The Odyssey of Professional Excellence: 
Becoming a Highly Effective TESOL Professional

Submitted by
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Signatures:
Abstract

In order to expand the institutional support base for professional learning and development of teachers in the field of TESOL and other educational disciplines, a firm resolve is needed to keep extending our intellectual frontiers for a broader understanding of a fundamental question in educational research: How do teachers learn and develop? In light of the TESOL Inc. (2003) position statement on teacher quality, which conceives TESOL to be a professional discipline, the present research was conducted on the learning biographies of those TESOL professionals who have already demonstrated their professional competence and earned the title of highly effective TESOL professionals at their workplaces. On their supposedly epic journey from being novices to becoming highly effective TESOL professionals, they are expected to have developed an advanced level of professional consciousness, which is informed by a blend of propositional, pedagogical and experiential knowledge of the profession and the noble professional and humanistic values reiterated by TESOL Inc.

To enhance our understanding of the phenomenon set forth above via research on the learning biographies, the current study was primarily planned to analyse the continuing professional learning and development experience, along with the role of various influential contextual and individual factors, of three highly effective Pakistani TESOL professionals working at a Saudi university. More importantly, explanation was sought for the nature of their professional learning and development in light of the social learning theories of Vygotsky and Lave and Wenger, and the established yet evolving construct of reflective practice. With a scope for investigative depth, interpretive adequacy, and illuminative fertility (Shank & Villella, 2004), the study was designed within the ambit of Interpretive Paradigm employing purposive sampling for data collection. Following an intra-paradigm methodological eclecticism, a narrative-biographical inquiry of three TESOL professionals’ lifelong professional learning and development was conducted for fieldwork.

The findings of the study have some significant implications that may be of interest to a myriad of people. The findings of these narratives of professional learning and development may be motivating for the TESOL aspirants in Pakistan and the Gulf, enlightening for fellow professionals at different rungs of their career, and thought-provoking for researchers, teacher-trainers and policy-makers in the field of TESOL.

First, the findings reinforced with additional evidence that TESOL professionals learn in a variety of ways and their professional learning and development feature idiosyncrasy and complexity rendering all attempts at uniformity of the process of learning as problematic. Whereas, an inclusive, non-dichotomous approach combining a variety of learning theories can help capture the ubiquitous and variegated nature of teachers’ professional learning and development. Secondly, the findings underscored that such learning experiences which tend
to effect an epistemological as well as an ontological change in teachers, lead to profound transformation in their professional-self. Thirdly, the participants' concern for context-specificity and culture-sensitivity in their pedagogical practice, particularly in the event of boundary crossing (job in a different context), significantly contributes to their learning by challenging their existing repertoire and creating new zones of proximal development (ZPDs). Fourthly, the study envisages hope for the vital context-specific professional learning and development through participation in interdependent, synergistic professional learning communities epitomizing the features of mutual empathy and maturity. Fifthly, the analyses of these narratives offer situated understanding of professional learning and development with a scope for readers to identify with (some of) the ideas, themes, and patterns and develop them further for application beyond the research context. Finally, narratives of lifelong professional learning and development of these highly effective Pakistani TESOL professionals are a substantial contribution to the extremely deficient body of knowledge about the learning lives of Pakistani TESOL professionals working in or outside Pakistan.
Dedicated
To
My Father
Whose prayers still endure to bless my life!

The epitaph on his grave reads:
Our Lord! We have heard a caller calling unto Faith: ‘Believe ye in the Lord!’
So we have believed. Our Lord! Forgive us our sins, and remit from us our evil deeds, and cause us to die in the state of righteousness.
(The Quran, 193:3)

Tribute
To
The wonderful participants in my research

Not all who try hard
Can hunt a gazelle
But those who have hunted the gazelle
Have certainly tried hard
(Anonymous)
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Contents

Abstract 3
Dedication and Tribute 5
Acknowledgements 6
Content 7
Tables and Figures 11
Abbreviations and Terms 12

Chapter 1: Prolegomena 13
1. Introduction 13
1.1 The Genesis and Rationale of the study 13
1.2 Teachers as (Highly Effective) Professionals? 14
1.3 Research Aim and Objectives 15
1.4 Research Questions 16
1.5 Significance and Contribution of the Study 16

Chapter 2: The Context of the Study 18
2. Introduction: English Language in the Saudi Context 18
2.1 The context of English Language Institute (ELI) 18
2.2 The Mission of the ELI 18
2.3 The Programme Design and Curriculum 19
2.4 The Faculty at the ELI 19
2.4.1 The Pakistani Teachers at the ELI 20
2.5 The Faculty Evaluation and Professional Development 20
2.5.1 Classroom Observation: Evaluation of Instructional skills 20
2.5.2 Professional Development of Faculty 21
2.6 The Pakistani Context: Teacher Professional Learning and Development 22

Chapter 3: The Literature Review 23
3. Introduction 23
3.1 Professional Learning and Development: Setting the Context 23
3.1.1 The Scope of Professional Learning and Development 24
3.2 Major paradigms of Learning Theories 25
3.3 Theoretical Framework of the Study 26
3.4 Humanism: Adult Learning Theories 26
3.5 Behaviourism and Cognitivism (Cognitive Constructivism) 27
3.6 Social Learning Paradigm: Social Constructivism & Social Constructionism 27
3.7 Vygotsky’s Sociocultural Theory of Learning (Social Constructivism) 29
3.7.1 Major Tenets of Vygotsky’s Sociocultural Theory 29
  3.7.1.1 The developmental or genetic analysis of human mental processes 29
  3.7.1.2 Social origins of higher mental functions 30
  3.7.1.3 Mediated nature of human mental development 30
    3.7.1.3.1 Internalization 31
    3.7.1.3.2 Mediational means or tools 31
    3.7.1.3.3 Zone of proximal development (ZPD): Scaffolding and regulation 34
  3.7.2 Criticism 35
3.8 Situated Learning and Community of Practice Theory (Social Constructionism) 35
  3.8.1 The Structure of a Community of Practice (CoP) 35
  3.8.2 From Community of Practice to Professional Learning Community (PLC) 36
  3.8.3 Criticism 37
3.9 Supporting Professional Learning and Development: Models and Approaches 38
  3.9.1 Typologies of Professional Learning and Development (PLD) Models 38
  3.9.2 PLD Models: Key Dimensions or Features 40
3.9.3 The Reflective Model 42
  3.9.3.1 Schon’s reflective practitioner: An experiential-intuitive reflective model 42
  3.9.3.2 Wallace’s reflective model: An exposition in light of Schon’s ideas 44
3.9.3.3 Criticism on the reflective model 45
3.9.3.4 Reflection as a social practice 46
  3.9.3.4.1 Verbal interaction as a means of reflection 46

3.9.4 Professional Learning Community Model 47
  3.9.4.1 Scope for professional learning communities 47
  3.9.4.2 Key features of a professional learning community (PLC) 48

3.10 Factors Affecting or Contributing to Professional Learning and Development 49
  3.10.1 Contextual and Individual Factors 49
  3.10.2 Self-efficacy 51
  3.10.3 Critical Incidents and Critical Persons 51

3.11 Being and Becoming a (TESOL) Professional 53
  3.11.1 Metaphors for Seeing Learning 53

3.12 Key Empirical Research in the Domain of Teacher PLD 53
  3.12.1 Empirical Research on Teacher PLD in KSA 54
  3.13 Conclusion 55

Chapter 4: The Research Design: Ways of Knowing and Telling 56
4. Introduction 56
  4.1 Research Paradigm: Interpretivism 57
    4.1.1 Methodology 58
  4.2 Research Approach: Intra-Paradigm Methodological Eclecticism 59
    4.2.1 Narrative-Biographical Inquiry 59
    4.2.1.1 Teachers’ learning biographies 63
    4.2.2 Ethnography 63
  4.3 Participants and Sampling 64
  4.4 Data Collection Methods: From Field to Field Texts 66
    4.4.1 Narrative Interviews 66
    4.4.2 Documents and Artifacts 68
    4.4.3 Open-ended Questionnaires 69
  4.5 Analysis of the Data 69
    4.5.1 Why Analyse a Narrative? 70
    4.5.2 What and How of Narrative Analysis 70
    4.5.3 Preferred Approach to Narrative Analysis 71
  4.5.4 Narrative Analysis Process 73
    4.5.4.1 From field texts to interim research texts 73
    4.5.4.2 Data analysis framework 73
    4.5.4.3 From interim research texts to final research texts 76
  4.6 Quality of the Research: Trustworthiness 77
  4.7 Ethical Concerns 79
    4.7.1 Consent, Confidentiality, and Representation 79
    4.7.2 The Researcher’s Positioning: A Reflexive Stance (My Learning Biography) 80

Chapter 5: Narrative Analysis: Findings and Interpretations 83
5. Introduction 83
  5.1 Ali: A Learning Biography 83
    5.1.1 Childhood, Schooling and Post-Secondary Education 83
    5.1.2 Professional Education 85
    5.1.3 Professional Career 86
    5.1.4 Ali’s Professional Self-Understanding 87
      5.1.4.1 Self-Image and self-esteem 87
      5.1.4.2 Job motivation 87
      5.1.4.3 Future perspective 89
      5.1.4.4 Task perception 89
      5.1.4.4.1 Being and becoming a teacher 89
      5.1.4.4.2 Learning in specific experiences and situations 92
    5.1.5 Subjective Educational Theory 93
5.1.5.1 Personal theory of bonding with students 93
5.1.5.2 Seeking evidence of student learning 93
5.1.5.3 Student level-appropriate scaffolding for pedagogical success 94
5.1.5.4 Teacher’s adaptive skills 94
5.1.6 Additional Factors in Professional Learning and Development 95
  5.1.6.1 Contextual affordances in the Saudi context 95
  5.1.6.2 High expectations of diligence 95

5.2 Sarmad: A Learning Biography 96
  5.2.1 Childhood, Schooling and Post-Secondary Education 96
  5.2.2 Professional Education 97
  5.2.3 Professional Career 98
  5.2.4 Sarmad’s Professional Self-Understanding 99
    5.2.4.1 Self-image and self-esteem 99
    5.2.4.2 Job motivation 100
    5.2.4.3 Future perspective 101
    5.2.4.4 Task perception 102
      5.2.4.4.1 Being and becoming a teacher 102
      5.2.4.4.2 Learning in specific experiences and situations 105
  5.2.5 Subjective Educational Theory 106
    5.2.5.1 Context-specificity and culture-sensitivity 106
    5.2.5.2 Rapport building for student motivation 106
    5.2.5.3 Empathy for the students 106
    5.2.5.4 Teacher’s integrity 107
  5.2.6 Additional Factors in Professional Learning and Development 107
    5.2.6.1 Contextual affordances 107
    5.2.6.2 Class observations: Annual faculty evaluation 108

5.3 Omer: Learning Biography 108
  5.3.1 Childhood, Schooling and Post-Secondary Education 108
  5.3.2 Professional Education 110
  5.3.3 Professional Career 110
  5.3.4 Omer’s Professional Self-Understanding 111
    5.3.4.1 Self-image and self-esteem 111
    5.3.4.2 Job motivation 112
    5.3.4.3 Future perspective 113
    5.3.4.4 Task perception 113
      5.3.4.4.1 Being and becoming a teacher 114
      5.3.4.4.2 Learning in specific experiences and situations 117
  5.3.5 Subjective Educational Theory 119
    5.3.5.1 Rapport building 119
    5.3.5.2 Context-specific choice of teaching methods 119
    5.3.5.3 Scaffolding: Adapting the materials to students’ level 119
    5.3.5.4 ‘Demand high’ and student achievement 120
    5.3.5.5 Evidence of learning: Feedback and reflection-for-action 120
  5.3.6 Additional Factors in Professional Learning and Development 120
  5.4 Conclusion 121

