

**Using Technology to Support the Professional Development of Iraqi
ESL Teachers in the Post-Invasion Context**

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his own and the appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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All praise is due to Allah alone, I praise him, seek his aid and seek his forgiveness. I testify that there is no God but Allah, and that Mohammed (peace be upon him) is his slave and messenger.

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Abstract

This thesis sets out to explore the status of the professional development of the Iraqi EFL teachers in post-invasion Iraq. English language teaching in Iraq has witnessed a huge transition period after the invasion and a new English language curriculum was introduced as a result. The introduction of the new English language curriculum has, therefore, brought huge challenges for the EFL teachers.

EFL teachers are in the middle of a challenging transitional period as far as their professional development is concerned due to the absence of in-service training. The new curriculum is significantly different from the old one because it contains a lot of communicative activities and technology based tasks that Iraqi teachers are not used to. They seem to be following the old professional development style and training that is stuck in their minds from the period prior to the American invasion of the country (although nothing available at the moment) which has now become unsuitable for the new curriculum that requires more up to date methods in teachers' training and development.

From 2003 access to technology and the Internet became available in Iraq, but learning through the Internet has not been applied yet in the education sector. As there is currently a lack of in-service training for Iraqi EFL teachers, this study investigates whether teachers in the 'new' Iraq consider it feasible to use technological tools as a platform for teachers' professional development.

Using a thematic perspective, the study investigated the perceptions, understandings and responses to status of teachers' PD in a complex and chaotic setting in one province in Iraq. Data were generated through multiple qualitative interviews carried out over five research phases.

What has emerged from the findings of this study is that the teachers' professional development process currently remains in a state of chaos as a result of the political changes in the country following the American invasion in 2003 and the educational changes that followed.

The data shows how English teachers in one city have responded to the idea of using technology for their PD purposes. It suggests that use of the now widely available aces of technology, and particularly the Internet, might provide a solution to the lack of more formal PD provision.

Table of Contents

LIST OF FIGURES & TABLES	8
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	9
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	10
1.1. MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY	10
1.2. THE MACRO CONTEXT OF IRAQ	11
1.2.1. <i>Historical Background of the Country</i>	<i>11</i>
1.2.2. <i>Iraq's Post-War Economic Situation</i>	<i>13</i>
1.2.3. <i>Development of ICT in Iraq.....</i>	<i>13</i>
1.2.4. <i>Incorporation of ICT within Education in Iraq</i>	<i>16</i>
1.2.5. <i>The Introduction of New English Language Curriculum</i>	<i>18</i>
1.2.6. <i>Teachers' Professional Development in Post-invasion Iraq</i>	<i>21</i>
1.3. THE AIMS OF THE STUDY	23
1.4. THE RESEARCH APPROACH	24
1.5. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY	26
1.6. THESIS OVERVIEW	28
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW	31
2.1. INTRODUCTION	31
2.2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK	33
2.3. LITERATURE REVIEW DETAILED THEORETICAL PHASES	34
2.4. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	35
2.5. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT INTERPRETATION	36
2.5.1. <i>Policy Makers' Perspectives.....</i>	<i>38</i>
2.5.2. <i>Schools Perspectives</i>	<i>40</i>
2.5.3. <i>Teachers' Perspectives</i>	<i>44</i>
2.6. A HOLISTIC PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	44
2.7. ENHANCED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT METHOD	46
2.8. THEORETICAL FRAME FOR INTERNET BASED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	51
2.9. THEORETICAL FRAME FOR INTERNET BASED SETTING	54
2.10. POTENTIAL CHANNELS FOR INTERNET BASED PD	55
2.10.1. <i>Email</i>	<i>56</i>
2.10.2. <i>Chat</i>	<i>59</i>
2.10.3. <i>Internet groups and forums</i>	<i>58</i>
2.10.4. <i>Webinar.....</i>	<i>61</i>
2.11. ADVANTAGES OF INTERNET PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	62
2.12. ONLINE LEARNING MODELS	66
2.12.1. <i>Salmon's model.....</i>	<i>67</i>
2.12.2. <i>Community of Enquiry Model.....</i>	<i>76</i>
2.13. EDUCATIONAL CONCERNS RELATED TO ONLINE LEARNING	78
2.14. COLLABORATIVE LEARNING	85
2.15. THE ONLINE TUTOR'S ROLE	88
2.16. ASYNCHRONICITY	90
2.17. THE EMERGENCE OF BLENDED LEARNING	92
2.18. UNDERSTANDING BLENDED LEARNING	94

2.19. CONSTRUCTIVIST SUPPORT	96
2.20. SCAFFOLDING	99
2.20.1. <i>Internet scaffolding</i>	101
2.21. RELATED EMPIRICAL RESEARCH	104
2.21.1. <i>Studies in the West</i>	105
2.21.2. <i>Studies in the Arab World</i>	107
2.22. CHAPTER SUMMARY	114
CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY	113
3.1. INTRODUCTION	113
3.2. MY BACKGROUND AS THE RESEARCHER	117
3.2.1. <i>My role in the study</i>	118
3.3. PHILOSOPHICAL STANCE	119
3.3. PURPOSE AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS	122
3.4. METHOD FRAMEWORK – QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW	123
3.5. SAMPLE IDENTIFICATION AND SELECTION	125
3.6. THE PARTICIPANTS	127
3.7. DESCRIPTION OF PARTICIPANTS AND THEIR SETTINGS	129
3.8. CONDUCTING THE INTERVIEWS	135
3.9. PILOTING MY INTERVIEW	138
3.10. FIELD WORK	139
3.11. ETHICAL ISSUES	139
3.12. DATA ANALYSIS	141
3.12.1. <i>Identifying my themes</i>	142
3.13. TRUSTWORTHINESS	144
3.13.1. <i>Credibility</i>	145
3.13.2. <i>Dependability (Reliability)</i>	148
CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS	150
4.1. INTRODUCTION	150
4.2. THEMES	150
4.2.1. <i>Theme 1</i>	152
<i>Iraqi teachers' perceptions and attitudes about the current INSET provision</i>	152
4.2.2. <i>Theme 2</i>	164
<i>Teacher Autonomy</i>	164
4.2.3. <i>Theme 3</i>	179
<i>Official Support for Internet – based professional development for Iraqi teachers</i>	179
4.2.4. <i>Theme 4</i>	190
<i>Teachers' attitudes towards adopting technology for their PD</i>	190
4.2.5. <i>Theme 5</i>	206
<i>The obstacles to the I-based professional development / overcoming those obstacles</i>	209
4.3. CHAPTER CONCLUSION	236
CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION	238
5.1. CONNECTING LITERATURE AND EMPIRICAL FINDINGS	239
5.2. TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF CURRENT INSET PROVISION	241
5.2.1. <i>Responsibility for teachers' PD (ownership)</i>	241
5.2.2. <i>The official stance about teachers' PD (confusion)</i>	244
5.2.3. <i>Pressure on teachers to achieve with no support</i>	246

5.3. AUTONOMY	247
5.3.1. <i>Collaborative Learning</i>	247
5.3.2. <i>Scaffolding</i>	253
5.4. POTENTIAL CHANNELS FOR INTERNET-BASED PD	256
5.4.1. <i>The official encouragement for the I-PD</i>	257
5.4.2. <i>Technology (the Internet) is essential for modern PD process</i>	262
5.4.3. <i>Bottom up approach for teachers' PD</i>	264
5.5. FACTORS HINDERING TO I-PD (IN THE SHORT AND MEDIUM TERMS)	270
5.5.1. <i>Lack of Internet-based PD trainings, Internet skills and professional support</i>	272
5.5.2. <i>Lack of Internet-based PD motivation, confidence and incentives</i> ...	276
5.5.3. <i>Perceived disadvantages of the Internet (lurking, isolation)</i>	279
5.6. CONCLUSION	281
CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION	286
6.1. INTRODUCTION	286
6.2. CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY	288
6.3. FURTHER RESEARCH	290
6.4. LIMITATIONS	292
6.5. FINAL THOUGHTS	293
REFERENCES	296
APPENDICES	310
APPENDIX 1 PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET	310
APPENDIX 2 PARTICIPANTS' CONSENT FORM	312
APPENDIX 3 CONSENT FORM - ARABIC VERSION	313
APPENDIX 4 INTERVIEW SCHEDULE – PRE- FIELD WORK (PILOTING)	314
APPENDIX 5 INTERVIEW SCHEDULE – FIELD WORK	316
APPENDIX 6 SAMPLE INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT – ENGLISH VERSION	319
APPENDIX 7 SAMPLE INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT – ARABIC VERSION	327
APPENDIX 8 SAMPLE DOCUMENTS	348
APPENDIX 9 PICTURES FROM THE FIELD	333

List of Figures & Tables

Figure 1: Map of Iraq

Figure 2, Salmon's Model Description

Figure 3: Salmon's model of e-learning

Figure 4: Garrison & Anderson's Community of Enquiry Model

Figure 5: table shows the breakdown of participants & setting

List of Abbreviations

BERA	British Educational Research Association
CMC	Computer-mediated communication
COSIT	Central Organization for Statistics and Information Technology
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
ICC	Iraqi Commission for Computers and Informatics
ICMC	Iraq Communications and Media Commission
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
DGOE	Directorate General of Education
ICT	Information Communication Technology
INSET	In-Service Training
ITPC	Iraq Telephone and Postal Company
MoC	Ministry of Communications
MoE	Ministry of Education
MOPID	Ministry of Planning and International Development
NCC	National Computer Centre
PD	Professional Development
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WLL	Wireless Local Loop

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1. Motivation for the Study

Prior to the American invasion of Iraq in 2003, I worked in the Iraqi education sector in many different positions; as English language teacher, inspector and a senior planning officer at the Ministry of Education in Baghdad. In my roles, I became knowledgeable about the Professional Development (PD) provision in Iraq that was set up in the early 70s. My work involved travelling to different parts of the country working closely with local Directorates of Education in the provinces and thus gained a greater understanding about the teachers' PD provision in respect of how the provision was organised, how its contents were linked to curriculum and teachers' training approaches. After the American invasion of Iraq in 2003 a big reshuffle took place in the Ministry of Education. This reshuffle was an attempt to restructure the education sector, changing many established personnel in senior positions who were seen as part of the previous political regime and to bring in new faces. A new English language curriculum was also introduced but that just added more problems to an already complicated situation in the education sector and that affected the performance of schools and mainly teachers who overnight found themselves in a middle of a great upheaval.

The chaos that followed the invasion and the dissolving of the previous structure at the MoE made it impossible to salvage any of the previous system structure at that time and the American Consultant who was in charge of the MoE at that time formed an American Cultural Council to

advise how to make the necessary changes. It was during that restructure that I was appointed as a member of the Education Consultation Committee that advised the Americans at that time.

Recently after many years of American control of the education sector, the Iraqi Ministry of Education has started to regain its role as the main authority responsible for the educational change that have been introduced. However, the MoE seems confused about how to support Iraqi teachers' PD in the new context that has emerged from the disappearance of the old system.

Fortunately, as I worked in the education sector before and after the invasion of the country in 2003, I found myself in a position to be able to understand the differences and gaps between the old and the new systems, the complications posed by the educational changes and what would teachers find difficult in the new era. Prior to undertaking this study, I had recognised that the provision of PD would be key to enabling teachers to begin to address the educational changes that had been introduced and having become familiar with the power of the Internet, I wanted to investigate whether this would be an effective way to implement PD.

1.2. The Macro Context of Iraq

1.2.1. Historical Background of the Country

The Name Iraq has been in use since before the 6th century and many other names have been used as well. In more modern times, subsequent to independence from the United Kingdom in 1932 Iraq referred to as The

Kingdom of Iraq. In 1958 Iraq became a republic and since then it has been known as The Republic of Iraq. Geographically it is located in the Middle East and has an area of 169,234 sq. miles which is twice the size of the United Kingdom and has a population of about 37 million.



Figure1: Map of Iraq

1.2.2. Iraq's Post-War Economic Situation

Prior to 2003, Iraq suffered enormous hardship, largely due to continuous external conflicts, which contributed to the country lagging behind global developments in many economic and social domains. The government's concern for mobilizing oil profits for security and military support on the one hand, and for the Oil-for-Food programme during the sanctions years (initiated by the UN), on the other, prevented Iraqis from acquiring the quality of life common in other major oil-producing countries in the region. Following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, the United Nations' Security Council implemented resolution 661, imposing sanctions on Iraq. A series of further resolutions followed, intended to define the terms of the withdrawal and disarmament of Iraqi forces and weapons of mass destruction. In April 1995, the Security Council passed resolution 986, establishing the "Oil for Food" program.

Under that program, Iraq was allowed to sell oil in order to purchase necessary humanitarian supplies. Iraq was able to import only those items essential for humanitarian relief, mainly food and medicine. Any items considered slightly aiding the development of Iraq's arsenal of weapons were banned under the sanctions, including information and communication technology ICT products.

1.2.3. Development of Information Communication Technology (ICT) in Iraq

Prior to 2003 and greatly damaged by over two decades of wars on different fronts, ICT policies were either non-existent or very oppressive.

The sanctions meant that Iraq was left behind for more than 12 years especially where technology adoption where technology adoption was concerned. Already underdeveloped by global standards, restrictions on ICT imports resulted in further deterioration of the sector. Furthermore, government security concerns throughout those years exacerbated the situation, and consequently Iraqis had no access to the Internet, mobile phones and satellite TV channels. Thus citizens, including teachers, were not aware of the rapid development in ICT that was happening elsewhere in the world. In addition, throughout this period the government viewed development of the education sector as a minor concern in comparison to what they considered to be other major issues such as defence and national security or more precisely, the security of the regime.

Access to ICT by the public was looked at as a threat to the security of the governing regime. There was a National Computer Centre (NCC) attached to the Ministry of Planning, but that was under the control of the Iraqi Intelligence Agency, which was an agency that was exclusively responsible for the government's IT policies by means of exacerbating security doubts and threats among politicians and decision makers (Dewachi, 2006). In 1999, the government detached the NCC from the Ministry of Planning and attached it to the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research. That move provided a long needed, but late, relaxation enabling government departments to plan their own ICT applications and activities. In 2000, the government changed the name of the NCC to the Iraqi Commission for Computers and Informatics (ICCI). That again was looked at as another chance to relax the strong hold of

security departments on the ICT sector. However, real control remained in the hand of the Directorate of the General Security in Baghdad.

The war on Iraq in March 2003 marked a landmark in the liberalization of the ICT especially for telecommunications. In June 2003, the Ministry of Transport and Telecommunications was divided into the Ministry of Communications (MoC) and the Ministry of Transportation. Unlike many states in the region, Iraq did not add “information technology” to the name of the newly formed ministry.

In October 2003, three telecommunications companies were granted GSM licenses to operate the mobile phone services in northern, central and southern areas in Iraq. Those three operators broadened their services throughout Iraq later in October, 2006. Prior to that, in February 2005, The Ministry of Communications announced its plans to bid for two nationwide Wireless Local Loop (WLL) networks in partnership with Iraq Telephone and Postal Company (ITPC). The licenses were awarded in 2006 (Dewachi, 2006). In addition, an announcement was made that seven fibre-optic loops were to be established to cover the whole country and connect its cities. That was part of the Ministry of Communications plans to broaden its fixed network infrastructure.

In the information technology sector, the Ministry of Planning and International Development (MOPID) established the Central Organization for Statistics and Information Technology (COSIT) aiming at creating an entity in MOPID that is responsible for a national ICT policy. Iraq Communications and Media Commission (ICMC) was then established as

a watchdog for the telecom and media sector with the objective “to encourage investment and discourage state interference” (SRS, 2007).

1.2.4. Incorporation of ICT within Education in Iraq

As the ICT in Education and e-learning context has not been academically investigated as far as Iraqi teachers’ professional development is concerned, it is appropriate to present a brief account of the Iraqi education system, a background of teacher education and development and the present status of English language teaching in Iraq. To provide a perspective of this context, the background to in-service English language teachers and institutions function will be discussed next.

On the 8th of May 2006, The Iraq ICT Alliance was launched a public and private partnership work to promote ICT development in Iraq. The alliance was founded by partners including multinational companies, international donor agencies and government agencies. The Alliance’s main target is to build ICT capacity, and develop and deliver training courses to government ICT departments. A number of other private and public partnerships started to be formed in 2007 and 2008 and were mainly situated in universities and some private secondary schools. They started to provide computer and Internet access in campuses. Internet now is accessible everywhere in Iraq and many Iraqis nowadays have Internet access through their mobile phones. The use of many different applications such as the social communications websites has become very common in the last two years. These changes to provision of and

access to ICT pave the way for considering how to exploit the huge change in the country's ICT infrastructure to serve the education sector.

The Iraqi constitution of 1970 mentions:

ينص الدستور العراقي لعام 1970م أن الدولة تضمن حق التعليم المجاني في جميع المستويات - الابتدائي والمتوسط والثانوي والجامعي - لجميع المواطنين. وتعتبر الحكومة مسؤولة عن وضع السياسات التعليمية والإشراف عليها وكذلك تمويل التعليم وتطوير وتنفيذ البرامج التعليمية.

Free education is guaranteed by the state for all levels; primary, secondary and higher education and that the government is responsible for setting up, supervising and funding all the education policies and also providing training and support for education facilitators to execute the education programmes.

(Excerpt from the Iraqi Constitution 1970, <http://www.irfad.org/ar/>)

The directorates of educations in each of the 18 Iraqi provinces which are attached to the Ministry of Education are the executive powers with regard to education. It is their responsibility to set education and training plans, provide teachers with necessary aspects to meet the training needs of different sectors and organize and execute educational programs in schools, which can include teacher training programs. After 2003 all those directorates were attached to the American Cultural Council of Education (dissolved later on in 2010) that started to pass laws and legislations to develop the education sector and to renew the educational programs and the teaching methods.

Since the fall of the former regime in 2003, the Iraqi education system has been a focus of extensive works by international agencies. There is an aim to fully review and revise textbooks and the curricula currently in use.

Despite this, out-of-date curricula persist and have impeded the impact of

educational initiatives and interventions. As a result, the focus of the new change has shifted towards the English language curriculum.

(www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco/worldwide/arab-states/iraq/2014).

1.2.5. The Introduction of New English Language Curriculum

The old Iraqi English language curriculum followed the grammar-translation method and it used to focus on teaching grammar and composition and students used to simply study grammar in order to improve their writing skills. In contrast, the new English language curriculum includes many new topics, which comprise a variety of units that cover writing, reading, listening and speaking skills. The Curriculum uses idioms that Iraqi school students never use in everyday life, i.e. it is set in contexts that use language in ways that are unfamiliar to learners. However, the biggest changes were the introduction of literature as an integrated part of the curriculum, the use of technology in teaching and applying a communicative approach in learning English. The new curriculum was designed to introduce English in the first grade and then skills are supposed to develop throughout the following stages up to the senior secondary schools years. In the old curriculum, English began in the fifth grade. Although the curriculum seemed promising, the lack of adequate consultation with its main facilitators, the teachers, has undermined its effective implementation.

The new curriculum expects Iraqi teachers to:

- Create an enabling learning environment.

- Encourage active learning including the use of new technology in education.
- Follow new technologies and advanced methodologies in the educational process.
- Engage the learner in social dialogue and collaborative learning.
- Enable learning to be personalised and enjoyable.
- Encourage independence and self-management of learning.
- Enable students to express themselves imaginatively and communicate efficiently with others.
- Enable students to read and analyse literature stories that reflects the life styles of different nations and links to the Iraqi cultural identity.
- Enable students to critically read drama, poetry and non-fiction texts to help them engage in the world of knowledge.
- Use appropriate teaching and learning strategies in harmony with the learning goals. (unesdoc.unesco.org/Iraq-2012)

The new curriculum entails that teachers follow the steps above in order to help their students use English language in real life situations by encouraging them to communicate in English with each other and with their teachers inside their classrooms and on schools premises. In addition, the new curriculum encourages group work and discussion, in which students are able to express their opinions on many different matters. This is a completely new approach for both students and teachers and its implementation represents a challenge for the classroom behaviour

and practices of both students and teachers. Students are expected to interact in classrooms that have previously never encouraged them to express their opinion and where teachers have been the “absolute authority”. Iraqi teachers meanwhile, who were previously used to transmitting knowledge about English to their learners, are now expected to become more like facilitators who monitor their students’ progress and facilitate their learning journey.

This was a major transformation in the Iraqi education system. It is the first time in Iraq that the “traditional” ways of teaching and learning have been challenged. The introduction of the new English language textbooks and curricula, therefore, represents a key challenge to EFL teachers in Iraq in terms of their own language proficiency, their understanding of new teaching approaches and the different teacher roles and relationships that these imply. International organizations such as the UNESCO support the implementation of the English language curricula in Iraqi schools believing that it will contribute to the modernization of the schools, improving educational standards and also to the reconciliation in Iraqi society through its attempts to consider the different needs of the many groups within Iraqi society (Arabs, Kurds, Yazedies, Sabiis, Mandanies, etc.). However, the curriculum change policy has, so far, offered no practical interventions to help EFL teachers adapt to and begin to implement the new changes.

1.2.6. Teachers' Professional Development in Post-invasion Iraq

The Iraqi Ministry of Education is aware of the above challenges and has expressed concerns about the present levels of English language teacher competence, in terms of their behavioural, pedagogical and linguistic skills, observing that graduate teachers of English simply lacked competence to teach new syllabus effectively. The demand for more qualified and competent teachers to cope with the most up to date methods is growing sharply. Consequently, it is now important for the training provision for in-service teachers to be addressed by the education authorities. Teachers' professional development programmes used to be set up centrally and attendance was compulsory for teachers in order to sign off their annual teaching status, which was a kind of an annual MOT check for teachers' development. Teachers' PD was deemed highly important prior to 2003 as stated in the Ministry of Education mission statement:

ربما يكون تدريب المعلمين من أهم الفروع في حقل التعليم، لأن المعلمين يشكلون حجر الزاوية في العملية التربوية برمتها. ويساهم المعلمون في جميع مراحل التعليم ومستوياته - الابتدائي والثانوي بأنواعه والتعليم الجامعي - في تشكيل عقول الطلبة ومعارفهم وقدراتهم، ويحضونهم على طلب المعرفة في الحاضر والمستقبل.

Teachers' PD is the most important branch in the education system because teachers represent the corner stone of the whole education process for their role in shaping students' minds and developing their abilities to obtain knowledge at all times.

(Excerpt from the Iraqi MoE Mission Statement 1990, <http://www.irfad.org/ar/>)

However, the situation changed radically after the invasion in 2003 and the priorities of the MoE have shifted from concentrating on the backbone of the teaching process (teachers' PD) into focusing on hitting new

government targets (set up by the government in consultation with the American advisors) of modernising the education system and introducing more technology into the education sector. Therefore, the MoE current focus is on providing technology to schools without any plans on how to enable teachers to use such technology in teaching and for their own PD purposes. Therefore, teachers' development remains a big challenge in this concern. Al Obaidi & Budosan (2011) mention that current school system in Iraq lacks the philosophy of the modern education system and teachers are not trained to identify and deal with new challenges.

However, given the availability of ICT, and insufficiency of PD provision, my own background and experience in the Iraqi education context led me to wonder whether technology and mainly the Internet could be a means for EFL teachers to begin to develop their own contextually appropriate PD provision to help them gradually become more able to implement new English curriculum as intended especially with the current unlikelihood of MoE being able to provide systemic PD provision across education in the near future.

Consequently, and perhaps more than ever in Iraq recent times the need to reflect on the appropriateness of existing EFL teachers professional development and the role of teachers in directing their own professional programmes have become important aspects of the recent changes in curriculum. Internet has become accessible in Iraq since 2003 after the invasion, there seems to be a potential opportunity to explore whether teachers might use the Internet as a platform for their professional

development to address the lack of regular in-service training provision.

This is the focus of my study.

1.3. The aims of the study

The aim of my research has been to look at the status of the professional development of the Iraqi ESL teachers in post-invasion Iraq and to consider to what extent English teachers in the current Iraqi context see technology as a means of providing the PD that is otherwise not available. English language teaching in Iraq has witnessed a huge transition after the invasion and a new English language curriculum was introduced. As the new curriculum is the first major shake-up in the English language sector in Iraq for over 50 years, it has posed some challenges for teachers, in particular how Iraqi teachers can help themselves to develop the new understandings and skills needed to begin to teach some version of the new curriculum. In other words, the research explores whether and how Iraqi ESL teachers, working in school contexts where technology, mainly the Internet, is readily available have tried to use technology to establish a much needed professional development process in the midst of those changes, despite receiving little or no direct support from the Ministry of Education in Baghdad or from the Directorates General of Education in the provinces. PD is also seen as a means of boosting teachers' careers in the Iraqi context at the moment, both due to teachers' own desire to develop their professional capacities and to the official encouragement of this stance. This research aims to address the following research questions:

1. How do teachers feel about the official professional development opportunities currently on offer & do they make use of them?
2. What do teachers think they could do to support their own PD individually and collectively?
3. Given the official support for Internet-based professional development solutions, are teachers willing to use technology for their own professional development?
4. How do teachers think technology might support professional development?
5. What do teachers see as the barriers to technology and can those be overcome?

1.4. The research approach

This inquiry focuses on the state of English language teachers' PD in one Iraqi province, Nineveh. I looked at what those teachers were doing to support their own PD. I explored the degree of willingness that Iraqi teachers showed to adopt technology for their own PD purposes. I also examined the encouraging factors and the barriers for adopting technology. I decided to use purely qualitative data collection method because I believed I needed to understand both the historical background to the participants' behaviour and how it is influenced by their cultural and social context.

Qualitative interviews "seek to describe the meanings of central themes in the world of the subjects. The main task in interviewing is to understand the meaning of what the interviewees say" (Kvale, 1996). If responses are taken out of their contexts and interpreted separately, their meaning may become distorted (Neuman, 2003). This means that it is important to

consider the Iraqi EFL teachers' background and current context to get to the real meaning behind the responses. The selection of my participants was conducted very carefully as I was aware that I needed to acquire participants who were willing to share their experiences with me honestly and openly and who were happy to share "their stories" (Creswell, 2007. 133). I chose my participants purposefully and included in my study those with relevant experience to get an in-depth understanding of the circumstances related to my research questions. My strategy in identifying my participants was, therefore, driven by my research purpose (questions), the frame of my study and the availability of the resources. The data was gathered in 5 phases that are explained in detail in Chapter 4 in order to get first hand data regarding teachers' experiences of their professional development as they are the main stakeholders who are in the front line of any curriculum change process.

My thematic analysis was inductive. My research findings emerged from the frequent, dominant or significant themes that were inherent in raw data. I started by collecting relevant data for my research questions, then looked at the whole data and identified the patterns. By inductive approach, I mean that I formed a set of observations and then moved from the particulars (responses I received from my participants) to general propositions (about the responses). It is a process of moving from specific aspects to general. I found that the features of the inductive approach fitted my research aims and purposes.

Chapter 2 below sets out the context in which this research was conducted and the suitability of the research design for such context.

I made sure throughout the whole research stages that the trustworthiness of the data was maintained by reflecting on my own role in the process of the data collection and analysis. This research was approved by the Ethics Committee at the University of Leeds.

1.5. The significance of the study

This research attempts to discover the potential role of technology and particularly the Internet, in supporting the provision of PD for Iraqi English Language teachers. My study explores the potential power of technology to offer solutions for education systems in very difficult contexts in which teachers attempt to implement a new curriculum with minimal or no professional support. Whilst there has been recent literature about the role of technology and online learning in the teacher education field that considers some aspects of such a role. This study presents a thorough empirical investigation of what the role of technology in education can mean for a specific group of people in a highly unusual educational context.

This study contributes to a more in-depth understanding of the rational dimension of educational change, and specifically the implementation of technology in teachers' PD provision, which also necessitates an awareness of the very specific factors that are relevant to the Iraqi context.

I hope that my findings will add / contribute to understanding of how technology might present a gateway towards PD information, training,

resources and support that can be accessed locally and quickly by teachers working in difficult contexts.

This study will contribute to knowledge by providing an alternative view of using technology in the field of education for the purpose of teachers' PD. My study focuses on the role of the real change agents, the teachers in this process and explores the potentials for the use of technology within education in a different way and in a completely unique context. This will begin to fill a gap in literature but I believe there is still much more research to be conducted in the area of the potential powers of technology in supporting educational change agents in extremely difficult contexts.

While few educational contexts are as systematically incoherent as Iraq is at present unsystematic approaches to educational change occur in many regions in the world with different parts of the world having different specific needs related to local necessities and contexts. Consequently there is a need for more investigation to reveal the potential roles of technology in addressing complex educational concerns.

My study has highlighted the potential significance of technology in addressing educational challenges and supporting teachers in pursuing their PD in a very unstable and unpredictable context but further research in the Iraqi context is also needed to explore the other dimensions of the problem that it has not been possible to include in the investigation of this study, such as the effect of the newly introduced technology on the learners of English language in Iraq and which of the many new

applications learners need to be aware of, to achieve acceptable level of proficiency.

This study has highlighted the scarcity of research that has investigated the role of technology in education within the Iraqi context. Gaining better understanding on how technology might be used to enable teachers' PD provision will enable policy makers to form a better picture on what support is needed and which provision requires more attention at the current transitional period of the history of Iraq.

Therefore, this study is useful and timely at this time because the MoE is looking for any information that might contribute to presenting them with a better picture of what is really happening on the ground. Hile there have been some reports generated by a few international organisations, such a UNESCO, these have only lightly touched on the issue of the big change and what it meant for the future of Iraqi teachers' PD. And to date, no other in-depth studies have focused on the issue of the teachers' PD in post-invasion Iraq.

1.6. Thesis overview

The thesis consists of 6 chapters.

Chapter 1 is the introduction. Chapter 2 presents a description of the social and historical aspects of life in Iraq that had had a direct impact on the context of the education sector in the country. It also shows the stage of transition in the IT sector from the period of the Saddam Hussein's regime until the invasion of the country in 2003. The chapter provides

information about the structure of the ICT sector, how it entered the education field after a long time of restricted use, and the importance of exploring the implications of technology for dealing with teachers' PD in English Language teaching in a highly disrupted educational system.

Chapter 2 puts the study in the context of literature related to teachers' professional development and the role of technology in this respect. The chapter identifies the broad base of literature in terms of the difficulties that teachers are likely to experience during educational transition periods and the challenges around adopting new methods. The chapter also highlights the gaps in the literature in relation to the transition challenges faced by teachers and education officials in various educational contexts. This literature chapter sets out the conceptual framework for the thesis.

Chapter 3 presents the research methodology and design. It also presents my philosophical stance and the rationale behind the qualitative approach. The data gathering phases and the process of analysing and verifying the data are also presented in Chapter 3 alongside the ways in which I addressed the ethical issues and the trustworthiness of the research design and findings.

Chapter 4 presents my findings that emerged from the data related to teachers.

Chapter 5 presents my discussion and interpretation of the data related to how teachers understand the changes and the challenges they are facing in pursuing their professional development issues. It discusses the themes that I identified around the participants' experiences of the current PD

situation in the Iraqi education context and the limitations that moved them towards the status quo.

Chapter 6 is the conclusion in which present summaries of the contribution and the limitations of the research. The main findings and other implications are also described in the chapter in addition to some suggestions for further future research in this field.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

People's taking up of the Internet in our modern world is extraordinary compared to all other technologies. Radio, for instance, attracted around 50 million listeners after 38 years of its first launching while television reached 50 million viewers 13 years after its birth. The Internet crossed that limit in just four years. 3 million people were connected in 1994 and they became 119 million by 1998 (Lynch, 1998). There are currently 3.8 billion Internet users as of June 2017 (www.internetworldstats.com). The Internet is now available to more than half of the world's total population and its usage has entered every sector in life including education.

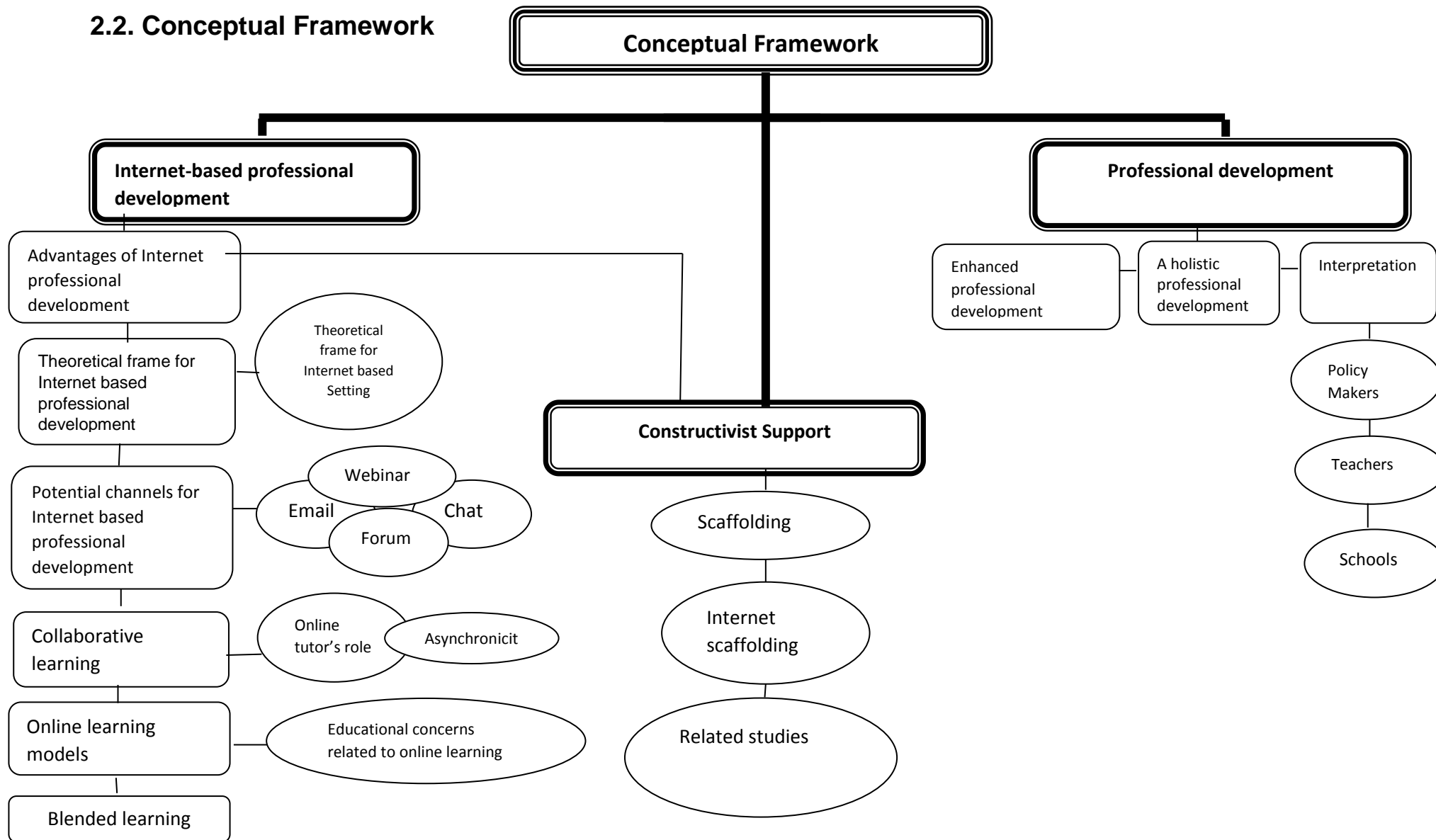
This chapter explores issues related to the potential of the power of technology in supporting teachers' professional development in the Iraqi context. I look here at the pedagogy aspects in relation to technology capacity in supporting teachers in a specific context. I also critically analyse the idea of education change, professional development and technology as a complex procedure which leads the conceptual framework for this research. Although my main focus is on the triangle of technology, PD and context, some of the issues explored in this section belong to the general education context and wider literature related to the capacity of technology in supporting the whole education process in general and teachers' practices in particular. My study, in the end, has been compiled around a problem that the outcomes of any change in education,

anywhere in the world would mainly depend on the main facilitators, teachers and it depends on what teachers think and do – “it’s as simple and as complex as that” (Sarason, 1971: 193).

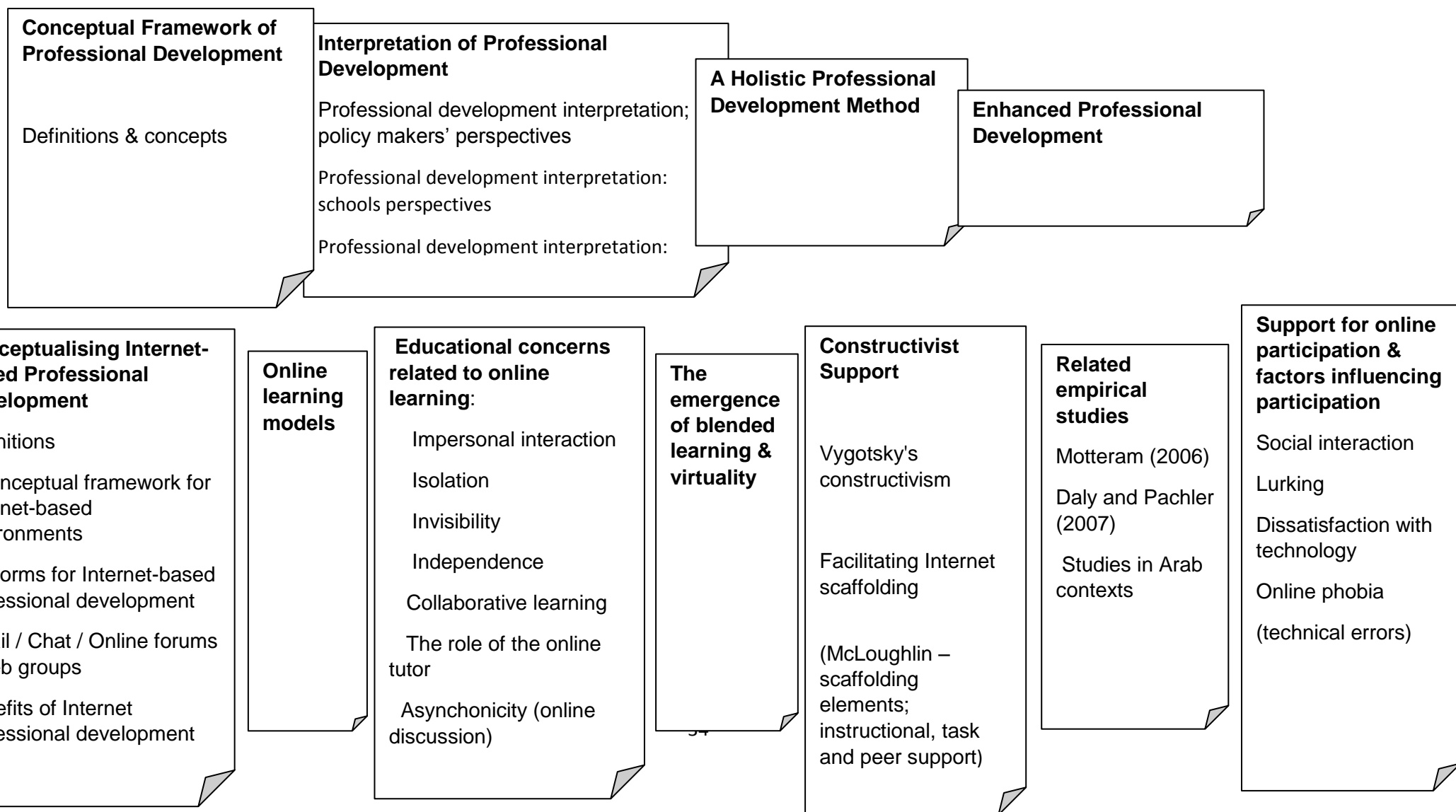
The previous literature around technology in education and the educational changes mainly focuses on well-established educational contexts. There is no literature on the Iraqi context because of the unique situation in the country and the many different political complexes. Therefore, in addition to the previous related literature in other educational contexts in the world, I also relied on some websites and reports published by international organisations following the invasion of the country.

The literature chapter has been organised to reflect the main domains related to teachers’ PD and the use of technology in this field. The following are conceptual diagrams for the Literature Review chapter and the aim of these diagrams is to make the reader able to follow the literature chapter in a smooth and coherent way as they are acting as a road map to the whole chapter.

2.2. Conceptual Framework



2.3. Literature Review detailed theoretical phases



2.4. Conceptual Framework of Professional Development

Professional development as a term has been loosely used in conjunction with continuous professional development and teacher development. John & Gravani (2005) state that the term has not been used properly which caused “semantic confusion”. Fullan & Hargreaves (1994) state that no one of the leading authors or the other main literature in the field has offered a concise definition for the term. The only definition that might be acceptable is the one of Day (1999: 4) as it describes the scope of the process. Day defines professional development as;

“The process by which, alone and with others, teachers review, renew and extend their commitment as change agents to the moral purposes of teaching and by which they acquire and develop critically the knowledge, skills, planning and practice with children, young people and colleagues through each phase of their teaching lives”

In essence, this means that the process of development for teachers is a continuous one. Teachers learn continually and gain knowledge and skills from the start of their careers until their retirement ages. Fullan (2007) mentions that teachers do this in order to acquire the necessary skills that help them in improving the teaching they provide to their learners.

Underhill (1992) emphasizes the continuity of teachers’ development as a human experience and a way in which teachers strive to find the best teaching methods. Individual teachers need to search for “a way of teaching that continually draws out their potential to facilitate a quality of

learning that is more significant, more worthwhile, more effective, more personally engaging, and more rewarding for both teacher and learners, as well as for the community they work in” (Underhill, 1992: 71). Thus, professional development is seen as something that teachers can do for themselves individually and collectively according to what they feel they need or might be applicable to their status, their situation and their context.

Actual provision of professional development has been also referred to in literature in terms of being top-down or bottom-up. Top-down training sessions, i.e. the days in which teachers attend training in schools that are organised in advance by the policy makers. Bates et al (1999: 324) warn on the “danger inherent in the top down national priority-driven, bureaucratically inflexible training structure. Richards (1991) also highlights the necessity to encourage more critical thinking for teachers that is based on long term plans and change the traditional short term objectives that are focused on feeding teachers with some new teaching skills. Mark and Fusco (2004: 209) mention that schools deal with professional development process traditionally “where outdated conceptual tools and top-down allocation of roles and responsibilities are the norm”.

In contrast to top down, current thinking suggests the need to allow more time and opportunities for bottom-up professional development that is led by teachers’ individual contributions. Lock (2006: 663) states that facilitating teachers’ professional development in the new era needs policy makers to change the traditional perception of professional development.

Lock adds that policy makers need “to develop new images of ongoing professional development based on individual needs”. This means that the professional development comes out of the real learning environment.

Roberts (1998) says that the professional development concept implies different objectives that reflect the individual differences among teachers. These objectives, adds Roberts, are set up in accordance to the teachers’ learning needs and can be “associated with the notion of a teacher as professional and independent problem-solver, who takes responsibility for personal and professional development (Roberts, 1998: 222). Nowadays, according to Opfer & Pedder (2011: 384), there is growing recognition about the importance of the input of teaches’ themselves in setting up their own PD, which “will improve teacher instructional practices”.

It is worth noting here that the above objectives that are implied in the professional development concept allow teachers a degree of independency while it is led collectively in accordance to teachers’ needs.

This makes it suitable for both the professional and the personal development needs. The nature of different objectives has created confusion about the meaning of professional development conceptually. John and Gravani (2005) comment on this confusion by saying that the flexibility of implementation of professional development has created various “definitional problems” (p. 109). However, Opfer & Pedder (2011: 384) focus on the degree of effectiveness of the professional development process by stating that “effective professional development will improve teacher instructional practices, which will result in improved student learning.”

There are numerous other definitions of professional development in the literature but I thought that instead of extracting more, I would rather focus on the stakeholders' interpretations of the concept; the policy makers, the schools and the teachers in educational change context such as the one currently happening in Iraq because it will provide a better understanding of the previous studies handling of the issue and the possibility of applying this to the Iraqi context.

2.5. Professional development interpretation

2.5.1. Policy makers' perspectives

Education officials frequently look at the teachers' professional development as a top down process. Officials' intervention in the teachers' professional development in most countries including Iraq is a centralised process where officials impose on schools the management of such intervention that might be even politically driven in certain cases. The teachers' training from the official perspectives has to run through a pre-planned set of instructions that are designed by the collaborators "to work on certain aspects of teachers' development" (Freeman, 1989: 39). Such training, according to Goodlad (1994) is a structure oriented process that pays little attention to the education aspect where the objective is training not development, i.e. the focus is on achieving short terms outcomes. The top down professional development, therefore, concentrates on feeding specific skills and activities that have to be learnt in a specific time. The concentration on the pedagogical knowledge in such trainings is limited.

Craft (2002: 12) lists a number of weaknesses that the top down professional training tend to suffer from. Craft mentions that such training is usually not “linked to the needs of the school and being random in terms of content in relation to the needs of individual schools”. In addition, the in service training often depends on quantifiable measures in grading teachers’ performance. This is the case in the Iraqi context where policy makers look at the professional development as a top down interventions. Such interventions, according to O’Neil (1994: 286) are external identified solutions to “problems associated with the delivery of curriculum”. Such interventions were also referred to by Faraj & Tarvin (1989) as ad hoc types of in service training because the programmes stop when certain objectives are achieved. This is shared by Medgyes (1994) who states that although the top down interpretation of professional development may be well planned institutionally, they are sporadic as far as training opportunities are concerned and the effectiveness of scheduled training, in reality, does not necessarily match the institutional plans. The effectiveness of the in service training (top down intervention) has been a subject of a research report in 2016 by the National Foundation for Education Research in the UK in which it stated that such intervention cannot promote the outcomes that are essential to achieve a quality professional development, “there is a need to value professionals exploring the potential of a strategy rather than a top-down directive about an approach that must be implemented”. This is because such outcomes are only limited to information and awareness levels. They do not inform on the motivational and effectiveness (knowledge and skills) levels. The

NFER report concluded that the in service top down training is less likely to impact on practice and achieve effective professional development levels. (www.nfer.ac.uk/research/2016). The top down training provides “one means of planned intervention to accelerate growth, but should, ideally, take account of critical moments in this interplay” (Day, 1999: 41). This means that an established weakness of any teachers’ trainings is in “its being irrelevant to the teachers’ needs” (Postholm, 2012: 416).

However, the need for the top down intervention is still important according to Day (1999). Day says that teachers need to get engaged in it to keep up to date with curriculum contents. Day (1999: 48) adds that such engagement is important in developing teachers’ “classroom organisation and teaching and assessment strategies”. Kennedy (1995) argues that top down training is needed after ITT to catch up with the changes that might happen in the national curriculum. Furthermore, top down training opportunities are looked at by Hayes (1997) as a welcome remedies for teachers’ lack of progression. Hayes mentions that teachers might encounter, at any stage in their teaching career, certain situations in which they feel they are stalled in a non-moving progression and top down training, for such reason, can help in regaining their momentum.

2.5.2. Schools perspectives

Professional development from schools perspective falls within the rubric of teachers’ development as part of staff development process. Jones (1987: 199) state that professional development from schools viewpoints

is seen as “a cyclical process including stages of needs identification, prioritising, negotiation /contracting / delivering training, monitoring and evaluation/ feedback”, which is something, according to Rinke and Valli (2010), that varies according to different schools environments. In contrast, Hargreaves (1994) argues that teachers need to choose and direct their professional development although schools need to coordinate the training programmes with the policy makers because, according to Rogers (2015: 296), schools administrations “cannot simply mandate support” without considering other relevant factors that relate to policy and teachers’ needs. Different other previous studies such a Brown et al (2001); Neil and Morgan (2003); Day (1999) and Forde et al (2006) have discussed school driven professional development and in most of the studies that I came across, such development were considered part of the staff development. Forde et al (2006) say that teachers’ development within schools context is determined by their schools’ needs and the requirements to meet the national targets. This process, according to Forde et al (2006) is politically driven and schools deal with professional development within this frame. “Schools improvement and pupil attainment are regarded politically as being affected by policy directives.” (Forde et al, 2006: 5) It is thus reasonable to see teachers participate in activities that focus on personal and professional development to compensate for the politically orientated development process (Day, 1999). In a report compiled by the OCED (2009), it was stated that in order for schools to achieve a sustainable professional development for their teachers, there need to be a system of professional community in place in order to help

supporting such development. Peng et al (2014) also emphasise the importance of professional community but they tend to suggest a larger scale by stating that in order to improve the education system, there need to be a nationwide professional process in place because that will influence the school level perceptions.

In the light of the above, schools interpretation of professional development has two main perspectives; the formal perspective in which schools being the policy makers' representatives set up training programmes to meet the targets defined by educational authorities and the informal perspective in which schools set up their own training targets internally and this is initiated by teachers themselves. Both forms might exist at the same time.

Professional development at schools level potentially involves teachers being able to gain the ownership of their development especially when certain changes in their teaching practice are implemented by schools. Bax (1995: 353) says that training programmes that are derived from teachers' context motivate teachers to learn new skills that they can benefit from in their own teaching practice and this can lead to "more effective change than top down approach".

School driven development might, however, encounter some procedural problems according to Neil and Morgan (2003). They argue that some problematic issues might come up to surface when different groups of teachers have different priorities in pursuing their professional development process i.e. some teachers might feel that they do not need

training on their teaching practices while others might discuss changes without real intention to adopt them. Roberts (1998) say that training programmes that work for some teachers do not necessarily work for others. This highlights the fact that the top down development process that is usually backed by schools cannot meet different teachers' training priorities because they do not emerge from the individual needs and desires that can motivate teachers. This might well be the case at Iraqi schools also if a top down new system is introduced without considering teachers' needs, and is something that Iraqi educational policy makers need to consider if any PD provision is set up in the near future.

Teachers' training in Iraqi schools is and always has been centralised and driven by national education policy. Iraqi schools are not autonomous in organising development programmes that suit their own needs even with the lack of any PD provisions at the current times. Such atmosphere might push teachers to seek their own independent development regardless the position of their schools, in which they take the initiative to set up their own targets and objectives as the policy driven training is ineffective, insufficient and simply does not exist at the moment. The scarce in-service training programmes which have been implemented in relatively difficult environment and circumstances are "often not fully successful in providing systematic opportunities for continuing education, skills and career development for teachers." (www.unesco.org/new/en/iraq-office/2014).

2.5.3. Teachers' perspectives

Maley (1990) has attempted to understand professional development from teachers' point of view by asking a group of teachers in an investigation that was conducted on in service schools teachers. It was found that teachers differ in their interpretations of professional development. While some teachers mentioned higher qualifications (postgraduate studies) and extra – curricular training as means of development, others looked at development as learning new teaching methods and setting up groups within schools to discuss training needs. Little (1993: 147) state that “teachers' central reasons and opportunities for professional development begin with the teaching assignments they acquire, the allocation of discretionary time, and other work conditions encountered day by day”. Teachers look at their professional development as part of their teaching practice, i.e. it is related to their daily teaching experience. Little adds that when teachers decide to take the initiative of their own professional development, they usually tend to think of “structured opportunities that range from independent reading to formal course work, conference attendance, skill training workshops, leaves or sabbaticals, participation in committees or special projects and scheduled consultation with colleagues”. Teachers also share a common interpretation of their development, which is a bottom-up independent one. They assess their needs and try to address them individually or in groups within their schools contexts.

Day (1999) says that professional development from teachers' perspectives is a teamwork practice. Such practice begins as a self-learning experience and then moves into becoming a collaborative experience. Day (1999) identifies a number of cycles that teachers may go through in their perception of their own professional development; individual cycles and collective cycles. In the individual cycles, Day (1999) mentions two types; a closed cycle where teachers undergo a self-learning experience and an open cycle where teachers learn from their school colleagues. In the collective cycles, Day (1999) mentions a closed cycle in which a group of teachers share knowledge collectively and an open cycle where other colleagues add to the knowledge collectively.

There is obviously a little overlap between teachers' interpretation of professional development and their informal perception of school based development. Teachers may look at schools as just venues for discussion and sharing different ideas. This bottom-up interpretation of professional development normally becomes very popular as a result of the deficiency in the policy driven top – down practices. The support for bottom-up PD is essential, according to Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin (2011: 82), when there is a change in curriculum and pedagogy and a lack of official support, because new policies will be required. At the same time, a strategic assessment of existing policies will also be required to determine to what degree they are “compatible with the vision of learning as constructed by teachers and students and with a vision of professional development as a lifelong, inquiry-based, and collegial activity”. This means that teachers' voices about their own PD would have to be heard

by PD provision officials in order to form a policy that works for all. Bore (2006: 419) mentions that a bottom-up approach to PD might be marred by some chaos that is associated with it at the early stages but this is normal and should “welcomed in the early stages of the creative process”, and is part of this complex process. Driel & Berry (2012: 2) in their study about teachers’ professional development noted that the teachers’ development is “a complex process that is highly specific to the context, situation, and person” and that therefore, teachers’ trainings “should be organized in ways that closely align to teachers’ professional practice”

2.6. A holistic professional development

After discussing three interpretations of the professional development from the policy makers, the schools and the teachers’ perspectives, a holistic professional development approach is needed. Previous literature such as Day (1999) and Fullan (1994) have supported the idea of a holistic interpretation or approach that considers all the three previous interpretations mentioned above. Fullan (1994) says that both strategies; the top down and the bottom up do not work effectively on their own. Therefore, a blend of both might be needed. This means that in the context of this study Iraqi school teachers should be externally supported by a bottom up approach that can be initiated professionally in addition to the top down ones if available. This would enable Iraqi school teachers to manage their professional development and be independent as individuals and at the same time interdependent with their colleagues. In doing so,

Iraqi school teachers will be able to prepare their own professional development plans that are led by them and are relevant to their schools contexts. Even though the professional development plans are normally set up by the education officials in a top down procedure and in organising school trainings, the possibility of shortcomings happening is there and many weaknesses occur during the implementation of the top down plans. For this reason, teachers do need to prepare their own activities independently and interdependently through a down top pattern to address the shortcomings that usually accompany the implementation of the top down activities. Therefore, a proper professional development holistic method that takes in consideration the teachers' needs and views of their own development only happens when the implementation of the teachers' professional development becomes a "joint responsibility of teachers, schools and policy makers" (Day, 1999: 2). When such holistic method is achieved, it will not be perceived as opposing strategies, i.e. when all three stakeholders agree on an approach, there will be a harmony in implementing the components of such approach. Woodward & Cuban (2001: 16) say that such opposing strategies will be seen as a combination of work by which schools can promote professional development competence as their main goal in the development process because decisions about professional development options should "depend on the location of the participants and the types of objectives that are to be developed". In the Iraqi context, there need to be some sort of top down support for bottom up initiatives, so teachers identify their needs individually or collaboratively and then the education system provides the

means of achieving these. Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (2011: 90) emphasises the necessity of “developing concrete exemplars of the policies and practices that model top-down support for bottom-up reform. The changed curriculum and pedagogy of professional development will require new policies that foster new structures and institutional arrangements for teachers’ learning”. In addition, there will be a need for “a number of design principles to guide national and state officials struggling to devise “top-down support for bottom-up change” and to guide local actors who are rethinking their policies”. Birzea & Fartusnic (2003) assert, when considering educational change in Eastern Europe during the Post-Communist era that complex educational change requiring great adjustment to existing norms, and practices can take “generations” to become visible in classrooms. Thus, a holistic approach would require new relationships between stakeholders and mutual understanding and respect, which would require a cultural change in the sense of new ways of thinking about roles and responsibilities.

2. 7. Enhanced Professional Development Method

Enhanced professional development has been supported by previous studies. Stolk et al (2011:375) define optimised professional development as:

“A strategy that constitutes exploring the usefulness and consequences of theoretical ideas by working them out in a professional development process. The professional

development process is then optimised in several research cycles, focused on testing, reflecting on and adjusting the designed programme and framework”.

Previous literature such as Pachlar et al (2003), Woodward & Cuban (2001), Unwin (2007) emphasized the need for teachers to be given the opportunities to set up their own in house plan and to question the in-place policy of the top down development practice. Pachler et al (2003: 9) mention that optimised professional development enables teachers to understand the theoretical aspects of the development process and link it to their professional careers. They state that optimised professional development is “sought out proactively according to intrinsic training needs”. Teachers prefer to lead their professional development process because they are aware of their training needs rather than in response to policy directions. In support of an optimised professional development, previous studies also stated that optimised professional development refers to teachers’ involvement in the process. Unwin (2007) says that such type of development (optimised) adds a purpose for teachers’ professional life. Therefore, teachers’ planning of their professional development is in fact implied, according to Dede (2006), in the optimised professional development because such planning creates more opportunities for teachers to develop their profession. Rossner & Bolitho (1990) mention that teachers’ challenge to the top down professional development policy can positively affect their careers. Teachers can redirect the policies to be in line with their needs as they are the front line facilitators of the whole education process and it is, therefore, important to

give them the required authority to do this. Rosser & Bolitho (1999: 327) add that teachers have to be able to “play a leading part in their own development”. Optimised professional development has to be initiated by teachers’ desires to achieve their individual and collective objectives in their own context. This is why the top down professional development process, as is the case in the Iraqi context, does not meet the real needs and is impractical. Neil & Morgan (2003: 39) argue that “there is no longer any prescribed syllabus or format which CPD must take, and with the opportunities open in different arenas and support mechanisms available, teachers should be encouraged to develop their own interests. Teachers’ perception of their own development is the most authentic one, according to Neil and Morgan (2003: 40), because it reflects the real needs that any professional development activities have to address. This will also “enhance the quality of the teaching and learning take place in their classrooms and they will benefit the schools in which they are working”.

In a recent study, Daly et al. (2007: 274) state that professional development consists of three major themes. The first theme is the “shared practice” in which teachers are encouraged to change the practice of their professional development rather than just exchanging teaching practices. Teachers need to be the initiators of the change in their professional development process rather than just recipients of the top down policy. The second theme mentioned by Daly et al (2007) is the “collaborative development” in which teachers’ constructivist development is enhanced collaboratively by acquiring knowledge from learning networks. “Reflection on practice” is the third theme where teachers’

individual and collaborative reflection is supported in order to enhance their knowledge and change the traditional understanding of their professional development. Daly et al (2007) argue that the above themes lead to outcomes that provide mixed methods of learning for teachers as they draw upon varieties of resources. They are also characterised by being supported online collaboratively.

Considering the above literature suggests that an enhanced professional development does not follow the existing professional development through transmission of knowledge that is based on skills alone but rather requires teachers to be proactive change agents in their pursuit of excellent practice. Teachers also need to challenge the prevailing policy constructively. Daly et al (2007) say that this can be only achieved if a good focus on teaching practice is in place in learning networks.

The learning networks are online networking that are linked to “communities of practice” (Daly et al. 2007: 36). While online networks consist of different groups of practitioners who freely express their ideas and share their experiences via computer mediated method, communities of practice, according to Wegner (2010), are group of people who share a collective learning process. Those groups can be located at school, work or home. They are engaged in collective learning through a shared domain of their choice. They usually raise a concern about a practice they do and then start learning through interacting with each other on how to do it better.

Creating communities of practice for teachers via online networks offers good development opportunities and enhances the professional development especially in contexts where organised programmes for development are scarce and not regular. Therefore, I suggest that alongside a holistic professional development method that was suggested in the previous section, an enhanced professional development is also beneficial for Iraqi school teachers and can work alongside the holistic method. Iraqi teachers as communities of practice can articulate their professional development and pursuit best practices using a lot of online resources to draw on their own practices and on others' in order to achieve the required change. This will be even more useful for Iraqi teachers with the introduction of the new English syllabus and the difficulties encountered by some teachers. Holistic and enhanced professional development methods are likely to support the Iraqi teachers' needs in terms of their professional development.

Having looked at the different interpretations of the stakeholders of the professional development underpinned by the holistic and the enhanced methods, I find it useful to discuss in the following part the nature of the Internet as a tool to support the enhanced professional development in educational change contexts. In this study, my focus is on the Internet based professional development as an option for a down top professional development led by teachers themselves.

2.8. Theoretical frame for Internet based professional development

In this part, I am reviewing the potential role of the Internet tools and other technologies in supporting the holistic and the enhanced forms of professional development that were discussed above.

The Internet forms a source of virtually endless information for learning. McConnell (2000) indicates that the Internet has enabled learners to access a wide range of resources that can directly contribute to their professional development. She adds that the Internet based professional development can be carried out on both informal and formal levels and it can enhance self-development a great deal. Ertmir et al (2012: 408) mention that “the Internet was a floodgate”, referring to the amount of information teachers could access when using it. The use of technology for PD purposes, according to Kao and Tsai (2009: 66), is an important factor for the modern professional development process because “teachers’ professional development in the use and the application of technology is the key determining factor for improved performance”. The Internet, according to McPherson & Nune (2004) is flexible, i.e. learners can access it whenever and wherever they feel to and this has made it widely used as source of information and a learning environment. English language teachers in Iraq can, therefore, can access endless number of websites dedicated to English language teaching and teachers professional development. Ryan et al (2013: 69) agrees with the above point of the Internet flexibility. In a study conducted on a number of learners to test their motivation for opting to online mode of learning, some

questions were raised, such as “Was it a positive decision on their part to study using the Internet rather than conventional means?” the results showed that “students who preferred flexible study were more motivated than others” to use the Internet.

Albion et al (2015: 658) refer to another feature of the Internet which is the ability to interact with other people. They say that teachers can get in touch with others through emails or different forums to extend the benefit of individual development and excellences including “professional learning communities in schools, communities of practice, and networks that enable sharing more widely on the Internet”. Price (2007) points out that the recent advances of technology and the introduction of the Wi-Fi has made communication over the Internet even easier and more flexible. Teachers can now access learning materials and discussion forums from anywhere in the world and are no longer restricted to certain geographical locations. Price (2007) also mentions some potentials of the Internet in the field of teachers’ professional development. The Internet, then, represents effective source of electronically supported learning or what is now known as online learning or e-learning.

In general the terms e-learning and online learning have been identically used to refer to distance learning or learning that is conducted via the Internet. Clarke (2002) states that online learning is usually the learning that is Internet-based. Online learning covers a broad range of educational activities such as posting learning materials, video streaming, interactive television, audio materials, and social networks. Oblinger & Oblinger

(2005) refer to it as a range of many options that achieve individual and collaborative learning environment and it is a “wholly” online learning process. Online learning offers many pedagogical opportunities that can be of great benefit to Iraqi teachers in their environment by enabling them to access trainings and other relevant modern teaching practices themselves rather than waiting for the official support that no one knows when it is happening.

In order to further elaborate on this point and for the benefit of the reader when coming across some terms in the later chapters, it is worth mentioning here that a clear distinction between e-learning and online learning has not been agreed on by the previous literature. Nicholas (2003) defines e-learning as restricted to technologies and tools that are web capable, web distributed, or web based. E-learning, according to Nicholas (2003), has to be accessed via the Internet. However, Elis (2004) disagrees with such restriction on using the term. Ellis (2004) states that activities like audio and video tapes, interactive television and satellite broadcast are e- learning materials. For Tavangarian et al (2004), e-learning is not only procedural. It should show a kind of transformation of one’s knowledge through a construction process and there should be a level of interactivity included. As there is some uncertainty around the meaning of e-learning, authors tend to avoid stating clear definition and rather provide vague description. What is certain is that there is no agreement on the precise description of the term. A useful clarification came from Haythornthwaite et al (2007) who state that e-learning includes any technologies that are pedagogically applicable. This means that e-

learning can include a broad range of digital technologies as far as they are pedagogically appropriate and as far as those technologies can provide a learning opportunity for individuals and groups.

2.9. Theoretical frame for Internet based Setting

Having shed some light on the e-learning and the online learning concepts above, I feel that it will be also beneficial for the study to look at how the Internet based setting was viewed by previous literature, i.e., what do previous studies mean when they refer to Internet based learning. The setting of Internet based learning was viewed differently by previous literature such as Atkinson et al (2002), Haythornthwaite et al (2011) and Lee et al (2005), some studies tended to refer to it as web based learning while others called it Internet based learning. I prefer to call it in this study as the Internet based learning. Because I feel that the Internet as a multi communication system is more familiar to public use than the web which is mostly seen as a chain of computers networks. The Internet with its applications such as email, chat, social networks and conferencing rooms is better understood by most people and it reflects a familiar concept. Atkinson et al (2002) mentions that the web is one part of the Internet and it is mainly concerned with specific configuration of displaying materials online while the Internet covers the whole process of online activities. Internet based e learning covers both online learning (distance) and blended learning (face to face with online technology). Lee et al. (2005) mention that the Internet-based learning is not a straightforward process

and other conditions needed to be available for any goals to be achieved from such process. Depending on Haythornthwaite et al (2011) perception of online learning (e learning), I am not intending to deal with this theoretical frame on Internet based professional development in its environmental aspect but rather in its ability to reflect continuous patterns of e learning posted by teachers and learners. Internet based professional development for English language teachers can be seen or understood as the outcomes of collaborating and interacting with instructors and colleagues in a local, national or international context using Internet based resources (fixed or mobile platforms) that are set to enhance and support teachers' professional development. Bearing in mind the context of Iraqi English language teachers, the holistic concept of professional development discussed in earlier sections can be directed to focus on the contextualised needs of teachers as individuals and as a group rather than only based on ineffective top down professional development. Online discussion can also benefit Iraqi English language teachers and can contribute to their development.

2.10. Potential channels for Internet based professional development

Iraqi teachers may use several Internet channels to facilitate their professional development. Below are some of the channels that can be used to promote professional development in any context.

2.10.1. Email

Email is asynchronous and it is considered as the foundation of all online communication because it is easy to use. It is easy for teachers to exchange emails even in low resources contexts. Chen et al (2009: 1158) say that “in online educational contexts, engagement between learning parties is largely facilitated by computer-mediated communication (CMC) technologies such as e-mail”. Dudeney (2000: 10) states that email popularity come from its being “fast, cheap and reliable”. Exchanging emails suit low level technology skills contexts because learners and instructors can attach learning materials, post web links about learning resources, and send and receive feedbacks with minimum cost and facilities. Moor et al (2011: 132) indicates, in a study conducted about e-learning and distance learning, that “in regards to technology tools/techniques in the learning environment, the highest reported tools were discussion boards and email” and exchanging emails for the purpose of learning can create a unique setting for language encounter that cannot be achieved in a face to face environment because such communication is accompanied by online spelling and grammar check. This allows learners to correct themselves and express themselves in a better way. This could be useful for Iraqi teachers whose proficiency in English might stop them to effectively engage in trainings to avoid embarrassment. It could also reinforce their PD provision, mainly female teachers, by enabling them to communicate freely without the need to be identified.

2.10.2. Chat

Chen et al (2009: 1156) point out that “synchronous communication and collaboration tools, such as synchronous text chat, are increasingly important components of online learning”. Kearsley (2000) points out that text chat is a simple method by which different parties can exchange instant messages online. A significant amount of literature (Duemer et al., 2002; Shotsberger, 2000, Wang & Hsu, 2008) has indicated the usefulness of exchanging messages in real time chat in creating a pedagogical tool to facilitate learners’ engagement (in my case the teachers as learners) in synchronous discussion online. Chat is also looked at as an informal method of exchanging ideas and knowledge and this makes learners feel “related and connected to each other” (Almedia, 2005: 30). The creation of specialised online communities is effective in promoting learning for specific groups, i.e. English language teachers can create their own communities online with other English teachers from all over the world. Chun et al (2016: 1155) mention that “the synchronous text chat is useful for community building”, which is linked to the suggested enhanced professional development that I mentioned in an earlier section. Some other features available in chat platforms like the video and voice feature in the Yahoo Messenger can promote the social ties in online learning communities. Such online ties can be a good source of support, according to Liu et al (2015: 169) who emphasise the role of adequate support and effective collaboration in the technology-based teachers’ professional development to “improves ability”.

2.10.3. Internet groups and forums

Internet tools such as Skype, Zoom, Yahoo, Facebook, Snapchat, Viber, Instagram, WhatsApp and other web based sites used for messaging are asynchronous low cost solutions that can be easily set up. These groups facilitate communication and file sharing at affordable rate. Previous studies such as (Clarke & Myer, 2016; McLoughlin & Lee, 2007) state that such web based groups do not only maintain a good social conversation, interaction and feedback but are also capable of providing flexible and modular networking that enables collaborative skills, “a transformative process in which the information and media organised and shared by individuals can be recombined and built on to create new forms, concepts, ideas and services.” (Mcloughlin & Lee, 2007: 664) The web based groups facilitated by the social networking tools allow continuous communication and provide participants with chances to ask questions, seek advice, share their experiences and setup learning forums. Levy (2009: 775) highlights the powerful features of such tools in enhancing learning because such applications “enable the computer to mediate communication via voice, to transmit audio or video through audio and video conferencing, or to facilitate user participation and interaction via text chat, voice chat, audio logs, or voiced bulletin boards.” Participants can also send or post files that support their arguments. Levy (2009) adds that using those tools is cheap in comparison to other sophisticated satellite communication methods and those tools achieve almost the same purpose that other expensive tools might provide. Programmes like VoIP used by Skype, for example, operate like a telephone conversation and it

is “free of charge and provides good sound quality as long as there is Internet connection available to link the participants.” (Levy, 2007: 775). Most of those “asynchronous e-learning forms are available on demand and designed for individual self-study” (Clarke & Myer, 2016:9).

As to the Internet forums, it is another way of establishing discussion communities online. It is an advanced type of emails and it consists of senders’ details and subjects’ headers which makes it easier for participants to select the ones that are of their interest. They also maintain records of all messages sent or received which facilitates shared learning and knowledge exchange. Many informative discussions in literature have referred to the feasibility of online forums particularly for language teachers. Previous studies urge participants to choose technologies wisely. Studies like (Reece & Walker, 2016; Passey & Samways, 2016; Chun et al, 2016; Levy, 2009) state that it is important to note in the mid of the evolving new technological environment that teachers’ education and training are paramount. “With the advent broadband which allows fast transmission of voice and video, the idea of video conferencing is increasing in popularity” (Reece & Walker, 2016: 61). Passey & Samways (2016:30) also support the role of technology in facilitating learning for teachers by stating that “teacher education should be geared towards building a link between the various teacher/learners in society”. They add that various training setting can be organised to do this with “ICTs being utilised to facilitate greater communication, collaboration and reflections among the various partners”. By using technology, “anything

can be accomplished” (Levy, 2009: 777) and great learning opportunities can be achieved.

Internet forums thus are effective tools that can enhance and assist critical reflection. Teachers can share information and exchange knowledge about their teaching practice through Internet forums discussion.

Kupferberg and Peretz (2004) conducted a study on exchanges in Internet forums by bringing together 16 newly graduate teachers and 8 experienced teachers of English as a second language. The participants met and discussed online theoretical and practical issues of interpersonal problem discourse. Each of the participants was able to initiate a discussion through posting a problem message leading to more than 300 messages. Kupferberg and Peretz (2004) found that the newly graduate teachers and the experienced ones engaged effectively in Internet discussion forums on the problems posted by others. This finding is backed by Harlen and Doubler (2007: 458) who state that through Internet forums, teachers can easily “share knowledge perceptions and concerns about their practice”. Meriam et al (2016:18) also backed up the online forum effectiveness because the Internet:

“allows synchronous, real time chats as well as asynchronous, such as email or forums. Even when the participants are not physically together. Such forms of communication can further cooperation in performing a task, enable greater exchange of ideas or findings, and improve peer and teacher feedback, clarification, and evaluation”.

2.10.4. Webinar

Webinar is a relatively new technology that allows conferencing events to be shared online. Webinar can support interactive seminars and workshops online. Wang and Hsu (2008: 175) investigated the pedagogical issues underlying the use of the webinar tool in online learning and training. They mention that “webinar has been attracting more and more attention with the advancement of online learning technologies because webinar tools facilitate real-time communication and enrich the interactivity in an online learning environment”. Some of the applications supported by webinar include training events, meetings, lectures and presentations. This is a good potential for learners in remote places and with low resources environment. In the case of Iraqi teachers, webinar could offer great opportunities for professional development because all what they need is to sign in for available trainings or workshops and they can attend the training, listening to the trainer, sharing information with other attendees, ask questions and post or receive materials. This is all done from anywhere in the world. Webinar is “able to transmit video, audio, and images, webinar also enables users to share applications and to use whiteboard, the objective being to exchange information in a real-time and two-way format.” (Wang & Hsu, 2008: 176)

Increasing number of educational institutions has recently started to adopt webinar tool “because it can reduce travel expenses and travel time” (Britt, 2006: 177) In addition, webinar is an affordable tool. Learners can attend and participate in any sessions using their computers and Internet

connection. Another useful feature in webinar is the possibility of receiving immediate feedback about subjects discussed throughout the event.

Learners can also consult the materials presented at any sessions at different times, i.e. learners can access the materials that they missed at any time because “webinar tool provides an environment in which participants can archive seminar content for personal review or for people who missed the real time session.” (Wang & Hsu, 2008: 176)

2.11. Advantages of Internet professional development

The potential advantage of the Internet for teachers’ professional development in a poor resources context, like the Iraqi one, is its basic level of technological infrastructure, i.e. it does not need a highly advanced technical environment and it functions as a sole medium that can be used by individuals at their own comfort. The multi tasks feature of the Internet brings to users all other ICT tools. Email can be used for fax, voice mail can be used for phone, and chat can be used for video conference.

Internet can also support TV, news, films, live radio, news and many other forums. Fernandez et al (2009: 386) support this argument by stating that “Internet tools can promote good practice, active learning, prompt feedback and a more efficient use of the time.” rendering the Internet based learning a potential method for professional development though its immediate access to global resources. Harasim (2017: 132) states:

“The growth of many forms of network intelligence, and the speed and scope of future plans and projections, are beyond

anything human society has experienced to date, with significant ramifications for education ... the Internet is an incredible repository of information and expertise that is easily accessed and offers immense rewards”

One of the main advantages of Internet based professional development for teachers is its being flexible. In service teachers are usually pressed for time and it is hard for them to find time for training. McConnell (2000: 193) states that in service teachers find it difficult to “take time off work” to attend professional development training events. The Internet provides flexible access to training events and it is available 24 hours a day so teachers can work on their professional development whenever and wherever it is convenient to them. Mullen et al. (2012: 47) also found that communicating online removed the differences between the participants’ status and positions, which leads to considering the potential of technology “to encourage communities of learners in which issues of status and power are downplayed”. Schofield (2000) argues that professional development for in service teachers has witnessed an increasing demand for flexible delivery of the training programmes. Stehlic (2003: 1) found in a study conducted on the Australian VET that Internet based professional development is suitable for many different sectors in the education field. Stehlic add “from a pedagogical perspective, flexible delivery of training programs aims to give learners greater choice over when, where and how they learn, and includes strategies such as distance education, online learning, mixed mode delivery, self-paced learning and self-directed learning”. Other previous studies such as Desimone et al

(2002); Ko & Rossen (2017) and Figlio et al (2013) have mentioned several advantages for the Internet based professional development. Ko & Russen (2017: 410) mention some of the advantages of the flexibility of the Internet, which could be useful to support an Internet based professional development, by stating that learners (teachers as learners) “can progress at a speed that suits them. Thus the novice can afford to proceed at a slow pace without worrying that he or she may be holding back the rest of the group, while more advanced users can proceed quickly to get to the material they need to learn”.

Internet based professional development thus is potentially suitable for schools context as in the Iraqi situation where teachers’ capacities vary widely. Furthermore such professional development method suits female teachers who have social commitments and family needs especially in the Iraqi environment where it is very difficult for women to attend trainings outside their normal working hours due to social and cultural aspects. This is also useful for teachers in remote villages whose attendance to trainings is almost impossible due to the travel distance from the main cities where most of the training programmes are held. Internet based training offers a useful medium by which teachers can share and exchange their knowledge without the need to the physical meetings and attendance (Neil and Morgan, 2003).

The flexible nature of the Internet based training also allows teachers to select the information they feel of importance to their own professional development, i.e. they can hover over pages to learn more on certain

subjects that they need to know about more than other ones. “The web is well-suited for open, flexible and distributed learning.” (Khan et al, 2011: 76) Learning classes over networks, according to Salmon (2002), offer collaborative learning opportunities for teachers via sharing teaching expertise and resources.

The cognitive approach to learning, according to Anderson & Garrison (1995), states that the learning process is the place where beginners become experienced, i.e., the main purpose of learning is to provide learners with what they need and what they lack. Anderson & Garrison (1995) suggest that in cognitive approach we need to test new ideas before learning them. Web based discussion forums offer opportunities to learners to compare and share what they know with other learners.

Harasim (2017) argues that the strength of web based discussion lies in the fact that it can facilitate group interactions and activities effectively. Ko & Russen (2017: 201) state that the discussion online can take place in a discussion forum, which is “a logical area to base the ongoing question and answer sequence of course”. This provides a mechanism that allows the social affective and cognitive benefits of face-to-face situations to be duplicated.

As summed up by Donnell et al (2013: 242), “computer-supported collaborative learning systems are assumed to enhance the effectiveness of peer learning interaction. Communicative tools give access to collaborating partners, but also to other resources like external experts or other information sources via the Internet”. The success of any internet-

based CPD programmes, according Bradshaw et al. (2012: 82) can be attributed “to the approach and ethos of recognizing, and building on, the expertise of practitioners and developing an infrastructure to support bottom-up sharing of that expertise”.

2.12. Online learning models

Looking at the previous literature, one can find many different models for online learning that suit different pedagogic needs. Such models can be looked at as potential for Internet based professional development. There have been several online models recently mentioned by Harssem (2017) and Ko and Rossen (2017), but one of the recent online models implemented in the field of education is mentioned by Clarke & Mayer (2016) who present a model that involves a person demonstration of modules contents with an online avatar (pedagogical agent) using video streams. However, given the Iraqi teachers being novice users of technology, and being aware of the Iraqi educational context (just beginning to grasp the online learning concepts), I found that two earlier models might potentially be implemented in the Internet based professional development for Iraqi school teachers. Those models are Salmon’s five stage model (2002) and Garrison and Anderson’s community of enquiry model (2003).

2.12.1. Salmon's model

Salmon's model of 5 stages of e-learning has been studied and developed as a standard model over many years. It has been applied in many different training disciplines and learning contexts. The model can be used in identifying activities that learners (the teachers in this study) might be involved in throughout the different stages of the learning process. This is summarised in the following table;

Learning stage	Learner activity	Tutor activity
Stage 1 Access and motivation	Setting up system and accessing	Welcome and encouragement Guidance on where to find technical support
Stage 2 On-line socialization	Sending and receiving messages	Introductions Ice-breakers Ground rules Netiquette
Stage 3 Information exchange	Carrying out activities Reporting and discussing findings	Facilitate structured activities Assign roles and responsibilities Support use of learning materials

		Encourage discussions Summarize findings and/or outcomes
Stage 4 Knowledge construction	Conferencing Course-related discussions Critical thinking applied to subject material Making connections between models and work-based learning experiences	Facilitate open activities Facilitate the process Asking questions Encourage reflection. Tutor is very active at this stage.
Stage 5 Development.	Use of conferencing in a strategic way Integration of CMC into other forms of learning Reflection on learning processes Students become critical	Support Respond only when required Encourage reflection Tutor is less active and hands over to the students

Figure 2: Salmon's Model Description (Salmon, 2004)

Looking at the brief description of the model in the table above draws my attention to the fact that although the model was originally designed for e-

learning, it is possible to be applied in blended learning, which is something that the teachers in this study might benefit from by balancing their options, i.e. not to be fully exposed to online learning but rather introducing them to online learning alongside face to face learning in order to make it easier for them to adopt such options. Again this is an Iraqi cultural issue, people over there normally give up if they do not see themselves able to make the most of any learning experience, this could be linked to the numerous hardships that the current generation has gone through. Nonetheless, To get a better understanding of the model and how it works technically, the figure below shows those steps in relation to their implementation in the e learning process;

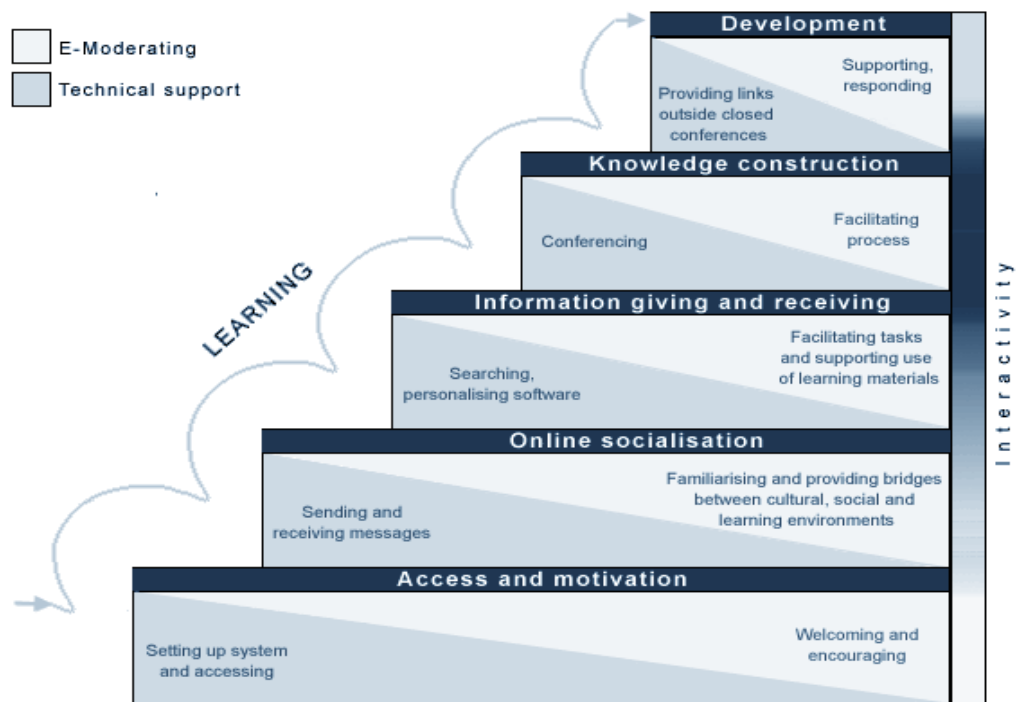


Figure 3: Salmon's model of e-learning (Salmon, 2004)

It can be seen in the figure above that the tutors' role (the trainer) is shown on the right of the steps while the left side shows the technical support

needed in the process. It also shows the structured activities that are built on the previous experiences of learners. The model presents a framework on how to build an Internet based learning environment via conferencing. The steps are meant to help in raising the individuals' level of contributions in active learning. It provides "a scaffold for a structured and paced programme of e activities" (Salmon, 2002: 10). The brief explanation of Salmon's e learning model presented throughout the table and the figure above needs a detailed presentation in order to show the potentials of such model to be used in Internet based professional development.

There five stages in the model; access and motivation, online socialisation, information giving and receiving, knowledge construction, then development. I present below explanation of each of the five stages;

1. Stage 1

Access and motivation is the stage where participants join the e learning environment by using certain log in credentials. The trainer or the tutor directs the participants to the next stage by welcoming them to the e learning environment. Although this stage is looked at as a preparation stage in which the operational procedure is demonstrated, Salmon (2002) thinks that it is a good practice if all is demonstrated to the participants while they are online and not in a face to face meeting with them. Salmon thinks that we cannot expect the participants to take part in e learning environment successfully just because the procedure has been explained to them beforehand. Salmon thinks that participants need to explore how online learning works when they are already online. Salmon also thinks that new e learners might hear

negative comments about the effectiveness of e learning from other participants. Salmons add that such comments whether true or not will give new e learners unnecessary negative supposition about online learning even before they try it. Furthermore, the process of inducting participants on face to face bases is time consuming. Salmons says that “IT support people will spend many hours providing assistance, and some people will still fall by the wayside.” (p.14)

By the end of this stage, learners are able to navigate through the e learning environment confidently. Having acquired the main skills of how to work and learn online, learners become more active in their next visit and they can move to the next stage with minimum concerns.

2. Stage 2

Online socialisation enables learners to set up their own identities as e learners and be more active in socialising with other learners. This mainly starts by sending short messages to each other like introducing themselves to other people online. Knowing the other people in the group helps in building a good e learning environment. Learners should be able to introduce themselves and begin to know each other (Phillip, 2000). This promotes teamwork spirit and establishes friendly relationship among learners preparing for a collaborative online learning environment. “Indeed, the importance of establishing relationships, through both formal and informal interactions, in contributing to social and academic integration, is well documented as critical for students’ retention” (MacDonald, 2008: 50).

3. Stage 3

Exchanging information is a more productive stage in which learners start gaining information. The relationship among participants move from a mere friendly exchange of greeting into a more course related one. There two types of interactions in this stage; the first type is between learners and other learners and between learners and the moderator of the course. The second type is between learners and the learning materials. The moderator or the tutor is the person who presents the learning materials which can be done in different formats; uploaded materials, typed instructions or links to other websites. Most of learners' activities at this stage are focused around retrieving information about assigned tasks and then sharing outcomes. The moderator or the tutor needs to make sure that the instructions on any task are precise in order not to distract learners from the learning environment and keep them engaged interactively. "The fact that online activities are central to the course means that all students in the group are expected to participate... the moderator may be engaged in chasing up, and encouraging those who re not active." (MacDonald, 2008: 61) It is also worth noting at this stage that learners might need help in navigating around tasks and finding information, this is normal and expected because not everyone is fully familiar with tasks at such a stage.

4. Stage 4

Knowledge construction stage is when learners start to formulate their own assumptions about knowledge and relate them to their own

experiences. Learners' main task at this stage is to build up upon their previous experiences and try to apply that on new situations. In doing so, learners will be able to develop new skills in their practice. Learners formulate their own understanding of knowledge "linking it directly to personal experience ... each piece of newly constructed knowledge is built on previous knowledge" (Salmon, 2002: 29). Tutor at this stage should encourage learners to debate and comment on the points of discussion and acknowledge learners' remarks.

5. Stage 5

Development is the outcome of all the previous stages. Unlike the previous stages, learners become more concerned at this stage about their own personal development and thus their interaction with each other decreases. Learners are more aware of how to engage in online learning environment at this stage and their main concerns is on how to relate what they have already gained to their personal contexts. Learners' metacognitive understanding is reinforced in this stage as they are more able to make judgement on their learning and apply new ideas to their professional development. Salmon (2002: 33) says that metacognitive learning skills focus on what the learners do in new contexts or how they might apply concepts and ideas". Learners start guiding each other at this stage and offering each other advice on various situations.

Although Salmon's model presents detailed steps on how to conduct an online learning, it has not been agreed on in the later literature. Studies like Unwin (2007); Johns & Peachy (2007); Moule (2007); Motteram (2006) have criticised Salmon's model and described it as being simple, mechanical and determined by the physical process alone. A critical research conducted by Jones & Peachy (2007) showed that Salmon's model lacked the required level of socialisation. Jones and Peachy (2007) found that an appropriate level of socialisation was not achieved because of the limited guidance that online learners were offered. Moule (2007) says that the absence of the face to face factor in Salmon's model has made it limited in nature, "the five-stage model has not reflected the potential available to use e-learning as part of an integrated approach that includes face-to-face delivery" (Moule, 2007: 39).

The simplicity of Salmon's model makes it a straightforward process for novice e learners and that is criticised by other studies because teachers' learning is a far more complicated process than such basic steps. However, such model could be appropriate in the Iraqi context as Iraqi teachers are introduced to such technology for the first time and a straightforward easy online learning model will be sufficient for the purpose of such early stages of e learning. The model explains in each of its five stages what is needed from learners and from tutors as far as technical support and participants roles are concerned. Motteram (2006) has adopted Salmon's model in a blended learning event that he organised for English language teachers in which he applied all the five

stages. Motteram (2006) mentioned that adopting Salmon's model in that context was a success.

As to the progress of participants from one stage to another, Salmons (2002) acknowledges that this cannot be achieved equally for all participants. There will always be some participants who lag behind and this depends on different reasons such as the level of knowledge with computer and the adequate support received. Of course tutors cannot offer step by step support for all participants at all times. The model does offer a practical framework for e learning but individual support needs have to be considered by tutors in order not to deter novice learners from online learning. "Although online learning allows students to be fully included in a community, instructors need to pay attention to issues of accessibility, availability and support in order to ensure their full participation" (Palloff & Pratt, 2003: 46) This leads us to what some studies suggested about adding a preliminary stage to the model in which new learners receive a face to face induction. Such stage might also help in assessing the participants' needs and thus address them at an early stage. Palloff & Pratt (2003: 79) emphasises the importance of needs assessment stage in education and says that such assessment "has been increasingly recognized as a necessary part of curriculum design". Stewart and Cuffman (1996: 261) also state that "the integration of needs assessment as part of a total distance education system should benefit all stakeholders".

I acknowledge that the implementation of such model would require some preliminary work mainly in devising materials and finding suitable training

moderators and this in the Iraqi context is not going to be an easy task given the chaotic status of the PD provision. However, this can be a step in the right direction and its potential benefits to the current Iraqi PD provision can be seen with some hard work and good willingness on the part of all the parties involved.

2.12.2. Community of Enquiry Model

Garrison and Anderson (2001) model focuses on the facilitation of e learning environments in order to create active online communities in which independent and interdependent practice can be achieved. The main argument in Garrison and Anderson's model is that participants in e learning environment come together to discuss a specific purpose of how to construct and validate understanding. In doing so, participants can achieve both cognitive independence as well as social interdependence.

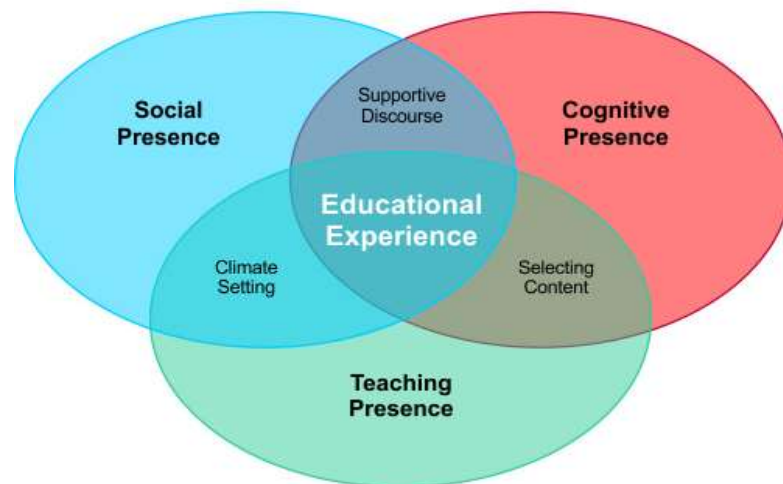


Figure 4: Garrison & Anderson's Community of Enquiry Model (Garrison & Anderson, 2001)

Garrison and Anderson's model presents a kind of practical relationship between social presence, cognitive presence and teaching presence. The

result of the interaction of those three mechanisms is a community of enquiry. I present below a brief description of each of the mechanisms;

- Social presence is where participants introduce themselves to other e learning community members in order to establish their real presence in the community.
- Cognitive presence is the e learners' ability to build up their own meaning throughout continuous interaction and communication with other participants and the tutor.
- Teaching presence is related to the tutor's facilitation of the above two mechanisms, i.e. is when tutor selects the contents (cognitive) and sets the environment (social) for participants so they can create useful learning experience.

The community of enquiry model shows the functional roles of participants and tutor throughout the relationship between social presence, cognitive presence and teaching presence. This is the concept of the enhanced professional development mentioned earlier where teachers become proactive change agents and challenge the prevailing policy constructively. The community of enquiry model "provides the order and structural elements needed to begin the process of understanding the complexities of online learning" (Garrison et al, 2010: 32). The model has proved to be useful in setting up online education. Aykol et al (2009: 123) talk about the model as becoming a prominent model of learning online, "considerable research has been conducted which employs the framework with promising results, resulting in wide use to inform the practice of online

and blended teaching and learning. It states that online learning is best supported and maintained in a learning community in which learners engage effectively in critical reflection. The theoretical aspect of the model is grounded in research on meaningful and deep approaches to learning while its philosophical aspect is collaborative constructivism (Garrison et al, 2001).

As in the case of Salmon's model above, I acknowledge that Garrison and Anderson model presupposes access to some organisations to moderate and design its implementation, which might need some preparation in the Iraqi context, but again this can be seen as another step in the right direction for the Iraqi PD provision.

2.13. Educational concerns related to online learning

There are quite a few pedagogical worries that are linked to the online learning experience. The move from traditional learning style to online mode is not a smooth one and it entails several concerns for both parties; tutors and learners. Online learning is a large scale change in the way learning is conducted, where and when learning happen, how learners are assessed, and how resources can be evaluated to suit learners and most importantly that at the centre of all of this there are learning activities that must occur. By this view "it's not new pedagogies that we need, but new ways of providing existing pedagogy efficiently and flexibly" (Stephenson, 2001: 17). This is the real challenge for online learning. It is the challenge of how to offer the pedagogical experience equivalent to that of an

individual tutorial with a knowledgeable, sympathetic, and well equipped teacher to a large number of learners in geographically dispersed and socially diverse setting” (Stephenson, 2001: 17). Previous literature has highlighted some of those concerns that are associated with online learning.