Chapter 6: Discussion and Meaning-Making 122
6. Introduction 122
  6.1 Professional Learning and Development Experience (RQ1) 122
    6.1.1 Task Perception 122
      6.1.1.1 Learning as being and becoming a professional 123
        6.1.1.1.1 Professional solicitude: A context-specific and culture-sensitive approach 123
        6.1.1.1.2 Professional practice: Reflection-in/on/for-action 124
        6.1.1.1.3 Professional awareness: Flexible competence 125
        6.1.1.1.4 Professional diligence: Engagement in various undertakings for learning 126
6.1.1.2 Learning in specific experiences and situations 127
  6.1.1.2.1 Professional ‘fusion’: Learning in observing and being observed 127
  6.1.1.2.2 Professional pursuits: The Cambridge CELTA 128

6.1.2 Subjective Educational Theories 129

6.2 Factors Contributing to Professional Learning and Development (RQ2) 132

6.2.1 Individual Factors 132
  6.2.1.1 Self-image and self-esteem 132
  6.2.1.2 Self-efficacy 133
  6.2.1.3 Job motivation 134
  6.2.1.4 Critical incidents and critical persons 136
  6.2.1.5 Future perspective 137

6.2.2 Contextual Factors 138
  6.2.2.1 Institutional affordances for learning 138
  6.2.2.2 Vulnerability and threat 138
  6.2.2.3 High expectations of diligence 139

6.3 An Explication of the Nature of the Participants' Professional Learning (RQ3) 139

6.3.1 Social Constructivism: Learning as Construction 140
  6.3.1.1 Mediation: Internalization and transformation 140
    6.3.1.1.1 Cultural artifacts 140
    6.3.1.1.2 Changing context and ZPD 141
    6.3.1.1.3 Human mediation 142
  6.3.1.2 The participants as reflective practitioners 142
    6.3.1.2.1 Ali: Reflection via private speech tool 142
    6.3.1.2.2 Sarmad: Reflection as individual and social externalization 143
    6.3.1.2.3 Omer: Reflection for creating spaces for ZPDs and scaffolding 143

6.3.2 Social constructionism: Learning as participation 144
  6.3.2.1 Ali: Learning experience as a class observer 144
  6.3.2.2 Ali, Sarmad and Omer: Learning in the CoP 145
  6.3.2.3 Sarmad and Omer: Learning in the PLC 146
    6.3.2.3.1 Interdependence and synergy: The cause and effect of a PLC 146
    6.3.2.3.2 Empathy and maturity: Key success factors for a PLC 147

6.3.3 Learning as Becoming 148

Chapter 7: Conclusions and Implications 149

7. Introduction 149
7.1 Conclusions of the Study 150
7.2 Implications of the Study 153
7.3 Limitations of the Research 155
7.4 Suggestions for Further Research 156
7.5 Final Word 157

Appendices 158

Appendix 1: 158
  A. Summary of Professional and Pedagogical Areas Considered in Classroom Observation
  B. Formal Observation Evaluation Criteria
  C. Summary of Evaluation Ratings and Guidelines

Appendix 2: Researcher’s Guide for Interviews 161
Appendix 3: Information Sheet for the Research Participants & Consent Form 163
Appendix 4: 166
  Questionnaire 1: Personal Value Narrative
  Questionnaire 2: Reflecting on Value Creation (key questions)

Appendix 5: 168
  A. Coded Samples from Ali’s Transcribed Interviews
  B. NVivo Coding Summary by Source
  C. List of Initial Codes Generated from Ali’s Data

References 188
Tables and Figures

Tables

Table 2.1: Courses Offered to EFL Learners at the ELI 19
Table 2.2: Percentage of Teachers’ Placed in Ratings from 1 to 5 (2014-2016) 21
Table 4.1: Participants’ Profiles 65
Table 4.2: Aims and Themes of the Interviews 67
Table 4.3: An Overview of Field Texts Collected for the Study 69
Table 4.4: Data Analysis Framework (Kelchtermans, 1993, 2009a/b) 75

Figures

Figure 3.1: Typology of Professional Learning and Development Models 39
Figure 3.2: Reflective Cycle (Wallace, 1991) 45
Figure 4.1: Approaches to Narrative Analysis 71
Figure 4.2: Approaches to (Thematic) Qualitative Data Analysis 72
Figure 6.1: Professional Learning and Development Experience 123
Figure 6.2: Factors Contributing to PLD 132
Figure 6.3: The Explication of the Nature of Participants’ PLD 139
Abbreviations and Terms

Abbreviations
CELT A: Certificate in English language teaching to adults
CoP: Community of practice
CPD: Continuing professional development
DELTA: Diploma in English language teaching to adults
EFL: English as a foreign language
ELI: English language institute
ELT: English language teaching
KSA: Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
PD: Professional development
PDU: Professional development unit
PLC: Professional learning community
PLD: Professional learning and development
RQ: Research question
SLO: Student learning outcome
TESOL: Teaching of English to speakers of other languages
ZPD: Zone of proximal development

Terms
Self-image and Self-esteem: My self-image, descriptive in nature, is what other people think of me; my Self-esteem, evaluative in essence, is what I think of myself.

Self-efficacy: Bandura (1995:2) defines self-efficacy as the ‘beliefs in one’s capability to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations’. In other words, Pajares and Schunk (2001:244) conceive of self-efficacy as ‘a judgment of the confidence that one has in one’s abilities’.

Empathy: Empathy is a deep and genuine understanding of others’ feelings.

Maturity: Covey (1989) defines maturity as the balance between ‘courage and consideration’: The ability to express one's feelings and convictions with courage balanced with consideration for the feelings and convictions of others.

Synergy: Synergy means that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts (1+1=3 or more).

Ontogenesis: The development throughout the life history or lifespan of a human.

Microgenesis: The development of a competency for a task or activity; it is to ‘grasp the process in flight’ of the history of a particular event (Vygotsky, 1978:68).
Chapter One
Prolegomena

1. Introduction

The teaching profession, and more specifically TESOL as a highly professional discipline (TESOL Inc., 2003), is not meant for mediocrities. Unlike Bernard Shaw's (1903:334) satirical assertion, 'he who can, does; he who cannot, teaches', I firmly believe that the teaching profession is the right choice for only those 'who understand' and teach (Shulman, 1986:4). Endorsing Shulman's rejoinder, I insist on a stricter selection of aspirants to the field of Education, with criteria considering personality attributes and motivation to become a teacher as well as knowledge of professional theory and practice (Bernaus & Gardner, 2008). Keenly aware of the complex nature of teaching profession, Leung (2009:55) also desires in a (TESOL) teacher 'a high degree of professional consciousness that is informed by relevant specialist knowledge and explicit values'.

Indeed, at the heart of every academic institution lies the desire to enhance student learning and achievement for various individual and social purposes; the realization of this objective is in fact not possible without skillful support of professionally competent teachers. Given the fact that student learning primarily hinges upon teacher competence (Fullan, 1993), the educational institutions are duty-bound to take measures to ensure their teachers' continuing professional learning in an effort to develop them into (highly) effective teachers. For institutions to expand support base for professional learning and development (PLD) of teachers in the field of TESOL and other educational disciplines, a firm resolve is needed to keep extending our intellectual frontiers for a broader understanding of a fundamental question in educational research, which according to Webster-Wright (2009) is: How do teachers learn and develop? Hence, the current study aims to not only explore how teachers learn and develop, but also to highlight the ongoing process of their becoming highly effective professionals in the field of TESOL.

1.1 The Genesis and Rationale of the Study

Profoundly impressed by Stephen R. Covey’s (1989) landmark study of human excellence in personal and professional spheres of life which, germinating the idea of learning and development with the aim of becoming a highly effective person and professional, eventually led me to consider a research study on highly effective teachers in the field of TESOL. Notwithstanding the fact that 'no man is an island', the initial challenge in such a study was the bane of the teaching profession — the isolated nature of teachers’ professional lives and classroom practice, which Lortie (1975) in his colossal work on teachers described as egg-crate like structure where teachers are least aware of the professional lives and practices of their colleagues. Considering classrooms as their personal domains, teachers usually have
limited interaction of any academic nature with their co-workers, keeping their professional lives and practices shrouded in privacy, which consequently leaves little scope for any fruitful, mutual exchange of professional ideas and strategies (DuFour, 2011).

Convinced as I am that success leaves clues that can be traced and documented for the motivation and enlightenment of other aspirants, the present study has attempted to unravel, via a narrative-biographical inquiry, the phenomena of professional and pedagogical success of three highly effective TESOL professionals teaching at a Saudi Arabian university. By means of studying the learning biographies of these professionals, I have tracked their course of lifelong PLD, and thereby endeavoured to enhance our understanding of the ways and means culminating in successful professional practices in the fields of TESOL. Indeed, learning biographies of successful teachers merit an exhaustive study in order to highlight their professional strengths, and learning skills and strategies for others to adopt, adapt and appropriate according to their professional and contextual dynamics (Donmoyer, 2000).

Granted that every context is unique and the processes of teaching and learning are complex and embedded in particular contexts, which makes it nearly impossible for researchers to agree on any universal truths or uniform solutions for educational systems (Guskey, 1995); still I believe the findings of my research can be beneficial as ‘fragmented pieces of knowledge’ that TESOL teachers and researchers may utilize to improve or inform their professional ideas and practices (Kelchtermans, 2004:219). Above all, learning trails and traits of these highly effective TESOL professionals offer considerable scope for critical self-reflection on our own professional selves (Muchmore, 2001). Whereas, an ongoing practice of reflection on different aspects of our professional lives compared and contrasted with professional experiences of the accomplished professionals may gradually enable us to perform our pedagogical responsibilities more effectively in our academic contexts.

1.2 Teachers as (Highly Effective) Professionals?

One of the key terms in the current research is ‘professional’, which needs some exposition at the outset. A ‘profession’ is defined as ‘a calling requiring specialized knowledge and often long and intensive academic preparation’ (Merriam Webster Online Dictionary). As relativity rules supreme in the social dimension of our life, a professional may be defined variably in different contexts. In somewhat generic terms, Wallace (1991) argues that any vocation aspiring to be considered a profession should possess the foundational ‘scientific knowledge [of the profession]; a period of rigorous study which is formally assessed; a sense of public service; high standards of professional conduct; and the ability to perform some specified demanding and socially useful tasks in a demonstrably competent manner’ (p.5). Agreeing with Wallace, I can state unreservedly that (language) teaching is a profession, and a
teacher can be conveniently called a professional if s/he is ‘a trained and qualified specialist who displays a high standard of competent conduct in their practice’ (Leung, 2009:49).

Another important descriptor deserving careful consideration is the ‘highly effective’, prefixed to teachers or professionals. It is not only problematic but injudicious to propose any universal criteria to define or judge (highly) effective teaching. What is meant by effective teaching and who is deemed an effective teacher? The answers to such questions vary from culture to culture and context to context. With this awareness that any consensus on these questions is nearly impossible, researchers like Coombes (2014), Day (2012), Fairbanks et al. (2009) and J. Richards (2011) have made considerable attempts at sifting through the cornucopia of literature on teaching effectiveness and sharing their understanding on the subject. The current study is also one such attempt although with a different focus. It does not provide any typology of effective teaching; however, it presents context-specific exemplars of three highly effective TESOL professionals with extensive and intimate details to engender a sophisticated understanding of the phenomena.

It is important to note that, in the current research, the descriptor ‘highly effective’ is a relative term used for teachers who get the excellent or outstanding ratings in their annual faculty evaluations in the research context; the details of which are presented in the section 2.4 below (also see 4.3 Participants and Sampling). Notwithstanding the refined and multifaceted criteria used in the research context to evaluate and rank the teachers, I would like to mention a caveat in the process: The criteria or evaluation rubrics used to decide the professional rank and ratings of a teacher in the research context, even though are based on empirical research and producing consistent and contextually reliable results, may not guarantee their universal applicability due to their context-specific adaptation, interpretation and standardization (see Appendix 1). Hence, a teacher who may be highly effective in the Saudi or the Arabian Gulf context may not be immediately as effective in a different context, for example China or Japan. Nevertheless, given the congenial professional learning ecology, a highly effective teacher in one context has strong probability to become equally effective in another context in due course with their ‘broader and more flexible repertoire of skills’ (Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2007:116).

1.3 Research Aim and Objectives

The principal aim of the current study is to enhance my understanding of the phenomena of professional excellence in TESOL by delving into the learning biographies of three highly effective Pakistani TESOL professionals working at a Saudi university. To that end, I have explored, described and analysed their PLD experiences with a hope that the sum and

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1 A useful discussion on the descriptors of ‘professional’ and ‘professionalism’ can be seen in L. Evans (2008), Scanlon (2011), and Waring and C. Evans (2015).
substance of my understanding will bestow some epistemological authority on the outcome of the current research.

To achieve this aim I have set three key objectives for the current research: First, to offer an analytical description of the lifelong PLD experiences of these TESOL professionals; second, to analyse various factors that have affected or contributed to their extraordinary success as TESOL professionals in the research context; and third, to explicate the nature and processes of their PLD primarily in light of social learning paradigm with informed awareness of a host of other learning paradigms, models and perspectives (see details in Chapter 3). Based on the findings of the current study, I aspire to share a vision or multiple visions for becoming a highly effective TESOL professional in contexts having situational resemblance or foreseeable potential for transferability of findings (Bandura, 1997).

1.4 Research Questions

I will make an optimum effort to inform the following research questions in order to achieve the cherished aim and proposed objectives:

1. How do the highly effective Pakistani TESOL professionals, working at a Saudi university, experience Professional learning and development?

2. What are the factors that contribute to their becoming highly effective TESOL professionals?

3. What learning theories and models can help explicate the nature of their professional learning and development?

1.5 Significance and Contribution of the Study

The present study contributes by way of bridging a wide knowledge gap in the research context in addition to chipping in the deficient repertory of knowledge about the professional lives and learning of TESOL professionals worldwide in general and in Pakistan in particular:

1. Research studies with the idea of learning from the professional lives of teachers are still emerging. In the past, research on learning mostly focused on student learning neglecting the significance of teacher learning. Hence any attempt to understand the phenomena of teacher professional learning will add to the deficient body of knowledge on the subject (Vermunt & Endedijk, 2011). Likewise, as mentioned earlier, Webster-Wright (2009:705) argues that research needs to focus on the fundamental question of how teachers learn throughout their professional lives as well as in specific work contexts. Endorsing it further, Tatto, Richmond and Andrews (2016:248) conclude that ‘[m]ore research is needed that provides innovative answers to the challenging questions of who should teach, and where and how should teachers learn to teach’. Defined in
Vygotskian terms, research needs to consider both the *ontogenetic* and *microgenetic*\(^2\) dimensions of teacher professional learning in order to develop better understanding of teacher professional learning, thereby helping researchers and policy-makers to effectively enhance professional learning support for teachers.

2. There has been little systematic research on the factors that lead to participation and perseverance in PLD tasks or projects. A deeper understanding of such factors can help the TESOL policy makers to devise effective ways for maximising teachers’ participation in PLD activities (Schieb & Karabenick, 2011). In order to conceptualize the lifelong learning process of teachers, Kelchtermans (2004) also emphasises the need to focus not only on the actions and experiences of teachers, but also on the factors underlying them.

3. We still need to know more about how teachers interface their PLD with actual pedagogical needs of the students for academic achievement. K. Johnson (2006:239) argues that the research has continued to pay little attention to ‘an epistemological gap between how [TESOL] L2 teacher educators have traditionally prepared L2 teachers to do their work and how L2 teachers actually learn to teach and carry out their work in classrooms.

4. There is a dearth of scholarly research on professional learning and excellence in TESOL in the Saudi context. As a result, TESOL professional learning programmes in Saudi Arabia are ‘nonsystematic and inadequate’ (Al-Hazmi, 2003:341), which necessitates research in the area of teacher PLD.

Though I cannot, through the present study, bridge all these ‘gaps’ conclusively, I will strain every nerve to contribute, certainly not in a negligible way, to enriching the body of knowledge in the field of teacher PLD.

More importantly, I believe that a study exploring the learning lives of such *highly effective* TESOL professionals – with a focus on the edifying role of pre-service and in-service trainings, PLD, and the factors which facilitate the transition of a fledgling teacher into an interdependent and *highly effective* TESOL professional – will hopefully be an illuminating read for a myriad of professionals. Particularly geared towards the language teachers working in the Arabian context and Pakistani language teachers anywhere in the world, the findings and import of the study will also raise the consciousness of TESOL community at large. In this spirit, I venture into a less trodden but a potentially fertile territory of narrative-biographical research on TESOL teachers’ lifelong professional learning and development to bring forth something enlightening for the said stakeholders.

\(^2\) See page 12 for definitions

17
Chapter Two
The Context of the Study

2. Introduction: English Language in the Saudi Context

The roots of English language in the Middle East and the Arabian Gulf can be traced back to Colonial period in the early 19th century (Weber, 2011), but in Saudi Arabia (KSA), English language teaching first began as a high school subject in the late 1950s (Al-Haq & Smadi, 1996). However, a major shift in the status of English language in KSA came with the post 9/11 (2001) political scenario when English language was acknowledged, probably under social and political pressure from some quarters, as a necessity for development and modernization in the country, declaring it a compulsory subject across all school levels (Mahboob & Elyas, 2014). With the privileged status of English as a compulsory foreign language in the country already established, the launch of the late King Abdullah’s vision 2020 for his country in 2007 led to the adoption of English as a medium of instruction for all science departments in the Saudi universities. As a result, these universities have established new English language departments, institutes or centres to run a Foundation Year Programme (FYP) with a major focus on TESOL.

2.1 The Context of English Language Institute (ELI)

The site of the current doctoral study is the male campus of an English Language Institute (ELI) of a public-sector Saudi university. The English language program at this university was originally established around 40 years ago by the British Council. Since the introduction of the Foundation Year Programme (FYP) in the academic year of 2007-2008, the University has made it a prerequisite that all freshmen students successfully complete six credit units of general English before starting their desired course of studies at any department or college of the university. At present, the ELI English language programme, accredited by the renowned US Commission on English Language Program Accreditation (CEA), caters to the EFL needs of around 7000-8000 male university students each year.

2.2 The Mission of the ELI

The Mission of the ELI is to provide intensive instruction of EFL to Foundation Year students, using an internationally-oriented curriculum delivered by qualified instructors, in order to enhance their English language skills and facilitate their academic progress. ELI has a set of objectives to achieve its mission, which include assisting and facilitating students in the Foundation Year to achieve an Intermediate Level of proficiency in the English language, providing appropriate pedagogical environment that leads to student retention and success, and appreciating faculty members’ scholarship and services through provision of, and support for professional development.
2.3 The Programme Design and Curriculum

The Foundation Year English Language Program comprises four core language courses. With the beginning of each module, faculty are provided with a detailed curriculum and course description with expected Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) for courses they are assigned to teach at the ELI. Following Common European Framework (CEFR), the ELI offers courses starting from Beginner (A1) to Intermediate (B1) to the enrolled students, who are admitted into an appropriate language level class based on their language proficiency assessed in a placement test (see Table 2.1). The four-level intensive English language course is a content-based, integrated-skills programme, delivered through a system of modules. The duration of each module is 7-8 academic weeks, with 18 contact hours per week. Presently, the English Unlimited Special Edition is being used as main syllabus resource which replaced the Oxford Headway series (special edition) that was used for five years from 2010-2015. The international edition of the New Headway series was slightly modified to suit the 'conservative' environment of the KSA.

Table 2.1: Courses Offered to EFL Learners at the ELI

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ELI Course Code</th>
<th>Course Level</th>
<th>CEFR Level</th>
<th>Credits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>101</td>
<td>Beginner</td>
<td>A1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>102</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>A2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>103</td>
<td>Pre-Intermediate</td>
<td>B1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>104</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>B1+</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.4 The Faculty at the ELI

In order to run such a massive EFL programme, the ELI (male campus) has a large faculty of around 250 English language instructors hailing from 25 different countries. Among the non-native faculty, the largest community of teachers comprising around 45 teachers belongs to Pakistan, which is followed by Tunisian and Egyptian groups of teachers who are around 40 and 25 respectively. Whereas, the native English teachers from the UK, USA, Canada and Australia exceed the figure of 40. Although the benchmark qualification of a TESOL teacher at the ELI is MA in TESOL/TEFL/Applied Linguistics, or any related equivalent from an accredited university, a teacher with BA in English plus a certificate or diploma in English Language Teaching and three year TESOL experience is also eligible for the job. Importantly, applicants who possess certificates or diplomas like CELTA and DELTA, and overseas teaching experience are given preference in the recruitment process. Based on qualifications and years of teaching experience, a competitive package is offered to successful applicants, which includes housing and furniture allowances, medical coverage, annual return tickets for the teacher and up to three dependents, 60 days paid annual summer leave plus national holidays, and end of service benefits.
2.4.1 The Pakistani Teachers at the ELI

With my insider's view and ample anecdotal and testimonial evidence, I can safely state that the Pakistani teachers at the ELI have invested most generously on their professional learning and development. No less than eight teachers are enrolled in doctoral programmes at universities in the UK or USA. A considerable number of the Pakistani teachers, at least six, with their earlier degrees less focused on micro language teaching skills, sought admission in MA TESOL programmes in British universities. More than 15 of the Pakistani teachers have completed the Cambridge CELTA. Indeed, the Pakistani teachers’ devotion to professional learning and development and/or desire for survival in a challenging workplace that motivated them to spend out of their not-so-fat wallets have brought rich dividends. With their professional potential and expertise appreciated by the top administration, luck has smiled on them, and they have been able to secure numerous key positions, which had hitherto been dominated by the native speakers, such as chief-coordinators, coordinators, and headships and memberships in various units of the ELI. The pursuit of professional excellence pioneered by some Pakistani teachers, myself one of them, has gained momentum over the years and an increasing number of my compatriots have committed themselves to further professional learning and development in the field of TESOL.

2.5 The Faculty Evaluation and Professional Development

For teaching quality assurance, the ELI has a multi-faceted system of teacher evaluation, in which classroom observations are considered a key factor. Based on their performance in at least five evaluation areas, teachers are ranked on scales from 1 to 5 (see Table 2.2). Teachers placed in lower ranks are either sacked or transferred to rural campuses, whereas teachers between rank 4 through 5 stand a chance of promotion and monetary gains. The overall annual faculty evaluation criteria include:

- **Instructional skills** (based on classroom observation);
- **Professionalism** (based on academic knowledge, performance, and behavior outside the classroom);
- **Professional development** (undertaken between module four of the previous academic year and the end of module three in the current academic year and based on submitting a personal professional development plan for the upcoming academic year).
- **Service to the ELI** (based on participation in various committees, involvement in extra-curricular activities, materials development, etc.);
- **Student evaluations** (information obtained from student feedback on teaching).