Among those concerns is isolation. The lack of interaction with people on a face to face basis can make learners feel lonely, hence the models that I proposed earlier are desirable as they address such issue. Palloff and Pratt (2003: 73) say that the feeling of loneliness that many online learners may feel is “the hardest symptom for educators to combat”. Isolation “can influence a student’s attitude to online learning and as such needs to be given greater consideration when designing web-based courses” (McInerney & Roberts, 2004: 77). Salmon (2002) even goes further to describe the situation as stressful and frustrating for learners. The absence of social interaction affects new learners even more because they have to build their own assumptions of how the rest of their group would normally act in a face to face environment and for new learners “this is not the best orientation” (McConnell, 2002: 71). The feeling of isolation can cause learners to be more concerned about completing duties on time as they expected to handle tasks independently and this put pressure especially on new learners. The social interaction is important from time to time to relieve the sense of isolation (Salmon, 2002) and to teach and offer knowledge that is not always possible to convey throughout online environment. (Pincas, 2004)

Impersonal interaction is another concern about online learning. Some online learning methods are asynchronous and are normally based on text messages exchange and there is no face to face interaction as the case in the traditional learning environment. In addition, paralinguistic features are missing in the online learning which in certain situations are important for learning. Previous studies such as Werry (1996); Herring (1999); Burnet (2010) discussed the lack of paralinguistic features in the online learning context. They mentioned that this type of learning is mainly associated with recreational context that is conducted through real time interaction. Burnet (2010: 248) identified some features in this concern by stating that in an online learning context “firstly, contributions are limited to two or three lines in length. Secondly, participants lack paralinguistic cues, such as eye contact, gesture, and facial expression. Finally, several participants can simultaneously compose and post responses to the same comment, resulting in multi stranded conversations”. This, according to Herring (1999) might shatter learners’ focus and can cause “topic decay” (p.10). Burnett (2010: 289) adds that “the lack of paralinguistic cues may cause a reluctance to share emerging thoughts and ideas: it is hard to gauge others’ reactions to comments and easy to misinterpret tone or content.”

Other studies such as Groschner (2014); Figlio and Rush (2013); Pincas (2004); Burnett, 2010) have reported that the lack of face to face communication in the online learning environment especially between learners and tutors makes learners miss out on seeing the tutor as a dynamic figure in the classroom who takes the responsibility of managing interaction and supporting the learning needs. Face to face learning chats

are characterised by tentativeness and this is hard to suggest without “using facial expression, hesitancy and tone of voice.” (Burnett, 2010: 248) Tibbett (2004: 33) adds that the delay in responding to learners’ needs and concerns can be frustrating mainly to new e learners. “The internet gives much more than it accepts. Interaction with a web page is still not as immediate or satisfying as interaction with people. Teachers want to help; most teachers want to know about their students’ lives, thoughts, and opinions. The web page does not really care, however much the Java expert tries to humanise things”.

Looking for another educational concern in the online learning environment, I found that familiarity with using technology has been mentioned by several studies as a concern that online learners might encounter. Online learners need a sufficient level of knowledge with technology in order to be able to engage effectively and interact critically. The technical support that is normally available for learners in the traditional mode might not be available for the online learners. In addition, knowledge with technology is important if constructivist pedagogy is to be accommodated in the learning environment, i.e., learners need to be familiar on how to use different technology applications for educational purposes. Smarkola, (2008) mentions that learners with greater computer self-efficacy may have more positive attitudes toward the Internet. Buabeng-Andoh (2012: 136) highlights the “lack of teacher confidence” with technology among the barriers behind poor integration.

Palloff & Pratt (2007: 4) say that “many institutions mistakenly believe that all it takes to implement an online distance learning program is to install a fancy software package and train faculty to use it”. This is, off course, not the case because without learners and tutors being fully aware of how to use technology any learning outcomes would not be possible to achieve. Palloff & Pratt add that tutors and learners “needs to be knowledgeable about the technology in use and comfortable enough with it to assist should difficulty be encountered”. Meyer & Murell (2014: 10) also emphasise that education policy leaders needed to allocate resources to enhance policy executers’ skills with technology. Another issue in this regard that previous studies mentioned are the implications of constructivist pedagogy for using technology in teaching and learning. Duffy et al (2012: 3) mention that “constructivist pedagogy emphasizes the "situatedness" of learning and the context in which it is experienced. The context involves the larger framework or purpose for engaging in a task”. Consequently, a sufficient support for learners is needed to address any unfamiliarity with the online environment and to enable them creating a learning context in which they communicate with others successfully. Previous studies also referred to learners’ reading and writing skills as essential to achieve active online environment. Salmon (2002) mentions that learners who do not have sufficient level of reading and writing skills will be under pressure in any online learning environment and this is more likely to happen with learners who use foreign languages in their communication. As a result, non-native learners being under pressure of producing error free text messages might develop what is called “online

error phobia” (Salmon, 2002) which might lead to online learning being abandoned by such group.

Another online learning concern is the invisibility. Being invisible to other learners and to tutors increases the isolation status of online learners. McConnell (2000) mentions that online learners’ level of activities and participation might be affected by the invisibility of their tutor which in some cases makes them lurking and inactive. Unlike the traditional learning setting, online learning environment does not oblige learners to participant due to being invisible to each other and to their tutor. It, therefore, offers “an electronic mask behind which online participants may hide” (Grint, 1989: 13) and this encourages lurking. Online learners can easily withdraw from any context if they feel that it is not for them without the need to justify their action. Salmon (2002) suggests encouraging online learners to share their personal details, i.e. profile, in order to create a face to face like environment in which learners develop a feeling of belonging to their online group. This, according to Salmons (2002), can compensate for the invisibility issue of online learners. Other studies like Pachler (2005); Kearsley (2000); McLoughlin (2002); Polly et al. (2010); Bourne & Moore (2004). Bourne & Moore (2004) mentioned learners’ independence as a concern in online learning contexts. This might represent an issue for the Iraqi teachers due to their being dependants on the authority in the last 5 decades and the skills of being independent learners for the purpose of their PD might be a challenge for them. The main concern is that learners who do not have the ability to do most of the learning requirements independently will not be able to engage effectively

in an online learning environment. In a study they conducted on higher education online learners, Bourner & Moore (2004: 9) found that “there are two reactive behaviour dimensions dependent/independent. Dependent students need instructor’s approval on all their work while independent students are self-motivated”. Online learners being in a learner-centred online pedagogy are expected to be independent and to self-direct their own learning process (McLoughlin, 2000) without any help from their tutors who are only the moderators and not the source of knowledge as in the case of traditional learning environment.(Pachler, 2005). Online learners need to depend on their meta-cognitive skills to direct their learning and on their online groups and other web resources. This according to Kearsley (2000) represents a setback for learners who do not have the required independent learning skills and as a result they are not likely to be successful in online learning environment.

As online learning provides learners with a scope of freedom from their tutors’ control, it perhaps provides appropriate independent learning environment. Therefore, Pratt (2002) argues that traditional learning environment is not a learner – centred pedagogy and thus it does not prepare learners or train them to be independent, which is the case in the Iraqi context. This is different with the online learning environment in which learners need to be independent and self-directed. “When students are introduced to online learning, they are faced with a new learning environment and the expectation that they will have independent learning skills and the capacity to engage in activities that require self-direction and self-management of learning” (McLoughlin & Marshall, 2000: 3).

Therefore, according to McLoughlin & Marshall, online learners need to be inducted on how to become accustomed to independent learning environment and how to apply their meta-cognitive skills. Online students “need to develop independent study habits and to develop self-responsibility. This is achieved by providing learners with an introduction to learning online, examples of study timetables and guidance in creating their own plan and study goals” (McLoughlin & Marshall, 2000: 8). This will enable them to participate effectively within their learning groups and promote their progress. They will also be able to evaluate their performance as learners and develop plans for themselves depending on their previous accumulated knowledge. Weddell and Malderez (2013) emphasise that learning has to develop new practices and behaviour and developing a good understanding on how different elements operate in any new educational context and this applies to online learning being a new educational context in the Iraqi case. This leads us to the role of collaborative learning in creating an atmosphere of working together within learning groups.

2.14. Collaborative Learning

Collaborative learning happens when learners work actively with their peers to create a meaningful collective learning experience. I have mentioned before that online learning environment represents a less intimidating and threatening environment compared to the traditional face to face environment because learners normally have more time to reflect

and they are not likely to be interrupted or feel embarrassed.

“Collaborative learning in which students have opportunity for critical discussion with the tutor and other students is a key element of effective teaching and learning in higher education. Such teaching methods are said to help develop students’ ability to reason in a specialist subject area.” (Pilkington & Walker, 2003: 57) However, collaborative learning needs a high level of involvement and commitment. Palloff & Pratt (2007: 21) described collaborative learning as an equal playing field where there “must be equality of participant-facilitator and participant-participant interaction. The most powerful experiences are those in which interaction occurs throughout the group”. Learners in collaborative environment need to show willingness and desire to share knowledge and they also need to have a belief that their personal development is improved the more they work with other learners around topics of mutual interests. Successful collaborative learning requires active collaboration and participation to be successful. Previous studies like Pilkington & walker (2003); Pickering et al (2007); Swan (2006); Palloff & Pratt (2007) emphasise that collaboration and participation are essential requirements for a successful online learning. Pilkington & Walker (2003: 57) mention “all must interact effectively if the objectives of the course are to be met”. Participants must first agree to minimum participation standards and understand what they are committing to. “Minimum levels of participation should be established and agreed upon in order to create a high level of discussion” (p. 21). Pickering et al (2007: 53) say that online communication has to provide

tutors with the opportunity to “develop agentive methods of thinking through collaborative practice”.

On the other hand, collaborative learning might not be suitable to all types of learners. Some students who are uncomfortable with groups work might look at collaborative online learning environment as threatening or intimidating. This is, according to Salmon (2002), because learners need to demonstrate a high degree of cognitive skills and reasoning when collaborating online than when working on their own. Other studies like Whitehouse et al (2006: 18) state some desired pedagogical improvements that most of the online collaborative communities tend to promote. These improvements range from exchanging of knowledge and collaborating around mutual topics to “developing a professional learning culture online”. This argument seems to suggest, according to Hilts et al (2007), that participants need to sense the features of the online environment in order to enhance their understanding and to collaborate with their groups constructively. Hilts et al (2007) also say that such online collaboration sense is not the norm because the nature of learners is always characterised by competition and, therefore, a kind of scaffolding is needed in order to make the collaborative practice successful. In addition, the feeling of the member of groups towards their collective work plays a positive role in promoting group collaboration spirit, according to Stewart (2014: 28), because “learning communities thrive when all participants are invested in the work they are doing”. This point has also been highlighted by Knight (2011) who mentions the importance of establishing healthy group environment where teachers become personally motivated simply

because they set up dialogue between group members to achieve an equitable working atmosphere.

2.15. The Online tutor's role

The online student centred pedagogy suggests that online tutor's role is bounded by limited scale of intervention in the learning process. Online tutor provides appropriate support only when help is needed by learners and this is done in timely manner. Salmon (2002) mentions that the main online tutor's role is that of moderating and facilitating the process.

Therefore, online constructivist pedagogy looks at the role of online tutor as the key facilitator of the learning process through supporting the sharing of knowledge and at the same time encouraging independence.

Pincas (2002) looks at such role as a learning process manager. Duggleby (2001: 8) mentions that "an important outcome of successful online tutoring is to encourage individuals to take responsibility of their own development. Online tutor must provide a climate in which people will take responsibility for their learning". However, Scharle et al (2000: 5) mention that although the online tutor's role is limited to providing support and management to the learning posture, online learners still look at tutor as the one who should tell them what to do and a figure of "authority who should be there". An interesting study conducted by Oliver and Herington (2000) found that the satisfaction with the face to face learning environment is decreasing compared to its online counterpart because it is assessed individually and is tutor centred leaving little scope for learners to be independent. The study also found that traditional learning is being

relocated to the Internet and it is being processed satisfactorily with tutor's role changing to be less authoritative. The key point in this argument is that tutor's role remains to be central to the learning environment even in the online context though not in any authorisation frame anymore. Online tutor, therefore, remain to be essential players in the online learning context and their role is still important in supporting learners' independency and in facilitating a collaborative learning process. One of the key aspects of online tutor's role is supporting the knowledge construction by promoting participation and not by merely presenting readymade materials (Hilts et al, 2007). Online learners also need learn to be more independent and rely less on tutor and use their meta cognitive skills. The online tutor's role, hence, is described by Hilts et al (2007) as a manager role that identifies learners' needs, design learning materials to reflect those needs and facilitate the achievement of learning targets in an independent learning environment. McPherson & Nunnes (2004: 4) look at online tutors' role as critical in e learning because they are "the main agents responsible for the delivery of the courses and the support of the learners". In addition, Hilts et al (2007) emphasise the importance of feedback by online tutors in promoting a successful online learning. They mention that feedback has to be structured and regular to help learners keep engaged in the process as they are more subject to feel isolated due to the absence of social communication. Salmon (2002) sums up the online tutors' role as being able to encourage online learners to get engaged in the online world and to encourage the sharing of information in order to construct meaningful knowledge and most importantly to "know

when to take part as tutor, when as peer and when to stay silent” (Salmon, 2002: 5). Salmon adds that when tutor design their online activities, they need “to take account of the time they expect their participants to be online” (p.95). This leads to the significance of considering asynchronicity in the online interaction process.

2.16. Asynchronicity

Hilts et al (2007: 56) describe asynchronicity in online interaction as “anytime communication via the Internet”. Asynchronicity in the online context is featured by a delay in communication, i.e. participants can have time to think or to check resources before responding. Harrison & Stephen (1996: 208) explain:

“asynchronosity provides each user time to formulate ideas and contribute responses. Students who characterize themselves as limited, passive or unable to think quickly in face to face situations report that asychnocity enabled them to participate more actively and effectively. Aschronous communication provides participants the opportunity to comment immediately or to reflect and compose a response. Together with the opportunities of composing a response in the text based medium, asychnocity can contribute to improving the quality of students’ interaction, enhancing opportunities for thoughtful and reflective participation”,

All communications are recorded (archived) in case it is needed for further reference. Salmon (2002) highlights the importance of this feature as

being an advantage of asynchronicity because all communications are recorded and can be explored and this does not happen in the face to face context. Asynchronous interaction can promote more reflective and critical interaction when compared to traditional face to face one (Hilts et al, 2007). However, online messages, unlike asynchronous interaction, can be ignored by participants if they are not mandatory. Hilts et al (2007) mention the issue of ignored or not replied to messages as a disadvantage of online communication because it causes confusion and frustration to learners worrying about whether their messages have been received on the other end or whether their messages were considered as “unworthy” to reply to. Reports show that up to 35% of online information requests are not responded to Selwyn (2000). This suggests that even though online learners show their readiness to participate, they are not always ready to respond. Ehrman et al (2003) state that the time delay feature in the asynchronous interaction is useful for non-native speakers. English learners who find it helpful in enabling them to organise their thought. Peters and Braschler (2001) do not agree with Ehrman et al (2003) in this respect because he finds it more difficult for non-native speakers to respond to written messages than to speak in classrooms, because the text based responses need advanced level of English proficiency when compared to speaking skill.

2.17. The emergence of blended learning

Looking at the Iraqi situation, one can easily find that traditional learning mode is the only one that Iraqi teachers have ever used. Online learning has never been tried due to the many factors surrounding the Iraqi context which were mentioned earlier. Therefore, it is not feasible and not realistic for Iraqi teachers to completely switch from the traditional face to face learning to the virtual mode. Traditional learning cannot be replaced by technology, a viewpoint that is strongly supported by Salmon (2002: 3) who mentions that success is always achieved by “a balance between older learning concepts and the implementation of innovations using the best of technologies”. In the light of the above, I find it useful here to look at what is meant by blended learning and what types of blended learning can be used for different learning contexts.

Virtual learning witnessed a huge popularity when it first emerged in the mid of the nineties. However, virtual learning suffered a decline because of failing to meet its objectives. Out of the many prospects associated with it, only few were really implemented. (Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005). Carr (2000) mentions that virtual learning has seen greater level of fading away than the traditional face to face learning. Many factors claim the responsibility for the decline of virtual learning including the sense of isolation, the dissatisfaction with achievement and the negative experience that some learners have faced. Popularity has, therefore, moved from a full online process towards the integration of technology in the face to face traditional learning. Hence, blended learning emerged. Hoffman (2011)

suggests that blended learning is not simply achieved by using different methods for the delivery of the content. Hoffman (2011: 2) defines blended learning as “using the best delivery methods available for a specific objective, including online, face to face based instruction, performance support, paper-based study and formal and informal on-the-job solutions”. The key point in Hoffman’s definition is “for a specific objective” because it makes us focus on how to implement learning in relation to the tools available. Hoffman adds that “when designing a blended learning solution, we often focus on what technologies we have available and try to apply those technologies to our content, rather we should be reviewing our content in a very systematic way in order to determine the best possible delivery methodology for that piece of content”. AlKhatib (2009) has highlighted the significant roles of technology and tutor in delivering sustained learning outcomes (Pincas, 2002) and a long term learning experience (Hilts et al, 2007). Blended learning is considered as the most popular online learning modes nowadays. Blended learning offers convenient learning mode that combines the traditional face to face learning with technology to produce positive outcomes. (Hilts et al, 2007).

Blended learning has been interpreted by previous literature in many different ways in line with contexts and teaching and learning purposes. Blended learning indicates a combination of traditional teaching methods and online teaching ones and it brings together mixed aspects of traditional face to face instructional methods and Internet based technology. Klein et al (2006) look at blended learning in terms of the degree or the level it is implemented in teaching. They mention that tutor

might combine traditional face to face learning with online learning occasionally to achieve specific purposes. However, Klein et al (2006) indicate that the major part of blended learning happen online where learners are able to interact with tutor, learning materials and other members of their group “using web based electronic methods” (Klein et al, 2006: 665). Salmon (2002) suggests that in a blended learning environment where learners are novel, online interaction can be increased gradually as learners gain confidence in interacting online. A similar approach is supported by Mason’s model (1998) in which novel learners’ online interaction should not exceed 20% of their learning time.

2.18. Understanding blended learning

Blended learning has been dealt with by previous studies differently in terms of how and when to implement it and to what extent. Blended learning needs to be pedagogically considered in line with the learning contexts, the learners’ needs and the degree of blend that tutors might consider suitable to support learners at each stage of the learning process. i.e. what tasks best help achieving effective online participation, what technological tools best suit learners’ needs and whether face to face support is needed to promote online communication and to achieve the objectives of professional development. Stockly (2006) states that blended learning require a balanced learning mode of online materials and face to face interactions that are suitable for a particular group of learners in a particular condition. Other studies such as Pincas (2002); Ginns & Ellis (2007) have looked at blended learning in different ways and this shows

that there is no clear method or specific modal on how to deliver blended learning, rather it all depends on when and where to deliver it and to what group of learners. Pincas (2002) believes that blended learning is driven pragmatically and, therefore, it depends on what online materials are mixed with face to face instructions. Ginns & Ellis (2007: 53) states that the proportion of face to face interaction to online materials are mainly determined by the providers of the learning contexts who consider several factors when designing the learning contacts such the pedagogical needs of learners and the learning outcomes needed because “the approaches students take to learning, and the subsequent quality of their learning, is closely related to their perceptions of their learning experience”. Stockly (2006) argues that for the purpose of professional development, teachers can attend face to face trainings to learn about theories and then can do the practice side online. On the other hand, Thorne (2003) states that tutors or the learning facilitators should select the amount of blended that is appropriate for learners’ pedagogic needs and the learning context. Thorne (2003: 68) adds “what the online component of blended learning shouldn’t be is a training programmes simply put onto the web. Used properly there are excellent opportunities to make learning interactive, dynamic and fun”. Blended learning has the ability to make a group of different learners build up rapport with their tutor and socialise with their peers. It also enables learners to focus on certain individual needs after attending a face to face training. In addition, the face to face part of blended learning offer important emotional encouragement for lurking learners via discussing causes of lurking and lack of participation.

Mason (1998) has proposed some models for blended learning; integrated model, wrap around model and content support model. In the integrated model, Mason (1998) suggests more online interaction depending on the needs of learning communities. Learners are expected to engage in independently of study with less support from tutors. In the wrap around model, learners get equal share of blended learning combinations; half for online and half for face to face. Again, just like in the integrated learning, learners are expected to be independent and design activities that suit their learning needs. The content support model, unlike the other two models, separates the learning materials (course contents) from tutors' support. In this model, contents can be provided in a paper format while tutors' support can be provided online (via email or online discussions). Mason (1998) suggests here that online share should not exceed 20% of the total learning time. This model seems to suit new online learners who are used to instructional support and peer interaction in a face to face context, and who are still not confident with a lot of online interactions.

2.19. Constructivist support

Having discussed the blended learning aspects above, I find it important to consider the support that learners can receive when learning online. Since the setting of the online learning is different from the traditional face to face one, online tutors would need to take some extra measures and consider certain techniques in order to achieve the learning targets. Add to that, adult learners have extra requirements compared to children and this would require online tutors to take those extra measures to make sure that

their adult learners are on the right track. Previous research has suggested that constructivism need to be applied in the online learning environments. As the learners (the teachers) in this study are adults, I feel that online constructivist support is important to this study, this section is to show that the constructivist face to face theory can be conceptualised and applied in online learning context. Hart (1998: 8) states that it is possible “to draw elements from existing relevant theories to formulate new insight”, hence providing an educational framework for constructivist support to be accommodated on the Internet or any online pedagogical environments. Vincent and Ross (1998) mention that the underlying theory is that the traditional teaching (face to face teaching) that produced the constructivist measures can continue to relocate to online contexts because a constructivist approach to online learning, according to Salmon (2002: 210), highlights the role of social factor as a main “factor in enhancing learning processes”. Thus, research in the field of online learning and educational technologies has resorted to constructivist theory, especially Vygotsky’s socio cognitive theory, as pedagogy for online learning contexts. Vygotsky’s constructivism has influenced the online learning and the technology enhanced teaching methods.

Vygotsky’s socio cognitive constructivist theory states that social environment is essential for any learning contexts and that learning is influenced by the environment surrounding learners. In addition, Vygotsky suggests that knowledge is socially and culturally constructed via interacting with other experienced persons. Learners, therefore, transform new information into meaning that makes sense to them via social

discourse. “Vygotsky states that through social and language interactions, older and more experienced members of a community teach younger and less experienced members the skills, values and knowledge needed to be productive members of that community” (Daniels, 2005: 249).

The constructivist views resulted in or led to the emergence of the ZPD (Zone of Proximal Development). The ZPD claims that the gap between what learners are capable of achieving without assistance and what they can achieve with assistance needs bridging in order for learning to take place. Vygotsky (1962) has mentioned that learners achieve better when appropriate support is provided by their tutors and, therefore, ZPD plays a role in defining such support. The ZPD is “often defined as an individual range of learning potential. This potential ability exceeds the actual ability of the individual, when learning is facilitated by someone with greater expertise.” (Kozulin, 2003: 181). Vygotsky (1978) mentions that learners’ skills are enhanced when they discuss learning materials with peers and such enhancement becomes more explicit and increases if discussion happens with knowledgeable peers and the gap between learners’ actual and potential progress becomes narrower. This is in a way happening in the Iraqi context as teachers might benefit from communicating with a more technology orientated colleagues. This is a type of peer scaffolding because knowledge is not passed intact from one learner to another, rather it is created and understood collectively by groups members while they form meaning to new information based on their previous knowledge and experience.

This leads us to look at scaffolding as a way of introducing new information or knowledge to learners. This happens when information are presented to learners at a slightly higher level than their present development stage. In this case, learners would be able to understand the new information by linking them to their previous knowledge (which is in a stage that is just below the new information stage). This narrows or bridges the learning gap. Accordingly, socio cognitive constructivist theory differentiates between lower and higher cognitive levels, so teaching strategies need to encourage high level of meaning discussion and social interaction and at the same time encourage learners to think explicitly in order to achieve high level of cognition. As a result, strategies of constructivist support might focus on giving learners more unpredictable topics or contradictions to engage them in a kind of conflict learning context. Driscoll (2000) suggest strategies like reflective thinking, problem based learning and discovery learning might be implemented to support interaction. Salvin (1989) also agrees that socio cognitive constructivism can help in supporting learners development. Salvin (1989) mentions that learners can easily learns from each other because when they discuss contents of information, cognitive conflict arises and inadequate reasoning is exposed resulting in the emergence of “higher quality understanding” (Salvin, 1989: 16).

2.20. Scaffolding

As to the teachers' continuous professional development, the idea of scaffolding is to help teachers progress in their learning independently by

transferring new skills and knowledge to their context (McLoughlin & Marshall, 2000). Teachers need to be taken through structured developmental stages and their successful performance at the end of each stage has to be acknowledged to motivate them to effectively progress to further stages. McLoughlin & Marshall (2000) mentions that the term scaffolding was first used to describe the intervention of a competent person; an adult or a peer in the learning process of another person. McLoughlin & Marshall (2000: 4) define scaffolding as

“a form of assistance provided to a learner by a more capable teacher or peer that helps the learners perform a task that would normally not be possible to accomplish by working independently. Integrated into pedagogical practice, scaffolding is intended to motivate the learner, reduce task complexity, provide structure and reduce learner frustration. Scaffolding can be provided both electronically and by an online tutor”.

The term can also be traced back to the ZPD concept of Vygotsky in which peer support is deemed influential to bridge gaps between learners' levels and new learning materials.

Tutors' support plays a key role in enhancing learners' progress. Learners' progress is always limited to a certain pace but this can be accelerated with appropriate support from their tutors. (Vygotsky, 1962) Challenging learners with information that is slightly above their level is necessary for their continuous development. McLoughlin (2002) suggests that the degree of scaffolding offered to learners needs to be gradually withdrawn

as learners' progress. Dodge (1998: 4) states that scaffolding should be always temporary "exactly as in building scaffolds". He adds that scaffolding is to present more support for learners who are not ready or not capable of achieving tasks on their own, "like what construction workers do, scaffolding is temporary ... to aid the completion of a task". Scaffolding, according to McLoughlin (2002: 155), has to support learners' cognitive skills and motivate high level of thinking and as such it should include multiple perspectives comparison and reflection. Appropriate scaffolding is meant to eliminate the possibility of learners' failure to happen and to help learners accomplish tasks that they are not able to do independently. Appropriate scaffolding also helps learners moving "to a new and improved zone of understanding bringing learners closer to a state of independent competence". This has also been highlighted by Pifar and Cobos (2010) who found that self-regulatory processes exist first at the social level before it entered the professional education field, where learners receive modelling, instruction, social guidance, and feedback on their learning process.

2.20.1. Internet scaffolding

Scaffolding can be easily applied in technological contexts like the Internet. The Internet can facilitate independent learning progress because it allows learners to navigate through the web, read a lot of relevant materials, and participate in online discussion and collaborative tasks. The nature of the Internet learning contexts encourages multiple demonstration

of knowledge as learners can experiment, discover and receive information that suit their level of knowledge and at the same time builds on it (Toprski & Foley (2007). Scaffolding can be “devised not only by able adults and peers but also by well-designed technological tools” (Miyake, 2007: 255). In addition, other previous studies have referred to the need of Internet based scaffolding because the Internet based learning environment keeps expanding, which has made the integration of scaffolding into online environment is “imperative”. McLoughlin (2002: 2) argues that the increasing demand on technology in education and the expanding of online learning necessitate the need to rethink issues of the “respective roles of informed peers, facilitators and teachers in offering learning support”. Such rethink is to include Internet based scaffolding as part of the process. As mentioned above, researchers have started to consider the socio cognitive theory in their attempts to reach a constructivist frame for online learning. Social constructivism emphasizes the importance of interaction in the facilitation of collaborative events and in the cognitive knowledge construction of individuals (McLoughlin, 2002) as well as interaction can enhance tutor’s role as instructional support providers (Cobb, 1994). The rapid growth of online learning contexts has resulted, according to Pincas (2002), in a change in the understanding of the online pedagogy concepts. Driscoll (2000) argues that the rapid development the web had witnessed in the last decade made the socio constructivist methods of online learning the most preferable way of teaching. Internet based support, as mentioned by McLoughlin (2002: 6), should offer opportunities to learners to construct knowledge. It also needs

to encourage multiple perspectives and “develop multiple modes of representation”.

Online technology is being increasingly used in the delivery of professional development and this necessitates the need to extend the scaffolding concept to reflect the current learning and teaching practices (McLoughlin, 2002). As a result, McLoughlin (2002: 5) suggests a framework for scaffolding online learners based on social support, task support and peer support. He states that the social support is the provision where a group of learners support different types of technological applications which facilitate conversation, interaction and the creation of online communities. Task support is mainly facilitated through the creation of structured learning in order to enable learners to do tasks by making use of online resources that “enable task engagement and activity”. The peer support is simply facilitated through the discussion platforms and forums in which learners can share information with their peers and review ideas between them in their groups.

Looking at McLoughlin’s scaffolding framework, I can see that the social support and the peer one coincide because peer interaction does create a sense of community when they collaborate and share knowledge. It is also clear that McLoughlin’s framework emphasizes the guided instruction so including instructional scaffolding would be a useful addition to the other elements. It has been argued by previous studies that the degree to which learners are exposed to guided instruction can determine their progress

level, “one’s unexpressed ability can be measured by the extent to which one profits from guided instruction” (Morris, 2002: 2).

2.21. Related empirical research

The continuous professional development has benefited greatly from the technological advances in the developed world. However, the developing countries who are just in the process of entering into the online learning world need to learn from the mistakes committed by the developed countries during the nineties when educational technology enthusiasts rushed to adopt new technology as a substitution for traditional methods of learning. Education sector in most of the Arab countries is currently witnessing transformation to online learning environments. The Arab region suffers from extensive educational challenges in terms of quality, access and relevance. Education is a core area where technologies have become largely institutionalized with an established critical mass of users (Arab Social Media Report, June, 2013).

Considering the early experience of developed countries in online learning and what was mentioned earlier in this chapter about the emergence of virtuality, I find it useful to draw on some of the studies conducted on the online learning applications in the West and I believe that Pickering et al (2007) and Motteram (2006) are good examples in this respect.

Some other studies carried out in the Arab world are also worth mentioning as they might give me some ideas on what has been happening in the region as far as online learning is concerned. However,

most of the studies done in Arab countries appear to be limited to theoretical concepts and to investigating the barriers of integrating technology in education. Studies in the Iraqi context is even more scarce or non-existent as the country has just started “dealing” with the implementation of technology in education.

2.21.1. Studies in the West

The study of Pickering et al (2007) looks at a blended learning course (master degree) for in service teachers at the University of London. The course was mainly described as being based on constructivist share of knowledge and critical reflection. It also included compulsory and regular participation online. The study followed the community of enquiry model by Garrison and Anderson (2003) in which messages sent by participants were investigated and themes related to development were extracted. That was an attempt to answer how professional learning and development happen in an online learning environment. The study showed that after analysing about thirty messages sent by participants, five main categories were identified; cognition, meta learning, community, autobiography and knowledge. In conclusion, the study states that continuous manuscripts, carried out via computer mediated interaction, assist engagement with language and allow interpretations and therefore, “extending the levels of further meanings” (Daly & Pachler, 2007: 76). In addition, the study found out that online discussions can significantly

contribute to the construction of professional development and the acquisition of knowledge.

Motteram (2006) carried out a case study on a group of in service teachers studying in the MA programme of Educational Technology in which he used a long term study using multi method design. The study was over a period of three years and data were collected through questionnaires and discussions. Motteram (2006) presented a blended learning model which he called transformative education scales in which he used one of the modules that was taught with the support of web based materials and asynchronous discussion. Motteram's aim was to assess whether the in service teachers benefited from using online technologies and whether blended learning proved to be a useful experience for them. Motteram's model is in a way a parallel to Salmon's five stage model. Motteram (2006) argues that Salmon's five stage model proved to work well with learners who usually engage in tasks that have stimulating ideas and that require more reflection, thus leading to meaningful learning. Motteram's study also indicated that blended learning can significantly help in transforming teachers if feasible and realistic tasks are made available. Unlike Salmon's five stage model, Motteram's model might not be suitable for novice teachers as it includes reflection on experience and this might be demanding for such group. It might be a good idea to guide new learners through simple online learning tasks to familiarise them with such context before asking them to participate in more advanced tasks.

2.21.2. Studies in the Arab World

There are so many valuable research to learn from in the field of distance learning and teachers professional development in the Western world. Unfortunately, this is not the case in the Arab region as research related to low technology conditions and low resourced learning environment is very scarce because of the late introduction of online learning in the Arab region. A report published by the UNESCO in the *Nature Middle East Journal* in May 2013, shows that in spite of a push to incorporate ICT in education across the Arab world, several countries still lag behind. The research in the Iraqi context is even scarcer and such studies do not exist as Iraq has just begun to set up plans to implement technology in education. All what can be found in the Iraqi context are reports conducted by international organisations who are trying to help the Iraqi government in this concern.

In 2002, the Arab Open University was the first educational institute in the Arab region to start online learning in three of its branches; Jordan, Lebanon and Kuwait. The university then extended the experience in late 2003 to three other branches in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Egypt. However, online learning at the Arab Open University was limited to higher education students only and it was not applied to other departments of adult education or to teachers professional development.

Previous studies in the region such as Sardar (2016); Altuhaih (2004); Almarzougi (2003); Massialas & Jarrar (2016) and AlKhatib (2009) mention that the introduction of educational technology in the Arab region

has been delayed due to a series of operational issues. In general research studies in the region appeared to have been focusing on subjects like the barriers for integrating technology in teaching, technical issues relating to technology, technology infrastructure, teacher training and other educational policy issues. Mynard and Almarzougi (2003) conducted a study about online learning implementation in higher education sector in the United Arab Emirates. The study found out that there were several issues that needed to be considered if online learning to be applicable. In addition to the necessity of providing adequate technical training for teachers and students, other issues, according to Mynard and Almarzougi (2003), needed to be taken in consideration such as the policy makers' attitudes which needs to improve in order to support allocations of sufficient funds to build strong online learning infrastructure. Mynard and Almarzougi (2003) also notes that employers have to be prepared to accept and recognise graduate who have got their certification via online learning. AlKhatib (2009), in a study conducted in Kuwait, agrees with Mynard and Almarzougi (2003) that online certification accreditation problems in the Arab region have distanced learners from choosing online learning. Consequently, such learners' attitude slowed the process of adopting online learning courses by most of the educational institutes in the region. The same issue was experienced in Jordan where online learning appeal was sent to all universities to help absorbing the increasing number of high school graduates but again it all came to stall due to accreditation issues. (Ghreb, 2004) On the other hand, the set up of the online courses in the region were also questioned by some previous

literature. Altuhaih (2004) found in a study conducted on the Technology Learning Centre at the University of Kuwait that most of the online learning courses were set up without careful consideration to learners' needs.

Altuhaih (2004) also found that there was little communication between officials responsible for the courses policy and tutors responsible for implementing courses. Such lack of co-ordination, according to Altuhaih (2004), was one of the reasons behind students' unwillingness to choose online learning, Altuhaih (2004) mentions that if a successful online learning to be achieved, all people involved need to work together, i.e. support staff, technicians and tutors all need to work together to improve the delivery of courses and to achieve a steady development of the courses in order to attract more learners. Gherb (2004) points out that adequate technical support is needed for tutors. Learners need to be trained on how to participate online effectively and how to work collaboratively with their peers in order to achieve better outcomes.

With regard to the in service Arab teachers' professional development, Gamal (2005) conducted a study on schools in Egypt in which he examined an online teaching project that was introduced to intermediate level. Gamal (2005) surveyed about 80 teachers to find out what barriers to the Internet integration in classroom teaching existed and what difficulties encountered by teachers in that respect. Gamal's results showed that only 12 out of 80 teachers have really received appropriate training by the Education Department on using the Internet in classrooms. Other teachers stated that the training they received was in a form of short courses and it was not sufficient enough to enable them to use the Internet

in their teaching practices. Gamal (2005) concluded that the poor training courses offered to teachers on using technology was not only limited to the Egyptian context but also seemed to be the case in other Arab countries in the region. Most Arab teachers in the region rely on their friends and not the formal support to address the issues of poor training and to solve problems they face on daily bases when dealing with technology. Gamal's survey on teachers also showed that 36% could not find time to learn new skills because of their teaching load while 20% have never tried to learn new skills due to the lack of incentives. Such results draw attention to the need of improving in service teachers training to include technology training courses in the teachers training institutes. Such improvement, according to Gamal (2005), has to be based on the real needs of in service teachers and should be conducted regularly in order to achieve the required outcomes.

To sum up. I feel that the above review of related studies has helped me in identifying a gap in the previous research on Internet based teachers professional development in the Arab countries in general. In addition, no studies were found in the Iraqi context. Gamal (2005) has raised some concerns about the need for organised and regular trainings for in service teachers and suggested that any trainings have to meet teachers' needs. In my study, I take Gamal's suggestion further by suggesting the integration of in service teachers training and any other school based training with professional development trainings carried out by teachers independently and collectively in a holistic approach. Although Motteram (2006) suggested successful model of blended learning to help teachers'

development and Salmon (2002) model of five stages offers a practical support for my study, no information were mentioned about the level of learners' participation needed at different stages and nothing was mentioned about any consequences of such support. Price (2007: 32) indicates that although blended learning is looked at as valuable, "little is known about the impact on learning". Tool & Absalom (2003: 179) agree with the above, in a study they conducted about the blended learning impact on students' achievements, by mentioning that "little research exists regarding the impact of ICT on the achievement of student outcomes".

Therefore, it seems that a study that examines how teachers' professional development in low resourced environment, like the situation in Iraq, could be supported using the Internet is very much needed. Unlike the previous studies which seem to examine online learning in well-established learning environments with high technological contexts in the West, or those studies in the Arab region that tackle the barriers of integrating technology in teaching or other accreditation concerns, this study looks for supporting technology-novice Iraqi teachers in their environment in achieving independent professional development using the Internet. In the end, the outcomes of applying new technologies or any other new approach can only be investigated thoroughly if they are applied in a specific context.

2.22. Chapter summary

The literature review revealed that the previous literature in relation to the professional development in the Iraqi context is scarce, in particular the post invasion teachers' PD provision. There has been little investigation of the role of teachers' in-service training provision after 2003 in Iraq and how the teachers were influenced by the change in the whole education context. This literature review has discussed issues around the change of curriculum, the support for teachers and different approaches of teachers' PD; top-down and bottom-up approaches. The role of technology in supporting the pedagogical aspect has been discussed and the potentials of technology in the field of teachers' PD has been presented through previous research findings.

Although there have been many studies around the educational change in the West and the role of different change participants in the process including the role of technology, only few studies tackled this issue in the Arab regions and there have been no studies that explicitly addressed such issues in the Iraqi context. Most of the studies in the Arab world addressed the advantages and disadvantages of technology and how important that is for the contexts. Having read all this literature and examined a lot of studies, I formulated a view about my research questions in regard to teachers' feelings about their PD, the official support provided, and the role of technology in bridging the current gap in the PD provision.

The next chapter presents the methodology and the design of the research that evolved from the research questions.

Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1. Introduction

I would like to shed some light here on the very difficult circumstances that I faced when doing this research. The research was conducted at the time when the so called “Islamic State” controlled a vast area of Iraq. Mosul fell to the “Islamic State” insurgents in June 2014 when their convoys of pickup trucks entered the city following the collapse of the Iraqi army first line of defence that was responsible for the city. The insurgents entered the city by shooting at the army checkpoints and by hanging, crucifying, and burning many Iraqi soldiers to spread terror and shock among the nearly 4 million population of the city. Life under the “Islamic State” after that, which lasted for almost three years, was marred by horror, fear and brutality. Although life in the city experienced a lot of changes and close monitoring by the insurgents and their collaborators, many of the government departments were left functioning as before including schools. Teachers in Mosul continued to get paid by the central government in Baghdad and schools carried on following the same curriculum and other policy procedures as was the case before June 2014. This is why the education system continued without interruption even after the liberation of the city in August 2017. Given the changes on the ground at the time when I was in the city, I had to operate with a great deal of caution and under enormous constraints and I had to tread carefully with the help of my tribe and family in the city. Access to my participants was obtained in a very difficult situation and my data was collected at the time of instability.

The context of my data collection made me act within new parameters that required a flexible and innovative approach. I had to meet my participants at different times in order not to establish a pattern that could have been detected by the insurgents because people meetings at regular times were seen as threat to the so called “Islamic State” collaborators and many people were detained and tortured because they were seen together on regular bases. I had also to meet some of the headteachers outside their working hours upon their request.

My research methodology and design are described below. This chapter explains the methods that I followed in my investigation and the data that such methods have produced. In the following sections, I outline my philosophical stance, explaining how the epistemological and ontological assumptions have informed the design of my research. The methodology framework is then described in the other sections along with the design of the research.

3.2. My Background as the Researcher

I was born in Mosul city, the capital of Nineveh province in the north of Iraq and the largest second city after Baghdad with a population of nearly 4 million. I was educated in Nineveh schools and graduated from the School of Education at Mosul University. I worked as English language teacher in several secondary schools in Mosul for more than 10 years. I was then promoted to be a curriculum inspector working closely with the Director of Planning and Curriculum Development Department that was attached to

the Directorate General of Education in Nineveh. Throughout my role as inspector, I was able to understand the teachers' professional development system comprehensively and throughout my links with the MoE in Baghdad, I was able to form a clear understanding of the link between the Iraqi curriculum and the PD provision. I was then delegated by the Ministry of Education to do a master degree in the Kingdom of Jordan, which I completed successfully from the University of Yarmouk. Upon returning to Iraq, I was appointed as a senior officer at the Directorate of Planning and Teachers' Development at the Ministry of Education in Baghdad.

3.2.1. My role in the study

According to Bonner and Tolhurst (2002), it is important that researchers, especially those who use a qualitative approach, clarify their roles in their research. The researchers who utilise qualitative methods may to differing extent be insiders or outsiders in the research context. Smyth and Holian (2008) mention some advantages of being an insider researcher such as having an already established familiarity with the participants and their contexts. This potentially promotes the obtaining and the interpreting of data in contextually appropriate ways, since insider researchers have better understanding of the social context and culture being investigated. Another advantage, which I feel applies to me, is that insider researchers normally understand the politics of the organisations (how are the

organisations are positioned in the national policy in the country and their structural performance) they study and how they work.

My insider role in my research helped me in shaping the design of my study and in directing my research in an informed manner. I had worked with some of my participants before and I had also worked in several of organisations (the schools and the local directorate of education) that I studied and that experience along with my informal diaries about the journey of my research helped me in conducting a study whose findings reflected the real people's interpretations in their real contexts. Since my research setting was familiar to me, I was able to collect data not from the perspective of a researcher only but also from a perspective of being a known person by the population of my study and perhaps a respected person who enjoyed good work relationships wherever I worked and this helped me in collecting rich data because my participants trusted me (from our previous colleagues relationships) and were "generous" in expressing their feelings and challenges freely and extensively.

As Malterud, (2001: 483) mentions:

"A researcher's background and position will affect what they choose to investigate, the angle of investigation, the methods judged most adequate for this purpose, the findings considered most appropriate, and the framing and communication of conclusions"

My knowledge about the context prior to doing the research and throughout the process of doing it helped in shaping what I needed to

investigate in a systemic way. My prior knowledge and cultural awareness of how my participants were likely to interpret their experiences and my ability to naturally interact with the participants (being one of them and able to effectively interpret their feelings and emotions) helped me to comment on my findings in an informed manner.

As a qualitative researcher studying my own social group, I felt that my research benefited from my insider status. As an insider in my research context I did not have to work on orientating myself with the environment and I did not experience any culture shock. I was able to blend into my study context with little disturbance to the social setting. My interaction with my research environment was natural. This affected the type of the stories I was told by my participants, and the way such stories were communicated to me. For example, my participants used to refer to certain practices that are locally known to everyone, like the type of their relationships with their schools administrators in its influence on their work, so they did not need to explain to me what that means and equally I did not need to ask for more details about such references, which made it easy for both parties. This in turn positively influenced the narratives that I formed and shared in my research in terms of the type of the stories I was told by the participants, and the way such stories were communicated to me.

I used a research diary from the beginning of the field work and continued to do so throughout the following stages in order to record my experiences

during the different research stages. Using the diary in a systemic way brought some advantages to the process of conducting my research because I kept a record about the daily activities and notes from the field, which proved useful source of information in the data analysis stage.

I used data gathered in my field notes to make methodological adjustment, such as reshaping my interview schedule in the light of prior experience and recording information obtained from non-verbal interaction. For example, by looking at some facial expressions of the teachers, I was able to understand whether they were comfortable with some questions and how some questions sequences needed to be adjusted to prepare them before asking about some issues. I was also able to record some of the feelings/emotional states that I experienced (angry, frustrated, etc.) when I heard the teachers' stories about some issues, which lead me to a better understanding of my own values and beliefs and their impact on my research.

I also felt that my participants valued the fact that I was someone who was one of them, spoke their language and shared their culture. I tried to use such characteristics to recruit the most suitable people to serve the research aims and objectives and to enrich and inform the data collection and analysis process. At the same time I was aware of the need to try not to allow my prior knowledge to jeopardise my open-mindedness as to the outcomes of the whole research process.

3.3. Philosophical stance

Ontology, according to Snape & Spencer (2003) is the study of the nature of what exists and what it is possible to explore about the world. It reflects our assumptions about the nature and kind of reality that exists. On the other hand, epistemology is our assumptions about the nature of reality and what it is possible to know. It reflects how we look at the world, find about it and understand it. In other words, epistemology is about our assumptions in relation to “the very bases of knowledge – its nature and form, how it can be acquired and how communicated to other human beings” (Cohen et al, 2013:7). The kind of epistemological assumptions, which we have about knowledge decides the process of how we explore knowledge in social contexts.