2.5.1 Classroom Observation: Evaluation of Instructional skills

Evaluation of Instructional skills, carried out through classroom observations, is the central component of annual faculty evaluation and faculty professional development programme at
the ELI, which is managed by the Professional Development Unit (PDU) of the institution. The PDU’s professional development specialists are the primary classroom performance evaluators. The PDU is responsible for conducting all formal and informal observations. After formal observations, written faculty observation evaluation reports are prepared, which are subsequently included in annual faculty evaluations. PDU observers are faculty members with proven successful classroom track records, trained to evaluate classroom performance and equipped to provide mentoring support and training for faculty members with developmental issues. Detailed notes are taken during observations and faculty members are rated from a variety of perspectives according to detailed observation rubrics. Standardized rubrics are employed for all observation records in order to maintain objectivity, transparency and fairness. A brief summary of different aspects of TESOL professional knowledge and skills evaluated during the classroom observations can be seen in Appendix 1.

Table 2.2: (Approximate) Percentage of Teachers’ Placed in Ratings from 1 to 5 (2014-2016)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers’ ratings</th>
<th>Percentage of teachers in each rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4+</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3+</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: PDU

2.5.2 Professional Development of the Faculty

The ELI faculty members are encouraged and expected to participate in professional development opportunities at the ELI as a means of enhancing their professional knowledge and skills in the field, in support of the achievement of the ELI’s Mission. Faculty members are kept posted on all professional development opportunities through regular communications. PDU also regularly updates the faculty members on relevant webinars, online courses, workshops, discussion groups and seminars offered on-campus and at various other locations including the British Council. In addition, there is ample scope for teachers to interact with colleagues on regular basis for professional exchange of ideas and concerns or set up any on-campus or online professional learning communities with institutional permission. The ELI has a substantial pool of qualified academic and educational talent and expertise at its disposal and is able to organize bespoke professional development events on the campus or other local venues.

(Sources not referenced in the description include: Faculty Handbook, Official Memos, Teacher Evaluation Rubrics, and website of the Institution)
2.6 The Pakistani Context: Teacher Professional Learning and Development

Even though the study primarily focuses on the participants' professional excellence in the Saudi research context, a brief perspective on the teacher PLD situation is also relevant as the study, biographical in nature, encompasses participants' learning throughout their lives. Some sporadic details about the Pakistani context can also be seen in the findings and discussion chapters.

English is an overwhelmingly dominant second language in Pakistan. Enjoying an official language status in almost all the public sector departments, the federal and provincial public services exams, which aim to recruit people for high-profile jobs, are conducted in English language. In this way, proficiency in English language can be the passport to success and prosperity in Pakistan (Rahman, 2002). With Pakistani society split into number of classes, for the elite and affluent of our country, English is a boon; but for the poor and underprivileged, it is a bane: a huge hurdle in their way to higher education. The people belonging to upper-middle class and above usually send their children to private English medium schools, usually affiliated with Cambridge or London Edexcel examination bodies (Rahman, 2005). The students studying in these private schools develop advanced skills in English language and hence grab most of the worthwhile positions in the country. The students coming from the lower-middle class and below have got the only option to study in public sector schools where the standard of education is pathetically poor, and English language is taught primarily through grammar translation method and rote learning by poorly trained language teachers. As a consequence, at the secondary and higher secondary level, the overall pass percentage of the students studying in government schools is extremely low as most students fail the English subject and losing motivation eventually quit their studies. As underscored by Malik (1996), the high failure rate, affecting the students in at least two ways, not only ruins all their chances for white-collar jobs in the homeland, but also dampens their morale for further studies.

One of the major factors in this schismatic educational situation is the low quality of teacher education and virtually non-existent PLD programmes in the country. According to USAID-UNESCO's (2006) situation analysis of teacher education in Pakistan, some of the major issues plaguing the system include lack of policy framework for teacher education and professional development, absence of any standardization system through licensing and accreditation, institutional clutter — numerous institutions with ill-defined mandate, lack of communication and collaboration among training institutions, poor quality of teacher preparation, lack of transparency in teacher recruitment and evaluation, and low-standard of teacher educators and training delivery systems. In a nutshell, the teacher PLD situation in Pakistan is fraught with challenges, and learning opportunities for teachers are scarce, sporadic, and shallow in substance (for details see Chaudary & Imran, 2012).
Chapter Three
The Literature Review

3. Introduction

The literature review aims to develop a broad conceptual framework for the current research study, which will influence various aspects of the study, such as refinement of research questions, data collection, findings and interpretations, and discussion of the findings to inform the research questions. The literature review has five sections covering (i) the concept and terminology of teacher professional learning and development (PLD), (ii) a brief overview of learning orientations or paradigms with relatively detailed discussion of two major social learning theories, (iii) a descriptive analysis of PLD models with focus on the utility of Professional Learning Community (PLC) Model and Reflective Model for supporting and enhancing teacher PLD, (iv) a concise analysis of various (individual and contextual) factors affecting or contributing to PLD, and finally (v) a brief discussion of the idea of becoming a (TESOL) professional. Another important segment of literature on PLD is the construct of Personal Interpretive Framework comprising Professional Self-understanding and Subjective Education Theory, propounded by Kelchtermans (1993, 2009a), which I have used for re-constructing my NVivo-supported deconstructed data and further meaning-making and interpretation of findings. Although I have touched upon Kelchtermans’ framework in this chapter, its further exposition is presented in Chapter Four.

3.1 Professional Learning and Development (PLD): Setting the Context

One of the bizarre predicaments I was up against in the current research was to finalize suitable terms and their definitions which could reflect my understanding of the topic. There are numerous terms used to describe the phenomenon of teacher PLD. Some of them include In-service Education, Teacher Learning, Teacher Development, Lifelong Learning, Professional Learning, Professional Development (PD), Continuing Professional Development (CPD), Continuing Professional Learning (CPL), and Continuing PLD (CPLD). Although all these terms have certain distinctions, they mainly try to capture the same phenomenon. It is interesting to see how some terms, like In-service education and staff development, reigned supreme at one time have now lost their lustre or faded into background. The renowned British journal ‘Professional Development in Education’ was once called ‘Journal of In-service Education’. Interestingly, the name of the journal is once again being considered for change and the newly proposed title for the journal most likely is ‘Professional Learning and Development in Education’ (O’Brien & Jones, 2014). It reflects how certain terms gain momentum with continuing research developments. Fullan’s (2007) argument also endorses such trends for adoption of more representative terms. He contends that ‘professional development as a term and as a strategy has run its course. The future of improvement…depends on a radical shift in how we conceive learning and the conditions
under which teachers and students work.’ (p. 35). As a substitute, Timperley, Wilson, Barrar and Fung (2007) and Stoop (2009) recommend a broader and more inclusive term, Professional Learning and Development, which not only encompasses the process of participation in developmental activities, but also captures non-linear aspect of teacher learning, reflective practice, and professionalism (O'Brien & Jones, 2014; Stoop, 2009) (for more discussion on these terms, see L. Evans, 2008; Fraser et al., 2007; Kelly, 2006; Loughran, 2010). Hence, I choose to use the term Professional Learning and Development (PLD) for the current research and borrow Day's (1999) words to define this term which, according to Mayer and Lloyd (2011), appear to capture both learning and development in the professional career of a teacher:

Professional [learning and] development consists of all natural learning experiences and those conscious and planned activities which are intended to be of direct or indirect benefit to the individual, group or school and which contribute...to the quality of education in the classroom. It is 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 and emotional intelligence essential to good professional thinking, planning and practice with children, young people and colleagues through each phase of their teaching lives (Day, 1999:4).

More importantly, by defining professional development as PLD, I believe I can also see all the processes - formal, informal, or non-formal and intentional, incidental, or implicit – whether aimed at or contributing to PLD, in light of the vast body of literature accumulated over time in the field of learning theory (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002).

3.1.1 The Scope of Professional Learning and Development

The scope of PLD as I conceive for the present study is in line with the European Commission (2000) document on educational policy, the Memorandum on Lifelong Learning, which states that ‘learning is no longer just one aspect of education and training; it must become the guiding principle for provision and participation across the full continuum of learning contexts’ (p. 3). Learning by this definition, beginning from pre-service education, encompasses all meaningful learning processes and activities related to three categories:

**Formal learning** that takes place in the classical education and training institutions and leads to recognised diplomas and qualifications.

**Non-formal learning** that occurs alongside the mainstream systems of education and training. It may take place in the professional contexts or the workplaces, in professional learning communities, friends groups and associations, and in civil society organizations. It may also occur during activities arranged by the employing institution to complement or enhance teachers’ knowledge and skills.

**Informal learning** is a natural accompaniment to everyday life. It is not necessarily intentional or organized by someone. (Commission, 2000:8)
Another important aspect to determine is the beginning and ending of the process of PLD. Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991) seem to address this issue to my satisfaction by defining a teacher's journey of PLD as the 'sum of formal [, non-formal] and informal learning experiences throughout one's career from pre-service teacher education to retirement' (p. 326). For the current study, I conceive lifelong PLD as encompassing the research participants' learning from pre-service education to date (till the completion of the study), holding as well a view that with tenacious and lifelong commitment to their PLD, enacted through participation in formal, non-formal, and informal processes and activities, teachers move towards expertise in their professional practice – the ultimate aim for a professional teacher (Kelly, 2006).

3.2 Major Paradigms of Learning Theories

You can't have a learning society without learning students, and you can't have learning students without learning teachers (Fullan, 1993:138).

As Fullan (1993) contends that student learning is contingent upon teacher learning, the question arises: How do teachers learn and develop? Unfortunately, research on learning has rendered more knowledge about animal learning than child learning, and more knowledge about child learning than adult and teacher learning (Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 2005, 2015). Notwithstanding the plethoric proliferation of learning theories - which in itself is a challenge for a fledgling researcher, if not for an experienced one, to make their way through the labyrinth of learning theory – our understanding of how learning takes place is still fluid. Probably, one useful way to develop foundational understanding of the underlying assumptions of a myriad of learning theories is by looking at them through various frameworks, orientations, or paradigms proposed by some of the seminal writers in the field. However, it is important to note that such categorizations of learning theories are not watertight and have a considerable degree of overlap between them (Jarvis, 2010).

Knowles et al. (2005, 2015) view learning theories as either elemental or holistic in nature placing behaviourist theories under elemental model and cognitive theories under holistic model while giving no mention of learning happening in the social domain. With a different focus, Wenger (2009) categorises learning theories as psychological learning theories and social learning theories. He places the multitude of behaviouristic, cognitive, cognitive-constructivist, and those social-constructivist theories which do consider the role of social interaction in learning but still view learning as primarily a cognitive process, in the realm of psychological theories. Wenger (2009) also views Albert Bandura’s social cognitive theory as a psychological learning theory. However, one may not entirely agree with Wenger's opinion about Bandura's learning theory being not too social to be considered in the domain of ‘truly’ social learning theories. Among social learning theories he includes theories emerging from the works of Lev Vygotsky, like socio-cultural and activity theories, and organizational theories focusing on learning in organizational structures. At the same time, he emphasises
that his conception of social learning has a different focus from these social learning theories. Another quite popular typology of learning theories is proposed by Merriam, Caffarella and Baumgartner (2007). They divide learning theories along five different learning orientations namely, behaviourist, humanist, cognitivist, social, and constructivist. They discuss various cognitive-constructivist, and social-constructivist theories under constructivist orientation and consider most of adult learning theories, which they place under humanist orientation, as constructivist in their nature. Additionally, major focus of their work is on adult learning theories. Finally, Jarvis (2010) has offered a simpler framework for developing a broad understanding of the underlying assumptions of various learning theories. He divides them into behaviourist, cognitive, and social learning theories. Among the social learning theorists, he mentions the names of Vygotsky, Bandura, and Lave and Wenger.

### 3.3 Theoretical Framework of the Study

The overarching theoretical framework of the study is derived from the **social learning paradigm** focusing above all on Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory and Lave and Wenger’s situated and community of practice theory. For the purpose of forming a background to the theoretical framework, drawing on the typologies of learning theories proposed by Merriam et al., (2007) and Jarvis (2010), I will touch upon the paradigms of Humanism, Behaviourism and Cognitivism, and move on to present in detail the Vygotsky’s and Lave and Wenger’s theories from the social learning paradigm. Nevertheless, given the large number of theories and perspectives on learning, I will, instead of enlarging the scope combining multiple levels of analysis and unnecessarily diluting the focus of my research, heed the suggestion underscored by Carre (2013) that ‘real expertise requires mastery of one specific level of analysis and an informed openness to adjacent levels of knowledge’ (p. 16). With this understanding, in the shadow of my theoretical framework, I have developed a broad conceptual framework drawing on a motley of theoretical constructs, learning models, and big ideas posited by renowned learning theorists affiliated to social constructivist, cognitive constructivist, participatory, and humanistic adult learning orientations. Hopefully, this flexible approach will help enhance my understanding of social as well as individual dimensions of learning, further illuminating the phenomenon of teacher PLD.

### 3.4 Humanism: Adult Learning Theories

Adult learning is a big tent which gained widespread popularity primarily due to the works of Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, and Malcolm Knowles, who were deeply influenced by the humanist tradition in learning (in Merriam et al., 2007). Historically, ‘the most significant of all educationalists for the development of adult education’ is John Dewey³ whose ideas and

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³ An in-depth discussion on hitherto less appreciated aspects of Dewey’s ideas on the social dimension of learning can be seen in Biesta and Burbules (2003) and Rich (2011); also see 3.9.3 for Dewey’s ideas on reflection.
influence can be conveniently appreciated in the (adult) learning theory (see Jarvis, 2010:186). Centred in the humanist tradition, adult learning theories either have a leaning towards cognitive-constructivist or social-constructivist orientations. Considering human beings as self-directing, Humanism appreciates the human dignity and potential for growth. The primary objective of learning in Humanism is to develop a wholesome personality through self-actualization of total human potential (Merriam et al., 2007). One major criticism on the adult learning theories of Knowles (1973), Mezirow (1981, 2000), and Kolb (1984) is their lack of emphasis on or disregard for the role of context in learning, which some later theorists like Jarvis (2001) and Illeris (2002) have tried to address in their learning theories.

3.5 Behaviourism and Cognitivism (Cognitive Constructivism)

Behaviourism, the earliest trend-setter of the learning theory, no doubt called the shots till 1950s until Chomsky (1959) — highlighting the constraints of stimulus-response theory and extrapolations of animal-experiments to human learning — smote it, paving way for the eventual rise of Cognitivism and a plethora of other learning theories and models (Thornbury, 2008). Vygotsky (1962) also criticised behaviouristic theories on account of being too individualistic, limited, and decontextualized in nature. Similarly, Cognitivism, with its least regard to social context of learners, and reductionist conception of learning as residing entirely in the mind and gained only through a process of transfer, has also been considered as inadequate to encompass the complexity of learning in general and teachers’ professional learning in particular (see Hager & Hodkinson, 2011; Kelly, 2006).

3.6 Social Learning Paradigm: Social Constructivism & Social Constructionism

As the learning theories in the paradigms of Behaviourism and Cognitivism fell short of capturing the active and agentic role of the (teacher) learner and sociocultural influences of the learning context, researchers like Johnson and Golombek (2011, 2016), Swain, Kinnear and Steinman (2015), and van Huizen, van Oers and Wubbels (2005) are inclined towards Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory, and Kelly (2006) and Webster-Wright (2010) favour situated learning theory of Lave and Wenger (1991); whereas, Freeman (2006), a seminal researcher in TESOL, considering learning and practice as social, cultural and historical, proposes an inclusive framework for teacher PLD derived from Vygotsky’s sociocultural and activity theories and Lave and Wenger’s situated learning and community of practice theory. In fact, I tend to feel more inclined towards Freeman’s recommendation for studying teachers’ PLD for the reasons discussed below.

Until the last decade, most of the literature on teacher PLD was produced under the influence of Cognitivism considering learning primarily as acquisition (Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2005; Kelly, 2006). With the rise of social learning theories, teacher education and PLD literature has begun to critique learning as acquisition in the light of constructivist learning theories; whereas researchers in the field of workplace learning are more inclined
towards participatory learning theories (Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2005). However, instead of adopting a dichotomous approach to learning theories, we need to develop and promote learning frameworks, like the one proposed by Freeman (2006), that could combine individual construction of learning with participatory learning approaches (McNamara, Jones & Murray, 2014). There are already some voices like Sfard (1998), Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2005), Hager and Hodkinson (2011), and Greeno (2011), calling for an inclusive approach to individual and social dimensions of learning, where both the perspectives could be merged, with social learning expanding and absorbing the more individualized aspects of learning. For teacher professional learning, Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2005:111) propose that ‘a combination of construction and participation metaphors provides a way of understanding learning that best fits the current research evidence, and is most likely to maximise possibilities for improving teacher learning in the future’.

Convinced as I am by the ‘social turn’ in learning theory (Block, 2003:4), I assume that human beings are social beings and the socialness of mortals is central to their learning (Wenger, 2009). Hence I intend to consider two major theoretical constructs relevant to the Social Learning Paradigm — Social Constructivism and Social Constructionism — as an overarching theoretical framework for my research — to explicate the nature of learning in my participants’ professional lives. Webster-Wright (2010) has cogently defined the conception of learning in Social Constructivism and Social Constructionism: In Social Constructivism the learner actively constructs knowledge, ‘influenced by past experience and present interactions with the social learning context. Although the influence of sociocultural interaction is stressed, social constructivism tends to foreground the individual in the making of meaning and construction of knowledge with others’; whereas Social Constructionism considers learning as taking place ‘through the inter-subjective construction of meaning. It emphasises that reality and knowledge are socially constituted, so that the learner and the world are irrevocably interrelated through lived experience’ (P. 20-1). Although there is a process of knowledge construction in both the approaches, Social Constructivism is more aligned with the concept of learning as construction and has more emphasis on the individual; whilst Social Constructionism epitomizes learning as participation, which is enacted through inter-subjective construction of knowledge in the social context. In other words, in Social Constructivism learning is centrifugal and it moves towards the learner from the social context and becomes their property, but in Social Constructionism learning is centripetal and the learner moves towards the learning and becomes a part of the social context where learning is enacted.

To the best of my understanding that is developed through a literature review in the terrain of teacher PLD, workplace learning, and adult education, I consider Vygotsky’s Sociocultural Theory as a major contribution to the domain of Social Constructivism (Johnson, 2009;
Johnson & Golombek, 2011, 2016; Swain et al., 2015); whereas Lave and Wenger’s (1991) and Wenger’s (1998) Situated Learning and Community of Practice (CoP) Theory can be declared as a representative theory in Social Constructionism (Kelly, 2006; Webster-Wright, 2010). With this theoretical position, I will make an attempt to raise our consciousness about the nature and ways of PLD of the highly effective TESOL professionals in my research context. I will also discuss various typologies of professional development models considered to be effective for supporting and sustaining teacher PLD.

3.7 Vygotsky’s Sociocultural Theory of Learning: Social Constructivism

Lev Vygotsky, the father of Sociocultural Theory, died of tuberculosis at the age of 37. Within his painfully transitory life, his contribution to the world of learning was prolific and prodigious (Swain et al., 2015). Johnson and Golombek (2011:1) have made a strong claim that Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory possesses ‘the potential to explicate the origins, mechanisms, nature, and consequences of teacher professional [learning and] development at all phases of teachers’ careers and in all contexts where they live, learn, and work’. Taking a similar stance, van Huizen et al. (2005) assert that Vygotsky’s theory offers a strong theoretical basis for a most comprehensive paradigm of teacher education and professional development. Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory, like most traditional learning theories, aims to understand the development of human cognitive functions (Zuengler & Miller, 2006). However, Vygotsky distinguished it from other learning theories by placing his primary focus on its social dimension. As he states: ‘The social dimension of consciousness is primary in time and fact. The individual dimension of consciousness is derivative and secondary’ (1979:30). Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory has three major tenets (Wertsch, 1985; M. Johnson, 2004):

3.7.1 Major Tenets of Vygotsky’s Sociocultural Theory

3.7.1.1 The developmental or genetic analysis of human mental processes

Vygotsky (1978) believes that in order to understand the current level of human mental development, we need to trace it ontogenetically (historically) through all its developmental stages:

We need to concentrate not on the product of development but on the very process by which higher forms are established….To encompass in research the process of a given thing's development in all its phases and changes—from birth to death—fundamentally means to discover its nature, its essence, for 'it is only in movement that a body shows what it is'. (pp. 64-65)

In addition to studying the ontogenesis of human mental development, Vygotsky emphasises the importance of considering the domains of microgenesis, phylogenesis, and sociocultural history in relation to human learning and development (Wertsch, 1985). By ontogenesis, Vygotsky (1978) means the development throughout the life history or lifespan of a human. Whereas, microgenesis is the study of the development of a competency for a task or
activity; it is to ‘grasp the process in flight’ of the history of a particular event (p. 68), which Wertsch (1985:55) defined as conducting ‘a very short-term longitudinal study’. Phylogenesis encompasses the evolutionary process of the human species in comparison to animals. Following Karl Marx, Vygotsky argued that human beings’ ability to use tools and the process of their brain development distinguish them from higher animals, implying that although human beings learn from the mistakes but they learn more from the successes of other human beings, and human interaction with biological environment is a collective process which invalidates the law of natural selection for humankind (Leont’ev, 1970).

Hence, giving less importance to phylogenesis over other domains, Vygotsky sees no link between human biological evolution and sociocultural history (historical development of human cognition) – or one influencing the other; whereas he does see ongoing sociocultural forces having an impact on ontogenesis (Wertsch, 1985). In sum, according to Vygotsky, a detailed analysis taking into account these four domains of human mental development can afford us a comprehensive understanding of human learning and development (M. Johnson, 2004). However, he himself focused more on ontogenetic and microgenetic domains in his research studies considering them ‘more “accessible” than phylogenesis and social history’ (Wertsch, 1985:40).

3.7.1.2 Social origins of higher mental functions

The second major tenet of Vygotsky’s theory is his claim about the social origins of higher mental functions of human beings. Vygotsky argues that higher mental functions of humans develop as a result of social interaction, and to understand these higher mental processes, we need to examine the sociocultural origins of those processes (Wertsch & Tulviste, 1992). As conceived in the genetic law of cultural development, higher mental functions have their genesis on the interpersonal plane, which is not only external to human beings, but also includes features of social and historical developments in a society (M. Johnson, 2004). Vygotsky (1978) defines this process:

Every function in the child’s cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological). This applies equally to voluntary attention, to logical memory, and to the formation of concepts. All the higher functions originate as actual relationships between individuals. (Vygotsky, 1978:57)

3.7.1.3 Mediated nature of human mental development:

Vygotsky (1982:166) made a unique contribution with his exposition of the concept of mediation, and declared that ‘the central fact about our psychology is the fact of mediation’. Wertsch (1985) argues that the first two tenets depend on mediation for their detailed explanation, but the third tenet, mediation being analytically superior to the other two themes, can be explicated as a stand-alone construct in Vygotsky’s learning and development system. Probably considering this fact, Johnson and Golombek (2011, 2016) in their
presentation of Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory, as the most comprehensive perspective on
the nature of teachers’ PLD, focused only on mediation and its related concepts.