My epistemological and ontological assumptions which I state below are the bases of my own understanding of the world and its facts. My epistemological and ontological views arise from my own beliefs which I derive from the way I was brought up in the Iraqi context. Nonetheless, my reading about ontology and epistemology have polished my understanding about those philosophical arguments and helped to relate such understanding to the investigation of actual language teaching and learning in my context. The ontological and epistemological views that underpin my study are mainly grounded on my beliefs that ultimate knowledge or reality do not exist. The knowledge and reality that do exist can only be explored and understood in the light of my perceptions, which means that they remain subjective and limited because they are obtained

out of my own endeavours to understand the world around me. “The social world can be understood only from the standpoint of the individuals who are part of the ongoing action being investigated” (Cohen, et al, 2013: 19). This means that people do not share a single reality, which they all agree on, but there are diverse constructions of the reality that are formulated individually, therefore, “all meanings are a product of time and place, the researcher cannot capture the social world of another, or give an authoritative account of their findings because there are no fixed meanings to be captured” (Ormston et al, 2014: 15). Any reality, thus, can be explored through investigating people’s perceptions and beliefs in a particular place and time and will similarly be interpreted through the researcher’s own beliefs and perceptions. This makes knowledge and understanding of ‘reality’ subjective because it is affected by different contextual and personal aspects. In the light of this, I can argue that reality does not exist separately from people’s experiences and it is constructed socially. Meanings are constructed by people in different ways depending on their personal experiences.

I adopt a constructivist approach because I believe that knowledge and understanding are obtained by exploring the social context of the people I am studying and by focusing on their interpretations of their social context. Constructivism, being one of the qualitative research paradigms, looks at knowledge as socially constructed and subject to changes depending on the situations and circumstances. Crotty (1998: 43) explains constructivism from the social perspective as the view that all knowledge “is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of

interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context".

I also construct my own interpretations and meanings and so the process of my data analysis is inductive because my aim was to explore and try to understand what my data means in terms of my research questions and not to use such data to assess an existing theory. In addition, I was not able to detach myself from my research completely, I was personally involved in my research and, therefore, I felt that my findings could be influenced by my own values and personal views and I tried to minimise these influences by showing a degree of empathic neutrality during data collection through being open, sensitive and respectful to my participants' opinions. I strived to report what I found in a balanced way and I endeavoured to be non-judgemental. However, since my values, beliefs and experiences were bound to influence my research design, the way I approached data collection and the data analysis. Therefore I followed and considered certain points in order to limit their influence;

- In order that the reader was able to see clearly what decisions I made at each stage of the research process and how I responded to unexpected issues that arose, I kept records about:
 - The research process
 - The data analysis
 - The problems encountered
- I conducted my research in a systematic way:

- I identified the research methods that were appropriate for gathering data and that helped in answering my research questions.
 - I reviewed my evidence in a transparent method for the purpose of validity and reliability of my findings.
 - I undertook my review in stages to cover the scope of investigation, my research questions and my research protocol
 - I carefully selected evidence and conducted quality evidence appraisal and the data extraction and dissemination.
- I was honest with my participants about my own values and beliefs. I stated my views about the existing professional development process in the mid of the huge changes in curriculum and the transition of the teaching of English in schools that happened after the invasion in 2003.

3.3. Purpose and Research questions

As mentioned earlier, English language teaching in Iraq has witnessed a huge transition after the invasion and after a new English language curriculum was introduced, which has posted huge challenges for teachers' PD. Iraqi ESL teachers were left in the dark on how to go about their professional development in the mid of those changes with little or no support at all from the Ministry of Education in Baghdad or from the Directorates General of Education in the provinces. All this happened at the time when technology has been introduced to Iraqi schools for the first time in their history, which was seen as a potential solution for the current

gap in EFL teachers' professional development after the invasion. My research questions specifically are;

1. How do teachers feel about the official professional development opportunities currently on offer & do they make use of them?
2. What do teachers think they could do to support their own PD individually and collectively?
3. Given the official support for Internet-based professional development solutions, are teachers willing to use technology for their own professional development?
4. How do teachers think technology might support professional development?
5. What do teachers see as the barriers to technology and can those be overcome?

3.4. Method Framework – qualitative interview

It is widely accepted in research that choosing the research method is usually informed by the research itself, i.e. the research objectives, aims and questions. Silverman (2010) mentions that research methodology needs to be suitable for the research topic and what dictates methodology are the research purposes. Cohen et al (2007) state that it is wise for researchers to think of "fitness for purpose" because different research purposes require different paradigms. It is clear from my research questions that I am looking at the teachers' feelings, perceptions and viewpoints. I need to look at how teachers understand the meaning of certain terms and aspects of their current situations. Such meaning is expressed naturally through interaction and discussion. It might be argued that starting with a questionnaire survey and then focusing on individuals

could have been a good process for this research but such process would have been impossible in my context, firstly due to the nature of Iraqis who do not normally express any thoughts or opinions freely by responding to written questions because of the fear of consequences that such documents, that they have written themselves, might bring to them, which is linked to the many years of fear from persecution they experienced at the time of the previous Saddam Hussein's regime. Secondly, it was not feasible at the time of collecting my data to put more burdens on the participants in the mid of the horrific atmosphere under the so called "Islamic State".

For this research and to answer the research questions, it was necessary to establish what perceptions Iraqi ESL teachers had about their current professional development, how they currently interact with technology and whether they see potential in using the internet for their own professional development. Hence, it was be essential to get them to talk about the circumstances and the conditions under which they might experience internet-based learning and, to do so, a semi structured qualitative interview design was considered appropriate as a research tool.

I decided to use purely qualitative data collection method because I believed I needed to try to understand the historical background of the participants and their cultural and social context in addition to the practical reasons mentioned above. Qualitative interview "seeks to describe the meanings of central themes in the world of the subjects. The main task in interviewing is to understand the meaning of what the interviewees say" (Kvale, 1996). If responses are taken out of their contexts and interpreted

separately, their meaning may become distorted (Neuman, 2003). This means that considering the Iraqi EFL teachers' context in understanding the responses of my interviewees was important to be able to interpret the real meaning behind the responses. I was well placed to do that because I am Iraqi fellow citizen of Nineveh and I have prior experience in the education system, which all helped me to understand the national and the local educational contexts.

Interviewing is one of the most widely used research tools for conducting social enquiries and other areas in the education field (Hannan, 2007). About 90% of all social science investigations use interviews in one way or another (Turner, 2010). The rationale for the use of qualitative interviews has been recognised by previous research (Radnor, 1994; Denscombe, 2003 and Hannan, 2007). The interview is particularly useful for getting at the story behind a participant's experiences since the interviewer can pursue in-depth information around the topic. I designed my interviews to be semi structured and the questions to be open ended, which enabled me to ask more follow-up questions when needed and at the same time provided flexibility for the participants to provide additional information.

3.5. Sample identification and selection

Creswell (2007) mentions that selecting the right candidates for research interviews is an important step. Creswell also states that researchers should use sampling strategies that suit them in order to be able to recruit participants that can provide the most complete and reliable data for the study. I was aware that I needed to identify participants who were willing to

share their experiences with me honestly and openly and who were happy to share “their stories” (Creswell, 2007. 133). I was also aware that it would be easier to do my interviews in a comfortable atmosphere, where they did not feel uncomfortable to share their information or restricted in what to say. I chose my participants purposefully and included in my study those with relevant experience to get an in depth understanding of the circumstances related to my research questions. My strategy in identifying my participants was, therefore, driven by my research purpose (questions) and the frame of my study.

An initial possible sample was identified, based on my personal contacts and knowledge of the Iraqi education sector so the participants represent a convenience sample for me. Some of the participants were people whom I knew and whose experience and position (having been in service for long time and in senior positions) would help me to form a better understanding of the current professional development situation. However, no gatekeepers were used. I also made plans so that if any of the already identified participants decided to withdraw from study, I was ready to recruit different ones whom I felt were appropriate alternatives to the withdrawn ones in terms of their experiences and positions. I approached my sample by email or telephone invitation to ask them to participate in principle. I followed this initial contact up with full information, in the form of a letter, advising them of the nature of the research. I also invited my participants to indicate their interest in participating in the research by reading the information sheet and signing the consent. Those who expressed interest in joining were asked if they were willing to participate

in other research phases if needed at later stages. In an effort to empower participants with access to relevant research output at the end of the research, I offered them the option of requesting feedback on the interviews findings. In addition to being a token of gratitude for participating, the feedback option might have tempted teachers, especially female ones, to submit personal contacts like e-mails or phone numbers. This enabled me to check and confirm the data I collected from the individual teachers and particularly at the data analysis stage should any need arise at that time to support data validity in terms of double checking some answers with the participants when needed.

3.6. The participants

I interviewed teachers and headteachers in relation to EFL teachers' professional development. The teachers' and headteachers' details are as follows:

- Participants came from 8 secondary schools in Mosul in the Province of Nineveh: 2 elite schools (those are the only elite schools in Mosul and students have to pass admission exams to join them) and 6 mainstream schools.
- 26 teachers were interviewed from the above schools: 13 female teachers, 4 from an elite school and 9 from mainstream schools + 13 male teachers, 4 from an elite school and 9 from mainstream schools.
- 8 Headteachers & Headmistresses: 1 headteacher of the boys elite school and 3 headteachers of mainstream school + 1 headmistress

of the girls elite school and 3 headmistresses of mainstream schools.

- I also talked to the Director General of the Directorate of Education in Nineveh, 2 officials from the Ministry of Education in Baghdad and 2 officials from the Teachers' Union (the Union enjoys an influential education position in Iraq).

The reason I chose the above number of schools was because it was convenient to me to access those schools and speak to teachers as the majority were well known to me and also because they represented a balanced sample of all of the schools in the area.

The sequence of the data collection was as follows:

- **First Phase:** I interviewed the teachers in the 8 schools
- **Second Phase:** I interviewed the headteachers and the headmistresses
- **Third Phase:** I conducted follow up interviews with teachers
- **Fourth Phase:** I conducted follow up interviews with headteachers and headmistresses
- **Fifth Phase:** I interviewed officials.

The reason behind the sequence above was because I wanted to begin by getting first hand data regarding teachers' experience about their professional development as they are the main stakeholders who are in the front line of the process. Then, I spoke to the headteachers and

headmistresses as they act as the middle man between the Ministry of Education and have their own views about the current professional development requirements. Therefore, the data that I got from the first phase was enhanced by the supplementary information that I got from the second phase. The second phase helped in filling any gaps that aroused from the first phase, i.e. questions that I should have asked but I couldn't due to logistical reasons. Questions were asked in Arabic because teachers preferred that as they were able to express themselves better. All was then translated into English for the purpose of the transcription of the data. Although I translated all the interviews accurately being a native speaker of Arabic, I asked a friend who is a certified translator to double check my translation to make sure that the English data is a fair representation of what was said in Arabic.

3.7. Description of participants and their settings

I use pseudonyms to refer to different schools, teachers, headteachers and officials. I agreed with all participants that their real details would be kept confidential and any personal information that might identify them would be removed. Below is a table that shows the description of the participants, their roles, experiences, positions, age and their work contexts.

School Name	Teachers / Headteachers	Age Group	Experience	Position
Al-Mutanabi Secondary School for Boys أعدادية للبنين	Teacher Ahmed – Male	40-45	17 years	Group Leader
	Teacher Bashar - Male	35-40	14 Years	Senior Teacher
	Teacher Nori – Male	25-30	3 Years	Junior Teacher
Al Rabeeh Secondary School for Boys أعدادية للبنين	Teacher Abbas – Male	50-55	25 Years	Senior Teacher
	Teacher Maher - Male	30-35	10 Years	Liaison Teacher
	Teacher Saeed - Male	25-30	5 Years	Junior Teacher
Al Salam Secondary School for Boys الأعدادية للبنين	Teacher Salman – Male	25-30	7 Years	Teacher
	Teacher Ali- Male	45-50	25 Years	Senior Teacher – Inspection Coordinator
	Teacher Mohamed – Male	25-30	5 Years	Junior Teacher

Al- Mawaheb Secondary School for Boys مدرسة للبنين	Teacher Sultan – Male	45-50	25 Years	Senior Teacher Curriculum Advisor
	Teacher Hameed- Male	50-55	27 Years	Senior Teacher
	Teacher Fouad – Male	35-40	15 Years	Senior Teacher Exams Officer
	Teacher Dawood - Male	40-45	20 Years	Senior Teacher
Al Zatoon Secondary School for Girls اعدادية للبنات	Teacher Amal- Female	40-45	25 Years	Senior Teacher
	Teacher Bushra- Female	35-40	15 Years	Senior Teacher
	Teacher Asma –Female	25-30	5 Years	Junior Teacher
Kansa Secondary School for Girls اعدادية للبنات	Teacher Hana- Female	25-30	5 Years	Junior Teacher
	Teacher Wafa- Female	40-50	22 Years	Senior Teacher
	Teacher Rahma Female	55-60	35 Years	Senior Teacher - Deputy Head

Al Tahreer Secondary School for Girls اعدادية للبنات	Teacher Nora-Female	25-30	5 Years	Junior Teacher
	Teacher Eman- Female	40-45	18 Years	Senior Teacher
	Teacher Sana - Female	30-35	10 Years	Senior Teacher
Al-Shaterat Secondary School for Girls مدرسة للبنات	Teacher Fatima- Female	55-60	30 Years	Senior Teacher Curriculum Advisor
	Teacher Nawal- Female	25-30	6 Years	Junior Teacher
	Teacher Alaa- Female	35-40	15 Years	Senior Teacher Exams Coordinator
	Teacher Hala – Female	50-55	28 Years	Senior Teacher Inspection Coordinator
Al-Mutanabi Secondary School for Boys اعدادية للبنين	Headteacher Sadoon – Male	45-50	20 Years	Headteacher Member of Nineveh Union

Al Rabeeh Secondary School for Boys أعدادية للبنين	Headteacher Jasim– Male	50-55	25 Years	Headteacher Director of Local Headteachers Group
Al Salam Secondary School for Boys الأعدادية للبنين	Headteacher Hassn– Male	55-60	35 Years	Headteacher Holder of Excellence School Management Award
Al-Mawaheb Secondary School for Boys, (Elite secondary school) مدرسة للبنين	Headteacher Ghazi – Male	35-40	15 Years	Headteacher Member of Young Leaders Committee - DGOE
Al Zatoon Secondary School for Girls أعدادية للبنات	Headmistress Sabah –Female	45-50	20 Years	Headmistress Local Schools Liaison Officer
Kansa Secondary School for Girls أعدادية للبنات	Head Dina – Female	50 - 55	25 Years	Headmistress Holder of the Headteacher of the Year Award

Al Tahreer Secondary School for Girls اعدادية للبنات	Head Sundos Female	35 -40	15 Years	Headmistress Nineveh Union Representative
Al-Shaterat Secondary School for Girls (Elite secondary school) مدرسة للبنات	Head Lamees Female	30-35	10 Years	Headmistress (newly appointed as Head in this school) Member of Young Leaders Group
Government Department		People interviewed / talked to	Years in Service	
Directorate General of Education – Nineveh المديرية العامة للتربية في محافظة نينوى		DG – A	14 Years	
Ministry of Education وزارة التربية العراقية		MoE – A MoE – B	25 Years 10 Years	
National Union of Teachers – Nineveh Branch نقابة المعلمين في العراق – فرع نينوى		TU – A TU – B	35 Years 5 Years	

Figure 5: participants & settings

3.8. Conducting the interviews

There are various types of possible interview design for qualitative research; informal interview, general interview and open-ended interview (Gall, et al, 2003). The important point about which form to choose is highlighted by Creswell (2007), who suggests choosing a design that can help in obtaining thick and rich data that can utilize/support a qualitative investigation. In my case, the open-ended or what is called a semi-structured interview style was more appropriate to my investigation because I had key issues that I needed to cover and a list of similar questions to ask my interviewees, while also, aware that some supplementary questions would need to be asked to each individual separately. The interviewees in the semi-structured method had the freedom to answer the questions how they liked without restrictions. This allowed my participants to contribute with as much detail as they wished. Before conducting the interviews, I paid considerable attention to the preparation stage in order to minimise problematic circumstances that might arise throughout the implementation process. The preparation stage was to double check the suitability of the setting of my interviews and also testing my recording equipment and making sure that my participants were ready for me. Turner (2010) emphasises the importance of the preparation stage because it helps the interviewer to concentrate on how the interviews will be conducted in order to gain the most relevant and valuable data.

In practical terms, I followed the steps below while preparing and conducting my interviews;

- I introduced myself and explained the purpose of the interview. I adhered to the academic ethics by ensuring that my interviewees were completely aware of my research purpose.
- I chose a place with little distraction; that was in the headteachers and headmistresses offices.
- I explained the purpose of the research one more time to each interviewee just before stating the interview to further clarify the matter for the participants.
- I explained the format of the interviews and the recording of the responses.
- I informed my participants that the interview would take about 60 minutes and that I would see them again as a follow up process for about 30 more minutes on a different date.
- I left my contact details in case they wanted to get in touch with me later on.
- I made sure that I asked my participants if they needed more clarifications before starting the interviews.
- I recorded the interview on my iPhone device that was encrypted and I kept it in a secure place at all times.
- I made my questions easy to understand and avoided using technical terms/jargons that might have confuse my participants.
- I made sure not to ask leading questions and I ensured that my participants were free to provide answers that were their own honest perceptions.

- The language of the interview was Arabic as that was the preference of the participants who felt that they were better expressing themselves using their mother tongue language.

Creswell (2007) suggests that the researcher should be flexible with the interview questions because respondents might not necessarily respond to a researcher's question directly but rather respond to it in another question asked at a later stage. Therefore, it was helpful that I constructed my questions in such a way as to keep my participants focused so I could obtain optimal answers. My literature review readings such as Silverman (2002) and Cohen et al (2007) helped me in scheduling questions that were suitable for the purpose in addition to my own observation of the current situation in the Iraqi schools.

There were other practical issues that I considered when conducting my interviews, such as:

- I occasionally checked my recording device was working.
- I asked questions one at a time in order to clearly follow a systematic approach with all participants.
- I gave the participant ample time to respond but I interfered to redirect the conversation to my question when I felt that my participants had gone astray from the main point. I did that by politely interrupting the participant and reformulating the question.
- I remained as neutral as possible by not showing emotional gestures or reactions to my participants' responses. However, I encouraged my participants to talk more by nodding or showing interest in what they mention.

- I took some notes while my participants were talking, but I was careful not to abruptly jump to my notebook when something important mentioned in order not appear as being pleased or surprised about the response. This could have affected the participant's answers in the next questions.
- In order to establish the epistemology with the information I got from my participants, I made sure that I smoothly moved from one question to another with informative links, I said for example; "You've mentioned ... and now I would like to talk about a different point..."

3.9. Piloting my interview

I tested my interview by piloting it with a couple of English Language teachers in Iraq who shared similar characteristics with my actual participants in order to see if there were any limitations or flaws that could be avoided or changed. This is a recommended practice in research as it allows the researcher to make any necessary changes before the actual implementation of the investigation process (Kvale, 1996). The pilot helped me refine my research questions when needed. It also enabled me to check my own interviewing skills to see whether I was:

- Wording my questions to be open-ended to enable my participants to answer my questions in their own words.

- Making my questions neutral and not directing participants to certain answers (to avoid judgmental and evocative wording)
- Asking questions one at a time in order to clearly follow a systematic approach with all participants.

3.10. Field work

I collected my main data throughout the period between June 2015 and October 2015. That was the period when teachers had fewer commitments and could devote time for the interviews (throughout the summer holiday and the beginning of the academic year). It was not possible to interview teachers during the month of July 2015 as that was the Holy month of Ramadan when all schools were closed for fasting and this is the hottest month of the year in Iraq with temperature hitting 60 Celsius. The sequence that I followed was:

- June 2015 – First phase interviews (patch 1 – Boys Schools)
- August 2015 – First phase interviews (patch 2 – Girls Schools)
- September 2015 – Second phase interviews
- October 2015 – third & fourth phases + fifth phase

3.11. Ethical Issues

I followed the British Educational Research Association (BERA) guidelines in designing my research and in the implementation of my investigations along with the code of ethical practice at the Faculty of Social Sciences,

The University of Leeds. My ethical approval was granted on the 15 June 2015. The main issues raised in my ethical review were related to the consent forms, the need for any permission to access sites and whether I was dealing with any vulnerable adults or children. I responded to the review panel with detailed description of the whole process and the permission regulations in Iraq. I also stated that no children or vulnerable adults were involved in my research. My research is dealing with teachers and headteachers and no vulnerability issues were highlighted. My role as a researcher is described at the beginning of this thesis in the background section. When I started the research process I was weighing my options in regard to the language of communication with my participants. I am a native Arabic speaker and so are my participants, the question was whether to conduct the research using English language or Arabic. After initial consultation with my participants, I decided to choose Arabic due to my participants' preferences. They mentioned that they would feel more comfortable using Arabic and they would be able to express themselves better. Another point was some participants' proficiency in English was not at a level to enable them to communicate their ideas accurately., That decision proved to be sound since during the course of the research as it was easy for my participants to talk and discuss many different important issues without any struggle to choose the words or being embarrassed about language proficiency. Although that choice entailed more work on my side and it was time consuming as I had to translate the whole data into English and then interpret the findings, the satisfaction that it provided to my participants surpassed my hard work and the time I spent in the data

analysis process. The role of the language of communication can make a big difference in the process of the whole research because “failure to recognise and acknowledge the role of language and communication issues in cross-cultural research may impact on the rigour and reliability of the research” Henninck (2008, p.22).

I came across several ethical issues throughout the course of my data processing, for example, most of my participants know me and I ensured them that whatever their answers might be, that was not relevant to me and to our future collegial links. Also, because the teachers were concerned that their answers might be seen by inspectors and other educational officials, I made sure that they did not halt from providing answers that might have been seen as not desirable from the MoE point of view, and thus I reassured them that all their responses would be highly confidential, which is why the data shows plenty of criticism. Therefore, my ultimate goal of not causing any harm to my participants has been met. My participants mentioned that they found their participation in the research really easy, comfortable and interesting. My participants appreciated the opportunity they were given through this research to express their views and their opinions and potentially making their voices heard by the policy makers in regard to the future of their professional development process.

3.12. Data Analysis

Throughout and after the collection of data, I had the analysis process in the back of my mind. I followed the thematic analysis method which I

believe has helped me in reporting, analysing and identifying certain patterns in the data. The thematic method is widely used in qualitative research and according to Rubin & Rubin (1995: 226), it is a method that can be very inspiring because it can “discover themes and concepts embedded throughout the interviews”. Data analysis thus involved grouping my data into codes/themes Creswell (2007), that reflected ideas, thoughts, or phrases that were commonly mentioned by my participants and which were clearly linked to my research questions.

3.12.1. Identifying my themes

In establishing my themes, I looked for data that my participants mentioned, which I felt were important for my research questions. I had to be aware that there was no fixed percentage or proportion of responses (the number of times a specific point was mentioned) that would make a ‘a theme’ because particular points might be mentioned often or only once or not at all, by different participants, therefore, depended on my judgement to decide what was necessary to count as a theme. After initially identifying 25 possible themes after repeated reading and analysis I identified 5 main themes.

Theme 1: Iraqi teachers’ perceptions and attitudes about the current INSET provision

Theme 2: Teacher autonomy

Theme 3: Official Support for Internet – based professional development for Iraqi teachers

Theme 4: Teachers' attitudes towards adopting technology for their PD
(males/females)

Theme 5: Obstacles to the Internet-based professional development /
overcoming those obstacles

I explain the analysis process more fully below. My thematic analysis was inductive. By inductive approach, I mean that I formed a set of observations and then moved from the particulars (responses I received from my participants) to general propositions (about the responses). It is a process of moving from specific aspects to general. I started by collecting data relevant to my research questions, then looked at the whole data and identified the patterns. My research findings emerged from the frequent, dominant or significant themes that were inherent in the raw data.

An inductive approach, according to Patton (1990), involves identifying themes that are strongly present in the data. After achieving a sufficient engagement with my data, I started the coding process. Each set of my data whether related to teachers' interviews, headteachers' interviews was organised into separate files and a chart was created for each to make it easier to track the patterns. I linked the interviews questions to the responses and then processed to categories to decide on the codes. However, there might be some themes that do not fully match the specific questions answered by the participants. I coded my data in terms of its apparent relevance to my specific research questions in order to identify themes that would inform my research aims. I searched across my data sets to find repeated meaning patterns according to the following stages:

- Stage 1: Working from the transcriptions, I familiarised myself with my data. I read the data several times and wrote down some initial thoughts.
- Stage 2: That was when I started to generate initial codes. I coded what I saw as important types of data in a systematic method across the whole data set.
- Stage 3: That was when I started to look for themes. I organised the codes under potential themes by putting data under their relevant themes.
- Stage 4: That was when I started to review my themes. I made sure that the codes were relevant to the themes by checking the data extracts.
- Stage 5: That was when I started defining my themes. I refined and named my themes so they became more specific.
- Stage 6: That was when I conducted a final analysis of the selected data extracts to relate them to my research questions

3.13. Trustworthiness

Holloway & Galving (2016: 309) mention that:

“trustworthiness in qualitative research means methodological soundness and adequacy.

Researchers make judgements of trustworthiness possible through developing dependability, credibility, transferability and confirmability. The most important of these is credibility”.

Research studies need to be conducted with rigour if they are to be sufficiently valid (credible) and reliable (dependable) to form the basis for influencing. I have had this in my mind throughout the whole process of my research as I was hoping to influence future educational decision-making in my country with recommendations from this research. I received several assurances and hints from senior education officials at the Iraqi MoE that they would consider my research results, because they seemed to be interested in a study that would present suggestions about the potential role of technology in solving many of the issues that they are facing on daily basis. For me these assurances represented motivation to carry out a trustworthy study that would enable my participants' voices to be heard and my research outcomes to be considered on an official level. I discussed above in section 3.11 the ethical issues that I encountered throughout the research process and how I dealt with confidentiality and participants' comfort as priority. In this section, I discuss the strategies that I considered during the research process to maintain a good level of trustworthiness in regard to the dependability and credibility of my findings.

3.13.1. Credibility

The findings that I offer at the end of this study need to be credible. Therefore, I used triangulation of data in order to shed light on different types of data obtained from different participants. Orson (2004: 104) mentions:

“In social science, triangulation is defined as the mixing of data or methods so that diverse viewpoints

or standpoints cast light on a topic. The mixing of data type known as triangulation of data, is often thought to help in validating the claims that might arise from an initial pilot study”.

In my case I attempted to triangulate my data through talking to a different range of different participants within the education sector to compare and contrast their responses and perceptions, prior to establishing emerging themes in the data. This enabled me to construct and verify different participants’ experiences to establish a more credible interpretation. I also tried to ensure that the reader could be confident that any perceptions and interpretations made came from the data collected and not from my own understandings and assumptions. I tried to make sure that the data reflected the participants’ genuine perceptions and not the researcher’s inaccurate interpretations by conducting follow up interviews after any initial analysis of the primary data to ensure that where I was uncertain, so could check participants’ meanings. According to Nobel & Smith (2015: 2), “respondent validation includes inviting participants to comment on the interview transcript and whether the final themes and concepts created adequately reflect the phenomena being investigated”. I did follow a checking process; first, I summarised what the participants mentioned at the end of each interview and doubled checked that with them to make sure that the summary was really what they meant. Second, I tended to start my follow up interviews by mentioning to the participants what I understood from my early interviews with them and inviting them to comment on whether my understanding and interpretation did really reflect

their perceptions. In addition, I always specified a time at the beginning of the interviews and especially in the follow up ones to clarify with my participants any data that contradicted what the majority of other participants had said or that I was confused about. I found the follow up interviews were a good opportunity for me to share with my participants some of the findings that I had reached from the initial analysis of the data from the first interviews and also to cross check with them whether they were able to recognise their experiences in my findings. These follow-up interviews were thus also helpful to me in highlighting some of my biases and misinterpretations.

Irit (2011: 231) mentions that the transfer of the transcripts to the interviewees is helpful “to validate the transcripts, to preserve research ethics, and to empower the interviewees by allowing them control of what was written”. I, therefore, also sent my participants my final interpretations of their data (my transcripts) in order to allow them to verify for themselves what I understood them to have mentioned and also to change/add any more issues that they felt needed to make their viewpoints accurate. I emailed my participants with their transcripts attached as I was not able to go back to Iraq to do that due to time constraints. I received more 14 replies with only two of them commenting on their own transcripts. Others apologised for not finding the time to read through the transcripts and approve them. Overall, those who responded were happy with their transcripts. The inability of some participants to comment on their transcripts could be seen as one of the limitations of this research.

I spent almost 5 months in Iraq collecting my data and the different phases of the data collection process allowed me to cross check the data with my participants in their real contexts. Being Iraqi myself and having worked in most of those educational fields, I was fully aware of the Iraqi educational and social contexts. The long time that I spent at the schools with teachers and at the offices with the school administrators enabled me to achieve a degree of data saturation. Francis et al (2010: 1229) mention that “in studies that use semi-structured interviews that are analysed using content analysis, sample size is often justified on the basis of interviewing participants until ‘data saturation’ is reached”. During the last month of my data collection period, I started to hear almost the same thing every day and no new ideas were mentioned. At that point I realised that I had collected all the possible data from my participants and had reached the data saturation point.

The different data collection phases also enabled me to collect thick and rich data. The thick and rich description of data that I was able to provide is, in my humble opinion, one of the strengths of this research because I feel it might enable readers from different contexts to recognise similarities or differences between the context of this study and their own contexts, i.e. it might enable readers to consider the data’s transferability to other contexts.

3.13.2. Dependability (Reliability)

Merriam & Tisdell (2015: 250) mention that “reliability refers to the extent that research findings can be replicated”. For research to be reliable, the

findings need to be consistent with the collected data. I asked two of my friends to act as critical readers for my study to challenge my understandings and the conclusions that I reached. I have also taken the required steps to avoid any misinterpretation of the data by keeping an account of all the stages of my study in several folders that cover the procedures of the methodology and any reflections that arose from the data throughout the collection and the analysis stages of my research. Roneson & Host (2009: 151) mention that “the basic objective of the analysis is to derive conclusions from the data, keeping a clear chain of evidence”. The “chain of evidence” that I can provide presenting a transparent and clear expectation of how I achieved my findings helps to enhance dependability.

In the light of the above explanation I believe that the findings and any implications emerging from this study may be considered to be trustworthy.

Chapter 4 Findings

4.1. Introduction

In this section, I present my findings based on the data emerging from the qualitative interviews. The findings are presented in accordance to the themes and I have included relevant quotes under each theme to make it easier for the reader to follow the emergent information in a consistent and coherent way.

I have quoted very liberally because the voices, particularly of Iraqi teachers (my main participants) are rarely heard and, as mentioned in the previous chapter, I am hopeful that the MoE officials will read this research.

4.2. Themes

The final themes emerging from my data deal with five major areas and are arranged in an order that matches my research questions below:

1. How do teachers feel about the official professional development opportunities currently on offer & do they make use of it?
2. What do teachers think they could do to support themselves individually and collectively?
3. Given the official support for Internet-based professional development solutions, are teachers

willing to use technology for own professional development?

4. Where teachers are supportive, how do they think technology might support professional development?
5. Where teachers are reluctant, what do they see as the barriers and can those be overcome?

In the presentation of the findings below, I present my participants' responses to the interview questions according to their apparent relevance to each of my research questions.

Theme 1: Iraqi teachers' perceptions and attitudes about the current INSET provision

Theme 2: Teacher autonomy

Theme 3: Official Support for Internet – based professional development for Iraqi teachers

Theme 4: Teachers' attitudes towards adopting technology for their PD (males/females)

Theme 5: Obstacles to the Internet-based professional development / overcoming those obstacles

I consider myself part of my research and that was something that impacted on the method I used to identify my themes (I was able to recognise the participants' main concerns through my continuous communications with them while doing the research), which was one of the most fundamental tasks of my research. I followed the steps below when reaching my final themes:

- I read through the data looking for repeated terms and statements in contexts, comparing and contrasting various ideas.
- I paid special consideration to the unique features of my participants to explore whether these affected their responses because I thought that such features might have affected how the participants shaped their responses and how their responses were linked to their unique features and roles in their schools;
 - The number of years in service (experience)
 - The positions of the teachers in their schools and the extra duties that some of them performed beside their teaching loads;
 - Junior teachers
 - Senior teachers
 - Curriculum liaison teachers
 - Exams teachers
 - Group leader teachers
 - Inspection coordination teachers
 - Deputy heads teachers

4.2.1. Theme 1

Iraqi teachers' perceptions and attitudes about the current INSET provision

After analysing the data obtained from the interviews about the current INSET provision in the Iraqi schools, it appeared that most of the ESL teachers have not had any training since the introduction of the new curriculum, which was disappointing for all of the ESL teachers

interviewed. Despite the radical curriculum changes, there has been no delegation of responsibility from the centre to individual schools, the very centralised governance structure of Iraqi education remains unchanged. The MoE could have actively delegated and supported the provision of INSET to local levels should any of the centralised system changed. The disappointment and the dissatisfaction about the INSET provision in the Iraqi schools were expressed and shared not only by the EFL teachers but also by some of the headteachers and inspectors. It appears that within the Iraqi educational system, EFL teachers and their schools were unable to initiate any significant changes to support the implementation of the new curriculum due to the absence of direct support from the Ministry of Education in Baghdad. The data revealed that teachers with long experience tended to be more critical of the system and more upset about the lack of support for the PD provision. This might be linked to that fact that such groups of teachers had been used to a more organised, regular and continuous PD system as it was the case before the invasion. The data also showed that such groups of teachers were not very keen on the MoE approach of indirectly encouraging them to use technology for their PD purposes without a clear policy.

Teacher Ali stressed that

We are not being supported at all by the MoE who need to think about setting up regular and appropriate trainings for us.

He also mentioned:

such trainings should include conferences, seminars about the new curriculum and also some courses that could work as refreshments [refreshers] for us.

The view of Ali who has more than 25 years of experience and who is also Inspection Coordinator is that there should be more in depth support, and his views reflect his extra duties in his school that are related to the inspection sector, which is mainly concerned about the type of support that teachers should receive. Ali's view is shared by other teachers who also expressed their disappointment about the lack of training courses to support the whole process of introducing the new curriculum. Bashar who has been in service for 14 years (Male from Al Mutanabi Boys School) echoed Ahmed that the MoE need to take some responsibility in regard to teachers' professional development stating that

we only had a short course last year about our PD needs in relation to the new curriculum, it was a couple of hours when an inspector visited our school and talked to us about the new curriculum, it was really short, and I can say it was totally useless !!. It was not enough to invite an inspector to talk to you about your PD in the new era in a very short time, I feel that the school, the General Directorate of Education (DGOE) and the MoE were ticking boxes! Most of the teachers do not feel that there is genuine intention to help them.

Teacher Bushra (female from Al Zohur Girls School with 15 years of experience), went further to describe the poor state of the current

teachers' PD including the lack of incentives to teachers who are put under a huge pressure from the schools and the DGOE to achieve progress with no support or encouragement in place. She said that she

feels sorry for the schools heads who try to convince teachers that they are on their side and who push teachers to adapt to the new curriculum but they know themselves that there are no provision of support in place and there is no scheme of incentives to make teachers believe that there is a plan for their PD that the officials are implementing to ease the pressure on teachers.

It is not surprising that the UNESCO Report on Iraq, 2013 concluded that

“the Iraqi education system faces critical shortcomings in many areas. One of the main challenges is the limited capacities of teachers in their fields of specialty (teaching subjects) as well as on the use of modern teaching methodologies. Such limitations have affected the quality of education” ([http://www.unesco.org/new/en/iraq-](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/iraq-office/education/teacher-training)

[office/education/teacher-training](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/iraq-office/education/teacher-training) - page 1)

It seems that there is no clear provision set up by the MoE to tackle the challenges of the Iraqi teachers' PD issues. As official DG – A, who has been in service for 14 years in Nineveh Province stressed:

teachers are in a state of chaos, they are being left alone to tackle the challenges brought by the new curriculum. It appears that the new curriculum has not brought the problems to the education

sector, but it rather revealed the shortcomings that were already there, which no one was aware of. The curriculum, I believe, has just uncovered the existing state of the educational confusion since the invasion in 2003.”

It appears that this state of confusion has impacted negatively upon the teachers' motivation and consequently the students' achievement. Such a revelation from someone who has been very close to all the changes in Nineveh Province shows the accumulated “shortcomings” of the system in the area. In a report published by the UNECSO in 2014, one of the points of concerns regarding access to quality education that have been highlighted as being of outmost importance to the Iraqi government was that “many curricula and teaching methods are outdated”.

www.unesco.org/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/FIELD/Iraq/pdf/Publications

This came to light, when speaking to participants, who all mentioned that the introduction of the new curriculum and the difficulties that Iraqi teachers have encountered in trying to teach have resulted in a lack of confidence in the authorities, which is evident from the more experienced teachers' attitudes towards the official professional development opportunities. Teacher Wafa (female from Kansa Girls School), who has 22 years of experience, expressed her frustration about official neglect for the teachers' needs, she began by explaining the situation prior to the invasion in 2003:

before 2003, there was a system and there were plans set up every five years to address teachers professional development. We used to attend regular workshops organised by the Department of Planning and Educational Development at the Directorate General OF Education in Nineveh. Those workshops were compulsory and teachers needed to complete them in order to meet their annual CPD requirements. We used to attend some courses at schools as well which were additional to the INSET provision at that time. However, things have significantly changed after the invasion in 2003, and the new government cabinet seems indifferent about setting up new INSET provision to address the changes in the political situation... I mean the "political" change of the curriculum.

She carried on by expressing her views on the current situation stating that

nowadays, teachers are not using any of the INSET provision that the MoE announces from time to time; they are very few and the last one that we heard about in our school was as I recall two to three years ago. Add to that they are not compulsory and teachers are free to attend or not, therefore, only few teachers go to such trainings while the majority do not even think about attending because they do not trust them because those who attend feed back to the rest and in most

cases the feedback is negative, the current INSET are scarce and most teachers think it is not even worth attending.

She focused on the need to impose training on teachers. As mentioned earlier, teachers' opinions seem to be shaped by their length of prior experiences. I believe that Wafa's opinion above is related to her being in service for a long time (22 years) and her resentment about the new era is derived from her experience of, and therefore expectations, what PD provision should be like? It is, therefore, normal in the Iraqi context for some teachers who have a long experience to express their anger about the leniency of the new system which does not insist that teachers attend the few PD sessions that are offered; although such leniency might also be seen as an advantage by other teachers. The issue of trusting the professional development provided through official channels was also mentioned by many other teachers. Teacher Ali (male from Al Salam School) with 25 years of experience agrees with the teacher above and showed his frustration and lack of confidence in the current official channels. He mentions:

The current INSET is a shamble, it is not fit for the purpose and those who attend it will not go back again. If you ask any of the teachers who are present here in this staff room, they will all mention that that they do not trust any official INSET provision at the moment.

This represents a turning point in the Iraqi teachers' confidence in the whole current educational system. Before the invasion in 2003, no teacher would ever have thought about suspecting the official INSET capability to provide sufficient support. That was because there were regular trainings and workshops and they were supervised by well-trained inspectors who used to visit schools on a quarterly basis. It seems to me that after 13 years (since the invasion in 2003) absence of a well-organised INSET, Iraqi teachers interviewed have developed a shared attitude which is not to trust what the officials say. The Director General of Curricula at the MoE said in an interview (in Arabic) with the Directorate website:

سوف نقوم بتدريب الأخوة المدرسين وفق أحدث الأساليب العالمية

We will offer PD trainings that meet the best world standards to our fellow brothers and sisters, the teachers" (www.manahj.edu.iq-2016 –page 1)

The conditions in Iraq have been extremely difficult to say the least. As the above quote implies, Iraqi teachers were promised, by the Americans after the invasion, a well organised, supported, modern and up to date PD training programme, but what they have is confusion and what appear to be false promises.

As stated in the background section of this study, the state of confusion in the education system after the invasion in 2003 has resulted in a general attitude among teachers, which is to be cautious towards any official promises. From my long experience in the Iraqi educational system and my knowledge about the Iraqi teachers' mentality, I totally understand this sceptical element in the Iraqi teachers' attitude towards official PD

announcements. This attitude can also be attributed to a sense of loss of clarity regarding ownership of the whole of the PD process as mentioned by several teachers. Teachers feel that they do not know who is responsible for their PD and who is supposed to be the main official body that they can refer to when they need support. Teacher Mohamed (male from Al Salam Boys School) and Teacher Nora (female from Al Tahreer Girls School) who are both fairly new to the profession with 5 years of experience spoke about their frustration with the official promises, Teacher Nora said that:

when they brought in the new curriculum, I recall that the headmistress held a meeting with us and informed us that we were in a new era and we are going to use the most up to date English language books in the field. The headmistress also mentioned the importance of using technology with the new curriculum, but surprisingly our headmistress did not mention to us at that time anything about the provision of supporting teachers to teach the new curriculum! All what she said that the MoE will support us... I believe our headmistress, herself, did not receive any information about that from the MoE at that time.

Teacher Sana who has been in service for 10 years was very similar in her response in criticising the lack of information about the teachers' PD support when the new curriculum was introduced. He criticised the lack of ownership of INSET provision after the invasion in 2003 and he talked

about different and contradictory instructions received from the MoE, Nineveh Directorate of Education and schools. She said that:

all what we get in the school is to use technology with the new curriculum and when we ask the headteacher about supporting us to use technology, the headteacher asks us to find our own way because he does not have sufficient information from the MoE. I cannot believe the state of confusion that those officials are in at the moment; How do you think we, the teachers, feel in the mid of this lack of consistency about our own PD? We have started to lose faith in the whole process but because we are concerned about the future of our students, we kind of started to find our own “unofficial” way of developing our abilities to meet the requirements of the new curriculum because if we sit and wait for the official support, we might end up spending years of waiting without any use.

It appears that the apparent lack of official responsibility for the teachers' PD has created a feeling of uncertainty for the teachers; the seniors found themselves in the face of a new challenge that they are not used to, while the junior ones found themselves under pressure to teach the new curriculum and to pursue their PD in a totally different way from how they were trained in their ITT stage. The junior teachers also found themselves under pressure to teach the new curriculum and to pursue their PD in a totally different way from how they were trained in their ITT stage. Junior teachers who obtained their QTS after the 2003 were trained using the old

system of the pre-invasion era, and they are, therefore, confused about what they were taught and what they are expected to do now. The majority of teachers (20 of the teachers interviewed) agree that they are unlikely to see any structured official training or any PD monitored courses locally or nationally in the foreseeable future. Although both Teachers Sana and Nora above have attended a one-day school based training course about classroom practices and teaching methodology within the last two years, they both feel that it was not sufficient, not effective and not useful because it was not one in a series of courses but just a one off course that seemed completely detached from its objectives and context according to what the teachers mentioned to me. This lack of relevance is one of the main reasons that several teachers mentioned as being a hindrance to their PD. However, Nori – (male from Al Mutanabi Boys School) was less sceptical towards the current status of the teachers' PD issue in the new system. Nori, who has just obtained his qualified teaching status 3 years ago, stated:

It is normal to see such confusion in the system after the big political change that happened in the country in 2003. We should not expect smooth transition ... such difficulties are normal and my fellow teachers should be patient and should show more understanding to the complex situation that the officials have found themselves in.

Although, Nori's view was not very common among the more experienced teachers who were not willing to give the MoE any excuses for failing to

provide an effective PD system, it seems to me that due to his being new to the profession, he might have been influenced by what he has been taught while doing his training and also because he has grown up in a different political atmosphere and has not worked under the old system, which makes him see things from a broader perspective. Before 2003, teachers were civil servants and so very much part of a system, which worked. At the present time, while there is an education system on paper, there is no real functioning national system any more after the invasion.

It appears, from the various teachers' responses, that the Iraqi educational officials; MoE, Nineveh Education Directorate and schools have changed from having the long term objective of helping teachers to achieve and develop to a short term one, which is to satisfy the immediate demands of senior central government figures who want to see some changes in the curriculum and a lot of technology integration in teaching. Those government figures are part of an unstable education system and they are influenced by the many external forces (publishers, assessment organisations and the cabinet different links and interests) trying to sell them the "latest educational ideas and kit" because their political influence has spread across the government departments.

To sum up this section, the main points show that:

- Teachers do not know who is responsible for their PD, are left alone and are lost in the middle of the whole process
- Teachers are confused about the MoE and the DGE stance on PD

- There is no systematic training offered for teachers compared to very structured system that existed before the invasion in 2003
- Schools put pressure on teachers to pursue their PD with no support
- Lack of support for teachers who wish to learn. The senior teachers are unable to pursue what they used to do prior to the invasion and the change of the curriculum, while the junior teachers are unable to link what they recently learned in their training period with the reality on the ground.

In the next section I discuss how teachers think they could help themselves and some of the initiatives that they have taken.

4.2.2. Theme 2

Teacher Autonomy

All teachers thought that establishing a sort of collaboration between themselves would help in addressing the challenges that they are currently facing. As mentioned in theme one above, the frustration of teachers about the insufficient official support have pushed them to seek their own methods to support themselves individually and collectively. Many teachers have started setting up some online forums, organising professional group meetings and asking their schools for more logistic support to facilitate a kind of in-house independent professional development. Those teachers believed that the groups that were set up in

some schools were useful in creating a community of teachers, which does not only help them in their teaching practices, but also in exchanging new ideas about their PD. It appears to me that teachers' personal needs and their worries about their own future careers (their PD) have made them more determined to pursue their own PD due to their concerns about their own learning, their own capacity to deal with new curriculum and their own way of dealing with their learners. Surprisingly, the data revealed that the teachers with long experience, who opposed the MoE unclear policy about technology for their PD, seemed to be willing to engage in some kinds of interdependent activities to compensate for the lack of the official PD programmes. I believe that such attitude, what I call the "opposition" to the MoE new policy indicates that Iraqi teachers do have their own priorities and as I mentioned earlier in this study that Iraqis look at their careers as one of the important aspects in their lives due to social considerations. This has pushed even senior teachers towards accepting the need to work with each other to salvage their careers and their students' future. Teacher Sultan (male from the Boys Elite School) who has been in teaching for more than 25 years and who is also a curriculum advisor mentions:

We have to find our own way, the official channels seem not working and teachers have to take some steps to address their professional needs. I am thinking about my own personal professional development to satisfy my career requirements and so are other teachers. If we sit and wait for the MoE to address

our PD needs, then we might stay behind for years to come. We are a bit lucky at the Elite Schools because our schools allow us to have time within the working hours to meet and exchange ideas about our PD. We have set up a forum here in which we discuss certain up to date information about PD. We do this in turn, every week one of us bring new ideas, or what they have heard in the field of teaching, for discussion and we normally agree on and adopt what is relevant to us”

Teachers Fouad & Dawood (males from the Elite Boys School) who have been in the school for 15 and 20 years respectively confirmed what Teacher Sultan mentioned above. They attend the same group and they are finding it very helpful because they have discussed many ideas throughout the current academic year (2015/2016) and they feel that that they are developing their own teaching methods and are able to address some challenges of the new curriculum. Teacher Fouad who is also the exam officer at his school says

it is brilliant, and it is working for us. We meet weekly on Wednesdays and we discuss new ideas and also talk about some problems of teaching certain units in the new curriculum and then we agree in the end on some measures that we all follow to tackle any issues.

Those teachers' views seem to be derived not only from their experience but also from their additional roles in their schools

(curriculum and exams), which have brought to them more information about the current situation at the MoE. They are in a close contact with the school administration and what they know might not be available to other teachers. Therefore, their views might have an extra weight in influencing the data, in regard to their knowledge about the MoE chaotic status, due to their being policy insiders. Their own forums that they started in their school seem an option for Iraqi teachers to, in a small way, begin to fill a gap in the INSET provision and also to make teachers feel that they are doing something for their own careers. The Elite schools are kind of semi-independent and the schools heads are able to adjust their timetables to suit the schools' needs without seeking permission from the MoE or the DGOE, which is helping teachers in such schools to create their own groups.

However, while some other main stream schools have started to manage such internal agreements by allowing their teachers some time to do this, some heads are still reluctant to do so without obtaining permission from the local DGOE. Such behaviour from heads seemed to be related to the remaining influence of the previous regime when heads needed permission to take any kind of individual initiative.

Some other teachers from normal schools have therefore personally started to participate in online groups which they find as useful tools in establishing more contacts with international teachers communities.

Abbas & Maher (males from Al Rabeeh Boys School) joined an online discussion group with many teachers from different countries. They are

finding it helpful in developing new teaching practices. Abbas mentions that

I have enquired online about how to achieve a good students' engagement at the beginning of the academic year when all students are new to the level. I had a response from a teacher in Jordan who suggested using a box full of different items (balls, books, pictures, etc.) and asking students to pick an item and then talk about what they know about that item. I learned a new technique that I can now use to make students love my lessons and enhance their cognitive development.

Teacher Hameed, from the Elite Boys School with 27 years of service, agrees and says

I believe it is a good idea to contact teachers online; you can obtain valuable information when dealing with teachers from different parts of the world. In the end it is a way that we are using to compensate for the lack of trainings. As you might know, we have not had any organised INSET for a long time and I do not feel happy to teach the new curriculum in the old way, therefore, I and other teachers do try to find alternatives.

It appears that many teachers feel that participation in such groups and discussion forums do provide them with a sense of a continuing professional development as they are improving their knowledge and skills to address the lack of sufficient INSET courses. Teachers Amal &

Asma (females from Al Zohur Girls School who share 30 years of experience between them) have also set up a group in their school where they meet with each other fortnightly to share and discuss their teaching practices and any creative methods that they might use in their classrooms. Teacher Amal who has 25 years of experience mentions that

the potential of our school group is in the access to new ideas expressed by colleagues who might have come across new knowledge by looking at a website, reading an article or chatting online. I seek opinions from colleagues in the group and I get answers on how to teach certain units in the new curriculum.

Teacher Asma who has 5 years of experience was of the same opinion and says that

those groups are good alternatives for the scarcity of the INSET. It should not be like that and teachers should not arrange their own PD solutions, this is the responsibility of the MoE and the DGE but in the absence of such provision, we have started to arrange such meetings to catch up and address those shortcomings in the INSET provision.

She also mentions that such group work and collaboration between teachers:

might help in imposing the changes of how to address our PD on the MoE who have so far failed to address the PD demands in the light of the changes in the curriculum.

This view of imposing change and putting pressure on the MoE to think about restructuring teachers' support seems to have been seen by certain teachers as a means of using a bottom-up approach to influence decisions made by top level leaders. What is significant here is that these two teachers (Amal and Asma) who represent two different generations share the same views, which indicates that regardless of the teachers' length of experience, they all feel that they need to do something about the current challenges and they share almost similar views towards the future of their PD.

Teacher Wafa (female from Kansa Girls School) shows an enthusiastic opinion about the role of teachers' collaboration in pushing a bottom – up approach. She says

I have been in service for 22 years and I have not come across such lack of INSET throughout my career. There has always been INSET provision ready every year until 2003. Add to that, the decision to change the curriculum was taken hastily and no one thought about setting up a new INSET for teachers to address the change in the curriculum. Therefore, I believe, we need to take the initiative and impose a bottom – up approach. If the MoE is not in a position to provide teachers with what they need to pursue their PD, then teachers need to do that to save their careers and their

reputation. These collaboration groups are the best platforms to impose such approach on the MoE. I am surprised that there are still some teachers who have not joined such groups and some schools heads who have not set up such groups yet. What are they waiting for? No one is going to guide them at least for the foreseeable future.

The view of Wafa above seems to be instigated by her long time in service and her experience in different schools settings. She seems keen on getting everyone behind the idea of joining groups to influence the officials who are, in her opinion, “*totally indifferent*”. Her point was mentioned by half of the teachers interviewed who all wish to see official support for teachers groups in schools and for teachers to take the initiative of their own PD and hope that the officials will in the end listen to the teachers’ recommendations that emerge from teachers’ collaborative work. This attitude is shared by senior teachers who feel that the whole education process is in danger of collapsing if the MoE keeps ignoring and trying to avoid dealing with the problems. Therefore, these senior teachers (males and females) seemed united about doing what they could to influence MoE decision making and found the online groups as a good means to get as many teachers in the country as possible to back a bottom-up approach for the sake of saving the education system from

going astray. Abbas (male form Al Rabeeh Boys School)

mentions that

joining teachers' groups can be helpful because you will come across new and useful ideas and practices that you might adopt in your teaching but you will also come across some ideas that are not useful and not suitable for your classes.

Teacher Rahma (female from Kansa Girls School) who is also the deputy head of the school reflects on the same point that teachers' autonomy is essential. She has this to say

In the current PD context where the official INSET is not available or when it is available, it is not fit for the purpose of the new curriculum; it has become the teachers' responsibility to pursue their PD. I believe this is the official stance as well but not formally confirmed. There is an implicit official view that if teachers are working on their PD themselves and looking for suitable methods to meet the requirements of the new curriculum, then let that be. Therefore, teachers have given up on any official regular INSET courses and have started to find their own way. The groups that are set up in many schools by teachers have started to show some good results. Teachers now feel that they

are not alone and they have the support of their colleagues to address their needs at this critical stage of their career. I expect those groups to be more effective by time because teachers will start to design them in a more practical and effective way to address their own concerns and then the recommendations from such groups can be adopted by the MoE, which can collate the ideas coming from teachers across the country and create a bank for such ideas ... because neither the MoE nor the local DGOE have any credible alternatives to tackle the PD issues at the moment.

Teacher Rahma's statement above is significant because of her position as a deputy head and her regular contact with the local Directorate of Education. When she mentioned that the MoE's "implicit" policy was to encourage teachers to find their own ways of PD, this suggests that the MoE is implicitly encouraging teachers' autonomy and consequently a bottom-up approach to their own PD. This move towards teacher autonomy in terms of PD provision is a revolution in how teachers think about themselves. There is an increase in their own voice and agency through the discovery of their own capacities to support each other's PD. This is a very big difference to what went on before in Iraq insofar as I know. This is also a very unusual situation globally and it can only

happens in Iraq, to be in a position where a previously very top down and controlled system suddenly becomes one in which teachers are able and tactically encouraged to make decisions for themselves. So whether the MoE will be able to reintroduce a totally top down system after teachers have experienced their capacity to manage their own PD in this way is questionable. This is not happening at the moment. It also appears that teachers' groups over time enforce a bottom up approach in order to make themselves heard by the MoE and not to be forgotten. The establishment of the teachers groups also shows that teachers are highly motivated when it comes to their own PD and where, as here, there is no official support, they do not give up on finding their own ways. This view although is mainly backed up by senior teachers who have been in service for more than 10 years, appeared to be attracting the attention of some of the junior teachers who have also started to feel that there is no clear path for them to follow to pursue their PD and develop their careers. This is what Teacher Hana (female from Kansa Girls School) confirmed. She is fairly new to teaching and has been in service for 5 years, yet she insists that the current PD situation should not continue and teachers are happy to take the lead in setting up a PD provision that suits their needs. She mentions that

teachers are not going to give up on their PD. We are going to keep trying and find our own ways of pursuing our PD and if the MoE is not going to be happy with our own initiatives, they need to present their own if they have any. I am pretty sure that the MoE will give up on their attempts to turn a blind eye on teachers' own initiatives and will in the end formally recognise those initiatives.

The lack of adequate teacher training therefore seems to have affected all the teachers (seniors and juniors), regardless of their experiences, in a positive way in the long term because it has made teachers look for innovative methods to pursue their PD themselves. Teachers innovative methods represent a wealth of knowledge available to be considered/consolidated in the future into a unified PD policy. Teacher Eman (female from AL Tahreer Girls School with 18 years of service) says

teachers are getting stronger when it comes to their PD, we are looking everywhere for new methods and we are exchanging ideas with each other and this is something new to us. We used to attend the MoE INSET and that was the end of it, but now we have many different sources of knowledge and not the only

single MoE source. I am very optimistic about the future of our PD.

The positive view that teachers have about their autonomy in pursuing their PD seems common among the majority of teachers with almost three quarters of the teachers interviewed sharing the same view regardless of their positions and whether they were seniors or juniors. In the current Iraqi context where planned top-down INSET is scarce, teachers reports that such self-motivated activities by teachers improve their performance in all sorts of ways, since successful collaboration enhances feelings of self-efficacy and recognition of the importance of local solutions to local problems.

Although such positive views about independent PD initiatives are backed up by many teachers, a few teachers and mainly heads of schools are not keen on such teachers' forums. Headteacher Hassan has a different opinion; he mentions that although such groups may appear to provide an alternative to the lack of INSET courses, they cannot be seen as professional replacement for the INSET. He says

I understand that there is a need to set up some sort of collaboration among teachers to help them pursue their PD but this needs to come through the official channels. We do have now many different groups and

online forums in different schools and they all meet to discuss and share new ideas related to their teaching practices but it seems that everyone is doing it in their own way. There is no link or an umbrella organisation who coordinates the work and make it more influential. Yes, teachers talk about imposing a bottom-up approach and I personally agree with that but if you want your voice to be heard, you need a coordinated work and a process that is agreed by a schools consortium. The National Union of Teachers can play this role, but as you might know they are governed by the MoE guidelines.

Headteacher Hassan's views above are noteworthy because he has 35 years of experience and he is the holder of the Excellence School Management Award, which is an award recognised by the MoE and is subject to careful selection process. Therefore, to hear about the usefulness of teachers' groups from such senior headteacher like Hassan who is well respected by his colleagues and at the MoE is a sign that different stakeholders have started to feel the need for an action to address the PD challenges. It is apparent that the idea of establishing teachers' groups and forums might be a useful alternative but some obstacles need to be overcome in order to make such groups more powerful and influential at least within their school contexts. The views of some headteachers about the effectiveness of such collaborative groups seemed to be related to their positions as the executors of the MoE

policies in their schools. Headteachers might have their own personal positive opinions about such forums as I discovered in the informal chats with some of them, but they were unable to explicitly declare that to their teachers due to restrictions related to their positions as heads of schools, which I believe is linked to the political aspect of the position, which means that they have to be seen on the side of the MoE who chose them to be schools leaders. Surely, such groups are already influential in their schools contexts and it would be good to have some sort of coordination across schools and different regions to enable the teachers' PD efforts and insights to become shared more widely. The collaborative PD work that teachers are currently initiating on a personal level through recommending materials, exchanging ideas, seeking help and advice, or simply through conversations with colleagues seems to represent an immediate solution for pedagogical issues arising from the current lack of INSET and the change of the curriculum. It also appears that teachers are relying on the time factor to support the establishment of a bottom-up PD approach in the future, i.e., they believe that the MoE will in the end give up on setting its own PD provision and will adopt what teachers think is already working for them.

The findings above show that;

- Teachers have set up informal groups and forums
- Teachers' collaboration to suggest some changes and working together to push towards alternatives to the absent INSET.

- Teachers are keen to influence decisions made at top levels, and they believe that their cooperative work will result in making the MoE listen to them and adopt an approach that considers teachers' needs and initiatives.
- Headteachers are implicitly supportive to teachers' forums/groups although they are unable to explicitly support such groups due to the absence of any clear MoE policy in this respect.

In the next section I discuss how the official support for technology and mainly the Internet might benefit an Internet-based PD

4.2.3. Theme 3

Official Support for Internet – based professional development for Iraqi teachers

The political change in the country in 2003 resulted in liberalising the communication sector and the Internet has become available everywhere in Iraq. The data collected from the interviewees reveal that the MoE is pushing towards integrating more technology in the education sector. The MoE is encouraging teachers to adopt technology in their teaching and implicitly for pursuing their PD. The data shows that using the available technology tools might be an option to compensate for the current gap in the INSET provision. Teacher Eman (female from Al Tahreer Girls School) has been in teaching for more than 15 years. She mentions that she likes technology and she feels that *the Internet is amazing. I feel we are gradually moving towards using technology in all of our classrooms. It is*

easy and available, the school encourages teachers to use technology and I might use it for my own PD. This view is shared by Teacher Alaa (female from the Elite Girls School) who has also been in teaching for more than 15 years and is the exams coordinator at her school. She says:

I am a big fan of technology, I use the Internet on daily bases and the school has provided us with all what is needed to use technology in our teaching and our professional development requirements.

Teacher Nawal (female from the Elite Girls School) has been in teaching for 6 years and she thinks that

technology is a golden opportunity for teachers at the moment. Teachers have the backing of their schools and the MoE to use more technology and this is making it easy for us. We do not have to think about the availability of technological tools anymore, all at hand now.

It is noticeable that the official support for the use of technology in education might be encouraging teachers to think about pursuing their PD through the use of what is available in schools. Side talks with teachers who have administrative duties in addition to their teaching loads also showed that they were keen to use technology for such duties (in addition to the PD purposes).

Headteacher Jassim (from Al Rabeeh Boys School) confirms that teachers are being encouraged to use technology

We have all what is needed in our school; we also provide whatever teachers need in a matter of days. The local DGE has a good stock of many different types of equipment that they dispense to schools who request them. I am working with my teachers to promote technology and I would like my school to be in the leading position in this. I hold weekly meetings with my teachers to talk about technology and how we can make the most of what is available to our PD.

Headteacher Jassim's statement above is linked to his position as the Director of Local Headteachers Group. He has been working with other heads to implement technology and he is close to the policy makers circle because he is invited to their meetings and it seems that the implicit policy of the MoE to use technology as an alternative method for the lack of PD programmes is being discussed at the senior levels although not officially declared.

Headmistress Dina (from Kansa Girls School) is of the same view, she had this to say

I believe that using technology in schools is not an option anymore. We are living in a digital era and we have to adjust our teaching methods and our performance to make it suitable to our era. In Iraq, we were behind for many years and all the neighbouring countries introduced technology to their schools a decade earlier than us. Now, our government is working towards closing this gap between us and the neighbouring countries by

providing schools with all what is needed to achieve an up to date, modern and technology-orientated performance. Almost all of my teachers are happy to use technology and they all feel that the support we are showing to them has made it even easier. Add to that our teachers now think about their progress with technology compared to teachers in other schools and this is creating a competitive technology atmosphere.

It seems that schools are in a competition to direct their teachers to adopt technology for their professional development and consequently for improving and changing their teaching practices. This complete atmosphere is promoted by the MoE and schools are going to be assessed in regard to the level of their integration of technology and using it for their teachers' PD. Teachers feel that their schools are very supportive when it comes to technology and the Internet is now available in all schools in addition to other hardware and software devices. In a document published by the Iraqi MoE in collaboration with the UNESCO, the ministry confirmed that a lot of work is undergoing to rehabilitate the education sector to address the important role of ICT in the future performance of the Iraqi schools;

- *تدريب فريق أساسي من المشرفين والمدراء يتألف من 17 عضواً بهدف تمكينهم من الحصول على شهادة "خبير تدريبي على الحاسوب" من مؤسسة الرخصة الدولية لمجلس التعاون الخليجي. ومن خلال هذه الشهادة، من المفترض أن يكون هؤلاء المدرسون المعتمدون قادرين على تدريب عدد إضافي من المدرسين، والذين سيقومون بدورهم بالتدريس باستخدام منهجية التعليم/التدريس المدمج. ويهدف المشروع إلى خلق كادر تدريبي وتربسي متجانس ومؤهل في وزارة التربية .*

The MoE has established a leading team made of 17 members of headteachers, teachers, inspectors and educational leaders who will

be trained on different ICT applications in education and work on getting the International Computer Driving Licence. On completing their training, the team will be able to train more teachers and cascade their experiences with ICT to schools. In doing so, the MoE is aiming at creating a well-equipped ICT team to monitor schools integration of technology into teaching practices.

www.moedu.gov.iq

Teachers Fatima & Alaa (both from the Elite Girls School) mention that the

Internet is working for them, Teacher Fatima says that

it is a new world of teaching nowadays, the Internet is a great facility and it has provided us with enormous resources. I am relying on a lot of online sources in my everyday classroom activities.

Teacher Alaa agrees and says that

it is very easy, the Internet is available here in our school and there are no restrictions on using it. We do have many computers so you do not have to wait for someone else to finish before you can use it, it is great.

Teacher Alaa also mentions that

the Internet is helping us in our PD as we look for solutions to many pedagogical issues online. It is the world in your hand.

It appears that teachers feel that official support is encouraging more teachers to think about technology as a viable alternative to the lack of official INSET, and also a means of achieving teacher-initiated, bottom up access to context relevant PD. Headmistress Sabah (from Al Zohur Girls School) has been in different positions within the education sector for the

last 23 years, she worked as inspector, senior curriculum advisor and now a headmistress. She mentions that she has not previously come across such official enthusiasm regarding an educational matter than what she is currently seeing about technology:

It is a technology mania for the MoE and what they are providing is incredible. You cannot find any official figures at the MoE and the local DGOE who does not back technology. Is it a policy or what? I do not know but it is good.

Being the local schools liaison officer, which is a role that entails establishing links between schools to share good practices, headmistress Sabah above raised a good point about the national education policy, which is at the moment not at all clear. She seemed very enthusiastic as well in encouraging her own teachers to adopt the technology option. She adds,

I am one of the technology supporters and what makes me more enthusiastic about this is the huge support that I am getting from the MoE and the local DGOE. I can pick up the phone right now and ask for anything related to technology in my school and they will provide it with no question!

Headteacher Hassan (from Al Salam Boys School) agrees that technology is good for education and says that

The official support for technology is unprecedented and the interest that the MoE and our local DGOE are showing in technology makes it hard for any school to ignore or avoid such

option. It is not imposed on us at the moment, but you can feel that they [the MoE & the local DGOE] like it and they want us all to like it as well. They want us to adopt it.

He continues by stating that technology also provides a means for teachers to provide themselves with PD opportunities;

our teachers have also started to feel the importance of technology and the Internet for their PD. Some of our teachers have started to use the Internet for their PD purposes and others are following because in such a supportive atmosphere it would be hard for any teacher not to be involved.

He adds,

why would teachers avoid using the Internet? There is no reason, everything is available for them in schools and all what they need is click a button and pursue their PD.

Although he appeared not very familiar with what technology and PD entail because he was not very familiar with different ICT applications and he kept referring to them as “*the ‘things’ that you can download ‘stuff’ from..*”, he also mentions the role of the support that teachers might need in order to use technology;

some might say that there is no support in place but I think is a different matter. What matters now is that teachers need to think about their future and they should know that without technology, they might not be capable of doing their jobs in the next five years.

It appears that teachers of different positions and with a different range of experiences supported the adoption of the Internet in their schools. I noticed more enthusiasm to use the Internet from female teachers because they found it a feasible solution for the current social constraints about women's presence in the work environments and their inability to stay behind after the school day as it is the case with male teachers. Female teachers feel that the Internet has liberated them from the physical restrictions and enabled them to communicate with their male colleagues and teachers from other schools outside their normal working hours in ways that were not previously possible.

It seems that the MoE is promoting the adoption of technology to fill a gap in the INSET provision and to find solutions for many problems that came with the introduction of the new curriculum. Although the MoE stance about the potential role of technology in teachers' PD is not officially declared, TU-A (a senior officer at the National Union of Teachers in Nineveh) says that

the huge support that the MoE is showing towards technology has only one meaning, which is to make it [technology] an alternative platform for teachers' PD due to the absence of the official INSET. We [Teachers Union] have been instructed by the MoE to encourage our members use the Internet to develop their performance.

The same view is shared by DG-A (a senior officer at the Directorate General of Education in Nineveh) who mentions that

the DGE is a key player in promoting technology and the use of the Internet by teachers for the purpose of improving their performance. We [the local DGE] are offering local schools adequate support to enable them to implement technology. He adds we are working with the Nineveh Teachers Union and the local inspectors to promote a better usage of what is available in schools, the schools have all what they need and there are no excuses.

It appears that the local DGOE looks at the implementation of technology in the local schools as one of its key targets and as a main part of its local education policy. It is also a very top down PD stance that is expressed by the DGOE, which reflects some of the conflict between teachers' autonomy and the official top down traditional method that is, according to the teachers, not working. DG-A stresses that

the DGOE has sent a clear message to teachers that using technology is what matters now and they have our back up to use it and make the most of its "wonders".

He seemed to adopt the MoE stance that technology is a "cure all" for all the problems arising from the political upheavals and consequent MoE lack of leadership. He continues by saying that

the majority if not all of the local teachers have shown great support to technology and a lot of them are using the Internet for their own PD and for improving their performance, so it is only a matter of time until we see the Internet as a replacement for the old INSET

provision ... there might be some guidelines to follow to make the process official.

DG-A failed to respond to a question about whether it was the official plan to use the Internet as a new platform for the INSET in the future, he simply says that

there is no confirmation yet, but looking at the MoE unprecedented campaign to promote technology in schools, one might think about the future implications of such campaign.

It appears that different levels (city and region) of the educational administrations have been drawn into the campaign that the MoE is currently leading to encourage teachers to make the most use of technology. However, although those bodies seemed to be influenced by their political orientation and their official positions, they themselves do not seem to have a clear vision of what the MoE intention is.

However, there were a couple of teachers who seem not very keen on the adoption of technology and who are still resisting the huge support of technology around them. Teacher Hala (female from the Elite Girls School) & Teacher Hameed (male from the Elite Boys School with 27 years of experience) both mentioned that technology cannot be the solution for the current pedagogical problems. Teacher Hala who has been in teaching for 28 mentions that *technology is not the solutions for our educational problems. The schools are trying to present technology as a solution but this is not the case.* She adds

the MoE needs to address the underlying problems in the teaching sector and not to cover them up by presenting technology as the “magic” solution. Even if our educational problems are solved, technology cannot be a replacement for teachers. When I enter my classroom, I do not wish to see any digital support because I can do better support and I have been doing it for 28 years.

It seems that those teachers' views about technology might have been influenced by their being in service for a long time and they might be finding it hard to change the methods that they have been following for more than two decades. It could be also related to their misunderstanding of what technology can/cannot do and/or the lack of clarity about what the MoE thinks the role of technology should be. Both teachers neither supported nor opposed the current official backing of technology and the changes that the schools have undergone to provide technology for their teachers and to help them in their PD. I understand the state of confusion for some teachers because technology is being presented as the solution to the many problems that currently exist without anyone having really explained the roles that it can play in PD provision.

The responses of the teachers and other educational bodies representatives give the impression that the official view is that the Internet might be used as a platform for the teachers' PD purposes, especially in the current unstable educational circumstances. The official support for the Internet and the teachers' willingness to use it might reshape the future of the PD provision.

To summarise, in this section the data shows that;

- Headteachers and teachers believe that the official support to adopting technology would open many doors.
- Headteachers and teachers believe that the official backing has made technology a promising tool.
- The MoE's stance about the role of technology in education is not clear for teachers, for schools and for the local educational officers. However, a bottom up approach is being discussed at senior level as an alternative to the lack of PD programmes.
- Scepticism among some teachers regarding whether technology alone can make up for the prevailing chaos in the PD provision.
- Female teachers show great enthusiasm towards the Internet because it offered them opportunities to communicate with their male colleagues in new ways that were not possible before.

In the next section I discuss the teachers' attitude towards adopting technology to support/enable their PD.

4.2.4. Theme 4

Teachers' attitudes towards adopting technology for their PD

Despite the reluctance shown by a few teachers towards technology, the data reveal that teachers' attitudes towards Internet-based PD are promising and positive. The majority of teachers shared the view that

technology and the Internet are essential tools for modern professional training. Teacher Fatima (female from the Elite Girls School) who has been in teaching for more than 30 years believed that the Internet was a great invention 'of all times' and teachers need to start making use of it in a similar way that other professional sectors have been using it. She mentions that

it is unbelievable what the latest technology has provided ... the Internet is amazing, it gives you access to anywhere. It is as if I have the keys for the libraries of the world in my hand.

Teacher Mohamed (male from Al Salam Boys School) says that *the advantages of technology and specifically the Internet are the flexibility and the freedom that it provides.* He adds that

the Internet provides immediate access to many different learning materials. You know, we are nowadays lazy and to find a book, sit and read that book is time consuming while the Internet is totally different, audio, pictures, live seminars and sometimes advertisement, all of that makes it an entertaining tool for learning.

Teacher Rahma (female from Kansa Girls School) had a similar view, she says that

sometimes I need more details about a certain point in my teaching practice and it might be difficult to find such details in books immediately. So the difference [in using the Internet] is that you can easily find what you are looking for and it will save a lot of time.

Some other teachers expressed their positive attitudes towards technology and the Internet and they expressed their intention to make use of what Teacher Alaa (female from the Elite Girls School) described it as a flexible and versatile source of knowledge.

It appears that teachers have started to realise the importance of technology for the “new” teaching practices needed to implement the curriculum change. Bashar (male from Al Mutanabi Boys School) mentions that *the Internet is very useful; it is like [opening] gates to places of knowledge and to limitless information*. It is encouraging to see that a lot of teachers are currently using the Internet to search for teaching practices and activities. Teacher Sana (female from Al Tahreer Girls School) identified another potential benefit, which is to use the Internet as a reference to check teaching materials before lessons. She says:

the Internet is useful and effective for double checking English language teaching materials before your lessons. I believe that when you are able to check the validity of your teaching methods, it means that your PD requirements are met. You cannot always rely on what you already know; you need to update your knowledge and information on regular bases. If you are asked to teach something new, as it is the case with the new curriculum, or if you are asked to teach a different level, then the Internet is always useful for you because you can refer to websites and the materials that you need to update your knowledge.

It seems that the majority of teachers in the study are using the Internet individually to check for up to date materials for their lessons. Some teachers mentioned that they were more experienced with the Internet usage and they could easily find what they look for without spending a long time. The data showed that teachers who have additional duties in their schools or who are affiliated to certain bodies such as exams boards or inspection provisions were more keen on technology and this is because they knew more about the MoE potential future plans to use technology as an alternative to the INSET programmes. However, Teachers Mohamed (male from Al Salam School) and Teacher Rahma (female from Kansa Girls School) argue that teachers need a certain level of skills to make the best use of the Internet. Teacher Rahma points out that

if you do not have a good level of Internet [skills], you might spend hours looking for materials and then the time factor will not be an advantage to you.

Teacher Mahmood agreed and says,

if teachers are unable to easily navigate through the websites, it might take them a while until they find what they are looking for. Luckily most of the teachers in our schools and in other schools are doing well when they use the Internet.

The data also shows that the majority of teachers use the Internet to look for materials that might improve their skills. Teacher Ali (male from Al Salam Boys School) explains,

there is a shortage in modern printed materials, lack of periodicals, so nowadays, we can just write [type] the titles of any materials that we are interested in and we get all what is needed in a matter of few minutes.

Teachers Nora and Eman (both females from Al Tahreer Girls School)

responded similarly by stating that

the Internet is good, you are able to find a lot of materials for your students, ... vocabulary, pronunciations and activities, the Internet is helping in improving our performance.

The majority of teachers believed that the Internet was helpful in improving their skills in finding up to date materials for their students. Teacher Fatima (female from the Girls Elite School) says that

the best Internet usage for me is when I access articles related to improving my students' language skills. I read a recent article last week about improving students' reading skills and it was absolutely helpful.

Teachers also showed interest in the affordability of using technology for their professional development purposes. It appears that teachers are aware of the potential of technology as an affordable source of information. Teacher Dawood (male from the Elite Boys School), who has 20 years of experience, reported that he tends to use the Internet to look for up to date materials to improve language skills for his students because of the lack of the official trainings. He mentioned that the Internet has helped him to overcome the challenges brought by the change of

curriculum and without the Internet it might have been extremely difficult for him to cope with such challenges. I asked him to give example of using the Internet to look for materials for his teaching, he explained:

The most recent example was about teaching adjectives. I prepared my lesson plan and identified the main points about adjectives that I needed to cover but I could not find adequate examples to offer to the students in order to make the learning experience creative and useful. At that moment I switched on my computer and visited some website, and found very useful list of adjectives with multiple choice questions and also some tests. All what I did was downloading the whole materials, which I remember was about 17 pages, and photocopied them and then handed them out to my students in the class. That saved me a lot of time and the materials were very useful to my students who enjoyed learning them.

Ahmed (male from Al Mutanabi Boys School), who has 17 years of experience and who is a group leader in his school, mentions that he searches for materials to support his lessons on weekly bases,

I prepare my lessons plan a week ahead, I go to the Internet every weekend to find materials such as activities, example, tests ... to support my plans because without providing enough examples to your students about any topic, they will not be able to fully comprehending it. Also, the way the lesson is presented to the

student is important and the Internet can help you in this [presenting lessons] as well.

Teacher Amal (female from Al Zohur School), a junior teacher with 5 years of experience, agrees and says: *I cannot imagine how I would have taught the new curriculum without the Internet. I feel the Internet has become available to us just in time.* She explained,

the time when the curriculum was changed and then the Internet in schools became available might have been planned!! ... I do not know if the MoE have thought of that when they decided to change the curriculum.

She adds,

it is unlikely that the MoE have thought of that because they should have thought of bringing some INSET instead, but they might have been lucky ... most teachers depend solely on the Internet nowadays for their PD purposes.

Teacher Rahma (female from Kansa School) agreed that Internet was acting as a replacement for the traditional INSET although informally,

I visit many websites on weekly basis to compare what I do with what is out there. I also chat with other professionals from different parts of the world and we exchange ideas and I can tell you that I am learning a lot from this.

Teacher Hala (female from the Girls Elite School) also mentioned that she uses the Internet to talk to other teachers, she explains:

when I have new topic to prepare, I speak to other professionals online to find out how o they prepare and deliver that specific topic and I feel as if I am attending a training session.

She links what she is doing to the lack of official training, she says,

in the absence of any official INSET, this invention that technology has brought is the best way of overcoming the shortage of training in the current educational atmosphere. We as teachers need to pursue our PD and if the MoE is not interested in addressing this issue at the movement, then teachers need to take the initiative and find alternative methods.

Abbas (male from Al Rabeeh Boys School) also stated that he spoke to people online about teaching methods and strategies of developing teachers' performance, he mentions that he has recently spoken to a trainer online about how to achieve a better students' engagement,

I always tend to engage my students in the lesson, I do not like the old traditional method of lecturing, I feel that my students enjoy the lesson more when they are engaged. I spoke to a trainer who works in Turkey about some practices that can increase students' engagement and I used them and the result was amazing. My students loved it, they felt that they were in charge and I spoke to other colleagues who also started to use the techniques that I learned online.

It appears that the majority of teachers are likely to put modern teaching skills/CPD as their main objective when using the Internet.

Saeed (male from Al Rabeeh Boys School) mentioned that he uses the Internet in preparing his lessons by focus on developing certain skills such as teaching the writing skill. This is perhaps because Saeed is a junior teacher and he was not quite confident with this due to his inadequate initial training. He mentions,

when I have new lesson to prepare, I normally visit websites that focus on good grammar and writing skills and I try to get some hints that I can use in my classroom the next day.

Participants believed that the Internet and the online activities were useful in developing new ideas for their classrooms teaching. Teacher Mohamed (male from Al Salam Boys School) mentioned that he put an enquiry online about the best methods of engaging learners at the beginning of the academic year and a teacher from the UK responded. He says, *I learnt new techniques from that teacher and it worked well for me and for my learners.* Teacher Ali (male from the same school) agreed with his colleague and added,

I find it really good to use the Internet for my PD. I contact many people online and I feel that I am getting good experience from such [online] activities.

Teacher Sultan (male from the Elite Boys School) found it easy to search for teaching methods online and he was very impressed with the tailored support that teachers can find online. He says,

it is amazing how easy you find what you need. You can even search for a very specific activity that is related to a very specific

subject and you can still find it. He adds, I looked for how to teach vocabulary for slow learner with some mental health needs and I was able to find a step by step method.

The same impression was reflected by another teacher in the same school, Teacher Hameed (male for the Elite Boys School) who mentions,

I had a student who always writes the letter “p” as “q”, I couldn’t find any help from my inspector, so I went online and believe it or not I found a very successful way of dealing with it. He continued, and I even found the reasons behind such behaviour, it [the Internet] is a great tool.

However, Nori (male from Al Mutanabi Boys School) mentioned that the Internet is a multi-cultural world and in many parts of the world the local social traditions govern the ways teachers use to teach in their own schools. He states,

when you speak to other teachers from other countries or when you join online groups, you find that there are many cultural differences and you find out that some methods are useful to be used in Iraq while others are not. You need to be selective and not rushing to adopt any method.

Nori’s point about the cultural differences was not mentioned by others.

This may be because Nori is a junior teacher and has only 3 years of experience and is also more involved in the use of Internet applications for daily life. For example he uses social media a lot, which has enabled him to see other nations’ cultures and traditions. Other Iraqi teachers who were

interviewed also showed awareness about choosing methods that suit the Iraqi context, especially when it comes to using materials that might contradict/infringe the Arabic and Islamic values. Some other teachers especially those who have been in service for a long time saw this cultural issue about the Internet as disadvantage. This may be mainly because of their long years in service and their more conservative view about viewing at the Internet as the solution for the INSET problems.

Teachers also mentioned that the Internet was useful to support their CPD due to its flexibility. The majority of teachers, mainly female teachers, stated that the Internet was helpful in filling the current gap in the INSET provision and more importantly, they felt that they were able to pursue their PD in the comfort of their home. It appears that Iraqi female teachers are finding the Internet a particularly suitable platform for their PD purposes because of the current social restrictions on their movements. The majority of teachers interviewed and mainly the female teachers seem to agree that the Internet has helped them to pursue their PD with great flexibility

Teacher Bushra (female from Al Zohur Girls School) says,

I am really happy with the Internet as an option for my PD. I have so many commitments and as a female it is hard for me to travel to another city to attend the occasional trainings amid the current security situation.

She adds,

I have three young children and it would be difficult for me to attend workshops 400 kilometres [in Baghdad] from my home. I find the Internet an affordable way of pursuing my PD for now.

Teachers Dina & Sana (females from Al Tahreer Girls School) felt the same about the Internet. They say, *what else you need, all the training courses are coming to you instead of you going to them.* They continued, we feel that what is happening somewhere else in the world is not that far from us because we can easily access the most up to date knowledge that is much needed for us especially with the new curriculum in place. Another female teacher from a different school was finding the Internet a good solution for the current PD problems. Teacher Nawal (from the Elite Girls School) says:

when it comes to my PD requirements, I find the Internet a good solution. I attended a course online a couple of weeks ago, it was about preparing exam questions and it helped me a lot. No one has shown me how to prepare exams after the change of the curriculum and if it was not for the Internet, I would have used the old method that is not good anymore for the new curriculum. Some teachers in my school especially those who do not like it [the Internet] are still using the old method and I feel sorry for them, they can easily develop their skills if they use the Internet.

Teacher Alaa (female from the Elite Girls School) talked about her own problems with the INSET provision and how the Internet provided a good alternative for her. She says:

last year, our headmistress asked me and another colleague to attend a training that was organised by the MoE in Baghdad. That was no sense in my opinion. She explains: how you expect female teachers to travel for more than 8 hours to attend a one off course in the current security situation. The MoE needs to understand that female teachers are not able to do that because they have family commitments and it is not safe for them.

Teacher Amal (female from Al Zohur Girls School) mentions,

I believe the MoE are living in a parallel world. They do not think about the differences between male and female teachers. They should send trainers to the areas if they wanted to help female teachers not asking [them] to travel somewhere else.

She continued by saying,

the Internet is the alternative for us now, I do not need to attend a useless training hundreds of kilometres away, all what I need is to switch on my computer and get the training that I feel is needed not the one that the MoE feels is needed.

She heatedly adds, *believe me, they [the MoE] do not have a clue of what*

is going on. Maher (male from Al Rabeeh Boys School) appeared to be in

agreement with female teachers when asked about the INSET provision.

He mentioned that it would be difficult for teachers especially female

teachers to accommodate any trainings suggested by the MoE for two

reasons;

first, the trainings set up by the MoE are very rare and in most cases they are not fit for the purpose, so no teacher would benefit from them. Second, female teachers are being asked to travel far away to attend these trainings without any consideration for our traditions and our current difficult circumstances. He adds: if you want to be believed, you need to be realistic ... the MoE want us to believe that their trainings are useful but the reality is no teacher from those who attended got any benefit, add to that, you would spend a lot of money on travel to attend useless trainings.

Teacher Rahma (female from Kansa Girls School) talked about the lack of consistency in the MoE approach towards teachers' CPD. She says,

I just can't understand why the MoE is not formally backing the Internet as the new platform for teachers PD. They encourage us to use it but at the same time they do not want to confirm that officially.

She said that most teachers are heavily using the Internet for their PD purposes and especially female teachers because it is flexible, affordable and more effective than all what the MoE are offering. She mentions,

I use it [the Internet] on daily bases, and everyone is doing the same ... why not ... the Internet is amazing and most teachers have started to see the massive development in their teaching skills and abilities that they gained from using the Internet.

Teacher Bushra (female form Al Zohur Girls School) mentioned something similar to other female teachers about the flexibility of the Internet and its

suitability for female teachers in specific but she also added that the Internet has provided teachers with a unique feature that they might not find in the traditional INSET provision. She says,

the Internet is brilliant, you can find a tailored method for whatever you need. I found a detailed lesson plan for teaching students who suffer from dyslexia ... no INSET provision has ever talked such specific issue. I also like the Internet because it suits our culture, I can learn and develop anywhere, in the school, at home, when I meet with friends literally anywhere.

I noticed that the majority of the female teachers in this study, regardless of their years of experiences or positions, were in favour of adopting the Internet for their PD. This is mainly related to their being able to freely look for materials that are suitable for their teaching styles and for their students (such as love themes or modern liberal stories) without worrying about being criticised or accused of breaking the cultural traditions if they do such activities in the real school contexts. A couple of female teachers showed some concerns about using the Internet as an alternative platform for the INSET. Those teachers have limited computer skills and they might be finding it difficult to navigate through the different websites, which is something that might have influenced their attitudes towards the Internet.

In this section, the data show

- Teachers look at technology as being essential tool for any modern PD trainings. They feel that although not everything they are currently doing might be linked to their PD, technology is expanding

the idea of PD by enabling them to look up appropriate materials online. The Internet offers them enormous opportunities to compensate for the lack of formal support by enabling them to look for what they feel suits their abilities and their learners' needs.

- Technology is enabling PD to be context specific, culturally appropriate, convenient and teachers initiated.
- Teachers, mainly female teachers, look at technology as the best suitable way to give them the freedom to pursue their PD away from the traditional rigid training given the cultural and the security context in the country.
- Teachers feel that in the absence of traditional INSET training, they are able to attend online courses to pursue their PD
- Teachers feel that they will be able to contact professionals all over the world
- Teachers feel that the Internet will help them pursue their PD training with great flexibility bearing in mind their many different commitments (work load, social issues, current political situation, etc.)
- Teachers' new perceptions of their own capacities compared to the pre 2003 implies positive attitude to develop the education sector in the country in the future.

In the next section, I will discuss how participants understand the obstacles to Internet-based professional development and their suggestions about the ways of overcoming such obstacles.

4.2.5. Theme 5

The obstacles to the I-based professional development / overcoming those obstacles

Although there is a good level of support for schools in the sense of providing them with the latest technology equipment, there is currently no official training policy for helping teachers to understand how to use the Internet provision and the use of technology by teachers appears to be superficial. However, the use of the Internet for other 'non-educational' purposes (social media, shopping, surfing the net, etc.) is widely common among teachers. The majority of the teachers interviewed reported making their own arrangements to obtain the required Internet proficiency.

Headteacher Sadoon (Al Mutanabi Boys School), who is also a member of the Nineveh Teachers Union, saw the teachers' attitude about finding their own ways of training as positive. He says,

this is really encouraging, teachers are looking after their own Internet training at the moment and this shows that they have good awareness. He continues by saying that although such teachers' attitude is promising, there is a need to help teachers gain the required skills to pursue their online learning.

This view is shared by headmistress Dina (Kansa Girls School), who is the holder of the Headteacher of the Year Award, talked about the enthusiasm that she noticed in some of her teachers' positive stance towards the Internet and the online learning and she felt sorry for them because of the lack of support for such positive stance. She says,

I really feel sorry for those them [teaches], most of them like to be part of the current technology campaign but they do not know how [to use technology] and they do not have the required skills to do so. They really need support and training in this respect.

The headteachers, headmistresses and teachers who were interviewed regardless of their positions and experiences all agreed that technology has to be adopted sooner or later to support teachers' PD, to support the teaching/learning process and in one way or another to please the MoE. However, without adequate training it might not be possible in the short term although they did mention that it is popular among teachers at different levels. It seems that teachers and schools heads are willing to adopt technology and also ready to receive training. There is a desire on the schools and the MoE part to equip teachers with the required skills to establish school-based Internet supported PD provision to help teachers develop through the use of technology, and so compensate for the gap in the traditional INSET support. The Iraqi MoE has shown a strong desire to undertake international collaboration to push towards a better implementation of technology in the education sector. During Iraq Educational and Technology Summit that was held in the United Arab Emirates in 2014, the MoE aimed at forming strong relationships with some of the leading international operators in order to "bring the highest level of technology, training and management skills to the country". (www.ecctis.co.uk/naric). Once such in-school PD systems are established, the chances for teachers to accept any top down PD later on will be extremely reduced. Headteacher Hassan (Al Salam Boys School),

cautiously (I noticed that he was very careful in choosing his words, may be because he did not want to upset anyone) advocated that all schools need to take steps to promote the use of the Internet for the purpose of teachers professional development. He says

I wish to see my teachers pursuing their PD using the Internet inside school; this is an amazing technology and an opportunity [for teachers] that is currently being missed due to the lack of training and support.

Headmistress Sabah (Al Zatoon Girls School) mentions,

my teachers are smart and [they] love technology but you cannot implement technology without following a scientific approach and offering appropriate training to teachers. Yes, we do have all what we need in regard to the equipment but what we are using is trivial. She carries on explaining her point, I mean we are only using about 5% of the potentials of those technology equipment that we have in school, and we are using the basics.

Headmistress Sundos (Al Tahreer Girls School) talked about the waste of resources for providing the equipment and not providing the support for using them,

Look at all those computers (pointing at many PCs in the staff room), they are all the equipped with the latest software and all connected to a fast Internet but what are my teachers using them for? They are using them to type and print teaching materials.

She then looked at the PCs wistfully and said,

those [PCs] should be used for teachers' development and teachers should receive the required training on how to pursue their PD online.

Headmistress Lamees (The Elite Girls School) mentions,

teachers can access the Internet everywhere nowadays, in schools, at home, in cafeterias on their smart phones, ... there are no excuses in regard to accessibility but the problem is from the top, they [MoE] need to be proactive and start a training programme for teachers.

Teacher Rahma (female from Kansa Girls School) was very upset about the point of wasting valuable resources due to poor planning. She says:

I am very upset about the lack of clear training provision for teachers. The Ministry of Education needs to act immediately to address the gap in teachers' training and the best way to do it is to equip teachers with the necessary Internet skills and let them pursue their PD themselves. There is no point that they [MoE] spend millions of dollars on technology equipment when teachers are not fully making use of them. All my colleagues feel the same, we are all in the same boat and I believe that we might need to take the initiative and enforce the change.

In the light of all the above quotes, which are from girls schools, it appears that training on the use of the Internet for PD purposes for teachers either

does not exist or is shelved somewhere at the MoE offices. Female teachers and heads seemed to be more open about the lack of support from the MoE than male ones, this is due to the fact that Iraqi official system tend to question male employees' opinions more than the female ones. The origin of this goes back to the previous regime who used to watch the movements of every male employees within the education system because for that regime, the danger to the national security was more probably to come from men than from women. Men had more freedom to move and might potentially participate in uprisings against the regime, while women mostly stay home and look after their families. Therefore, more worries came from men than from women for the Saddam Hussein's regime. This explains the reasons that some male heads and senior teachers, who have extra positions at their schools, do not criticise the effectiveness of the MoE or from saying what the MoE should do and implement.

Teachers in general have expressed their frustration about the lack of trainings and most of them showed willingness to receive the required training to enable them to pursue their PD. Most teachers and schools heads interviewed feel that they have been let down by the MoE in regard to providing the appropriate Internet-based PD training and they all wish for some changes to happen sooner rather than later. Although some teachers mentioned in previous sections that they were doing well with technology, the trainings that teachers wished for here is the advanced training that is geared to the purpose of PD and that covers all the high level of technology applications.

Teachers' personal Internet skills were also mentioned as being an obstacle to carry out Internet-based PD. Teacher Saeed (male from Al Rabeeh Boys School) argued that teachers were left on their own to develop their Internet skills. He says,

I am not good with technology and when I try to use the Internet to look for articles or training courses I have to ask a colleague who is better than me. I believe the process of using the Internet should not be done in this way. I have to be offered appropriate courses to enable me to pursue my online PD without the need to look for someone to help.

Teachers Amal & Asma (females from Al Zatoon Girls School) both expressed their concerns about their Internet skills for their PD purposes. They mentioned that although they were good at navigating the Internet, they did not feel confident to enrol themselves in online trainings,

We [teacher C speaking] are good at using the Internet for everyday purposes, for looking at some relevant teaching materials but we are not good enough to join online trainings. We think that we need to be trained on how to interact with other learners and trainers online.

Teacher Dawood (male from the Elite Boys School) says,

I am happy to use the Internet for my PD purposes but the question is do I have the required skills to do so? off course not. I need training and mentoring to do so.

Nori (male from Al Mutanabi Boys School) echoed what other teachers mentioned by stating that advanced Internet training was needed in order to upgrade the basic Internet skills that teachers currently have,

you need an Internet training provision that focuses on upgrading teachers' current skills and providing some advanced skills that will enable teachers to confidently pursue their PD online. He adds, they [schools] encourage us to use the Internet for our PD purposes but they do not show us how. If you want me to follow a certain route, you would need first to show me the route itself. I feel that they [schools] are currently pushing us towards doing our PD training online and they do not have a clue of what such training entails.