3.7.1.3.1 Internalization

Teacher PLD, from Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory perspective, undergoes a progressive
movement from socially mediated inter-psychological activities to internally mediated intra-
psychological activities managed by the teachers themselves (K. Johnson, 2009). According
to Vygotsky, this process is called internalization (Some researchers, like Wertsch (1998),
prefer to use the terms mastery and appropriation to substitute internalization). Through this
process of internalization, a teacher is enabled ‘to voluntarily organize and control (i.e.
mediate) mental activity and bring it to the fore in carrying out practical activity in the material
world’ (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006:62). However, this is not a straight-forward process as
Leont’ev (1981) believes that ‘the process of internalization is not the transferral of an
external activity to a preexisting internal “plane of consciousness”: it is the process in which
the plane is formed’ (p. 57). In other words, through the process of internalization mediated
by tools or signs, sustained participation in PLD activities leads to transformation of
professional self and skills instead of mere replacement or addition to the existing repertoire
(Valsineer & van der Veer, 2000). It also suggests that the learning outcomes of the process
of internalization are dictated by the personal agency of the learner who decides how this
engagement in activities will enhance their professional knowledge and self-understanding
(K. Johnson, 2009).

3.7.1.3.2 Mediological means or tools

As all the higher human mental functions or activities, which also include teachers’ PLD, are
mediated by various tools, a concise discussion of these tools or mediational means is
essential to a sound perspective on Vygotsky’s learning theory. Although in Vygotsky’s
earlier work (1978), a distinction was made between tools (externally oriented) and signs
(externally oriented), I will use the generic term tools for all mediational means following
of these mediational tools from Vygotsky’s works: Social mediation, Instrumental or tool
mediation, Semiotic mediation, Anatomical mediation, and Individual mediation. Vygotsky
mentioned various forms of mediation; however, he primarily focused on psychological tools,
privileging above all ‘semiotic mediation by means of the modality of language’ (Hasan,
2002:112). Johnson and Golombek (2011, 2016), while discussing teachers’ PLD in light of
Vygotsky’s learning theory, divide the mediational means or tools into three broad categories:

i) Cultural artifacts (including Language-private speech and collaborative dialogue)

ii) Scientific and everyday concepts

iii) Social relations: Human mediation
Cultural artifacts can be material (e.g. a book, or a reflective journal) or symbolic (e.g. language written in a book). According to Lantolf and Thorne (2006), cultural artifacts can combine both material and symbolic ‘aspects of human goal-directed activity that are not only incorporated into the activity, but are constitutive of it’ (p. 62). In other words, human use of artifacts to achieve a goal constitutes an activity. It is probably a major claim by Vygotsky that all kinds of meaningful activities are mediated by culturally developed symbolic and/or material tools (Swain et al., 2015). Johnson and Golombek (2016) use the example of a teaching lesson plan to elaborate the above point: a lesson plan is conceptualized in the mind of a teacher and presented on a paper, and then followed by an enactment in the classroom. Now the lesson plan is a symbolic tool in the form of a concept in the teacher’s mind and a material tool when written on paper before it is performed as an activity in the class. The same example can also be used to convey another relevant concept, of affordances and constraints, inherent in tools. A lesson plan can be a tool providing affordance for a nascent teacher in the form of lesson staging and time-management, but it may become a constraint in case time-management becomes a challenge and finishing the lesson on time shams into a goal for the teacher (Johnson & Golombek, 2016).

Of all the psychological tools in Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory, language is the most privileged cultural artifact – a semiotic tool that mediates the higher mental functions of reflection and learning (Swain et al., 2015). There are two ways we engage in a dialogue: collaborative dialogue (interpersonal) and private speech (intrapersonal), and language mediates between these interpersonal and intrapersonal domains of humans.

The private speech is probably the most complex concept in sociocultural theory. Private speech, ‘speech for oneself’ (Vygotsky 1962:135) or ‘self-talk’ (Vocate, 1994), is a cognitive tool that mediates our thinking process through an intrapersonal communication (Swain et al., 2015). Vygotsky (1934/1987:259) maintains that private speech ‘facilitates intellectual orientation, conscious awareness, the overcoming of difficulties and impediments, and imagination and thinking’. In addition, private speech helps us ‘to make sense of the situation in words, to find a solution to a problem or plan the next action’ (p. 70). There is empirical evidence that adults use private speech for intra-psychological purposes, particularly when faced with a difficult task, and it serves ‘a mediational role in problem-solving and self-regulatory processes’ not only ‘during early adulthood’ but also ‘throughout the life span’ (Duncan, 1999:160). Vygotsky (1960) argues:

All higher psychological functions are internalized relationships of the social kind, and constitute the social structure of personality. Their composition, genetic structure, ways of functioning, in one word, all their nature—is social. Even when they have become psychological processes, their nature remains quasi-social. The human being who is alone retains the function of interaction. (p. 198).

Interestingly, the private speech — an intra-psychological dialogue — is a form of externalization of higher mental functions, which provided partial evidence to Vygotsky for his
argument that higher mental functions are externalized in the form of social interaction between people (Swain et al., 2015). Whenever humans are up against any complex cognitive issue, they experience the emergence of private speech which takes the form of an internalized I-Me dialogue, which is an internalized replication of the patterns of participation in social interactions that occur in I-You dialogue (Swain et al., 2015; Vocate, 1994).

**Concepts** are also utilized to mediate the process of learning and development. For Vygotsky (1962), concept formation is a dynamic process aimed at the solution of some complex problem. He argues that ‘a concept is not an isolated, ossified, and changeless formation, but an active part of the intellectual process constantly engaged in serving communication, understanding, and problem solving’ (p. 98). He divides concepts into two categories: everyday or spontaneous concepts and scientific concepts. Scientific concepts can be defined as objective, systematic, and context-free; whereas everyday concepts are situated, intuitive, and practical. However, they are not mutually replaceable rather they influence each other with learners moving to and fro between scientific concepts and everyday concepts (Swain et al., 2015). Teacher PLD is enhanced through a dialectic between the two types of concepts. As part of teacher learning, scientific concepts are taught to teachers to help them be independent of their apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 1975), and while reflecting-in/on-action they reform and structure their everyday concepts as a result of a dialectic with scientific concepts (Johnson & Golombek, 2011). Vygotsky (1962) highlights the bidirectional and dialectic relationship between them. He states, ‘scientific concepts grow down through spontaneous concepts, and spontaneous concepts grow up through scientific concepts’ (p. 116).

The third category of mediational tools is **Social relations** which in the form of human mediation are key to our understanding of how human engagement in social interactions mediates the process of learning and development. For teacher PLD, human mediation can play a crucial role in teachers’ movement between everyday and scientific concepts, which gradually leads to development of sound teaching practices that are simultaneously more localized and context-specific, and grounded in theoretical and pedagogical knowledge (Johnson & Golombek, 2011). Rogoff (1995), a neo-Vygotskian researcher, proposes three planes of human mediation: apprenticeship, guided participation, and participatory appropriation. In apprenticeship, novices learn in a community of practice through participation in activities with others; guided participation involves observation of expertise and joint involvement of experts and novices in activities; and participatory appropriation ‘is a process of becoming, rather than acquisition’ (p.142), where the novices have already experienced learning and growth and do not need social mediation to use the tools. In the field of TESOL, ‘attention to the quality and the character of the mediation that teachers
receive is absolutely critical to understanding, supporting, and enhancing the development of teaching expertise' (Johnson & Golombek, 2011:6)

3.7.1.3.3 Zone of proximal development (ZPD): Scaffolding and regulation

Vygotsky (1978) strongly believes in the potential of human beings to co-construct their learning through collaboration or with help from someone more competent. He defines ZPD as ‘the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers’ (p. 86). ZPD can also be viewed as a metaphor that can help us understand the process of internalization of learning through various mediational tools (Lantolf, 2000). In programmes and activities aimed at teacher PLD, an attempt is made to help teachers perform tasks, which they on their own are incapable of doing. This process of help is enacted via various mediational tools in the metaphoric space of ZPD (Johnson & Golombek, 2011). Wertsch (1985) uses the term strategic mediation to highlight that it entails a process of cognitive assistance which is meant for cognitive transformation rather than successful performance at a specific occasion. This process of assistance should be well calculated in order not to impinge on the personal agency of the learner with too much support or lead to frustration with too little support.

Allied to ZPD are the concepts of scaffolding and regulation. Initially proposed by Bruner and his colleagues (Wood et al., 1976), scaffolding is conceived to operationalize the concept of ZPD. In order to reduce the cognitive load or provide necessary support to learners to perform a task or develop a skill, teachers can use various forms of interventions, such as differentiated instructions, modelling of activities, peer or group support, and reading of support materials, to appropriately scaffold the learning process. At personal level, reading, writing a journal or a diary, and discussions with colleagues can also act as useful mediational tools to manage learning in the ZPD (K. Johnson, 2007).

As regulation forms the stages through which learning passes from object-regulation, to other-regulation, and to self-regulation (McCafferty, 1994), faced with a difficult task, a learner without proper scaffolding, animate or inanimate, will be object-regulated and fail to bridge the space in ZPD. With appropriate scaffolding a learner will move from object-regulation to other-regulation (interactive assistance) and eventually to self-regulation - a stage characterized by mastery over confusion leading to autonomy. However, depending upon situations, learners can also construct their own ZPD; for example, writing a reflective journal to mediate the process of their learning (K. Johnson, 2007).

In a nutshell, Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory of learning and development highlights the interlinked nature of human cognitive and social dimensions. It offers considerable scope for research on ‘how teachers come to know what they know, how different concepts in teachers’ thinking develop and how this internal activity transforms teachers’ understandings
of themselves as teachers, their teaching practices and the nature of their students’ learning’. (K. Johnson, 2007:178)

3.7.2 Criticism

Toulmin (1981) christened Vygotsky as the *Mozart of psychology*, and Bruner (1987) declared him as one of the great theory makers of the 20th century. Schunk (2012) states that it is difficult to critique the contribution of Vygotsky’s theory as researchers have mostly debated issues aiming at ‘Piaget versus Vygotsky’ or such application of his theories which do not relate to the core of his work. Hence, little discussion focused on the adequacy of the main tenets of Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory of learning and development. As Vygotsky’s main focus was on learning and development of children, Illeris (2007) criticised the construct of ZPD and scientific concepts as ‘so clearly adult’, making the learning process as ‘a predominantly teacher-directed form of encounter’ leading to highly structured teaching with little contribution of pupils to the concept development (p. 59). Illeris’s concerns may be valid in contexts where teachers dominate the learning process and the teacher-centred approach is in practice, but for the current study, as focused on teachers’ (adults’) PLD, they lose their relevance.

Vygotsky is undoubtedly the most prominent scholar in the social learning paradigm. Still, Lave and Wenger (1991) - affiliated to the same learning paradigm despite their claimed distinction – do not consider Vygotsky as ‘social enough’ and argue that it contains only ‘a small ‘aura’ of socialness that provides input for the process of internalization, viewed as individualistic acquisition of the cultural given’ (p. 47). Undeniably influenced by the ideas of Vygotsky, they disparage his learning constructs of internalization and scientific concepts (see Liu & Matthews, 2005). Now I move on and discuss the Lave and Wenger’s situated learning and community of practice theory.