The same point of purposeless encouragement was mentioned by Headteacher Hassan (from Al Salam Boys School) who expressed his concerns about the teachers' abilities to pursue their Internet-based PD on their own without professional support. He mentions:

I totally agree with the idea of the Internet-based PD for our teachers because that will bridge a huge gap in the current INSET, however, I feel that our teachers are not fully equipped with the necessary skills to advance on this. The majority of my teachers and even teachers in other schools love the Internet and feel that its potentials for their career development are promising but they also feel that they do not have the abilities to use the Internet for such purpose without

regular training courses. The Internet and technology in general is advancing rapidly and without regular training on how to use technology teachers will be left behind and might not be able to carry on with their online PD. This is an obstacle that the MoE needs to address if the online PD is to be implemented.

Headmistress Lamess (from the Elite Girls School) talked about some initiatives that teachers are taking to pursue their Internet-based PD but she thought that such initiatives were hindered by the lack of official support. She says,

I can assure you that all of my teachers have tried to enrol in online training courses at different levels and all of them have mentioned to me in a meeting last week that they were unable to cope with some of the Internet applications/processes that were needed in some courses.

She then enquired,

where is the role of the official channels in this and what support has been provide to such brilliant initiatives by teachers? I can say that no plans are currently there to support or lead on such initiatives.

Headteacher Jassim (from Al Rabeeh Boys School) was of the same view, he says,

the lack of official trainings for Internet-based PD is now threatening to put the teachers off the whole process.

Teacher Sana (female from Al Tahreer Girls School) mentioned similar viewpoint,

the absence of Internet skills training might result in teachers losing interest in the Internet-based PD because if we are left on our own to fight our way through such advanced process, we might give up... you never know.

It seems that the teachers very varied level of Internet skills level is one of the main obstacles that Iraqi teachers are currently facing in trying to use technology as a means of accessing PD. The majority of the teachers and the schools heads (experienced heads such as Hassan and newly appointed head like Lameese) that were interviewed mentioned that professional trainings were needed to upgrade teachers' Internet skills and to enable them to adopt an Internet-based professional development. They mentioned that there was a need for teachers to feel able to adopt more systematic widely based interactive participation in online PD for which good technology skills and personal confidence in one's own capacity to use technology are needed. It also seems that while teachers have the desire to pursue an online PD training and some of them have taken some initiatives towards that, they all share the concerns about their level of Internet skills and that applied to all of the teachers, males and females regardless of their different experiences and positions.

Teachers' motivation to pursue their Internet-based PD was also mentioned as an obstacle that needs to be addressed in order to adopt this option more officially. The majority of teachers who were approached stated that the lack of incentives and the lack of recognition for the efforts that they are making have made them question the value of taking the initiative to try to adopt the internet-based PD option. Teacher Nawal (female from the Elite Girls School) says,

I believe motivation to look for online materials and read articles is linked to personal desire to do so; it is just like a fuel that is needed for an engine to keep running.

Teacher Hala from the same school, who is the inspection coordinator for her school, argued that some teachers are not using the Internet on regular bases in spite of its flexibility. She says,

some teachers are not using the Internet because of laziness. Some say that they are not bothered and some question whether it was their responsibility to do so.

The majority of teachers, mainly those who work closely with external bodies and who coordinate some duties with the local Education Directorate and the MoE, while agreeing that the Internet was a great platform to pursue their PD, also expressed their frustration about the absence of the official support that could provide a good motivation for them to continue to try and pursue their Internet-based professional development.

Headteacher Jassim (from Al Rabeeh Boys School) mentions,

most of our teachers here are very keen on adopting an Internet-based professional development option, however, they feel that they are not encouraged enough and pushed enough to do so.

When asked about what did the headteacher think good encouragement might be, he said, *they need official training programmes to boost their Internet skills, which will subsequently boost their motivation.*

Teacher Amal (female from Al Zatoon Girls School) says,

I know that the Internet could be the greatest option for me to pursue my professional development, especially in the current education climate, but my question is why should I do this myself without support, and if I do, do you think the school or the MoE would appreciate this?

Bashar (male from Al Mutanabi Boys School) seemed to be of the same opinion, he says,

no one more than me likes the Internet and believes in its potentials in the sector of teachers' professional development but when I use it, I feel that there are many applications that I do not know how to deal with, which in certain times makes me give up and switch off.

Teacher Nora (female from Al Tahreer Grls School) mentioned that she had established a forum to start an Internet-based professional development with some colleagues in her school and they were all excited about the idea but after 4 weeks

we started to lose interest because it became difficult and more advanced than our level so some of my colleagues withdrew from the group. She adds we need official back up and motivation to carry on; we need professional trainings and guidance to keep us going.

Similar viewpoints were expressed by teacher Alaa (female form the Elite Girls School) who mentions:

I started like this (placing her hand high) and I am now like this (placing her hand low), I am a big fan of the Internet-based professional development and I was one of the first teachers who promoted the Internet-based professional development in my school but after a couple of months of trying, I reached a point of questioning the outcomes of all my hard work, am I going to be rewarded for that hard work and for encouraging my colleagues to join me, the answer, sadly, was no so I slowed down my pace. I have not given up completely but I feel that the MoE need to interfere to increase our confidence and enhance our motivation.

It appears that while the majority of teachers are keen and positive about the Internet-based professional development provision, they question whether they will be able to maintain their motivation to carry on pursuing this option, without some further support. The autonomy identified earlier can only go so far, for it, and the continued professional development that it allows to be maintained, there does need to be some systematic top-down technical support and incentivisation. Frustration here seems to be

partly that use of technology gets harder once teachers start to want to do more complex things than just download teaching materials and partly that teachers feel that they should be rewarded for making efforts.

Time constraints were also mentioned as a potential obstacle to the adoption of Internet-based professional development. Teachers, specifically those with extra duties, expressed their concerns about finding sufficient spare time. Ahmed (male from Al Mutanabi Boys School) says,

I do not have enough time to do that [Internet-based PD] because the school do not recognise such time as valid and they believe that we need to use our own time for this purpose.

Teacher Wafa (female from Kansa Girls School) mentions,

I believe it [Internet-based PD] works better with male teachers as they might have more time than us. For female teachers, we do have more responsibilities to look after our families and other than school time, we are unable to spare any. We are trying to do so throughout the school time but it is not enough.

Ali (male from Al Sharqyia Boys School) questioned whether schools had any role in helping teachers in this matter. He says,

don't you think that schools need to free teachers from some of their work load to provide the much needed time for the Internet-based professional development? Why don't they consider such option in stead of their meaningless encouragement to adopt the Internet PD?

Teacher Rahma (from Kansa Girls School) was not very different from Teacher Ali above in her implied criticism of the school and the MoE approach towards the Internet-based professional development. She mentions

it is quite simple to enable teachers to pursue an online PD, all what they [schools & MoE] need to do is to lower our teaching load and ask us to use that time for our own professional development purposes rather than preaching us to do our best.

Headteacher Jassim (from Al Rabeeh Boys School) has this to say on this matter:

I agree with teachers that time constraints might be an obstacle for them to pursue their Internet-based professional development but our hands are tied in schools because we have to follow the MoE curriculum requirements targets and reducing the teaching hours for our teachers to free some time for the Internet-based professional development is not possible without a significant change in our targets. The MoE has to accept that there is a gap in our INSET at this transitional period in the whole country and takes actions accordingly. One of the most favourable options for teachers is the Internet-based professional development as most teachers like the Internet and are keen on using it for their professional development purposes. Add to that, the Internet is flexible and teachers can pursue their professional development without leaving the school premises. This is of course saving

more time that teachers used to waste when travelling to the traditional INSET courses.

There appear to be an issue of incoherency across the MoE policy.

The MoE would like to see teachers use more technology for PD but at the same time does not want to see this use of technology affects the achievement of the syllabus, and also does not want to spend more on technology trainings. I came across that information from my informal conversation with the headteachers and also some MoE officials due to my inside status. As if the MoE is saying that it does not want to give more time and money to teachers to use technology for their PD to compensate for the time and energy they put in their PD work.

Although change is happening, there are few habits from the old regime, the MoE is happy to take the easy part of changing the books and but it leaves the difficult part of teachers' PD revamp. However, if things go back to normal in the future (the MoE will reinstate the INSET provision) it might not be an easy task to make teachers accept that after they have established some level of autonomy.

Teacher Mohamed (male from Al Rabeeh Boys School) says,

there is not time enough to pursue a good Internet-based Professional development process, we have school in the morning and some teachers teach privately in the afternoon.

Teacher Bushra (female from Al Zatoon Girls School) humorously mentions,

female teachers with all their social commitments do not have time even to dress up well and look nice let alone the Internet-based professional development.

Nori (male from Al Mutanabi Boys School) mentions,

for teachers, there are many obstacles to this [to Internet-based professional development], some have family commitments, some have financial issues but the main problem is the time. Even if teachers are not working, they still have many everyday life issues to attend for, so there should be some sort of reshuffling the teachers' duty to provide the time.

Saeed above refers to many issues that teachers have to deal with on a daily basis just like everyone else in the city. At the time of data collection these issues included (in addition to those relevant to Iraqi teachers elsewhere) making sure that their family members are accompanied when leaving home and when coming back, and monitoring and calculating the safety of the routes they follow to avoid being killed or kidnapped due to the fragile security situation.

Teacher Mohamed (male from Al Salam Boys School), who is a junior teacher and newly qualified, had a different opinion of the scarcity of time; he talked about the amount of time that teachers waste on other things that they do not mention. He argued that the issue of time is mainly an individual matter because

there are teachers who spend a lot of time chatting, playing computer games and backbiting other colleagues. That is a wasted time that could be used for learning and development.

He adds

...it is a time management issue for teachers and they could use the spare time ... the little time available for the purpose of their professional development.

Throughout my visits to Al Salam Boys School, I noticed Teacher Mohamed, who has fewer duties than others and who has just started his career, sitting away from other loud and chatty colleagues who were involved in idle chat at their free time. I also noticed that he used his free time sitting in the corner of the staff room reading some articles. I did join him on a couple of occasions and we talked about his readings and he expressed to me his desire to be an inspector in order to put things right. He also mentioned to me that he was living on his own and he had few commitments outside school. I believe that his viewpoint on his professionalism must have come from his well-organised lifestyle and the fact that as a single man has few issues to worry about outside school time compared to other teachers.

It appears that the majority of teachers think that they cannot be expected to find time to pursue their Internet-based professional development without any support and recognition amid the current educational atmosphere. It also appears that the MoE is living in parallel world when it comes to teachers' Internet-based professional development. The MoE is

still imposing the old lesson plans and curriculum targets that were followed in the pre-Internet era on schools without considering the huge changes that have happened since the change in curriculum and the promotion of the use of technology in education. There is currently a state of confusion at the top level of the education hierarchy in the country; the MoE is keen on changing everything and abandoning the old system but at the same time still has failed to develop new approaches to educational governance and so continues using old centralised top down methods to control and evaluate schools and their teachers.

Although most teachers above mentioned many advantages of the Internet for their professional development, some apparent disadvantages of the Internet did emerge from the data. Teacher Fatima (female from the Elite Girls School) criticised the use of the Internet and described that as time consuming in regard of searching and preparing appropriate materials. She says,

I sometimes sit to look for certain exercises for my beginners but cannot always find what I look for ... I spend a lot of times looking and in some cases I do not find anything suitable, so that is a waste of time.

Teacher Dawood (male from the Elite Boys School) mentions

although it is fairly simple to use it [the Internet] and look for resources, this could be an obstacle for teachers who are novice in this field and who are new to the online learning environment.

Abbas (male from Al Rabeeh Boys School) talked about some problems with download speed outside the school premises, he says,

I sometimes use the Internet at home and I struggle with the speed, I wait for a long time for an article to be downloaded. The speed is excellent when I am at school but I need sometimes to use my time outside school to prepare teaching materials.

Likewise, Teacher Salman (from Al Sharqya Boys School) mentions,

I am honestly wasting a lot of time waiting for some materials to be downloaded. I tend to prepare my lesson plans over the weekend and the Internet access at home and in cafeterias is useless. We as teachers need to be offered special fibre optic access.

Another difficulty was with certain websites that require subscription in order to view their materials. Abbas (male from Al Rabeeh Boys School) says,

I get annoyed with some websites that need subscriptions as you need to have a credit card to obtain access and I do not have it [credit card] so I try something else.

Teacher Nori (male from Al Mutanabi Boys School) similarly expressed his frustration about subscription requirements for some websites. He says,

I came across a good website that offers courses for teachers' professional development but it asked for a credit card subscription and this is something we do not have.

The credit payment service has been introduced lately in Iraq but it is not very common among Iraqis who still prefer using cash in most of their financial transactions. Teacher Hana (female from Kansa Girls School) talked about the subscription requirement in relation to time aspect and not the financial aspect. She says,

I hate those website that ask you to subscribe first, it is time consuming because they send you email that you need to verify before gaining access. This is an obstacle for me.

Another issue that emerged from data was related to active teachers who attend and engage with online courses. Those teachers expressed some disadvantages of the Internet in the sense that they did not feel they were pushed to their potential and also some mentioned lurking as a disadvantage. Teacher Fatima (female from the Elite Girls School) says,

I feel the Internet provides flexibility that sometimes encourages laziness. I attend online courses and I notice that some learners do not participate and the online tutor has very limited control over this. I believe this is an obstacle for the progress of those teachers who just want to attend without contribution.

Teacher Hameed (male from the Elite Boys School) mentions lurking as being a problem for online learning,

I have obtained a certificate for attending a course without contributing to anything; I was just sitting in my office listening to others.

Headteacher Sadoon (from Al Mutanabi Boys School) expressed his concerns about the Internet mania among the officials at the MoE, he mentions some disadvantages of the Internet when used by teachers on their own without any auditing of the whole process. He also talked about lurking as an issue. I thought to include his comments about lurking in this section as it is relevant to the 'time' factor, he has this to say:

Everyone is obsessed with the Internet wonders as if there are no disadvantages, I have teachers who attend online courses and this is really good but who is monitoring their progress and how do we know if they have contributed to the courses that they attended? Some of my teachers have displayed their online courses certificates at their desks to show others that they have gained more qualifications. However, one of them informed me that it was dead easy, all what you need to do is to register and sit there watching other participants discussing ideas and suggesting solutions without the need to contribute or participate. I believe this is dangerous because if we encourage our teachers to pursue an Internet-based professional development, then we have to monitor that and we should have at least some links with the online courses providers to get feedback about our teachers' performance. This will also push teachers to be proactive and not to sit back when attending those courses.

It seems to me that teachers who have been active in pursuing their own professional development by attending online courses do face some

obstacles that might be affecting the level of benefit that they gain from such courses, however, according to those who attended online courses, even if they just sit and listen, they would have still gained some benefit compared to those who have not done any attempts. Headteacher Sadoon's statement above shows that there might be a need for some sort of control but something to note is that he has been in service for a very long time and he is known to be a big fan of the old traditional INSET, so this might have influenced his opinion about the online learning provision.

Isolation was also mentioned by teachers as being a disadvantage to online learning. Although teachers admitted that online learning offers flexibility and instant access to learning materials at their own time, they expressed concerns about feeling isolated because this type of learning is a solo activity. Such feelings, according to some teachers, might put off teachers from carrying on if no support in place. Teacher Hameed (male from the Elite Boys School) says,

I feel all alone, don't get me wrong, this is brilliant but sometimes I need to speak to a colleague... I mean I need to look at other learners faces and interact with them.

Teacher Amal (female from Al Zatoon Girls School) was of a similar opinion and she stated that when attending any online learning courses she feels,

bored and sad! I love to have people around me when learning because it gives me a sense of being part of a group who share the same aims and working towards the same targets.

Teachers Bashar & Nori (from Al Mutanabi Boys School) who were sitting together when I approached them about this matter also echoed the above teachers by saying,

it is great to be able to pursue your development online but we both attended different courses and when we talked about our experience, we thought that we were sort of detached from our environment, it is difficult if your colleagues are not around you when you learn.

Other disadvantages were also mentioned by few teachers such as online error phobia and frustration with technology, which seems to me that they are all linked to the absence of the appropriate training and continuous ICT support.

The issue of providing technical support for teachers to pursue their online development, which seems to be the reason behind some of the disadvantages mentioned above by some teachers, was mentioned by the majority of teachers, regardless of their years of service and their positions at their schools. However, more criticism was received from those teachers who have additional duties at their schools, such as curriculum advisory, exams coordination or liaison duties. In general, all teachers interviewed expressed in one way or another that the lack of technical

support was one of the main obstacles to kick-starting their Internet-based professional development.

Teacher Bashar (male from Al Mutanabi Boys School) says,

I am keen on engaging in any Internet-based professional development process but you need first to show me how, you cannot just introduce this option to me and ask me to take without explaining to me how to do it.

This is the same opinion of Teacher Asma (female from Al Zatoon Girls School) who mentions,

I like to be part of this process [Internet-based professional development] but I need someone to go to when I face problems, if I click something and it crashes the system or the webpage who do I contact? At the moment there is no one.

Headteacher Dina (from Kansa Girls School) talked to me about what she heard from her teachers when they discussed the Internet-based professional development and she expressed her opinion by saying:

I hear a lot from my teachers about adopting the Internet-based professional development as an alternative to the traditional INSET especially at the current educational atmosphere where there is no regular INSET. Most teachers are willing to be part of the process and some of them work hard themselves to take such great option but in the end they all ask about the support and the

trainings that are available for them when they learn online. Unfortunately, we do not have any answers for teachers because there is no support. Teachers would prefer someone in the school here who is an ICT expert to help them when they face any technical or usage problems. The majority of teachers informed me that they would be happy to engage if that appropriate support is available.

It appears that one of the big obstacles for the Internet-based professional development is the absence of ICT support and the trainings that teachers need to start the process. Headteacher Dina above has summed up the situation and if the MoE would like to see mass adoption of Internet-based professional development, adequate and professional support should be instated first and professional trainings should be offered for teachers to enable them to pursue their development on their own or interdependently/collaboratively.

To sum up, the data in this section show:

- Lack of the Internet-based trainings, to develop the required skills, and confidence that teachers need to use the Internet for PD meaning that degree to which technology can be utilised by most teachers is and bound to remain superficial.
- Teachers require incentives to maintain their motivation to continue to struggle to develop professionalism.
- Lack of incentives

- Time constrains
- Perceived disadvantages of the working on the Internet; lurking, isolation, etc
- Teachers feel that they can progress if professional support is put in place

4.3. Chapter conclusion

The data provided information about Iraqi teachers' attitudes to and perceptions of their current lack of INSET provision and the difficulties they are facing due to the change of the curriculum and the absence of any road map for their professional development process. Furthermore, the data suggested that teachers are developing a degree of autonomy and started to take the initiative by setting up their own groups and forums as a result of the lack of official support for Internet-based professional development. While there seems to be at least implicit encouragement for using the Internet for the purpose of teachers' professional development, the lack of any real and feasible programmes to set up a clear policy and to develop teachers' Internet skills has affected the credibility of such encouragement. The data has also shed light on the teachers' attitude towards the idea of adapting technology for their own professional development. The data revealed that teachers varied in their attitudes but the majority were in favour of adopting the technological option, that is to say, teachers felt they have been left behind for long enough and that engaging with technology was their chance to catch up with the rest of the world. Some obstacles to the use of Internet-based professional development were also uncovered with the majority of teachers mentioning their poor Internet skills and the need for further training to enable them to participate more fully in a wider range of professional development opportunities.

Having allowed the teachers' voices to be heard, it is now my job to make sense of what I heard. In the next chapter all the aspects of the research will be viewed together to answer the research questions, to make sense of what was revealed and to draw conclusions relevant to the current Iraqi situation, which have not been arrived at before due to the scarcity of studies in the Iraqi context.

Chapter 5 DISCUSSION

As I mentioned in chapter 1, my research started with a problem emerging from the massive educational transformation in my country. After 50 years of unchanged, highly centralised education system, there was abrupt change to the national curriculum and also the rapid introduction of technology into both society as a whole, and the education system. All that happened in a very distinctive setting. Although the country floats on a sea of oil and is one of the richest countries in the world, Iraqis were living in isolation when the technology boom started more than three decades ago and when the world and all of the other neighbouring countries were modernising their education systems. Having the quote of Fullan's (2007:129) in my mind,

“educational change depends on what teachers do and think of it, as simple and complex as that. . . . If educational change is to happen, it will require that teachers understand themselves and are understood by others”,

I wanted to examine how teachers understand the potential of using technology to fill the gaps in their existing professional skills and understandings resulting from the new approaches proposed by the recent national curriculum change.

The analysis findings in chapter 4 provided the data to answer my research questions:

1. How do teachers feel about the official professional development opportunities currently on offer & do they make use of it?
2. What do teachers think they could do to support selves individually and collectively?
3. Given the official support for Internet-based professional development solutions, are teachers willing to use technology for own professional development?
4. Where teachers are supportive, how do they think technology might support professional development?
5. Where teachers are reluctant, what do they see as the barriers and can those be overcome?

5.1. Connecting Literature and Empirical Findings

In this discussion chapter, I bring together the literature in chapter 2 and the empirical findings in chapter 4 to answer my research questions. It is worth noting that there are no previous studies in the Iraqi context that have touched on a similar sphere. It is, therefore, not possible to cross check my findings with other studies about Iraq because such studies simply do not exist.

I pointed out in chapter 2 (Literature Review Chapter) that professional development as a term has been loosely used in conjunction with continuous professional development and teacher development. John & Gravani (2005: 110) state that this has caused “semantic confusion”.

In essence, this suggests that the process of development for teachers is a continuous one. Ideally teachers learn continually and gain knowledge from the start of their careers until their retirement ages. In order to continue to acquire the necessary skills to help them in improving the teaching they provide to their learners (Fullan et al, 1991). Underhill (1992:71) also emphasises the necessity of continuous teachers' development as a means of enabling them to find the most appropriate teaching methods for their own context.

My findings have shown that Iraqi teachers' professional development continuity has been interrupted by the invasion of the country, leading to the cessation of the previous regular INSET. Moreover, the change of the curriculum that followed the invasion complicated the scene for teachers who overnight found themselves with no access to formal training at all while being expected to adopt the new very different curriculum requirements. Teachers were mainly left on their own to manage the "new" situation and find solutions to the challenges of curriculum change in a context in which previously all PD had been provided in a top down way, and teachers were not expected or allowed to develop through their own efforts.

I pointed out in chapter 2 that the purpose and design of teachers' PD needed to be conceptualised holistically in terms of teachers' views, schools views and the MoE (official) view. Therefore, provision that addresses the different PD interpretations of the main stakeholders was needed in the Iraqi context.

In this chapter I discuss what the previous literature has found about teachers' professional development and how such previous findings are related to my own findings and what adjustments can be made to make such findings fit the unique Iraqi context. The discussion is organised in accordance with the sequence of the research questions.

5.2. Teachers' Perceptions of Current INSET Provision

5.2.1. Responsibility for teachers' PD (ownership)

The data showed that there was a wide spread disappointment among the teachers in this study about the lack of INSET since the introduction of the new curriculum. Such disappointment was also shared by headteachers and inspectors who felt that the MoE, being the body responsible for teachers' PD, had failed to address its duty to provide teachers with the required trainings to enable them to adapt to and so effectively adopt the new curriculum. The findings show that teachers have had no formal training since 2003. This has made teachers' daily classroom practice unsettled, and made it very difficult for teachers to pursue consistent, context-relevant professional development activities to help them meet the challenges of implementing the new curriculum. Driel & Berry (2012: 2) in their study about teachers' professional development noted that teachers' development is "a complex process that is highly specific to the context, situation, and person" and that therefore, teachers' trainings

“should be organized in ways that closely align to teachers’ professional practice, including opportunities to enact certain (innovative) instructional strategies and materials and to reflect, individually and collectively, on their experiences.”

The data in this study show that Iraqi teachers have worked hard to develop their own understanding about their PD. They had to look for ways of providing such PD themselves, in order to compensate for the lack of the official INSET. This is a great step forward for the teachers in their unique difficult context and it shows a high degree of determination of these teachers to pursue their PD in order to become more able to help their students by implementing the new curriculum in an appropriate manner for their context. The teachers have turned everywhere using their own basic Internet skills to find suitable instructional practices to keep their schools and their students going in the right direction. Opfer & Pedder (2011: 384) suggest that we should “improve teacher instructional practices, which will result in improved student learning.”

Iraq teachers’ status is similar to that of teachers in many other parts of the world when it comes to the responsibility for their PD. The teachers have never been exposed to any independent learning before and the centralised education system in Iraq that started with the introduction of the national curriculum in 1973 means that Iraqi teachers have never previously been allowed to take initiative for their own PD. Since the 1970s Iraqi teachers had become used to the MoE providing ready-made PD courses and trainings on a yearly basis. Therefore, it is no surprise that

Iraqi teachers currently feel confused. The annual training courses, that they used to attend, suddenly disappeared and, despite the curriculum changes that were introduced responsibilities for finding their own ways to pursue their PD implicitly were shifted (were allowed to happen) from central government, the MoE, to schools who in turn delegated them to teachers.

Prior to 2003, all the government departments including education were heavily centralised discouraging any local creativity or initiative. The previous regime believed that any margin of freedom given to teachers might threaten the national security, or in precise words, the security of the regime itself. Therefore, Iraqi teachers were brought up with this attitude that they are not allowed to do anything themselves and they should only follow the official channels in anything that is related to their profession.

Consequently it is not surprising that Iraqi teachers who never took responsibility for their PD in the past are now taking responsibility of their own PD due to the lack of any guidance from the official channels. In fact it suggests that these teachers showed great courage in trying to lead on their PD themselves using the technology that became available for them. This is of course, something these teachers should be proud of as they have come a long way towards being able to address their own PD problems with no support whatsoever from the official education channels in the country.

The new administration at the MoE, as a result of the existing power vacuum and systemic incoherence, is implicitly allowing (or even

encouraging) teachers to pursue their PD through using the new technological tools that have become available to them in their school settings. Although there is no official stance on this, i.e., the MoE has not published any policies that define teachers' duties in regard to their PD, teachers are being encouraged by their schools to pursue their own PD. There is no clear vision at the moment about who is responsible for the teachers' PD and the main stakeholders (teachers and schools) do not know who to listen to and what to follow to pursue the professional development process.

5.2.2. The official stance about teachers' PD (confusion)

The official stance of the MoE in regard to teachers' training is opaque. There is no official agreed policy statement regarding about the status of and responsibility for teachers' PD after the invasion. The current professional development policies are the same ones that were used prior to 2003 but with the absence of any actual implementation processes. The MoE has not made any attempts to update the provision of teachers' training to match the massive changes that it has introduced in the education sector. The MoE seems currently completely confused about how to handle such provision and their confusion is reflected in teachers' responses when asked about their current PD. Teachers are not aware of who is supposed to provide PD and the official stance is not helping them at all. Teachers' needs have been completely ignored by the MoE after the implementation of the changes. One of the main weaknesses that any

education system might encounter is “its being irrelevant to the teachers’ needs”. Postholm (2012: 416)

Rinke and Valli (2010), who studied three American elementary schools in the same district and under the same pressure to achieve annual progress in pupil achievement, found that the quality of teachers’ development is influenced by the environment where the learning experiences are made. In this context, they point to supportive leaders who focused attention on teacher needs and interests, and developed a school culture in which staff share opinions and act on the basis of these. The study shows that several elements may contribute to teachers’ professional development. These include having experts among the colleagues who can contribute their competence, having a common focus on development of teaching, exchanging experience as well as undertaking meta-reflection in relation to the development process itself to enable teachers to become aware of their own learning.

Officially none of the above exist in the school contexts, educational leaders seem sometimes scared to take initiatives to support teachers and also there is a little tradition of sharing in there. The MoE is using an outdated policy thinking that it might work in helping schools tackle new challenges, but no new structure for PD provision has been mentioned yet. Instead there are very occasional ‘trainings’ offered but the effect of these are very limited. They are similar to what Craft (2002) found when exploring the suitability of education policies for actual policy implementation. Official training that is not “linked to the needs of the

school and that is random in content” (2002: 12) does not make any difference in teachers’ professional development. I understand that it is extremely hard for the teachers to quickly change what they have been used to doing for so long, but the teachers in this study seemed to have developed their awareness of the current chaotic situation quickly and they read the state of confusion at the MoE very well. Hence they acted accordingly and began to try to use what is available, i.e. technology, to conquer the difficulties in their extremely unsettled context.

5.2.3. Pressure on teachers to achieve with no support

My findings show that schools, whose leaders are also used to responding to instructions from higher levels see their roles as being the facilitators of the MoE policies. They are thus urging teachers to take the initiative to pursue their professional development themselves. In a report compiled by the OCED (2009), it was stated that in order for schools to achieve sustainable professional development for their teachers, there need to be a system of professional communities in place in order to help supporting such development. “This will require the creation of systems, in which school leaders and teachers act as a professional community with the authority to act, the necessary information to do so wisely, and the access to effective support systems to assist them in implementing change” (2009: 3). Such systems do not yet exist. My findings suggest that schools are putting pressure on teachers to pursue their personal professional development process with no clear system in place to help supporting such process. In addition, my findings show that schools neither have a

clear vision of what is needed nor have the required information to do this “wisely”. The steps taken by schools to urge teachers to take the initiative for their own professional development are mainly a reflection of the MoE stance of urging schools to push their teachers to act on their PD needs. A key aspect that seems missing is awareness in the official channels about the current gap in teachers’ training created after the decentralisation of the education system and the introduction of the new curriculum. It is evident that teachers in the Iraqi setting and as a response to the chaos have taken the initiative for their own professional development in the absence of any clear official vision and support. The teachers are making use of the available technology to pursue their PD although there is no official support or any plans to facilitate this option. Whatever PD teachers do obtain is thus due to their own work and their own willingness to innovate in the midst of the confused and unsystematic education system. The situation is similar to that reported in previous studies, such as Peng et al (2014: 86) who found in a study conducted in China that in order to improve the education system, there needs to be a nationwide process involving all stakeholders if the system is to “improve teacher quality and support teacher professional development”.

5.3. Autonomy

5.3.1. Collaborative Learning

The data show that the influence that they very limited or non-existent official support for teachers’ training has had on teachers is to make them

feel that they have been left alone to do the job. The absence of any new regular INSET programmes has pushed teachers to look for alternative methods to pursue their own professional development process using technology. Teachers believe or are urged by their schools to believe that they can organise training activities themselves to support their own development. Their discovery that they are able to do so (with the help of the newly available technology) sends an implicit message to the top officials in the education system that even if it is not officially recognised, teachers have now taken the initiative for their own professional development process. Such an autonomous approach to PD (although autonomy has to a great extent been forced on teachers), is most likely to be successful where members of groups are committed to the work they share with each other and are determined to make such work a success. The data in my study has shown that through collaboration and the use of technology, the teachers have been able to set up local groups to support their own professional development. The data also revealed that the enthusiasm that these teachers have shown towards such collaborative work has made it more appealing to other teachers who were reluctant to take the initiative themselves. This agrees with what Stewart (2014: 28) found about the importance of the positive feeling that members of learning groups share about their work. "Learning communities thrive when all participants are invested in the work they are doing". Teachers in this study have shown the willingness to do something about their career and the majority of the participants confirmed that they have established their own PD groups in their schools.

However, the data in this study also revealed that the success of such teachers' support groups varied across different schools. Although the majority seemed to be working in harmony, some groups revealed that the different individual opinions about how the training is set up has resulted in some teachers leaving the groups or in some cases reduced the number of times they meet every month. Driscoll (2000) suggests that using different strategies such as reflective thinking or problem based learning can help in supporting different types of learning practices within learning communities, which is something that Iraqi teachers might implement to make their groups more appealing. However, for such strategies to work, there need to be people who understand the strategies and who can guide the group in using those strategies. This study has found that often teachers' mutual understanding about what is needed to achieve a balanced professional development training for themselves had played a significant role in making such autonomous effort work. Where this has been so, there is evidence that groups were able to accept constructive feedback from each other, and any "difference of opinion and critical analysis of work should be discussed in an environment in which all have contributed to the organization of the group" (Stewart, 2014: 28). However, the data in this study also revealed that some of the groups lacked an understanding of how to effectively work together. This is normal in any context because "if cohesion of the group does not happen, members are not able to honestly critique one another and the cycle of feedback and improvement will not take place which undermines the potentials".

(Stewart, 2014: 29)

In the Iraqi context, the system-wide establishment of autonomous school-based learning groups such as those that some teachers reported belonging to, may be more difficult than in many other places. Iraqi culture has certain characteristics when it comes to working with peers of the same level. Iraqis accept instructions that are cascaded to them by higher authorities much more easily than accepting similar information from colleagues or from other professionals who are of similar status to them. Ironically and tragically, the current political situation in Iraq and the associated violence is a bigger reflection of the micro context in many government departments and organisations including education. After the invasion and the collapse of the central solid regime, different ethnic groups started clashes with each other just because they did not want to be told what to do by other groups. There has always been a resistance to accepting other people's opinions and ideas in the Iraqi context simply because for Iraqis such acceptance is perceived as implying an underestimation of one's own individual capabilities. This interpretation is not a conclusion reached through research, but rather one related to culture specific aspects, which being an Iraqi with many years of experience in both the previous system and the new one, I fully understand.

The potential for disagreement in current school settings are not that different from the situation in the whole country, except that disagreements are expressed in a more civilised way in schools than in the outside world. Teachers express their resistance to their peers' suggestions and

instructions by simply ignoring them or not participating in activities, rather than through violence.

However, despite the reluctance to learn from colleagues or from those of equal status mentioned above, there is somehow an exception when it comes to an individual's career prospects and self-esteem. Iraqis consider their profession as extremely important to their image within the society. Iraqis work hard to be successful in their jobs because this is the way they attract admiration and respect from their society. The data in this study revealed that there have been noticeable changes in the way Iraqis communicate with each other in recent years compared to how things were prior to 2003. The data shows an obvious change, which might be linked to the political change in the whole country, in the teachers' willingness to receive and accept instructions about their career development. Some teachers who consider their professional development as paramount to their status in the society and who recognise that there is a complete absence of any official support for their PD have now become ready to compromise on minor issues, such as not accepting instructions from other people of similar levels, in order to achieve the major goal of sufficient PD to enable them to meet the challenges of the new curriculum and so maintain their professional status. The data show that the Iraqi teachers interviewed have been working effectively within the groups that they set up to fill the gaps in their professional development process by using the technological equipment that became available for them following the invasion in 2003. The majority of the teachers interviewed revealed that they have agreed

between themselves on each one's duty in the group and this has made those groups more effective and attractive even to those teachers who are sensitive about their roles within the group. Such teachers' attitude shows that cultural behaviours can change, and it is not set in stone. Culture is not 'immovable', and changes in the wider environment can bring changes to what seemed deeply established beliefs and behaviours.

This agrees with the finding by Knight (2011) about establishing healthy group environment where teachers become personally motivated simply because they set up dialogue between group members to achieve an equitable working atmosphere. Teachers in this study showed a high level of commitment to their groups and they looked at such learning practice (working with their groups) as a feasible alternative to the lack of official support at this critical time of their career development. One of the key points that the data revealed in this respect was the fact that providing their students with the best possible learning opportunities was a central issue for teachers and was a great motive for them to work together professionally using any means to achieve that in their exceptionally difficult context. Such finding matches what Pedder & Opfer (2013: 541) found in their study about teachers' collaborative work that "professional learning that is undertaken by teachers in collaboration and directed towards improvements in student learning, is a central characteristic of professional learning communities".

5.3.2. Scaffolding

The data revealed that Iraqi teachers' continuous endeavours to pursue their professional development process made them more dependent on each other for support. Such support can be viewed as a form of scaffolding. McLoughlin (2002: 4) defines scaffolding as:

A form of assistance provided to a learner by a more capable teacher or peer that helps the learners perform a task that would normally not be possible to accomplish by working independently.

The situation with the Iraqi teachers at the moment, as mentioned above, highlights the need for such peer support. The data also uncovered some important information about the official stance towards such scaffolding. It appeared that the Iraqi MoE and schools administrations were encouraging such attitude. However, neither the MoE nor schools were prepared to offer any kind of concrete support to boost this scaffolding. That has left teachers to manage their own PD depending on each other's experiences and it appeared that the majority of teachers felt that they had no other option. Peer scaffolding has been shown to be effective in previous studies. Pifar & Cobos (2010: 239) found in a study conducted on 18 participants for a period of 12 months that scaffolding proved to be "a primary mechanism for enhancing the development of self-regulation processes, i.e. it can be useful to conduct development process by depending on a more knowledgeable peer". Pifar and Cobos also found

that self-regulatory processes exist first at the social level before they entered the professional education field, where learners receive modelling, instruction, social guidance, and feedback on their learning process. This finding agrees with what my study found about Iraqi teachers. Iraqi teachers mentioned that the support, the feedback and the social guidance they receive from a more experienced peer have shaped the way they conduct their professional development requirements and performance. However, the data also revealed that some teachers, especially female ones showed little interest in peer scaffolding. This is again related to the social constraints in the Iraqi society that limit the freedom of female teachers in meeting after school or over the weekends due to family commitments and other social and religious traditions. Having said that, female teachers did show great courage to get involved in online groups and they are also working hard, just like their male counterparts, to pursue their PD regardless of the many different challenges that are surrounding them.

Given the interest that Iraqi teachers expressed about scaffolding each other for their PD, the Internet emerged as a potential solution for the social constraints that might limit teachers and specifically female teachers from pursuing this option. The data showed that Iraqi teachers were enthusiastic but expressed some issues related to the organisation of such mutual scaffolding support and the difficulties they encounter when trying to meet for such purposes. Teachers mentioned that schools were not ready to reduce any of their teaching loads to free sometime for meeting with each other. They also mentioned that they were finding it hard to

allocate the required times to do this amid their busy life schedules. Therefore, the idea of meeting online represents a possible solution for Iraqi teachers to support each other without the need to worry about when and where to meet. In a study about online scaffolding and collaborative learning, Groschner (2014: 277) found that there are three features in developing a teacher learning community: “collegial and collaborative interactions, participation and discourse norms for productive collaboration, and focus of activity on teaching and learning”. It is, therefore, important for teachers to develop sustained relationships, “to listen carefully to each other, to raise questions and concerns, to constructively press each other to explain thinking and ideas, and to focus on his or her own teaching practices and make them public to the group”. The data emerged from this study supported the importance of these points. Iraqi teachers mentioned that they had had some issues when they first established online groups for PD purposes related to being not well organised, which made some teachers question the value of such groups. This was often due to the lack of “a facilitator who has expertise in the field of PD and teacher learning” (2014: 275), and who is able to build trust among group members. There will be more discussion about the potential channels of technology to support teachers’ professional development in the upcoming sections.

5.4. Potential Channels for Internet-based PD

I start in this part with a discussion about the new attitude that the Iraqi Ministry of Education is currently showing towards teachers’ professional

development. I say new because it is the first time in the education history of Iraq that the MoE is budging on its rigid stance in regard to teachers' professional development. That is to say that the MoE is listening to the teachers' needs and also showing unprecedented flexibility about listening to different options to salvage the whole teachers' professional process after the chaotic period that followed the invasion of the country in 2003. This new stance of the MoE is seen by teachers and schools as a change although it is only a 'listening' stance with no actions, so 'listening' in itself is a big deal for the MoE. The process before the invasion was the MoE used to set up INSET programmes that were cascaded to the local Directorates of Educations in the provinces who in their turn send them to the schools in their areas. The role of the local Directorates of Education and their schools at that time was just to do what the MoE sent them and they were not allowed to suggest or dispute any issues sent to them. It appears that the MoE realised the status of anxieties that teachers were experiencing along with the uncertainties around the future of the potential development policies. The Director General of Curriculum Development at the MoE did mention that

نحن نشعر أن الأخوة المدرسين يمرون بمرحلة من عدم الاستقرار بالنسبة لآليات التطوير المهني

We do feel that our brothers and sisters in the teaching sector are currently going through a stage of uncertainty about the process of their PD" (www.manahi.edu.iq, 2016:3)

This situation of uncertainty, according to the teachers in this study, has brought some advantages because it has in some way forced the MoE to think about alternative methods for teachers' professional development mainly through the Internet. This new positive attitude in Iraq seems to

have emerged from chaotic situation in the educational system following the invasion, which was ironically described by one of the participants as a “creative chaos” in reference to the name given to the military invasion of Iraq by the Americans in 2003, i.e., creativity is born of chaos.

5.4.1. The official encouragement for the I-PD

The fact that the educational administrators have been confused about how to provide teachers’ conventional INSET ever since the invasion in 2003 has forced teachers to think about alternative platforms for their professional development. The data revealed that teachers have started to feel a kind of enthusiasm towards adopting technology for professional development purposes. Schools have also changed some of their previous centralised practices in regard to teachers’ training due to the chaotic reality in the education sector. That was best described when I talked to a student on one of my visits to schools, who said;

Our school has changed, the relationship between the teachers and students is very friendly, they used to listen to the ministry before [the MoE] and we had to follow meaningless rules but not anymore, our teachers speak to us about how do we feel about the new books and how we want them to teach us. He added, I enjoy my studies and want to become either a doctor or a police officer.

Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin (2011: 82) suggests that although educational authorities might have the desire to support innovative

initiatives in educational change, they might not have the required understanding of the process to offer the necessary support.

“New approaches to the professional education of teachers are needed, and they require new structures and supports. New initiatives cannot by themselves promote meaningful or long-term change in teachers’ practices if they are embedded in a policy structure that is at odds with the visions of student and teacher learning that reforms seek to bring alive ... both new wine and old wine need new bottles, or else incentives and supports for teacher development will be counterproductive or non-existent”.

Indeed this is the situation with teachers in my study who do receive some supportive signs from the MoE and from their schools about using technology in their professional development process but there is a great gap in supporting such provision. The official channels seem to be incapable of supporting online learning experiences (a technology-based professional development) not because they do not wish to but due to their being unprepared for such change and also their miscalculations about the whole change process.

The Ministry of Education, according to the teachers in this study, started the change process in the wrong way, providing schools with all the necessary technology and changing the curriculum before setting up plans to rehabilitate the teachers and updating the INSET trainings to suit the new era. The status of unplanned implementation of online learning has been investigated by Figlio and Rush (2013: 776) who conducted an

experimental study in which university students were randomly assigned online live courses without pre planning. The aim was to test the positivity of such method of instruction. The results showed that “while the effect of live online instruction was positive, the lack of preparation before the implementation of the process undermined the potentials of such method”. Therefore, adequate support needs to be arranged before conducting any online teaching and learning process. There is potential for online, technology based learning to be effective if the necessary support is available for learners. A study by Ryan and Lyon (2007) tested the effect of online learning on the learners’ performance by engaging a group of learners in online learning activities that included various types of interaction with instructors and other learners using the Internet. The study concluded that the academic attainment was not affected compared to the traditional learning tools. The recent advances in technology and the introduction of Wi-Fi has made the use of the Internet easy and flexible. This suggests that the Internet could be used as an effective method of learning for teachers in the Iraqi context. The participants’ description of the new official stance about the Internet appeared to be a mixture of excitement and anticipation at the same time. The official stance as described by the Director General of Curriculum Development at the MoE is:

“we do believe that the Internet can play an important role in the field of teachers’ PD and we are currently doing all what we can to make this possible”

(www.manahj.edu.iq, 2016:5)

The teachers in this study expressed a willingness to adopt technology for their professional development purposes but they seemed worried about how to use a method that is extremely new to them and to the whole Iraqi education system. The teachers in this study also expressed their willingness to be part of a collaborative process to adopt Internet-based professional development provided there was adequate support. The importance of such support is highlighted by Liu et al (2015) who found in a study they conducted about the role of adequate support and effective collaboration in the technology-based teachers' professional development. They examined the influence of collaborative CPD work of a group of teachers using technology on their degree of willingness to adopt it as a method for future PD purposes. Their results showed that positive experience of "collaborating with colleagues improves technology ability" (2015: 169) while poor collaboration resulted in limited motivation to work with technology.

The need for support for change in the Iraqi context is particularly strong since it is also noticeable from the data collected by this study that the teachers who were interviewed were still keen on getting support to face the new challenges. Ryan Crocker, the United States Ambassador to Iraq (2007-2009) mentioned in an interview with *The New York Times*, that "Iraqi are still afraid of the past". (www.nytimes.com). Iraqis were suppressed by the previous Saddam Hussein's regime for many years and they were deprived from any creative thinking practice for more than 5 decades. Therefore, recovering from such experiences would require a lot of support from different governmental bodies. Although there have been

some changes in the Iraqi mentality and the way of thinking throughout the last 15 years, more work is still needed to enable people to face new challenges and adopt new methods without fearing the consequences because complex changes to ways of thinking and believing take a long time to happen (Fullan, 1992). For example, Birzea & Fartusnic (2003) asserted, when considering educational change in Eastern Europe during the Post-Communist era, during which teachers were also discouraged from taking initiative, that complex educational change requiring great adjustment to existing norms, and practices can take “generations” to become visible in classrooms. In the context of this study, the teachers showed great willingness to adopt Internet based PD and they have taken great steps so far in this field, but they, for the reasons mentioned above, need guidance, encouragement and the necessary instruction in order to cement what they have started themselves with the help of technology, and what is so far seen as merely solo efforts of their own. Such findings match what Al Obaidi & Budosan (2011) found about the current school system in Iraq. They mention that current school system lacks the philosophy of the modern education system and teachers are not trained to identify and deal with new challenges. Wedell and Malderez (2013) also emphasise that approaches to learning have to be consistent across all layers of education system and learners (such as the teachers in this study) need to obtain adequate information about the nature of any changes in the system (such as a new curriculum), if they are to develop new practices and behaviours that are appropriate for change implementation in their own context. This was obvious in the responses of

my participants who mentioned that they were left in the dark about the Internet-based PD option because many relevant issues related to support were not explained to them and they felt that they were not prepared or ready for such a massive change. I quote here one teacher who plainly summarised the whole situation;

“we are not scared of the new technology and the new system, we love it, we believe it is great for our PD, but we are human beings and we would not be able to do it on our own ... call us what you want... but the reality is that we are humans and we have to be trained on all the components of the new system in order to operate it efficiently.” (teacher Salman - Al Sharqyia Boys School)

5.4.2. Technology (the Internet) is essential for modern PD process

Across the wider Iraqi community understanding, the use of the Internet has become essential for the modern life. People from different walks of life are using the Internet for almost everything depending on its relevance to their interests. Therefore, it was no surprise that the teachers in this study, being part of the same community, showed great support for using the Internet for the purposes of enhancing their careers and developing new skills to boost their professional growth.