3.8 Situated Learning and Community of Practice Theory: Social Constructionism

According to Illeris (2007), the most significant breakthrough in sociocultural and historical tradition came about with Lave and Wenger’s (1991) and Wenger’s (1998) situated learning and community of practice (CoP) theory. Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998) conceive learning as situated in sociocultural contexts and communities of practice and enacted through participation in them. Repudiating the idea of learning as incrementally stored in the mind, Lave and Wenger (1991:35) emphasise that ‘learning is not merely situated in practice – as if it were some independently reifiable process that just happened to be located somewhere; learning is an integral part of generative social practice in the lived-in world’. In other words, learning is the natural outcome of a social practice, which takes place in a deepening process of participation in a community of practice (Haneda, 2006), and that participation leads to a kind of learning that is essentially continuous, relational and socially constituted.
With a continuing process of evolution in the theory of situated learning and CoP, Wenger (1998), in a later work, describes the learning experience as quite unique and comprehensive comprising various sociocultural, contextual and individual dimensions:

Our knowing – even of the most unexceptional kind – is always too big, too rich, too ancient, and too connected for us to be the source of it individually. At the same time, our knowing – even of the most elevated kind – is too engaged, too precise, too tailored, too active, and too experiential for it to be just of a generic size (p. 141).

3.8.1 The Structure of a Community of Practice (CoP)

Wenger (1998:5) proposes that a social theory of learning must integrate meaning (learning as experiencing), practice (learning as doing), community (learning as belonging), and identity (learning as becoming) to account for learning as participation in a CoP. In this way, learning as participation results in a rich experience which affords us to develop meaning (meaningful skills and practices) through a mutual sharing of our social and cultural resources in a CoP; at the same time, our participation in the CoP is considered as worth-pursuing and enlightening. Wenger (1998) describes all these components of learning as interconnected and views learning as experiencing a phenomenon, engaging in a practice, having a sense of belonging to the social/professional context, and a means of becoming a more competent professional and a better human being.

In addition to communities of practice being sites for negotiation of learning and identity, members of a CoP engage in practice which help them develop relationships with other colleagues. For Wenger (1998), no matter what forms different communities of practice may take, they all share three fundamental characteristics of mutual engagement (discussion, sharing of perspectives and exchange of ideas), joint enterprise (common professional goals, interests or activities), and shared repertoire (artifacts, concepts, experiences, tools, etc.), which are crucial in order for practice to generate coherence in a CoP and distinguish it from other groups and communities (for details see pp. 72-84).

3.8.2 From Community of Practice (CoP) to Professional Learning Community (PLC)

The construct of CoP has been gradually developed and dilated by Lave and Wenger (1991); Wenger (1998) and Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder (2002), which eventually germinated the idea of communities of practice for enhancing PLD. In their earliest work, Lave and Wenger (1991) postulated the concept of situated learning which focused on the interactions between novices and experts resulting in a professional identity for the fledglings. In his later work, Wenger (1998) extended the construct of CoP to offer personal growth and individual’s core vs. peripheral participation in a group. It was in 2002 that Wenger et al. (2002) revisited their conception of CoP and began to see it as a platform for improving organizations’ effectiveness and competitiveness through the professional development of its employees. They redefined the concept of CoP as ‘groups of people who share a concern, a set of
problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis’ (Wenger at el., 2002:4). Hence, one can see the widespread propagation of conscious efforts for establishing professional learning communities (PLCs) in institutional settings for PLD (Li et al., 2009). Although both a CoP and a PLC are meant to support and enhance the process of learning, a CoP is more informal with emphasis on voluntary membership and intrinsic motivation (Enthoven & de Bruijn, 2010). While CoP has less clearly defined objectives for supporting collegial learning; a PLC, theoretically based on Lave and Wenger’s (1991) theory, is more formal and institutionalized in its scope with well-defined aims to enhance teacher PLD through collaboration and thereby increase student achievement (DuFour, 2004). Hence for the current study, while presenting professional learning community (PLC) as a professional learning model in a later section, I will choose the term PLC instead of CoP (see 3.9.4).

3.8.3 Criticism

No doubt that situated learning and CoP theory offers a comprehensive account of social learning. However, at least three perceived weaknesses have been highlighted by various researchers in this theory (see Fuller, Hodkinson, Hodkinson & Unwin, 2005; Hager & Hodkinson, 2011; Haneda, 2006). First, probably with persistent voices calling for a review of the concept of legitimate peripheral participation in a CoP, this concept has faded in later works on the theory. In their earlier work, Lave and Wenger (1991) viewed master-apprentice relation as decentred, which ‘leads to an understanding that mastery resides not in the master but in the organization of the community of practice of which the master is part’ (p.94). In other words, they conceived learning as a movement from peripheral to full participation in a community of practice instead of the acquisition of knowledge within the mind of an individual (Wubbels, 2007). If a CoP is composed of novices, less and more-experienced teachers and experts, the idea of legitimate peripheral participation (LPP) seems short of encompassing the diversity of calibre and potential of individual participants; although it applies well to teachers at the early rungs of a career ladder as they have to learn the norms and develop professional knowledge of the domain of that particular community. However, later studies seem to suggest that patterns and forms of participation in a CoP are highly diverse, and learning in a CoP is not as simple and centripetal as conceived in LPP (Fuller et al., 2005).

Second, owing to its radical stance on the embeddedness of learning in the social context, it falls short in its perspective on how individuals are shaped by their engagement in the learning process, and how they experience a change in their identities as a result of peripheral to full participation in communities of practice (Hager & Hodkinson, 2011). Third, although in the context of non-formal or organizational setting, a CoP may function smoothly with relative stability, in academic institutions due to their hierarchical and centralized
structures, issue of power and control may crop up which Lave and Wenger failed to address in their theory (Fuller et al., 2005; Haneda, 2005). Notwithstanding the limitations of the theory, most of which have been reconsidered by Wenger (1998) and Wenger et al. (2002) in their later works, their works have made a substantial contribution to social learning theory.

3.9 Supporting Professional Learning and Development: Models and Approaches

In this section, I present a precise overview of some of the important PLD models that I consider worth-sharing in the context of my research.

3.9.1 Typologies of Professional Learning and Development (PLD) models

To develop a wide-angle conceptual lens, I present a review of various typologies of PLD models, which will help narrow down our focus on the major types of models proposed and utilized for teacher PLD.

Kennedy (2014), while revisiting her most popular framework for the analysis of PLD models proposed in 2005, has categorised PLD activities and endeavours under three major types of models: Transmissive, Malleable, and Transformative (see Figure 3.1). PLD models where delivery of learning is Transmissive in nature include the Training, Deficit, and Cascade models. These models, more bureaucratic and less autonomous, view learning as a transfer of techniques from experts to novices or less knowledgeable teachers. The Malleable models, with potential to be either implemented by institutions or individuals as Transmissive or Transformative, include mentoring and community of practice models. In the Transformative category, Kennedy (2014) places collaborative professional inquiry models, which embrace all such learning experiences that result from collaborative identification of a problem ensued by activities calling for greater involvement in reflective practices and research-oriented endeavours (e.g., Action research) to resolve the issues. Conceiving increasing professional autonomy and personal agency, she views the Transformative model as more aligned with the idea of professional learning communities as a base for collaborative inquiry, which Stoll et al. (2006) also posit as an effective approach to support and enhance PLD at both individual and collective levels.

Another major typology of PLD models for teachers is proposed by Tallerico (2005). In addition to training and observation based PLD, she promotes individually guided (e.g. reflection, portfolios, and journal-writing) and collaborative models (e.g. professional learning communities, mentoring, critical friends) of PLD (see Figure 3.1). She highlights three possible considerations for the process of choosing and implementing these models: 1) learner alignment – consider individual teachers learning preferences; 2) outcome alignment – focus on students’ desired learning outcomes; and 3) double alignment – which is an ideal situation meeting teachers’ learning preferences and students’ learning outcomes. However, teachers’ PLD depends less on the right choice of models than on features like focus on
deeper understanding of content knowledge, collective participation, active learning strategies, coherence between previous and current PLD activities and curriculum standards, and lastly the duration of learning activities and the time-span between current and follow-up activities (Tallerico, 2005:61). Further reducing the categories of PLD models to three, Gaible and Burns (2005) divide them into standardized, site-based, and self-directed models. Their standardized model encompasses the type of learning activities that Kennedy (2014) labels as transmissive in nature; whereas site-based and self-directed models are similar in description to Tallerico’s (2005) individually guided and collaborative problem solving models.

**Figure 3.1: Typology of Professional Learning and Development Models**
3.9.2 PLD Models: Key Dimensions or Features

In addition to classifying the numerous models of PLD for neat understanding of the process of learning and development, it is vital to develop a broader perspective on various aspects or characteristics of PLD. Among slightly dated works is Bell and Gilbert’s (1996) perspective on PLD. They highlight three inter-connected aspects namely personal, social, and occupational as having influence on teachers’ PLD: personal aspect includes teachers’ beliefs, values and attitudes, and their underlying motivations; social aspect is context-influenced and covers the role of community of practice or colleagues in teachers’ PLD; and occupational aspect entails strengthening of link between theory and practice with reference to professional context.

Guskey (2002), a seminal researcher on teacher change, laments that most of teacher PLD initiatives disregard two critical factors: teachers’ personal motivation for PLD and the process which effects a change in teachers. He further argues that PLD programs should aim to effect ‘a change in the classroom practices of teachers, in their attitudes and beliefs, and in the learning outcomes of students’ (p. 381). His model has been criticized for viewing teacher learning and change as a linear process (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002).

Desimone (2009) ambitiously aims to propose a ‘common conceptual framework’ based on five core features of teachers’ PLD (p. 181). Combining the five core features of this model - content focus, collective participation, active learning, coherence, and duration (actually sifted through the relevant literature by Tallerico (2005, see 3.4.1)) - with sequential steps of teacher change posited by Guskey (2002), Desimone (2009) develops a new framework, a ‘path model’, for assessing teachers’ PLD (p. 185). In her path model, teachers experience PLD as envisaged through five core features, which enhances teachers’ professional knowledge and skills and ushers in a change in their beliefs and attitudes. With this professional enhancement and change teachers are able to positively alter their instruction fostering visible improvement in student learning.

For L. Evans (2014:182), all the features represented through various models definitely broaden the knowledge bases, ‘but they do not deepen it’, as they fail to pay attention to the cognitive aspects of teachers’ professional development – the process of internalization of learning. There is only one model, the interconnected model of professional growth, propounded by Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002) that, according to L. Evans (2014), makes a substantial attempt to illuminate the micro-level process or change sequences of teacher professional development. By ‘micro-level cognitive process of professional development’, L. Evans (2014:183) means the process that ‘occurs inside an individual’s head in order for them to experience a single professional development ‘episode’ – [which still] remains under-examined by educational researchers’.
Clarke and Hollingsworth’s (2002:950) believe that teacher change (via PLD) is mediated by non-linear and cyclical processes of *reflection* and *enactment*, which take place in ‘the personal domain (teacher knowledge, beliefs and attitudes), the domain of practice (professional experimentation), the domain of consequence (salient outcomes), and the external domain (sources of information, stimulus or support)’. A change as a result of any experience or experimentation in one domain can catalyze a ‘change sequence’ in another, which may be a transitory change. However, in case an enduring change occurs in a teacher’s repertoire that will set in motion a ‘growth network’ leading to PLD (P. 958). By *enaction*, Clarke and Hollingsworth’s (2002) mean a teacher’s putting into action of a new idea, belief, or practice, whereas reflection for them is an ‘active, persistent and careful consideration’ (Dewey, 1910:9). Considering PLD a generative process taking place in a social context as a result of enaction and reflection, this model is aligned with situated learning theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Additionally, it acknowledges the idiosyncrasy of individuals and offers scope for development of personal theories of pedagogy as a result of change sequences and growth networks (for details see, Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002).