While the teachers reported some concerns about the official unplanned support for the technology based professional development, what came across in the data of this study was the teachers' positive feelings about

this new method and desire to “exploit” the official support to their own benefit in regard to pursuing their PD process and boosting their careers. The teachers interviewed in this study undoubtedly supported the idea of implementing technology for the purposes of pursuing their professional development and expressed their wish to be able to teach fully with technology in the future once they gained the necessary skills to do that. This is similar to what Polly et al. (2010: 866) found in a study they conducted on 150 school teachers who received education online. The teachers in that study “attended professional development workshops, received technology equipment and had access to individual help”. The results showed that 70% of teachers who received online education were able to develop new skills to teach with technology with one teacher reporting “I can apply what I know about technology in the classroom. I am able to use it as an instructional tool and integrate it in the curriculum.” The teachers in this study agreed that the Internet was a useful platform for their professional development purposes and they expressed their support for the idea of adopting the Internet for their new professional development strategy. They believe that the Internet is a modern tool that can bring many modern teaching methods, which will positively contribute to their professional growth. These findings from my study are also concomitant with those of Ertmir et al (2012: 408) who conducted a study about the opportunities that the Internet provided to teachers’ professional development process. They recruited 27 teachers for their study in which they investigated the influence of using technology for the purpose of teachers’ professional development. The results showed that “most

teachers responded that technology provided them with a constant source of professional growth. With the amount of resources and information available on the Internet, teachers established their own PDs through a variety of technology.” Ertmir et al (2012: 408) also reported that the teachers in their study mentioned that “the Internet was a floodgate”, referring to the amount of information they could access when using it.

However, the data in this study does not seem to match what Lee et al. (2005:1102) found about the Internet-based learning. They found that the Internet-based learning was not a straightforward process and other conditions needed to be available for any goals to be achieved from such process. “This goal cannot be achieved without the active participation and involvement of learners. Moreover, extrinsic and intrinsic motivators are different types of behavioural evoking drivers susceptible to different kinds of treatments.”

5.4.3. Bottom up approach for teachers' PD

It is really an unusual situation in Iraq to look at a bottom-up PD approach in in a “very” top-down education system. The data in this study revealed that the teachers were willing to use technology for their professional development purposes. That attitude was predicted due to the encouraging attitude of all of the government departments, including education, towards adopting technology.

However, what was totally unexpected to me, and which the data revealed, was the teachers' intention to use technology and mainly the

Internet to impose a bottom up system and pursue their own way of professional development. Some teachers in this study believe that technology might be able to help them impose such system because it appears as the only quick and effective option at the current status of chaos. They expressed their frustration about the lack of any top-down professional development plans and they trust that the availability of the Internet in the Iraqi scene following the invasion of the country in 2003 is seen as an opportunity for them to pursue their own professional development. They believe that such opportunity can be deemed a solution for the lack of the traditional INSET especially given that they are now expected, more than ever before, to upgrade their professional skills to be able to coop with the new requirements of the new curriculum. In a report published by the UNICEF, "Improving Access to Quality Education in Iraq", it mentions that "a thematic working group on teacher training has been established to make teachers' voices heard" (www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/files/Iraq_2013: 25). It is also revealed in the data through my informal conversation, noted in my journal, with headteachers, inspectors and education officials that such bottom up approach is actually happening at school level and they all raised concerns that teachers might not accept any future MoE INSET provision (if it happens in the future) that is prepared without consulting them.

The teachers in this study actively welcome the opportunity to take responsibility for their own PD and to establish a bottom up approach for their PD that would suit their needs. Although the teachers had no intention to do this at the beginning of the educational change process,

they found themselves being pushed to think this way due to the lack of any top down support. This represents a major shift in the Iraqi educational context and at the same time a pragmatic response to the contextual reality.

The data about my participants' beliefs in this respect is similar to that of Bradshaw et al. (2012: 74) who conducted a study about the role of ICT in enhancing a bottom-up teachers' professional development approach. Their findings show that teachers' perceptions of successful CPD is no longer linked to traditional INSET programmes. Instead CPD success in the modern times is mainly linked to an "innovative bottom-up response and reconceptualization of CPD as being more than just externally designed courses". Bradshaw et al. (2012: 82) concluded that the success of any CPD programmes "can be largely attributed to the approach and ethos of recognizing, and building on, the expertise of practitioners and developing an infrastructure to support bottom-up sharing of that expertise".

The participants in this study also mentioned that the use of technology has brought new work ethos to their schools because they felt that they were working more together compared to how things were before the invasion and before the changes in the education system. They explained that before the invasion in 2003 when traditional INSET was in place, they never thought of communicating with each other about their professional development issues because all was planned for them and all that they needed to do was to attend those courses. There was no need to speak to

each other about their PD issues because it was not their responsibility. This is not the case anymore and teachers have started to feel that they need support from each other to find a solution for their PD dilemma as they are all in the same boat. It appeared that technology has provided the teachers with an effective communication platform. They could meet online anytime and there were no constraints to stop them from meeting as was the case with the traditional face to face meetings. In other words, technology, mainly the Internet has made it easy and flexible for the teachers to meet and discuss their PD issues and agree future plans. This finding matches what Mullen et al. (2011: 47) found in relation to how communication among teachers makes it easier for them to influence official decisions. They found that when teachers achieved a good level of communication and understanding, their voices became more powerful. Their data also revealed that technology provided the platform for such communication and their participants “availed themselves of numerous forms of communication while learning about teaching. Internet based communication was only one such option”. Mullen et al. (2012) also found that communicating online removed the differences between the participants’ status and positions, which leads to considering the potential of technology “to encourage communities of learners in which issues of status and power are downplayed”. This technology capacity to remove differences between learners also makes us think about the potential power of technology in transforming teachers to be real change agents.

The power of technology to remove issues of status and positions in online communities is interesting when it comes to the Iraqi context. As

mentioned above Iraqis are naturally conscious about keeping their status and positions when attending meetings and when communicating with their colleagues and counterparts. Senior staff do not like it, for example, when they are asked by a junior staff member to discuss and form a collective view about their PD issues. The introduction of technology into the Iraqi context has made a positive change according to the data of this study. The teachers in this study mentioned that they all feel as one team when communicating and learning online and anyone can step in to help those who might be struggling with grasping certain ideas and concepts in relation to the modern teaching practices. The data also revealed that the introduction of technology has meant that for the first time ever all teachers; males and females can meet together online and discuss their future PD issues. This is a further example of cultural changes in the light of contextual changes, which lead to the growth of teacher agency.

However, the data also showed that although the teachers started to feel the benefit of technology in facilitating the pursuit of personally relevant PD they felt that implementation of a bottom-up approach was wrapped with the feeling of uncertainty and chaos because there was still no official umbrella to validate their suggestions and agreements. The teachers expressed their concerns regarding whether such initiatives can be organised and be documented for future references. All what the teachers were doing was to create online forums where they put forward the points they wished to see in their PD programmes and exchange ideas on meeting some PD challenges. This feeling of insecurity associated with the bottom-up approach is considered by Bore (2006) as normal at the

early stages of such approach. He mentions that “uncertainty is both likely and should be welcomed in the early stages of the creative process. Some chaos is integral to the process and is to be encouraged if combinatorial thinking by, and between, participants is to occur” (2006:419). Teachers such as the participants in this study who are normally used to top-down approaches need to accept such uncertainty as “they relinquish their structural straightjackets and begin to talk and think” (2006: 419).

The uncertainty phase, according to Bore (2006: 420) will eventually be replaced by enjoyment and enthusiasm and participants in bottom-up approach need to “be confident that these will become positive once the creative process gathers steam”. He continues “a bottom–up approach which is non-complex, needs minimal documentation and it requires little investment other than time. The ‘experts’ are the teachers, who can reconfigure theory creatively and collaboratively, using their pedagogical content knowledge” (Bore, 2006: 420). Thus, the initial apparent complexity of the bottom-up approach that the participants in this study might be currently experiencing has the potential to change into a main stream policy if they carry on with their work.

5.5. Factors Hindering to I-PD (in the short and medium terms).

The data in this study revealed that although the teachers showed willingness and enthusiasm towards adopting technology, they found themselves up against the wall due to the lack of support. The teachers were in a way surprised about the level of skills that they needed to

achieve in order to be able to use the Internet for their own PD purposes, they mentioned that they thought the use of the Internet for their PD purposes would be similar to the way they use it in their everyday life, simply search for what they wanted and then downloading the materials. However, their positive attitude towards the Internet has encouraged them to pursue the Internet option in the absence of any official support. This has led me to believe that the attitude of teachers towards technology might be a hinderer and/or an encouraging factor for them to adopt technology for their PD purposes and so it is a critical issue. This is another Iraqi specific issue because those teachers have suffered from many years of isolation from the outside world, which made them lag behind in terms of familiarity with technology compared to teachers in the rest of the world. The teachers in this study were deprived from taking advantage of the technological advances in the field of teaching due to the many complicated political circumstances that the country has been through in the last three decades but they proved that technology was able to heal their past scars quickly and effectively.

The use of technology for PD purposes, according to Kao and Tsai (2009: 66), is an important factor for the modern professional development process because “teachers’ professional development in the use and the application of technology is the key determining factor for improved student performance”. The Internet has been broadly used in the educational area and such usage has unlocked many doors for teachers who “need to learn from the Internet to advance their knowledge and professional development” (Kao and Tsai, 2009: 67). The advantages of

the Internet in the field of teachers' professional development have been widely addressed and authenticated by previous studies. However, my data showed that such advantages cannot be achieved without the teachers' Internet self-efficacy. The majority of the teachers in this study showed positive attitude towards the use of the Internet which helped them to relatively move forward in this respect. But a few teachers in this study were reluctant about the use of the Internet for their PD purposes. That was because those teachers were either not confident with their Internet skills or they have never used the Internet. The link between teachers' attitude and their use of technology has been investigated by previous studies. Kao and Tsai (2009) found that teachers' attitudes towards technology are correlated with their computer self-efficacy. Smarkola, (2008) found that learners with greater computer self-efficacy may have more positive attitudes toward the Internet. Besides, learners' attitudes toward Internet or web-based learning are highly correlated with their Internet self-efficacy (Kao & Tsai, 2009). This matches the data in this study which showed that teachers have more opportunities to learn through Internet-based professional development when there is a positive relationship between teachers' Internet skills and their attitudes toward Internet-based professional development. The teachers who did not show positive attitude towards the Internet in my study were mainly those who had been in service for many years, had very basic computer skills and believed that it would be very difficult for them to cope with the demands of the new technology and so found it not worth trying.

5.5.1. Lack of Internet-based PD trainings, Internet skills and professional support

The above argument about teachers' Internet self-efficacy leads us to a key point about the support that teachers might need in order to upgrade their Internet skills or learn new skills to be able to use the web for their PD purposes. The data in my study uncovered a very disappointing fact about the level of the official support for developing teachers' capacity to use technology. The findings revealed that the official messages that the teachers have been receiving in relation to their use of the Internet for PD purposes in many ways seemed to be putting more pressure on teachers rather than helping them. This becomes significant when considering that without adequate official support for the Internet based PD, the possibilities for any future progress on the part of the teachers in this respect becomes very slim. Buabeng-Andoh (2012: 136) mentions in a study conducted about governments' investment in ICT in education, that the adoption of ICT by teachers for professional progress has been limited despite the huge official encouragement and investment in this sector. He adds that among the barriers behind this were the "lack of teacher ICT skills; lack of teacher confidence and lack of teacher training". As I stated earlier in this chapter, the official support for the Internet based PD for the participants in this study seemed to be limited to the purchase of hardware and the software equipment. The teachers in this study have not been offered any opportunities to develop their ICT skills or to upgrade their Internet knowledge to levels that would be suitable for this type of PD.

Even where there were some sorts of acknowledgment by the MoE that the teachers needed to acquire new ICT skills to be able to pursue an Internet-based PD, according to the teachers in this study, such acknowledgment was not accompanied by any practical steps to set up training programmes for the teachers to be able to adopt this option. The MoE stance towards this issue appeared to be based on the theoretical view that the Internet has the ability to accommodate an online learning style, rather than providing teachers with the mechanistic/practical view about the process of their professional development, which entails a repertoire of techniques that teachers needed to learn if they were to take that option. The official stance seemed to be to encourage in-house technical support for teachers' PD to compensate for the absence of the official training programmes. The assumption seemed to be that those teachers with more skills would help those with fewer. However, the teachers in this study mentioned that other more ICT orientated colleagues could only offer so much. Rogers (2015: 296) mentions that although teachers generally acknowledge the benefit of colleagues support, yet "a school administration cannot simply mandate that colleagues give and receive support or that it will operate". He also questions whether the colleague support offered "actually meets the colleagues' needs?"

However, the data in this study also showed glimmers of hope, where the teachers tried to set up their own informal 'technical' learning groups. The participants mentioned that they maintained professional relationships with their colleagues in order to exchange ideas and information about using

the Internet for their professional development purposes although they did not look at that type of cooperation as an effective solution for their problems due to some gaps in their skills with technology. It was the lack of official support and the lack of consciousness that learning engages everyone that made the participants in this study create their own interdependent support groups, which as mentioned above were not alone an effective solution to fill in the gap in their professional development training. The importance of providing appropriate conditions for supporting teacher learning is noted by Ingvarson et al (2005: 17) who mentioned that “policy makers and school administrators need to give equal attention to building the conditions that will enable schools to provide fertile ground for professional learning on an ongoing basis and as a routine part of the job”. In the specific context of the Iraqi teachers in this study, the use of the Internet for professional development appeared to raise other concerns, which might be less prominent in the rest of the world or in neighbouring countries in the Middle East where access to the Internet began earlier. When compared to Saudi Arabia or Jordan, one can notice that such countries have taken a lot of steps in the last 30 years to prepare their teachers for the online learning era. Iraq, being put under international sanctions since 1990 after the invasion of Kuwait and before that the war with Iran, was unable to catch up with the technology boom that the rest of the world was living in the late 80s and early 90s. Therefore, it is no surprise to notice that the teachers in this study were not even aware of something called online learning before 2003. They have just started to realise that the Internet can accommodate effective learning if used

correctly. Part of any effective online learning, according to Salmon (2002), is access. If learners are unable to access online learning courses because of the absence of technology training and support to enable them to do so, then the whole process would not kick off.

Another critical aspect in regard to Internet based learning that the data of this study revealed was the teachers' unawareness of the importance of constructing knowledge in order to achieve a good level of online learning progress. The majority of the teachers mentioned that they thought their previous knowledge, obtained from previous PD provision, was not valid at all after the changes that the education sector in the country has witnessed and the need for technology to be integrated into teaching.

They thought that they needed complete new knowledge to be able to perform effectively. This is seen as another limiting factor on the teacher autonomy side. Most of the teachers expressed that they were always told what they needed to do throughout their previous PD requirements that were set centrally by the MoE. However, if they use the Internet to find out what things are and what things mean, it is going to be difficult. As a result they are unable to use their existing technology to understand new knowledge. For example, the teachers are used to teach English language using the grammar method but not the interactive teaching method.

Therefore, if they want to use a different method, they need to understand and formulate new knowledge. Although the teachers in this study has taken tremendous steps themselves to use technology for their PD purposes, none of the teachers interviewed in this study realised that Internet based learning or online learning requires learners to formulate

their own assumptions about knowledge and relate them to their own previous experiences (Salmon, 2002). Such lack of understanding of Internet based learning among teachers in my study is linked to the insufficient support and the absence of professional training programmes to modernise the teaching profession because if broader educational reforms were to be achieved and more powers to be given to schools, “then the teaching profession itself needed modernising” (Furlong, 2008: 727).

5.5.2. Lack of Internet-based PD motivation, confidence and incentives

Although the teachers in this study showed a lot of positive attitude towards I-PD, their criticism to the official support provision and their lack of confidence in the MoE might have exacerbated some teachers' feeling of frustration about the option of the Internet- based professional development. Similarly, the absence of any incentives for teachers, such as amendment to their teaching loads and promotions, to adopt such option for their PD suggested that while the teachers were expected to pursue their own PD using the available technology, the MoE practices and behaviour in this respect did not include any provision for supporting the teachers in this field. It appeared, as reported by some of the teachers in this study, that the officials at the MoE who were responsible for educating and supporting teachers in this critical transitional time, might themselves needed to be shown how to do their jobs. This fits with the point raised earlier by Wedell & Malderez (2013) that change needs to take place across the system; we cannot expect teachers to change if

those above them do not themselves understand how their roles also need to change in order to meet new educational goals.

These examples from this study are concomitant with the findings of (Meyer & Murell, 2014: 10) who found in their study that education policy leaders needed to allocate resources to enhance policy executers' skills in regard to online learning so they could provide better support for schools and teachers in this field. Policy leaders need to "focus on known pedagogies—e.g., experiential learning, critical thinking—that have been proven effective in the face-to-face classroom and transferred successfully to the online environment". Therefore, there is a need to allocate the required resources and to begin from where teachers currently are, i.e. with the known.

Online learning is closely linked to motivation, which means that if learners do not have the desire to adopt such type of learning then the potential of achieving any success becomes unlikely. Salmon's (2002) model emphasises the role of motivation in creating a successful online learning environment because the motivation element prepares the ground for other elements to be easily and smoothly applied. This has been clearly highlighted by the participants of this study. The data of this study showed that the teachers felt that they were left alone to deal with the top level suggestion about their PD progress. The MoE was mainly suggesting solutions without any accompanying practical steps. The teachers were encouraged to pursue online PD but no incentives were offered to them to make such option attractive. Most MoE and schools communication flow in

regard to the teachers' PD requirements seemed to focus on compliance, rather than providing practical methods to reinforce teachers' motivation in this respect. For example, the MoE and the schools' perception about the teachers' PD provision, according to teacher Salman – Al Sharqyia Boys School – was that it was the “*teachers' duty to teach and look for the best suitable practices to deliver the objectives of the curriculum*”. This reveals that the conception of the policy advocates at the MoE, about the whole process and what is happening in the education sector at the moment, is very simplistic, viewing teachers' PD as the ability to develop a set of lesson plans and teaching skills appropriate for the new curriculum. Sadly as yet policy makers in Iraq seem to continue to suppose teaching is a simple enterprise requiring little support, rather than as a tremendously complex skill that needs “training and specialized competence to navigate it successfully” (Fenstermacher, 2002: 21).

5.5.3. Perceived disadvantages of the Internet (lurking, isolation)

The significance of limited social communication that is associated with the online learning was apparent in the participants' responses about the Internet – based PD option. What the teachers in this study thought about the absence of the social feature in the online learning mode, is linked to their inexperience and hence not being fully aware of what modern technology applications offer in regard to the social and support factors. Salmon (2002: 50) mentions that online socialisation enables learners to set up their own identities and be more active. “Indeed, the importance of establishing relationships, through both formal and informal interactions, in

contributing to social and academic integration, is well documented as critical for learners retention". The social presence was also highlighted as important by Garrison et al (2010: 32) because it provides a structure to understand "the complexities of online learning".

The data showed that the teachers were able to pursue their own PD using the Internet but they were not sure whether that would be possible in the long term without being shown how to do so and what to look for. This feeling matches that of Stephenson (2001: 17) who found that the real challenge that online learners faced was how to find an online alternative for the knowledgeable well equipped tutor that they were used to have in the face-to-face provision. Therefore, "it is not new pedagogies that we need, but new ways of providing existing pedagogy efficiently and flexibly".

The participants in this study believed that although the Internet might provide massive opportunities for them to pursue their PD, the lack of interaction with each other could make them feel lonely. Iraqis are very sociable by nature and they are used to communicating with each other on regular bases about all the issues of their everyday life. This cultural distinctiveness that enables Iraqi society to be incredibly resilient through carrying on their everyday life issues collectively and supporting each other might, according to a report by (Reuters, 2016), be linked to the large scale disasters that the country has gone through, which in its turn tend to activate a collective humanitarian response. Life inside schools is no different from life outside schools. The teachers in this study mentioned that they meet after school quite often and they discuss and exchange

ideas about their schools work while socialising after school. It is, therefore, not surprising that the majority of the participants showed their support for online PD provision working and making the best use of it. However, working in a virtual environment is a totally new challenging experience for Iraqi teachers and they would require support and motivation to overcome any obstacles.

As well as their enthusiasm towards adopting technology for their PD purposes, many participants were frustrated with not being heard/advised by the MoE and by their schools about how to overcome the disadvantages of the Internet. From a wider thinking perspective, the current PD gap between the policy advocates and the main stakeholders, the teachers in this study, seems to enable the emergence of new PD methods such as the Internet-based one. However, the findings in this study showed that although the teachers have achieved marvellous progress in their online PD depending on each other, the MoE and the schools seemed to be mostly concerned with ensuring they convince teachers to adopt technology and keep the education technology policy on track without supporting them. This appeared to matter to the teachers in this study because the gap in the support required for their Internet-based PD affected them directly and they felt unable to make their voices heard by the MoE as the only concern of the top level officials was to show that their “new Iraq” policy was working. The education policy leaders in Iraq seem to be widening the gap further with the policy implementers by overlooking the need to establish the necessary structure to effectively implement the policies. They need to “consider firstly what support

systems will be necessary to enable implementers to be able to learn to do what is required by the change, and then what conditions will need to exist in their working environment to support them in doing it.” (Wedell & Malderez, 2013: 216).

5.6. Conclusion

What has emerged from discussion of the findings of this study is that the teachers’ professional development process currently seems to be in a state of chaos as a result of the political change in the country following the American invasion in 2003 and the consequent changes in the education sectors. The old education system whose components and structures had been in place for the last 50 years, all disappeared overnight. Most education policy makers and top level officials were replaced by new faces as part of a whole process to create what was called the “new Iraq”. Those new faces inherited a heavy task of creating a totally “new” education system that had nothing to do with the previous system, through cutting all ties with the past as they were seen as being part of the previous political regime. Additionally, the wide scale looting and burning of government buildings, including the MoE building and other education directorates triggered by the arrival of the American troops to Baghdad in May 2003 made it impossible for the new officials to build on what was there before them.

Given the above starting point and the hasty introduction of the new curriculum under the American pressure, the MoE seems to have seen the

provision of access to technology as one means of mitigating the effects of the lack of new structures, including PD provision, across the education system. Teachers struggled to make sense of an approach to PD that puts technology as the only solution for their problems, while those responsible for providing PD support to the teachers seemed unable to do any more than engulfing schools whatever technology equipment that their hands could fall on.

The previous literature about the use of technology in education for the purpose of teachers' professional development identifies issues related to training and support in well-established education contexts. These studies were usually based in stable education systems that have gone through the change process in a more systematic and organised way than is the case in Iraq. Additionally most studies were carried out in politically stable environments and, therefore, their outcomes appeared to match the normal process of educational transformation, i.e. whatever was planned would eventually result in some version of the desired outcomes because of the stability of the system and the continuous link between the support before and after the change. The contribution of this study is to show that in an exceptionally unique education context, the use of technology by teachers to compensate for the total absence of any INSET provision appears to be a feasible solution in spite of obstacles that continue to hinder any smooth implementation of the process. The contribution/exclusivity of this study rests in the fact that there have been no previous studies about the state of the Iraqi teachers' professional development after the invasion of the country in 2003. The data thus

sheds light for the first time on the daily struggle of the teachers as they fight their way through the results of the state of chaos that they woke up to see in the morning of the 9th of May 2003. The study highlights, for the first time, the state of confusion of the educational authorities struggling to provide a satisfactory solution for the absence of the regular INSET following the massive change in the country. The study reveals how teachers in such unstable context have made the tremendous efforts to pursue their PD process by using technology for their PD purposes.

My research underlines aspects of teachers' professional needs in a newly forming educational context that is endeavouring to catch up with the rest of the world and that has never seen many modern educational tools and practices before in terms of the introduction of technology. The current educational situation in Iraq is in some way similar to the situation in the rest of the world in the late 80s and early 90s when technology was just starting to find its way into the education field. The difference is that most of the places in which research was carried out were stable at that time and so prior research is based in education systems undergoing more or less orderly transitions. The situation in Iraq at the moment remains totally different. The data in this study illustrates the interrelated conditions rather than the purely technical measures in the education structure which are needed to support the desired emergence of new solutions. The data show that the teachers' professional development process and individual teachers' needs should be reflected in the national priorities. The Iraqi education system does not currently consider the teachers' individual needs in its strategic priorities and this issue needs addressing especially

after the Iraqi teachers studied here have showed what they are made of; demonstrating that technology can be responded to in a very positive way even in the most difficult and unstable educational contexts.

This study offers novel contribution to the literature on teachers' professional development and the use of technology for such purpose.

While the findings in this study show that there are many positive attitudes by the participants towards adopting technology for their PD purposes, the data did reveal the urgent need to create an effective support provision for such a purpose. The data enabled me to understand more about the possibilities of developing a more autonomous and bottom up PD system and promising future potentials for an Iraqi nationwide programme of support for the Internet-based professional development in Iraq when the dust of the current chaos settles.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

6.1. Introduction

My inquiry began as an attempt to understand teachers' PD in the Iraqi context following the invasion of the country in 2003 and the collapse of the previous education system. I set out to obtain a better insight into the complexity of providing teachers' PD in the mid of education change through investigating how different stakeholders working in different sections of the education system could influence the PD provision and the outcomes that such change might bring to the system. As a result of focusing at the provision of PD, and obviously because PD does not exist in isolation, so I have come across other factors in the system such as the status of the educational change. I have explored the nature of the PD provision after the invasion and explored the potential role of technology to address the PD provision following the change. My investigations were carried out in one Iraqi province, Nineveh Province, which is a typical representation of urban Iraqi big cities. Mosul is the capital city of Nineveh and the city is home of more than 3.5 million people. Mosul also provides a full picture of the Iraqi ethnic mosaic society; among a predominantly Arab Muslim Sunni population, a great number of Mosul's ethnic and religious minorities (Christians, Kurds, Shabak, Turkoman Shiaa and Yazidis) live in the city. Through investigating teachers' PD in Mosul, I was able to gain an insight of what makes teachers act in certain ways to address their PD needs.

I am aiming in this conclusion chapter to shed light on the contribution of my research to the understanding of teachers' PD and the implications my findings have for the education officials not only in my country but also in other contexts that might be undergoing an educational change process. However, I recognise that due to the exclusivity of the current Iraqi situation and the complexity of the Iraqi scene the results of this study might not fit any other contexts. Unlike many of the studies that have tackled the integration of technology and teachers' development, my study was conducted in a very unique setting where the situation in Iraq after the American invasion in 2003 necessitated the reconstruction of the whole country including education. Therefore, the whole education system was turned around overnight and we woke up to a new approach that we have never seen before, talk about the role of technology in education and the need to rehabilitate teachers to integrate technology became the daily message from the MoE and the other education directorates. Iraqi teachers were not consulted and they seemed confused about what was needed from them.

No other studies have focused on the issue of the teachers' PD after the invasion. There were only reports generated by some international organisations, such as UNESCO, that lightly touched on the issue of the big change and what it meant for the future of Iraqi teachers' PD. Hence, given the current official focus on the role that technology has to play in re-establishing a functioning education system, a study that explores the potential role that technology might play in supporting teachers' PD during this period in the country is needed. This meant exploring the Iraqi

teachers' current PD practices and how they thought about supporting each other to overcome the new challenges. I also meant examining the willingness of Iraqi teachers to adopt technology in their PD and what encouraging factors and barriers they were facing. My study is the first in depth study directly exploring how Iraqi teachers doing in the lack of support of PD at a time when they are supposed to be introducing and implementing a new curriculum.

I also provide here a reflection on the research approach that underpins this research. Further possible investigations are suggested and the limitations of the study are also presented.

6.2. Contribution of the study

Global understanding of the roles of technology in education has been centred on the integration process and what constitutes effective integration of technology in teaching practices. My research adds to studies of the role of technology for PD in an unusual context. It shows that the effect of technology on teachers is not only related to training and development support, but also attitudinal (teachers changed their attitude and started to work together in forums to help themselves) providing both access to information and also attitudinal, collegial support for, personal and professional development.

Previous research on educational technology over the last three decades has continually focused on the technical approaches of implementing technology, the factors round teachers' integration of technology in their

teaching practice and the use of technology for their PD purposes. Such research still concentrates mainly on investigating the potential benefit of using technology in education. Whilst such previous research is helpful, my research has endeavoured to show that focusing on the potential benefit of technology and the accompanying technical factors overlooks some important issues that are related to teachers' contexts and their specific experiences. My study highlighted the potential power of technology to present solutions for education systems in very difficult contexts and within local environments in which teachers attempting to implement a new curriculum receive minimal or no support. There has been some literature recently such as (Clarke, 2002; Price, 2007; Cohen et al, 2009; Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005; Albion et al, 2015) about the role of technology and online learning in the teacher education fields attempting to look at addressing some fragments of such role. This study attempts to address such call through applying a thorough empirical investigation of what the role of technology in education means for specific people in a specific unusual context.

This study has contributed to a more in depth understanding of the rational dimension of educational change and in specific the implementation of technology in teachers' PD provision, which also entails an awareness of the very specific factors that are related to certain contexts. For me as Iraqi education administrator the results of this study lead me to believe that in a very unstable context, technology has provided support for teachers locally and quickly. As a result my data adds / contributes that

technology presents gateway towards information and training and resources and support that can be accessed locally and quickly.

6.3. Further research

This study has contributed to knowledge by providing an alternative view of using technology in the field of education mainly for the purpose of teachers' PD. My study focuses on the role of the real change agents, the teachers in this process and presents the use of technology in a different way and in a completely unique context. This has started to fill a gap in literature but I believe there is space for more research to be conducted in the area of the potential powers of technology in supporting educational agents in extremely difficult contexts. Education change is probably not happening in a systemic manner in many regions in the world, and different parts of the world have different specific needs related to local necessities and contexts. I believe that such contexts might need more investigations to uncover the potential role of technology in addressing complex educational concerns. While my study has highlighted some aspects of the role of technology in addressing educational challenges and supporting teachers in pursuing their PD in an unstable and unpredictable context, further research in the Iraqi context s also needed to explore the other dimensions of the problem that were not included in the investigation of this study, such as the effect of the newly introduced technology on the learners of English language in Iraq and the many new applications that learners need to be aware of to achieve acceptable level of proficiency.

This study has made me aware of the fact that although technology is being strongly promoted as a solution to many of the problems facing the education system in Iraq today, there has been very limited research investigating role of technology in education within the Iraqi context.

Gaining better understanding of how to implement technology to support teachers' PD provision would enable policy makers to form a better picture on what support is needed and which aspect of provision require further attention at the current transitional period of the history of Iraq. Therefore, this study is useful and timely at this time because the MoE is looking for any information that might contribute to presenting them with a better picture of what is really happening on the ground.

One of the strengths of this research is that it was designed in a way to allow for a multi-level investigation of the current teachers' PD provision in Iraq, but further research could be useful to investigate more layers about the PD provision and its links to the political change in the country that has been lightly touched on by this research. My inquiry has shown some potentials and possibilities of making things work for the PD provision in Iraq following the invasion in 2003 through the use of technology in addition to some obstacles that currently hinder such use. However, it is not clear from my data whether there were any other informal factors that might be obstacles to using technology for teachers' PD, such as schools geographical locations and the communities' layout in certain areas.

Desimone (2009: 181) mentions,

“For decades, studies of professional development consisted mainly of documenting teacher satisfaction, attitude change, or commitment to innovation rather than its results or the processes by which it worked. In the past decade the field has acknowledged a need for more empirically valid methods of studying professional development”.

I agree with Desimone (2009) and would suggest more investigation of informal factors (factors that are linked to their life outside schools) related to teachers PD provision to be carried out in Iraq because this is a research area that would contribute to the literature in the field of teachers' PD and education change.

6.4. Limitations

This study has uncovered important understandings about the current teachers' PD provision in Iraq. However, it also has some limitations that might need to be considered when assessing the implications and recommendations presented in this research.

The sample size was limited to one Iraqi city, Mosul in Nineveh Province and only a few teachers and headteachers took part in the study.

Therefore, it would be undesirable to draw generalisations from my findings and my study was not meant to do this. My study aimed to explore the particular, to discuss “a particular topic organised for research purposes” (Gill et al, 2008: 293); and to shed light on the status of “chaos” of the teachers' PD provision in the single setting of my investigation in the hope that my result in better insights to inform the development of a new

PD platform for the complex situation in which the teachers have found themselves in.

While I see my field visits as a strength for this research, I understand that changing the current PD situation would take time and, therefore, I am conscious that my data reflects occurrences at a specific moment in time in a specific context. Consequently, I am careful not to propose that my findings are fixed for my participants because I am unable to determine whether new behaviours and practices will emerge in the future due to the dynamics of complications that makes it impossible to envisage what might happen.

Despite some challenges, I feel that the findings of my study provide detailed insights on how a particular group of teachers and schools administrators experience the PD provision in a particular context. I also feel that as long as the reader is made aware of the selection process of the participants and who they were, then the reader can make informed judgements about the credibility and the dependability of the claim made by this study and whether such claim can be linked to their own settings.

6.5. Final thoughts

My research has investigated the potential of using technology to address the teachers' PD provision in one Iraqi Province in order to gain insights on what it is that makes teachers and schools administrators do and think in certain ways. Following a qualitative approach, I examined the dimensions of different factors in the whole "new" technology-based

education system in Iraq and their role in enhancing/hindering the teachers' PD provision. I believe that the qualitative approach that I followed in this study, by implementing a qualitative interview tool for the data collection, has been conducted rigorously and provided a trustworthy presentation of the chaotic scene of the teachers' PD provision in the post-invasion Iraq. Although I began by investigating the current PD provision and the role of technology in addressing the newly created gaps in the system, I was surprised with the complexity of the scene that emerged from the data. The study suggests that education officials at the MoE need to consider the on the ground factors that teachers are experiencing on a daily basis before presenting technology as the magical solution for the whole education system because any educational change depends on the thinking and actions of teachers and others who support them.

While conducting this research, I experienced a critical transitional period, changing my role from a practitioner to a researcher, which was not an easy expedition, but one that I enjoyed and learnt a lot from. I was able to overcome the challenges of transforming my own practical experiences of the Iraqi educational change into concepts. I also feel that my research methodology skills have been greatly developed and polished.

I hope that the reader finds new insights about the current educational situation in Iraq and I hope that my great interest in the Iraqi education system, my passion about my fellow teachers and my country have shone through in this study.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 Participant Information Sheet

Participant Information Sheet

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether to do so it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

Who will conduct the research?

Awf Alali – PhD student, School of Education, University of Leeds, UK

Title of the Research

Supporting the professional development of Iraqi serving ESL teachers through the use of technology

What is the aim of the research?

My research is looking at the status of the professional development of the Iraqi EFL teachers in post-invasion Iraq. In other words, how do Iraqi ESL teachers go about their professional development in a period of educational change with little or no support at all from the Ministry of Education in Baghdad or from the Directorates General of Education in the provinces. Technology has also been introduced to Iraqi schools within this change and it could be a potential solution for current gaps in EFL teachers' professional development after the invasion. In other words, how do Iraqi ESL teachers go about their professional development? I am interested in exploring how you understand professional and what opportunities you see for such development in the current context.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen due to your long experience in English language teaching, which provides a good resource of data for the research objectives.

What would I be asked to do if I took part?

You will be asked questions in an interview with the researcher. The questions will ask about your opinions regarding professional development and what possibilities you see for your own professional development.

What happens to the data collected?

The data will be only used for the purpose of this research and will not be shared with any other parties.

How is confidentiality maintained?

The data will be dealt with in a highly confidential manner and it will be collected by an interview that will be recorded on an mp3 device. The data will be deleted from the device and any other transcripts will be destroyed when the research is finished.

What happens if I do not want to take part or if I change my mind?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason. There will be no adverse effects of your withdrawal.

What is the duration of the research?

There will be a maximum of two interviews that are likely to last between 45 to 60 minutes at your convenience, and subject to your availability.

Will the outcomes of the research be published?

The research outcomes will be available to the School of Education at Leeds University without disclosing any personal data. The thesis in which the anonymised data will be included will be placed in the public domain by being deposited in the University of Leeds library. I will be happy to share the outcomes with you once the research is completed.

Contact for further information

Awf Alali

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Email: awf_alali@hotmail.com

Appendix 2 Participants' Consent Form

Using Technology to Support the Professional Development of Iraqi ESL Teachers in the Post-Invasion Context

CONSENT FORM

If you are happy to participate please complete and sign the consent form below

Please Initial Box

1. I confirm that I have read the attached information sheet on the above study and have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions and had these answered satisfactorily.
2. I understand that my participation in the study is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.
3. I understand that the interviews will be audio recorded
4. I agree to the use of the data I provide being used as anonymous quotes
5. I agree that any data collected may be shared with the researcher's supervisors and examiners.
6. I agree that any data collected may be published in anonymous form in the doctoral thesis that this study will culminate in.

I agree to take part in the above project

Name of participant

Date

Signature

Name of person taking consent

Date

Signature

Awf Alali

Appendix 3 Consent Form - Arabic Version

اراء مدرسي اللغة الأنكليزية العراقيين حول استخدام التكنولوجيا في التدريس في ضوء السياسه التربويه للحكومہ العراقيه

أستمارة الموافقه

أذا كنت ترغب في المشاركة بهذا البحث، الرجاء القيام بأكمل الأستماره و التوقيع عليها

الرجاء وضع نعم أو لا	
	أؤكد بأنني قد أطلعت على موضوع البحث وقد أتيتحت لي الفرصه بطرح الأسئلة
	أنا على علم بأنني أستطيع الانسحاب من المشاركة في أي وقت و بدون أبداء الأسباب
	أنا على علم بأن المقابله سوف يتم تسجيلها
	أوافق على عرض و استخدام المعلومات بدون ذكر أي أسماء
	أوافق ان تطلع لجنة الأشراف و اللجنه الأمتحانيه على المعلومات
	أوافق على نشر المعلومات في نهاية الدراسه بدون ذكر أي أسماء

أنا الموقع أدناه أو هفق على المشاركة في هذا البحث

التوقيع	التاريخ	أسم المشترك
التوقيع	التاريخ	أسم الباحث

Appendix 4 Interview Schedule – Pre- Field Work (Piloting)

No.	Questions	Prompts for participants
Questions for teachers		
Q1	Is professional development an individual pursuit or is it the responsibility of the Directorate of Education?	Not to confused with in service training
Q2	How important is professional development in the career life of a practising ESL teacher in Iraq?	Other social and economic constraints. Priorities. Incentives.
Q3	As an ESL teacher with years of experience, what is it that you do to keep side by side with current developments in the field of English language teaching?	Journals, textbooks, courses, conferences, peer discussions, etc.
Q4	Do you think you need training in using the Internet resources for ESL teachers professional development	What? Organised by whom? Pay privately?
Q5	What do you think are the prospects of using the Internet resources for language teaching at your school?	Problems? Short term? Long term? Pupils ready?
Questions for the officials at The Directorate of Education in Mosul and the Ministry of Education in Baghdad		
Q1	How do you perceive the role of ESL teachers training programmes in providing a climate that encourages professional development?	Motivate. Direct. Encourage. Collaborate
Q2	What facilities are provided by schools and education authorities towards an active teachers' professional development climate?	ICT climate. Future plans if any?
Q3	How can teachers make effective use of the Internet as a resource for their own self-development?	How can you help?
Q4	Can your department contribute to creating continuous professional development network through web-based training such as e- learning, e-mail communication and discussion forums?	Professional development forum of local teachers, national network, annual conference.

Questions for school heads		
	<p>What kind of provision does the school provide to help teachers with their professional development? What is the role of schools and education authorities towards creating active professional development climate?</p>	<p>Motivate. Direct. Encourage. Incentives for teachers.</p>
	<p>What technical facilities or support are available for teachers to engage in professional development?</p>	<p>ICT climate. Future plans if any? Support from local education authority?</p>
	<p>How can teachers be encouraged to make effective use of the Internet as a resource for their own self-development?</p>	<p>Low-tech conditions. Internet-based lessons. Pupils needs</p>
	<p>Can schools contribute to creating a professional development network through web-based training such as e-learning, e-mail communication and discussion forums?</p>	<p>Professional development through school forum or national network. Annual conference.</p>

Appendix 5 Interview Schedule – Field Work

Interview schedules for teachers, and schools heads

- 1 How do you look at professional development? Is it an individual responsibility? Is it the responsibility of the Ministry of Education/Directorate General of Education? Or can it be a collaborative work in a teachers' network?

(Tips for me: this is not to mix up with INSET).

- 2 How important is professional development in your life as a practising EFL teacher?

(Tips: Are there other economic and social constraints? What Priorities/Incentives are there?)

- 3 Being an English language teacher with 10 years of experience, what is it that you do to keep side by side with existing developments in your teaching field?

(Tips: textbooks, journals, conferences, peer discussions, courses)

- 4 What do you think that you need to do more in order to develop your Skills and performance as an EFL teacher?

(Tips: action research, self-reflection, peer observation)

- 5 What is the current support that is provided by school and the Directorate General of Education? How does it work?

(Tips: journal subscription, training?)

- 6 What are the current associations for teachers that are currently available that brings all of Iraqi EFL teachers together? How do they create a professional base for organised CPD? What are they and how do they function?

(Tips: What if any? Proportion/scale - If not why not?)

- 7 What means in your context that are available to you that you can make use of for your own Professional Development?

(No prompts here! Just to obtain realistic response)

8 How effective and useful do you think the Internet as an online learning tool for professional development?

(Tips: How effective the Internet is? Is it practical/useful?)

9 Have you used the Internet consciously for the purpose of professional development before?

(Tips: What are sites you consulted? How did you identify/found them? How useful/effective were they to your professional development?)

10 How frequently do you use the internet for your professional development purposes?

(Tips: How do you get access? And how long?)

11 What training you have received on using the Internet?

(Tips: What training? When did it happen? How long for – period of time?)

12 In your opinion, do you feel that you need to get training on how to use the Internet's resources for the purpose of your English language teaching practice and also for your professional development?

(Tips: What training needed? Who do you think could organise it? Are you willing to pay for that privately?)

13 In your opinion, what are the implications of using the Internet and resources taken from the Internet on the teaching of English language at your school?

(Tips: Would there be any problems? Would the implications be on short term/long term? Do you think your pupils are ready for this?)

Additional questions for Headteachers

14 How do you observe your role as the headteacher in preparing a suitable climate for your teachers that might encourages Professional Development?

(Tips: motivate them?, Direct them? Collaborate with hem? Encourage them?)

15 What do the school and the Directorate General of Education provide (what facilities) in order to create an effective professional development climate?

(Tips: Do you offer ICT oriented atmosphere? Do you have future plans in place to achieve more?)

16 How do you think teachers can use the Internet effectively as a source for their professional development?

(Tips: As a head of school, how can you facilitate this?)

17 How do you think that headteachers might contribute towards establishing a web based network (such as discussion forums, emails groups) of professional development for teachers that can be used for online training?

(Tips: How to establish a forum of local school teachers? Are there annual conferences that can help in achieving this?)

<p style="text-align: center;">Specific questions for school heads (might be for the 2 elite schools)</p>
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18 What provision does the school provide to encourage/help EFL teachers in their professional development? What is the role of the school and the Directorate General of Education in creating effective professional development context?

(Tips: How to motivate EFL teachers? How to direct them and encourage them do so? Are there any incentives for them?)

19 What professional IT support and other technical that are available for teachers to make them engage in their professional development?

(Tips: What is the IT atmosphere in the school? What are the future plans to achieve this in the school?)

20 What role do you think the schools might be able to do in supporting teachers' professional development throughout the use of technology? How to eliminate the barriers and reinforce effective usage?

Appendix 6 Sample Interview Transcripts - English Version

Teachers Questions: Teacher No. 3 – male – Boys' School

(Duration: 60 minutes)

- 1. Who do you think should be responsible for a teacher's PD? Is it an individual responsibility? Is it the responsibility of the Ministry of Education/Directorate General of Education? Can teachers help each other to 'develop' through collaborating in a teachers' network?**

I believe that it is the responsibility of the DGE (Directorate General of Education) because it is the party that is responsible for the curricula and the one who should provide teachers the basic needs for their PD. It is also not reasonable to ask teachers to do that themselves, it is the DGE and the MoE who should do this.

Before the topple of the previous regime (Saddam's regime) and the change of the curriculum, there were good and clear training programmes, also the curriculum was far more simple and we knew how to teach it and how to develop our profession. In addition, the PGE and the MoE used to help teachers through organising many seminars and training sessions on the PD throughout the year.

Me: Do you know how often you used to attend trainings and PD seminars?

I can tell you, it was almost every term – kind of four times a year.

Me: ok, you were saying that the DGE and the MoE used to help teachers ...

Yes, there was a lot of support in the field of PD and but the main problem started after the change of the curriculum because everything became new out of a sudden and the MoE withdrew its hand from providing adequate training for teachers on how to teach the new curriculum. They left everything on the teachers' shoulders as if teachers are magicians who can wave a wand and be able to teach the new curriculum and develop themselves professionally.

You also asked me if we are able to help each other in our PD through collaborating in a teachers' network, I can say, yes, we are able to do so but it will be difficult because there are a lot of logistics that need to be available for the teachers to do that. Teachers will be able to collaborate with each other in

regard to their PD if enough support becomes available for them from the PGD and the MoE.

2. How important is professional development in your life as a practising EFL teacher?

It is very important; PD means is everything for a teacher's career. You do not expect me to carry out my duties effectively as a teacher without continuous professional development. Imagine you enter a classroom to teach and you are not fully equipped with the necessary skills to do so ... I believe that without continuous professional development, the teaching career becomes useless and teachers become ...

Me: I beg your pardon ... teachers become what...?

Teachers become useless because their performance will drop day after day, it is just like in every other profession, if not enough training is there, the performance will not be up to an acceptable standard. Add to that, the CPD provides you with information about the recent and most up to date methods in the teaching practices, also, English language teachers in specific need that more than any other teachers, because the teaching methods of the language are in constant change, and there are new teaching methods for English language every now and then and if, as an English language teacher, I am unable to get access to such advances, I will become a bad teacher, or a weak teacher. Even my students will be taught via methods that are outdated and they will be behind compared to other students all over the world. Thanks

3. Being an English language teacher with 10 years of experience, what is it that you do to keep side by side with existing developments in your teaching field?

There are many things that I do in order to carry on with my CPD even in the current circumstances where the resources are very scarce...

Me: Sorry, can I stop you here, I would like you to mention for me in brief the main steps that you take to keep up with the CPD in your field, not only because of the limited resources...

Well ... the main steps that I take are:

- *I attend the few seminars that are organised by the DGE although they have recently stopped that!! Imagine they stopped that at the same time when they brought in the new curriculum!! They seem to be muddling up everything ... I don't know what is happening..*
- *I do some researches myself about the recent publications in the field of the English language teaching and learning. I have been doing this by myself for the last 6 or 7 years.*

- *I have recently started to use the Internet to look for what is new in the field of teaching English and I have recently enjoyed reading some good articles about using authentic visual materials to teach listening and speaking.*
- *I also meet with my other teachers from time to time outside the school context and we exchange ideas about what we come across in regard to teaching English.*

Me: Do your colleagues use technology (the Internet) also to look for what is recent in your field?

Off course, using technology nowadays has become just like eating or going about in your daily life, it is essential in our life now ... can you believe it?

4. Are there any other activities that you feel you could carry out (more often) in order to develop your skills and performance as an EFL teacher?

Yes, there are a lot of activities that I do to develop my skills, for example, I read a lot about the new English language curricula around the world, not only the our new curriculum. But, between me and you, I don't feel that I am gaining anything worth mentioning from such reading because I am not quite sure if what I read is applicable in my context, I mean without the presence of a real guidance for teachers to direct them to read what is good for them, it becomes very difficult to benefit from such readings.

Me: I asked about the activities that you do regardless of whether you gaining any benefit or not...

Yes, I know what you meant but I felt to let you know about the challenges for the Iraqi EFL teachers ... I mostly read around the field of teaching using the Internet, I attend the very few seminars that are organised by the GDE, I exchange ideas with my colleagues and friends who are in similar positions, and try my best to get in touch with some international organisation who work in Iraq for some periodicals.

5. What is the current support for your PD that is provided by school and the Directorate General of Education? How does it work?

(The teacher smiles).... Are you joking? Are you serious?

Me: no, I am not joking? I am serious.

Brother, there is no support ... support is something that used to exist but not anymore. Support for the EFL teachers is extinct. However, the DGE and the MoE are trying to provide some support for teachers but they do not have the ability to do so logistically. They provide schools with computers and Internet connections and a lot of technological equipments....BUT they do not provide schools with the necessary support on how to use all what they provide in teaching!!? They do not provide the necessary support on how to use such technology in PD!!? The school is pressurising us to use technology for our PD and then in our teaching practices just because they, themselves, are under a huge pressure fro the DGE and the MoE to use technology.

In brief, the support that I get from of the parties you mentioned is almost nil, the only support that they are currently using is encouraging teachers on using technology ... they believe that encouragement is the solution for this!! They also believe that providing all what the technological equipments is type of supporting teachers in this ... I think they ... let us talk about something else now because this is stressing me up...

Me: ok

6. What are the associations for teachers that are currently available to bring all Iraqi EFL teachers together? What are they and how do they function? In what ways do they try to provide a professional base for organised PD?

There is the same English language teachers association (the one that you used to manage ... smile), it is still there ... for the last 50 years. The association is concerned about helping teachers in their PD but its role has become marginal after the introduction of the new curriculum.

I had a meeting recently with the secretary general of the association and he informed me that the association was not consulted about the new curriculum and they were as surprised as other EFL teachers when they knew about the new curriculum ... imagine that!!?

Anyway, there is another group inside the school that is run by teachers in which we agree on meeting regularly (once every two weeks) to talk about teaching and other PD matters.

The English language teachers association and the school group have only limited role for now, just providing teachers with some advice on how to use technology and the Internet on a basic level. They also provide some publications from time to time that they print off the Internet about teachers' professional development (there is no copyright in here ... laughing)

7. What means of supporting your own PD are easily available in your (school) context?

Only the computers, this is the main concern for the GDE and the MoE. They have informed schools that they could ask for whatever they need in regard to technology and that would be provided in a matter of days.

..... Silence

Me: Why don't you seize this opportunity to pursue your PD as EFL teachers?

Because there is no leadership... no one is there to guide us through this transitional period. I need support in how to use all this wonderful technological resources in my PD, unfortunately there is no INSET.

Is it possible, in your opinion, that I only sit in front of a computer that is connected to the Internet and pursue my PD without anyone to guide me through this? Answer me?

Me: I only ask questions.

So, the means of support are available in my school but what not available is the expert leadership, training and guidance on how to use all this technology in pursuing my PD.

8. How effective and useful do you think the Internet might be? as an online learning tool for professional development?

I believe that the Internet would be a great means of support for teachers in their PD amid the current severe lack of resources. I can imagine the benefit of being able to look at many different resources using the Internet. Also there are a lot more potentials and positive outcomes if the Internet is used for an online tool for PD.

Me: Would you please explain how would the Internet be of more potential?

Yes, for example, I might be able to attend workshops and training online amid the lack of face to face trainings. This would enable me to fill this gap that is currently affecting my PD progress.

Also, not to mention that as an EFL teacher, I can ask for whatever I want I regard to technology and the school will be happy to provide that in a very short time... they (the school) like technology.

Me: Would you please clarify more to me how would the Internet be of positive outcomes in relation to your PD?

I just cannot imagine anything negative about the Internet. Everything is around technology nowadays; we are living in a world where communications

have become easy, affordable and available. The whole world is just a press of a button away. The Internet can bring me the most up to date information in my field which will help me in building up my PD. I can speak to people all over the world and exchange ideas with them about my PD and also to learn from teachers in developed countries on how to catch up with the latest advances in my teaching field. It is amazing ...

The only negative point about the use of the Internet in my PD is my inability to use it effectively ... I can use the Internet on a simple everyday level but I need more support if I want to use more sophisticated applications.

9. Have you ever used the Internet consciously for the purpose of professional development before?

No, I have not used the Internet for my PD purposes but I have made some attempts to use it in a kind of a discovery way: I mean looking at what is happening in the world in relation to the teaching of the English language.

Me: So, in a way, you have used it with your PD in your mind?

Yes, I have mentioned that to you...

Me: sorry, you mentioned that you have not used it for your PD? Am I right?

I meant that when I started to use the Internet, it was not in my mind that the Internet might be used as a tool for my PD, I was looking at materials related to my PD out of my curiosity to see what is happening in the world but it did not come my mind that the Internet could be a tool that can play the same role of the face to face PD tools... so, honestly, I am still unable to understand how might the Internet be a tool for my PD, however, I wish that this can be true and I wish that I can get the required support to achieve that.

10. How frequently do you use the internet for your professional development purposes?

I we look at my simple attempts to look at PD materials online as a type of online PD, then I use the Internet for such purpose at least once a week. Every weekend, I look at some online materials related to modern methods of teaching English as a foreign language. I also use the Internet to speak to some friends who live in Dubai and we talk about the EFL teaching methods and how to maintain satisfactory PD in this regard. I ask them about what do they do about their PD over there and we recommend to each other some websites that we feel are beneficial in this respect.

I use the Internet more, almost everyday, during school holidays ... I feel that the world is in my hand when I use it and I always ask myself how much we have missed all those years before the Internet was introduced to us.

Me: shall we say that you use the Internet for your PD purposes between 1-2 times a week?

Yes, you can say that.

11. What training you have received on using the internet? In general or for your PD purposes?

You should ask me first if I have received any Internet training at all... not only a online PD training...

There are a lot of pressure being put now on the school and the headteacher to use technology. They say to us that we have to use technology to catch up with the advances in the world. They urge us to look online for what is available to support our PD, and they push us to so, they encourage us, they pressurise us ...they... they... oh, it is a long list. They only thing that they do not mention is how are we supposed to do that?!! Is the school able to support us to achieve that?!!

Me: so, have you received any training in this regard?

Someone came to our school 6 months ago, he was a trainer...he talked to us briefly about how to use the Internet materials to start an online PD. He gave us some forms and asked us to record our online PD activities every week, he said that the forms would help us to build up a portfolio of our PD and they could be used to track our PD progress.... Anyway, to answer your question, ... No, I have not received any training that is worth mentioning on using the Internet for my PD, I wish I could get that.

12. In your opinion, do you feel that you need to get training on how to use the Internet's resources for the purpose of your English language teaching practice and also for your professional development?

I have mentioned in my answer to your previous question that I wish that I can get training on how to use the Internet for my PD purposes and even for my teaching practice and I cannot wait to get that. As to whether I need such training, yes off course I need more than ever before.

I believe that the MoE, the DGE and the school have to offer the required trainings for teachers on how to use the Internet for the purposes of their D and their teaching practices. At the moment, teachers are using the Internet on a surface level, on an individual pursuit and in an unorganised way. Teachers do not know that much about the different applications of the Internet. Add to that the MoE, the DGE, the school never stop talking about technology and their willingness to support teachers with whatever they need to encourage the use of technology for educational purposes including

teachers' PD. However, no one has thought about providing teachers with the required trainings first in order to enable them to use technology for pedagogical purposes.

They need to provide us with the required trainings and support and only then, they can talk about the benefits of the Internet to our practices and PD. They are now doing it the wrong way and are putting the cart before the horse.

13. In your opinion, what are the implications of using the Internet and resources taken from the Internet on the teaching of English language at your school?

I believe that the implications are great.

Me: *Would you please mention to me some of those implications from your point of view?*

Yes, I believe that the main point of using the Internet and its resources would be to ease the pressure on teachers in regard to the teaching of the new curriculum. There are also other implications, such as:

- It would help us to get a lot of up to date materials.
- The Internet could be an effective tool to support us in our PD as it can be used anywhere and anytime. So, we would have the freedom of choosing when to carry on with our PD.
- There would be no time constraints when it comes to training, because the online training can be tailored to suit our availability and other work and social commitments.
- In our current security and political situation, it is difficult to move around different places in the country to attend the traditional face to face training, there are "millions" of checkpoints everywhere and it takes someone ages to go from one place to another...while the Internet comes to you wherever you are... in other words, the trainer comes to my school or to my house and I do not have to do any travel arrangements to attend trainings.

Yesterday, I spent two hours to visit a friend who lives 6 miles away from me due to the many checkpoints and security

Me: **I prefer that we do not talk about such matters as they are not within the realm of this research.**

Appendix 7 Sample Interview Transcript – Arabic Version

Teacher No. 3 – Male

الأسم : ماهر الكياكي

السؤال الأول : من هو المسؤول عن التطوير المهني للمعلم ؟
هل هي مسؤولية المعلم نفسه ؟ أم هل هي
مسؤولية وزارة التربية أو مديرية التربية ؟
وهل باستطاعت المعلمين أنفسهم مساعدة
بعضهم البعض في التطوير المهني من خلال التعاون
عن طريق شبكة أو خطة عمل يضعونها المعلمين
أنفسهم ؟

أعتقد بأنها مسؤولية مديرية التربية لأنها هم
المسؤولون عنه المطبقين ويجب أنه يركز للمعلم الأحدث
التدريبية للتطوير ليس من المعقول أن
تطلب من المعلم أنه يقوم بنفسه بتدريب نفسه
حيث كان الوزارة والمديرية أنه تقوم بذلك
قبل السقوط كما هناك برامج تدريبية وأهمها
البرنامج المطبق أسهل ولنا ذوق ضرة بطريقة
تطوير أنفسنا لتوابع المطبق أيضاً كما
الوزارة تساعد وكذلك مديرية التربية على
عمل الكثير مع الذات والتدريبات كما
التطوير التربوي
بعد تغير المناهج أصبح كل شيء على المعلم وسحب
الوزارة والتربية كدها من التدريب وتأنه المعلم فهو
مسلم يستطيع أنه يدور على الكيدية
هذا غير معقول
أنا قال إذا كنا نحن المعلمين نستطيع أنه نقوم
بتدريب أنفسنا جميعاً صلبة ولكن صعب، صالة
التدريب الأقدم التوجهات التي توفرها للمعلم
لكن نستطيع أنه بالتعاون مع الزملاء لتطوير أنفسنا
أخيراً وأهم الطريقة التي علينا أن نتعامل مع بعضنا
لأننا نحقق ذلك، الأول تعلم نستطيع ولكن يجب
أن يكون هناك برنامج

السؤال الحادي عشر : هل تلقيت تدريباً حول استخدام الأنترنت في التطوير التربوي؟

يجب أن نأخذنا أولاً هل تلقيت تدريباً
في أي شيء في مجال التطوير المهني .

(You should have asked me if I have received any training at all ?) .

هناك الصنف الكبير من قبل المدير والمدير
لا استخدام التكنولوجيا . هم يقولون لنا يجب
عليكم استخدام التكنولوجيا لو امكنه الفهم
ويجب عليكم أنه يبحثوا في الأنترنت لمعرفة ما إذا
يجد في مجال التطوير المهني ، ويجب ويجب .

وبكثيرهم لا يقولوا لنا كيف نفعل ذلك ولا يوفروا
لنا توصيات حول ذلك .

أنا : هل تلقيت أي تدريباً ؟

جاء لنا مدير قبل 6 أشهر وشرح لنا
بأفضل كيفية الاستفادة من المصادر الموجودة
على النت فيما يخصنا التربوي وقام بأي مما
لينا الاستمارات التي سأذكرها إذا علمت أنها
مفيداً تحتفظ سجل و (track) بحضرة تطويرنا
المهني . ولكن لا يجب كل ذلك ، بل
لم أطلب أي دعم وأتمنى أنه أفضل ذلك .

السؤال العاشر : ما عدد المرات التي تستخدم فيها الأنتريكت لأغراض التطوير المهني ؟

إذا فرضنا أن محاورت أطلاعي على مصادر جيدة أنا تكونت يوماً من التطوير المهني عبر الأنتريكت ، ما هي أستخدام ذلك معه أو قبله كل أسبوع ، في خطة نهاية الأسبوع ، اقوم بالأطلاع عن طريق التدريس الكندي للغة على الأنتريكت وأيضاً لدي أهداف معلون الأنة في الأمارات ومثلها نتحدث مع بعضنا عن كيفية تطور طرف التدريس وشباده الكندي عن ماذا يعملون هناك وكذلك في بعضنا بعضا اننا اقولوا المصنوع في هذا المجال .

في العطل الرسمية أو المدرسية ، اقوم بأستخدام الأنتريكت أكثر ، تقريباً بوضوح حيث أنني أعمل بالعالم بين يدي .

أنا إذا هل نقول بأنك تستخدم الأنتريكت لغرض التطوير المهني مرة - أو مرتين أسبوعياً ؟

نعم يمكن قول ذلك .

السؤال التاسع : هل سبق أن استخدمت
الإنترنت لعرض التطوير المهني؟
كيف ذلك؟

لا، لم أستخدم الإنترنت لعرض التطوير ولكن
سعت بعض المجتمعات لاستخدام الإنترنت من
مجال الاستشارات ومعرفة ماذا يقدمها الآلة
في العالم من طرق تدريب جديدة في مجال تعليم اللغة
الإنجليزية.

أنا : يعني استخدمت شبكة التطوير؟

نعم، هناك شيء دائماً نادراً ما أطور مهنتي وأصبح
مفتداً لطلابي وعندما وجدت نفسي في بيئة
حققت بالمصادر والتدريبات، قلت لنفسي
لماذا لا أبدأ إلى الإنترنت لكي يكون لي وسيلة
لنفس فإرضيه لعله يكون شافهاً ~~وغيراً~~

أنا : ولكنك قلت في البداية أنك لم تستخدم
الإنترنت لعرض التطوير المهني؟

نعم أنا قلت ذلك ولكنني فقت أنه لم يكن
في حسابي عندما بدأت إلى الإنترنت أنه
سوف يكون وسيلة للتطوير وأنا فقط
وسيلة للأطلاع. لمرام لا نرا لا نستطيع أدراك
كيف يعمل أنه استخدم الإنترنت في التطوير
المهني ولكن أحب أنه يكون ذلك حقيقة
في حاله وهو ما يرضي لذي

السؤال الثامن : ماهي أيجابيات استخدام
الإنترنت كوسيلة إلكترونية لمسارحة
التطوير المهني؟

أنا أعتقد بأنه الإنترنت حين أنه يكون وسيلة
عظيمة في التطوير (المهني) لخصوص أنني أستطيع
أن أطلع على العديد من المصادر عن طريق الإنترنت
وهناك الكثير من الامتيازات الإيجابية لذلك -

أنا : صلا أستطيع أنه كوضع في ما هي الامتيازات جارية؟

نعم ، بأستطيع مثلاً ، وأظل غيابة الشريكات
العادية التقليدية أنه أخصر وروياً تدريبيه
كما أنه أنترنت لكي أحوط الفحص الثاني أنا في
صحة الآن -

ولدتشيراً بأنني كعلم الآن أستطيع أن أطلب
أهـ سناً يخص التكنولوجيا من المدرسة وسوف
توضره في مطرف مناسب ، ألهتم بحبونا ذلك -

أنا : كيف يمكن أنه يكون الإنترنت إيجابياً أو سلبياً؟

لا أستطيع أن أفكر بأي سلبه للإنترنت ما إذا
عدم قدرتي مثلاً على التعامل بسهولة مع جميع
التطبيقات ، أنا الإيجابيات فيها كثيرة : أستطيع
كما ذكرت سابقاً التدريب على الإنترنت أستطيع
الأصقال بأناس خارج الفرق والأستفادة
من خبراتهم ، أستطيع على الكثير أنه مهتم -

السؤال السابع : ماهي الوسائل المتاحة لك في
مدينتك عملك في مجال دعم تطويرك
المهني ؟

الحكومات التي يركزون عليها الوزارة والتربية
والعديرة ، لقد أهدونا بأنته عملنا طلبنا
أن تترا وسوف يومزونه لنا لكي نفور
عملنا .
بنت ...

أنا : لماذا لا تستخدم هذه الفرصه اذا ؟

لأنه لا يوجد قيادة تاعين على استقلال
صحة الموارد ، نعم هناك الفرصه الموارد
المكانه ولكن أين ال INSET ، ليس
موجود . هل تطبع مثلا أنا تعلق مع الكمبيوتر
والمؤتمرات وتعلم بعد أن يكون هناك
من يجربك عن ~~مجال~~ كيفية العلم ؟ أهيين ؟

أنا : أنا أأل فقط .

أذا الوسائل متاحة في مجال عمل ولكن التري
ليس متاحة بل من يقودك وتعلم هذه
الاستثمار وتبقيه استثمارا .

السؤال السادس : ما هي الجمعيات المتوفرة طحال
اللغة الإنجليزية حالياً والتي يمكن
أن نجتمعهم مع بعضهم البعض؟ وما هي
الطرق التي تتبعها هذه الجمعيات لتقديم
خدمات التطوير المهني؟

هناك نقابة المعلمين التي لا زالت قائمة منذ زمننا
سنة، وهي نقابة لعلماء العلوم والتعليم والتطوير
وكانت هذه النقابة أيضاً أصغر دورها شبه
عاطلاً بعد أنه تم استثناء المراجع الجديد.

تصور، أنا حديث مع أمين النقابة وهو قال لي
بأنه النقابة لم تستطع في المراجع الجديد وأنتم
مُد باقية المعلمين تفاحوا بوصول المراجع.

هناك أيضاً بعض المجتمعات داخل المدرسة وهي
تدريسيات قبل المعلمين أنفسهم حيث يتفوقون على
المصنوع يوماً واحداً في الأسبوع لكن يتباهوا
بأنه الأمور التدريسية والتطويرية.

هذه الجمعيات، مثل جمعية المعلمين ومجاميع المدرسة
تقدم للمعلمين رضا حول استخدام الكمبيوتر
مثلاً أو الإنترنت ولذلك نعطينا زميلنا
كل ما من رهن المطويات التي يحملونها من الانترنت
حول التطوير التربوي (أتمنى لا يكون حقوق
السر... ينحرف).

ملحوظة: أشرت المعلم بأنه سوف تم نشر "مفكرة
النشر" رهنه طلباً للمدرسة.

السؤال الخامس: ما هو الدعم الذي تحصل عليه مالياً
من المدرسة ومن المديرية العامة
للتربية في مجال التطوير المهني؟ وكيف
تحصل على هذا الدعم؟

بصحتك ... بصحتك - أي دعم؟ هل أنت تسم

أنا ملبعاً لك ...

(once upon a time)

أفيا لا يوجد أي دعم، كما أن هناك دعم
الدعم في مجال التطوير التربوي لعلمي اللغة إلا بتعليمي
أصبح فنقرفنا

ولكن أنا أرى أن التربية والوزارة يجادلون
أنه يقصدوا شيئاً للعلماء ولكن ليس لديهم
الأمكانيه اللوجستيه لذلك يعطون المدرسه
الكثير من الكمبيوترات وخطوط الانترنت
والكثير من السهلات ، ولكن لا يقولون
لنا كيف نستخدم هذه الأشياء لتطوير المهنة
لنا ، المدرسه تعرف علينا استخدام الكمبيوتر
في البيت عن طريق مربيه ، وكذلك في المدرس
لديهم تحت حفظ الوزارة والتربية .

بأفقار الدعم الذي أمصل عليه جداً قليل والفرقة
من التشجيع على استخدام التكنولوجيا ، أعتقد
بأنهم يعتقدون أن استخدام التكنولوجيا هو
الكل ، وليصورون أنه كومنستراتات التكنولوجيا
هو دعم؟ لا أدري ربما هذا ما يقصدون

تلك من شراً أفلا لا هذا ترعيل

أنا ملبعاً

السؤال الرابع : هل هنالك خطوات أو فعاليات
يمكنك القيام بها لتطوير
مهاراتك التدريسية كعلم لغة
الإنجليزية ؟

هنالك العديد من الفعاليات ، منها مثلاً الفعاليات
حول مناهج اللغة الآ كليلية ، مثلاً عندما
وصلنا المنهج الجديد ، فتمت بقرارة كتابات
المعلم لمعرفة كفايته التدريسي ، بينا وبينك ، كل
شئ ما أستفدت لأنه ما أعرف هل ما أمراه
واقفك من أم صفاء ، يدونه وهو توحيه
مفتي ، تسبح معي هذا .

• أنا أنتك عن الخطوات التي تتبعها ؟

هنالك بعض الخطوات التي أنا أعتمدها أساسية :

• ترجمة الاتجاه حول المعتقدات في تدريس اللغة
• حضور بعض التدريبات التي تقدمها التريبية وهم

• تبادل الآراء مع الزملاء
• الأطلاع على المعتقدات من خلال الإنترنت .

السؤال الثالث : كونك معلم لغة إنجليزية، ولديك
خبرة عشر سنوات في التعليم، فأهو
الذي تقوم به لتواكب التطوير في
مجالك التدريسي؟

صالح الصديقي الأثيرات التي أقوم بها لنضري لكي
أواكب التطوير المهني ومنها :

أ) أحرص بعض السنوات التي أقوم بها صديريّة الربيّة
وعن الأوقات شبه معدومة، أقوم مع أخصائيّة
المناهج الجديدة، يعقنون التدريسيّة.

ب) أنا أبحث بنفسني عن بعض الكتب التي تنشر
حول تدريسيّة اللغة وأنا أقوم بذلك
متدست أو سبع سنين.

ج) مؤخرًا بدأت باستخدام الإنترنت في البحث عن
ما هو جديدنا تدريسيّة اللغة وقد أستمتعت
مؤخرًا بقرارة بحث حول استخدام الوسائل
المرئية الحقيقية في تدريسيّة الأخصائيّة والمحاركة.

د) أنا أيضًا اللقيّة ببعض الزملاء ونقوم بتبادل
المديت عن ماذا قرأنا وماذا سمعنا من
صديقيّة تدريسيّة.

أنا أقول : هل زملائيّ ستحرمونا التكنولوجيّا أيضًا؟
أيضًا، أجمع أستزام التكنولوجيّا عند الأكل والربح
والله زمان.

السؤال الثاني : ما مدى أهمية التطوير المهني في حياتك المهنية كعلم لغة إنجليزية؟

التطوير المهني هو كل جزء من حياتنا المهنية كيف
في أنه أقوم بتطوير نفسي بدون أن يكون
مبتدئ تطوير مهني لي
تطور أنك تفضل لتدريس الطلبة في أي مرحلة
وأنت غير مؤهل أو صعب لتقدم درسا
مما هي؟
أعتقد أنه التطوير المهني مهم . . . عفواً ماذا
قلت؟
أنا قلت : كيف صومهم؟

لأنه يعطيك الوسائل الحديثة لتواكب العصر
وتقدم دروس جديدة للطلاب أضعف
أي ذلك أنه معلم اللغة الإنجليزية بصورة
متابعة ، يحتاج إلى ذلك التطوير لأنه
تدريس اللغة يتغير دائماً وصناعات دائماً
طرق حديثة ما تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية وذلك
كنت لا تستطيع الأضلاع حال هذه الطرق، فلو
كلوا معلم زدي وسوف تحصل على
يعطون طاقم الامتياز والرفاهية لا يفهم
الباقي الطلاب في العالم الذين يتوجه لهم
ولمعاليتهم الوسائل الحديثة للتدريس.

شكراً

السؤال الثاني عشر : هل تعتقد بأنه يجب أن تنقلنا
تدريباً حول استخدام الأنترنت
لغرض تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية
وكذلك في مجال تطويرك المهني؟

لقد قلت لك في السؤال السابق أنني
أعتقد نعماً وأنا أتوق لذلك . أما إذا
فإنه كما يجب على ألقى الدعم ، طبعاً وطبعاً
يجب كلا المرسة والتدريب والفرار أنه
تؤمن في الدعم اللازم عن كيفية استخدام
الأنترنت لغرض التدريس والتطوير ، نحن الآن
سنقدم (الأنترنت بصورة سطحية) ولانندف
الكثير من التطبيقات) لذلك وبما أنهم
لدينا فقط عن أحدث في التكنولوجيا والاستعداد
لنؤمن في شيء يجب أنه يوضروا أولاً الدعم
والتدريب الكافي على طريقته؟ استخدام
الأنترنت للأنزاهة التربوية) ومن ثم يحدثنا
عن استمارة لأنه في ذلك أكتينا كمدوناً
قد وضعوا الأمورنا نصائبها وليس كما هي الحال
في وضع العربية أمام الكهات .

السؤال الثالث عشر: ماهي برأيك مردودات استخدام الأنترنت في تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية؟

أعتقد أن المردودات كثيرة والفوائد عظيمة.

أنا: صدقنا أنه تذكر لي بعض المردودات من وجهة نظرك؟

نعم وقبل كل شيء هو تخفيف الضغط علينا من ناحية استخدام المصباح اليدوي. وهناك أيضا العديد من المردودات أذكرها:

* سون يساعدا في الأطلاع على ما هو جديد.

* اختيار وسيلة ناجحة في متابعة التطور الذاتي حيث يمكن استخدام أيضا كنت وفي أي وقت شائرا.

* يخفف الضغط على الالتزام بأوقات محددة للتدريب حيث نستطيع اختيار الوقت المناسب لنا بدون منغومات.

* أيضا في وقتنا الكافي، الأضواء والسيارات محدودة في الحركة، والأندرتت أيضا أيضا. وسنا لا نناقض لأمه اي أننا المدرس أيضا في بيتي أو مدرستي ولا أحتاج أن أفكر على ترتيب مصوري الشبكات.

أفضل من الكثير في نقاط التقنيات المنسقة في المراجعة.

أنا: أرى أنه لا ننتهت عن ذلك لأنه ليس في مجالنا الميت. شكرا.

مدرسة العربية - أكرم سلمان

أسئلة إجابات طدرى المدارس

السؤال الرابع عشر: كيف تنظرون واجباتكم كمدير مدرسة في تهيئة المناخ المناسب للمعلمين لتشجيعهم على مواصلة تطويرهم المهني؟

أنا أنظر إلى دوريه توفير المناخ المناسب للمعلمين المدرسة على أنه من أهم أولوياتي لأنه من حالة عدم توفير هذا المناخ لا يمكنني أن أهاب المعلم على أداءه أو تقصيره، لأنه بما أنه سوف يقول لي ماذا ومنزتي هي لخير تلاميذي، وهذا منطقي.

أنا: هل تقصد بذلك تفرغها من هذا هو أولوية فقط لخير تلميذ محاسبة المعلمين؟

ليس فقط لذلك ولكن نعم، أنا مدير والتربية تلاميذي كل النتائج وعلى الأداء وإذا كانت أداء مدرستي سيئاً فإنه ذلك ينعكس على صحة المدرسة وعلى سمعة المهنة ككل، لذا فإننا نحرص على متابعة أداء المعلمين لكي أرتقي بالمدرسة للمستوى المطلوب.

السؤال الخامس عشر : ماذا توفر المدرسة والتدريب
العامة للتربية من خدمات لخلق
جو مناسب لدعم التطوير المهني؟

نحن نتقدم بتشجيع المعلمين على تطوير أنفسهم
من خلال توفير كل ما هو مطلوب للتطوير
أنت تعرف بأننا المصالح الكبري شكل كحدياً
للمعلمين والمدراس وقت للتربية والوزارة ونحن
نعمل كل ما بوسعنا لتزليل العقبات التي
تقف بوجه المعلم وتدريبه (المهني) ...
آنا: هل يمكنه أنه تذكر في نقاط محددة لما توفره
المدرسة/التربية للمعلم؟

* توفر الحاسوبيات والآنترنت .

* توفر الوقت الكافي للمعلم لحي تطوير نفسه من
خلال تفرغ بعض الحصص.

* إرسال المعلمين لبعض الدورات التدريبية المحلية
حول ذلك .

* توفر كل المستلزمات المالية لدعم العملية مهني

* نقول للمعلمين نحن ممتوهون كما أي افتراع أو
مشروع نيا عدكم كما الاستفادة والتطوير

السؤال السادس عشر: كيف يمكن للمعلمين استخدام الإنترنت بطريقة فعالة بحيث يكون مصدراً لتطويرهم المهني؟

أخيراً عزيزي: المعلم يستطيع أنه تطوير نفسه عنده استخدام الإنترنت كما حالة تومر الأهور التاليه: ← صدي رقعه بأ التعليم في Online Learning وجود كمبيوترات في المدارس وربطت

وجود تدريب مكثف للمعلم حول كيفية استخدام الإنترنت أولاً ومن ثم اختياره في مجال التطوير المهني.

عزس الاعتقاد لدى المعلم بأنه العالم قد تغير وأنه يستطيع الآن أنه يواجه تطوره الكهني على الإنترنت بدون الحاجة كصور حوار تقليدية. بعض المعلمين ليسوا يعتقد بأنه الإنترنت لا يمكنه أن يكون شيئاً أي أنه أسلوب التقليدي للتطوير وهذا خطأ لأن العصر من دول العالم تستخدم الإنترنت في الكثير من المجالات التي كانت تقليدية سابقاً وتحتاج

بعد تدريب المعلم على استخدام الإنترنت بطريقة فعالة يجب أنه يكون هناك مرحلة قاسمه من التدريب وهو كيفية استخدام الإنترنت في التدريب ~~وتلقا~~ وتلقا المعلومات عن بعد

* Overall → intermediate level of Internet Skills.

* generic barriers → lurking
lack of time
Context specific causes

* Fear of posting trivial responses
(ie-phobia)

relevant ep la zait ba' ...
... related ...

Three themes?

- * Do TS and Heady feel that Internet can contribute to
 - Enabling TS individual PD -
 - Enabling TS collaborate and support each other in their PD?

AND

- contextual factors that enable or hinder @ and (b).

wqmwras 2

200375249

السؤال السابع عشر : كيف يمكن لمدير المدرسة
المساهمة في إنشاء مواقع
تواصل على الأنترنت (مثل غرف
الردشة والمواقع الأخرى) للمساهمة
في دعم التطوير المهني للمعلمين وبالتالي
استخدامها في التدريب الإلكتروني؟

مدير المدرسة ليس تقني ولا يستطيع أنه يدير
المعلمين على كيفية استخدام هذه الطرق، يجب
أن يكون في كل مدرسة مختص تقني يكون
مهماً للمعلمين في التدريب وتقديم الدعم الفني
لهم * إنشاء استخدام هذه الأساليب،

ويمكن لو كان مدير مدرسة، أستطيع أن أوفر
الوقت الكافي للمعلمين لاستخدام غرف
الدروس وتطوير أدواتهم هونفسا الوقت
الذي لنا يومه لهم كصور الدورات التدريبية،
وجا أنه لا يوجد دورات تدريبية يمكننا كصليها
ذلك الوقت للتطوير عبر الأنترنت،

كما أنه يمكن أن أوفر كل مستلزمات التكنولوجيا
التي يحتاجها المعلمون لكي يقوموا باستخدام
الأنترنت في تطويرهم الإلكتروني.

أنا أيضاً أستطيع التوجيه وأستطيع وضع
مواقع لهم ليقوموا بعملية التدريب.

أسئلة أضافية طدراد المدارس
النموذجية في الموصل
كاي عبدالم

السؤال الثامن عشر: ماذا توقع من مدرستكم (باعتبارها

مدرسة نموذجية) للمعلمين لكي
تساعدهم في تطويرهم المهني؟ وما هو
دور المدرسة ومديرية التربية في
أنتشار جو إيجابي لدعم عملية التطوير
المهني للمعلمين؟

نحن نقوم بتوفير الكثير من المتطلبات لفرضنا رفع
مسؤول الإدارة لدينا فعلمنا، قبل أنه أحدث
عن ذلك، سوف أعتبرني عن أساسيات
(Mission Statement) مدرستنا.

نحن مدرسة نموذجية وما نحرفنا عن باقى
المدرسين هو مهنتنا على تقديم أفضل تعليم
ممكنة وأكترام أهدت ألبت القلم ياتر
من ربح معونة الطلاب، نحن نقدم تدريب
معلمينا داخلنا (in house) ونقوم بحلب بعض

المحترمين للحدثين من التطوير المهني من خلال
القاصل معهم مباشرة.

أما بخصوص مدرسة التربية، فهي لا توفر
بذكر، يرسلون لنا بعض التعليقات والأموار
التي يرعون أن نقول للمعلمين، يجب أن
تواصلوا تعليمكم ولكن في الحثية فهذا الزمن
(داخل المدرسة) نقوم بعمل خطة للمعلمين لكي
يطوروا مستوياتهم التعليمية.

دراسة نموذجية

السؤال الثالث عشر : هل هناك أسرار تقني للمعلمين
لتشجيعهم على الأتمتة في مجال
التطوير المهني؟

نعم هناك الكثير من الأسرار لتشجيع المعلمين
على مواصلة تطويرهم المهني ، فمثلاً توفر
المعلمات الوقتية (الكفالة الدراسية) أعداد
المعلمين مؤخرين على مختلف الوردت التدريبية
التي تقوم بها كل شهر ، وأيضاً تدريب
تمام لجميع المعلمين في رعاية كلاً متصل .

أيضاً : من يقوم بهذه التدريبات ؟

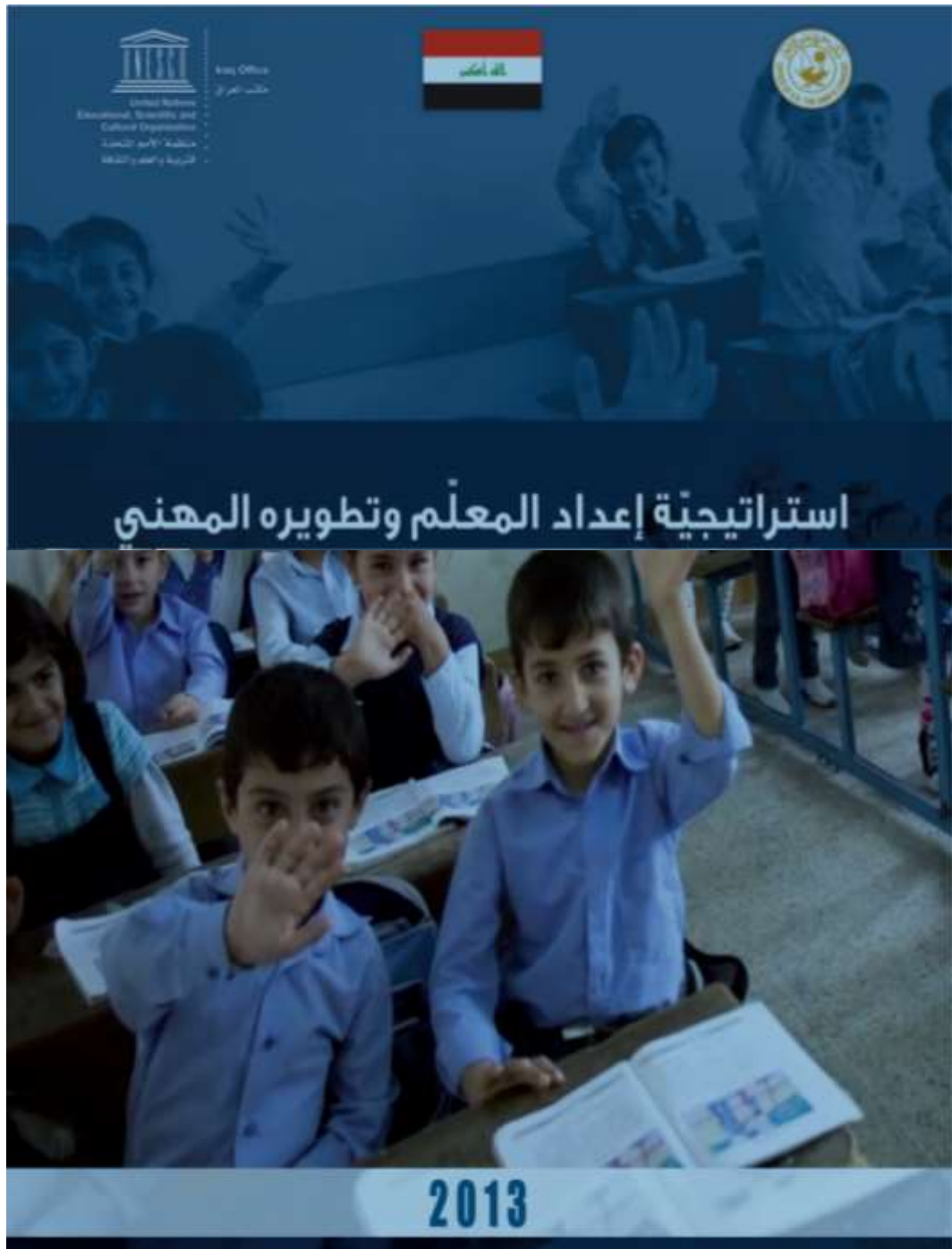
لا يوجد أعضاء من المهنيين الكبار للانسف
ولكن لدينا بعض المربين التربويين الذين
يأتون للتدريب ، ولكن هنا لا نستطيع
أنه أقول بأنه كافٍ لأنه هو الذي
المربين أنفسهم ليس على دراية بمتطلبات
المهني الكبار ولكن يقومون بتدريب المعلمين
وهذا هو غير أنهم في مجال التطوير التربوي من
هذه أرساد المعالجة على بعض الفترات التدريبات
التي تركز على التطوير المهني .

السؤال العشرون : ماذا تعتقد هو الدور الذي يمكن
أن تضارسه المدرسة لدعم عملية
التطوير المهني للمعلمين من خلال استخدام
التكنولوجيا ؟ كيف يمكن التغلب
على الصعاب وتشجيع أيجابيات
استخدام التكنولوجيا ؟

نحن نعتبر التكنولوجيا في حد ذاتها عن الأولويات
التي نحاول تغذيتها وإثرائها ورصدها بما
مطلوب ليس إلا استفادته فيها إلا أنها الكدور .
نحن نؤمن للمدرسة كل متطلبات التكنولوجيا وربط
سريع للأثرية ونحن المدرسين كما أن استخدام
الأثرية للأطلاع على أحدث وسائل التعليم ولكنه لكي
مقابلة تطوره لهم المهني . كما نؤمن الصورة الذاتية
التي موجودة لاستخدام المعلم وكل ما يتويبه هذا
أصاليات نحتاجها

هناك بعض الصعاب تواجهنا في استخدام الأثرية
عدم معرفتنا بالمرتكب الضخمة للاستخدام، فمثلاً
لو كان هناك توجيه في الترييب أو العزاه حول
التعلم عن بعد وتدريب المعلمة له استخدام المواقع
المتعلقة في التطوير فكان ذلك مهان في
الفرع التي نتبع في هذه مصادر التطوير
المعلمين في الفترة الأخيرة أيضاً عندما يتعلموا أيضاً
وبما في الشؤور (Lurking) وكل ما نقوم به هو
التشجيع وطلب ما يمكنه ولكن إذا أردنا
أنه نقوم باستخدام الأثرية بصورة فعالة، يجب
أنه يكون هناك خطة وطنية تطبق وتدعم من العزاه و
الترييب -

Appendix 8 Documents (samples)



UNESCO Report – Strategies for Teachers Professional Development in Iraq – 2013



مكتب يونسكو العراق

تدريب المدرّسين لتعليم نوعي ومستدام في العراق

فيما اعتبر نظام التعليم العراقي من الأكثر تطوراً في الدول العربية خلال ثمانينات القرن الماضي، أحدث عقدان من النزاع والظروف السياسية غير المستقرة والوضع الأمني كثير التقلّب خسائر كبيرة. يواجه نظام التعليم العراقي اليوم نقصاً كبيراً في عدة مجالات. وتكمن إحدى التحديات الرئيسية في **كفاءات المدرسين** المحدودة في مجالات تخصصاتهم (الموضوعات التدريسية) وفي عدم استخدام الأساليب الحديثة في التدريس. وقد كان لهذه القيود آثار جسيمة على **نوعية التعليم وعلى قدرة الوصول إلى التعليم** على جميع المستويات. كما أدى عدم الاستقرار والافتقار إلى الأمن إلى انحسار حجم النشاط الأكاديمي الاعتيادي في الجامعات العراقية وهجرة الأدمغة، الأمر الذي خلف تداعيات أكثر سلبية على الفرص التعليمية للطلبة العراقيين.

تتمثل إحدى أهم أولويات الحكومة العراقية ومنظمة اليونسكو في ضمان الوصول إلى تعليم جيد في العراق. كما يعتبر مشروع **"تدريب المدرسين لتعليم نوعي"** أحد المشاريع التربوية المصممة للمساعدة على تعزيز تدريب المدرسين من خلال دعم التعليم العالي في العراق.

ويتمثل الهدف العام لهذا المشروع في تحضير نخبة من قادة التدريب من أجل تدريب أكثر جودة للمدرّسين، في الوقت الذي يتم فيه بناء قدرات جامعات عراقية معينة وموظفي وزارة التعليم العالي والبحث العلمي. إن إحدى أهم إنجازات المشروع هي إنشاء **شبكة تدريب المدرسين في العراق** بحيث تربط 8 كليات علمية وتربوية مع جامعات دولية معروفة ببرامجها ومشاريعها وخدماتها المتطورة في مجال تدريب المدرسين. وقد تم إطلاق شبكة تدريب المدرسين في العراق عام 2007 وتم توقيع مذكرة تفاهم بين الجامعات العراقية وعدد من مؤسسات التعليم العالي الدولية.

ولغاية تاريخه، شارك ما يزيد على 130 محاضراً من كليات العلوم والتربية في أربع جامعات عراقية (بغداد، الأنبار، صلاح الدين والبصرة) في برنامج مكثف لتدريب المدرسين من أجل رفع كفاءاتهم من ناحية الأساليب التدريسية المعتمدة في 10 مواضيع علمية وتربوية مختلفة، إضافة إلى اللغة الانكليزية وتكنولوجيا المعلومات-الرخصة الدولية لقيادة الحاسوب. ويقوم المدربون بدورهم بنقل التعليمات والأساليب التي اكتسبوها خلال تدريباتهم إلى زملائهم. وقد تم تدريب ما يزيد عن 300 مدرب عبر ورش تدريبية مشابهة داخل العراق. وسعيًا لاستمرارية والحفاظ على فعالية هذه التدريبات، تعمل اليونسكو حالياً على إعداد 10 مقترحات تدريبية لدعم تدريب المدرسين في المراحل الثانوية.

إلى ذلك، تم تصميم برنامج للزمالات بالشراكة مع جامعة تورين للدراسات لتوفير الفرصة أمام 10 طلبة عراقيين في الجامعات الشريكة لمتابعة دورة دراسات عليا (ماجستير) في مجال إدارة حفظ السلام في جامعة تورين، إيطاليا.

وأخيراً، تمت صياغة مسودة لدراسة استراتيجية حول تدريب المدرسين في العراق، وفيما تم توفير تدريب خاص لبناء القدرات للتمكن من إعداد استراتيجية وطنية لتدريب المدرسين.

Extract form a report on Teachers' Quality PD Status prepared by the MoE and UNESCO



تطوير المعلمين في العراق



لمديرية العامة لإعداد المعلمين والتدريب والتطوير التربوي

The Facebook page of the Directorate General of Teachers' Preparation, Training and Educational Development – where many views of the MoE in regard to Teachers' PD via Technology are normally published

الدكتور محمد اقبال الصيدلي



15 دقيقة ·

التربية: مباحثرة المعلمين والمدرسين للعام الدراسي 2017_2016 اعتبارا من 1/9/2016
قررت وزارة التربية " اليوم الأحد " اعتبار يوم 1/9/2016 مباحثرة المعلمين والمدرسين للعام
الدراسي 2017_2016
وتكرر بيان للمكتب الاعلامي لمعالي وزير التربية الدكتور محمد اقبال عمر الصيدلي " ان مباحثرة
المعلمين والمدرسين للعام الدراسي 2017_2016 سيكون اعتبارا من 1/9/2016
واوضح البيان " ان الفقرة جـ من المادة (22) اولا من نظام المدارس الابتدائية رقم 30 لسنة 1978
نصت على (العطلة الصيفية تبدأ بالنسبة للمعلمين منذ اليوم الأول من شهر تموز لغاية شهر اب) كما
نصت الفقرة (ثانيا) من المادة (21) اولا من النظام نفسه على (يباشر اعضاء الهيئة التعليمية في
مدارسهم ابتداءا من اليوم الأول من شهر ايلول) وتابع " ان مباحثرة المعلمين في 1/9/2016 لا يؤثر
على المكلفين بواجبات امتحانية استنادا الى المادة (21) من نظام الامتحانات العامة .



A snapshot from the Education Secretary' webpage in which he sends a message to all teachers about the times of new school terms and urging them to maintain their commitments for the new academic year in 2016-2017.



A snapshot from the Ministry of Education webpage stating that the Education Secretary has met with the President of IREX (International Research & Exchanges Board) and they exchanged ideas about supporting the education sector in Iraq.

Appendix 9 he FieldPictures from t



The building of the Directorate General of Education in Nineveh



One of the workshops delivered to teachers about the challenges of the new curriculum and their PD provision