Another considerable model of PLD is the *Career-long Professional Learning Model* developed by Education Scotland (2014). This model is based on a multitude of studies researching links between PLD and enhancement of teachers’ professional practice. They have figured out four interconnected elements that support the process of teachers’ PLD, which are: reflection on practice, experiential learning, cognitive development, and collaborative learning. Advocating an embedded, relevant, and sustained approach to teacher PLD that blends individual and collaborative dimensions, this model aims to develop teachers into reflective, enquiring, and collegial practitioners. Likewise, Shulman and Shulman (2004) define the process of PLD as leading a teacher to become an accomplished teacher who ‘is a member of a professional community… is ready, willing, and able to teach and to learn from his or her teaching experiences’ (p. 259). In other words, they envisage a professional teacher as a reflective and collegial practitioner who is armed with a vision, motivation and professional knowledge and skills.

Wallace’s (1991) understanding that the two major factors in teacher education and learning are reflection and collaboration, has been further corroborated by the previous discussion of various features and models of PLD. In light of the review of literature on various approaches and models proposed for teacher PLD, I can safely say that the most prominent and consensual elements of teacher PLD are reflection and collegiality and collaboration in professional learning communities. Collegiality and collaboration although loosely linked are distinct terms. Collegiality denotes the relational quality of colleagues in an institution or a CoP, while collaboration refers to mutual, interdependent cooperation for action
(Kelchtermans, 2006). With this perspective, I venture to further mine the literature in these two areas and present two models considered most effective for supporting teachers’ PLD:

1) The Reflective Model,

2) The Professional Learning Community Model.

3.9.3 The Reflective Model

3.9.3.1 Schon’s reflective practitioner: An experiential-intuitive reflective model

In the late modern age, beginning around the First World War, Dewey (1933) can be considered the father of the idea of reflective practice for teaching professionals. Notwithstanding the popular acceptance of Dewey’s ideas about progressive education, his exposition of reflection became successful in making it an integral part of teacher learning and development with Donald Schon’s publication of *The Reflective Practitioner* in 1983 (Nelson & Sadler, 2013). Dewey (1933:9) defined ‘reflection’ as an ‘active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge’. For Dewey (1933:3), reflection is a process of systematically resolving a perplexed situation with a ‘serious and consecutive consideration’. While encouraging an overall attitude of open-mindedness, responsibility, and wholeheartedness (for details see Beauchamp, 2006; Norsworthy, 2008), he believed in a focused and methodological approach to reflection, in which ‘data (facts) and ideas (suggestions, possible solutions) thus form the two indispensable and correlative factors of all reflective activity’ (1933:104). Centred in a positivistic frame, the ultimate goal of reflection according to Dewey is a rational and logical explanation of the experienced problem and a demand for its resolution. For his strong inclination to rationalism, he has been criticised and his reflective model is conceived as based on technical rationality (Hebert, 2015), which Schon (1983:31) disparagingly declared as a ‘positivistic epistemology of practice’. To counter the technical-rationality of the dominant positivistic paradigm, which seemed to have ‘failed to resolve the dilemma of rigour versus relevance confronting professionals’ (Usher, Bryant & Johnston, 1997:140), Schon (1983, 1987) presented his experiential-intuitive model of reflection based on a new epistemology of practice (Hebert, 2015).

Schon’s (1983, 1987) work has been widely influential in professional development in the field of education. He argues that professionals develop a ‘special expertise’ or an artistic and intuitive awareness of their practice, which they ‘sometimes display in unique, uncertain, and conflicted situations of practice’ (1983:22). Such demonstration of a professional’s expertise or competence is usually based on their tacit knowledge, which in Polanyi’s (1966:4) words means that ‘we can know more than we can tell’. While giving this tacit knowledge a key role in a professional’s life, Schon (1987:25) calls it knowing-in-action which
‘attempts to put into explicit, symbolic form a kind of intelligence that begins by being tacit and spontaneous’. Schon (1983) further elaborates:

In his day-to-day practice he [a professional] makes innumerable judgements of quality for which he cannot state adequate criteria, and he displays skills for which he cannot sate the rules and procedures. Even when he makes conscious use of research-based theories and techniques, he is dependent on tacit recognitions, judgements and skillful performances (pp. 49/50).

Schon (1983) argues that reflection-in-action is an active and productive process of consciously accessing the tacit knowledge within action in the event of surprise, confusion or uncertainty, and thereby developing new knowing-in-action based on experiment with the situation in light of prior experiential understanding. Schon’s process of reflection can be summarized in a step-by-step process, which Schon (1987:28) defines as a series of moments:

- A routine action takes place that we respond to on the basis of our knowing-in-action.
- Routine responses produce a surprise - an unexpected outcome, pleasant or unpleasant, that does not fit the categories of our knowing-in-action.
- Surprise leads to reflection within an action-present.
- Reflection-in-action questions the assumptional structure of knowing-in-action. We think critically about the thinking that got us into this fix or this opportunity.
- Reflection gives rise to on-the-spot experiment.

Whenever, we engage in the process of reflection-in-action, we more or less follow these moments. However, this process may not be as ideal or neat as described above. What is important to consider is the significant relationship between action and reflection-in-action. The major contribution of Schon is his in-depth exposition of the idea of reflection-in-action for developing professional competence. However, when reflection-in-action is unable to resolve an issue, which is mainly due to the inadequacy of tacit or experiential knowledge, it will necessitate reflection-on-action entailing a thought process mostly aimed at the review or analysis of the past action and further reading and research on the professional issue beyond the ken of a professional. Schon’s (1983, 1987) works mainly render two orientations of reflection: reflection-in-action, reflection-on-action, whereas a third orientation, the reflection-for-action was proposed by Killion and Todnem (1991). Schon’s concept of reflection-on-action has similarities with Kolb’s (1984) experiential learning cycle where PLD is the outcome of a concrete experience followed by reflection on the experience resulting in development of new concepts and generalizations (explicit knowledge) to be utilized in future practices. Reflection-for-action combines the outcome of the first two orientations of the reflection (Norsworthy, 2008). It aims at committed efforts for enriching the existing repertoire of the professional knowledge in order to effectively handle any professional eventualities in the future.
3.9.3.2 Wallace’s (1991) reflective model: An exposition in the light of Schon’s ideas

In the field of TESOL, Wallace (1991) has basically repackaged Schon’s ideas on reflection in a more comprehensible form. While describing the three prevalent models of teacher professional development: the craft model⁴, the applied science model⁵, and the reflective model, he convincingly repudiated the craft and applied science models and presented the reflective model as a ‘compromise solution’ which retains elements of both the craft and applied science models (p. 17).

The ultimate goal of the reflective model of professional learning is the development of professional competence attained through a cyclical process of reflection on the teaching practice that is based upon an amalgam of received and experiential knowledge (see Figure 3.2). What Schon (1983:58) refers to as ‘research-based theories and techniques’, Wallace (1991) defines that as the received knowledge that includes key scientific research theories and concepts a teacher learns during his formal education for becoming a teacher. Experiential knowledge can be broadly considered a combination of tacit (cannot be verbalized), implicit (not verbalized, but can be), and explicit (verbalized) forms of knowledge (Fazey et al., 2006), which is enriched through an interaction of knowing-in-action and reflection. As mentioned earlier, by knowing-in-action, Schon (1983) means the tacit knowledge that a professional utilizes to make their day-to-day decisions in the thick of teaching practice. Once this knowing-in-action is consciously invoked through the process of reflection, it transforms itself into knowledge-in-action, a kind of explicit knowledge that further adds to the repertoire of a professional’s experiential knowledge. However, this is not the only way experiential knowledge is developed; it can also be enhanced by observing the teaching practices of competent others; nevertheless “knowledge-by-observation” is clearly of a different order from “knowledge-in-action” (Wallace, 1991:15; also see 3.10.2 for Bandura’s ideas on self-efficacy and observation).

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⁴ The craft model encompasses probably the most traditional form of professional education and learning where professional knowledge and wisdom reside in an experienced professional and the only way to learn the tools of any trade for a novice is to listen to, observe and imitate a master-teacher. Although the craft model allows for experiential learning through observation, advice and instruction of the expert teacher, the nature of learning in this model is essentially static and imitative with little accommodation for rapidly growing body of research-based knowledge (Wallace, 1991).

⁵ The applied science model is another more convenient term coined by Wallace (1991) to capture Schon’s ‘technical rationality’. Aligned with learning as transmission approach, the applied science model has been the most dominant model of teacher professional education until recent times. With little scope for a professional’s expertise resulting from experiential learning, the applied science model acknowledges only the experimental knowledge base which has in fact failed to resolve the complex day-to-day professional issues and dilemmas faced by a professional in the classroom. This model also perpetuates a ‘clear divide between the ‘thinkers’ and the ‘doers’”, the researchers and the practitioners, when it comes to development of professional knowledge (Wallace, 1991:10).
For Wallace (1983), the major aim of the reflective model is not only that reflection takes place, but also finding means to ensure the quality of reflection. He argues that teacher PLD programmes should aim to explore new ways of supporting a reciprocal relationship between received knowledge and knowledge-in-action being generated through reflection on practice; so that they feed and enhance each other symbiotically. Most importantly, unlike Schon who considers reflection-in-action as superior to other forms of reflection, Wallace (1991) accords virtually equal importance to reflection-in, on and for-action, with practice as the cynosure of the knowledge base (received knowledge + experiential knowledge) as well as the reflective process. In this way, he widens the scope of reflection for knowledge creation, at the same time supporting Eraut's (1995:21) contention that knowledge created in ‘reflection out of the action’ is no less than reflection-in-action.

Figure 3.2: Reflective Cycle (Wallace, 1991)

3.9.3.3 Criticism on the reflective model

As Wallace (1991) was largely following the works of Schon (1983, 1987), his reflective model did not face any direct criticism. Most of kind and harsh critiques of the reflective model were directed at Schon’s works. Commenting on Wallace’s (1991) reflective model, Ur (1996) has raised a concern about the likelihood of over-privileging of experiential knowledge at the cost of external (received) knowledge available in books, research papers and teachers’ lectures – a concern equally valid for Schon’s work. She believes that ‘a fully effective reflective model should make room for external as well as personal input’ (p. 6).

Eraut (1995) has questioned Schon’s (1983:49) claim of proposing a new ‘epistemology of practice’ in the construct of reflection-in-action. He argues that ‘reflection in-action is a process of knowledge creation, not a new kind of knowledge which is somehow different from knowing-in-action’ (p. 12). For developing a new epistemology of practice, Schon should have done in-depth research on his construct of knowing-in-action because the process of reflection-in-action results in new knowing-in-action. Additionally, Eraut (1995)
believes that ‘Schon fails to appreciate the importance of the time variable in understanding professional behaviour. When time is extremely short, decisions have to be rapid and the scope for reflection is extremely limited’ (p. 14). In case a practitioner fails to promptly resolve the issue at hand due to their incapacity or the element of immediacy in reflection-in-action, they can get upset or frustrated with the situation which might lead to total paralysis in the situation (Bleakley, 1999).

Another major criticism was levelled by Hager and Hodkinson (2011) highlighting the cognitive and decontextualized nature of Schon’s work. Although Schon’s reflective practitioner’s professional knowledge undergoes a process of construction and reconstruction, and in the light of their reflection-in-action they reform their practice, later researchers have viewed his work as more inclined towards acquisition and transfer metaphors of learning paying less attention to sociocultural factors in learning (see Hager & Hodkinson, 2011:41). This sharp critique of Schon’s work in a way questions his professed epistemological stance and finds the similar issues in his work for which he himself rejected his predecessors’ works labelling them as centred in ‘technical rationality’. Undoubtedly, Schon is more inclined towards individual practitioners but the above accusations are not altogether justified as Schon (1983:210) has also appreciated the vital role, in reflective practice, of ‘interpersonal theories of action’ and dialogue at workplace. Nevertheless, he did not succeed in theorizing reflection as a social practice (Marshall, 2008).

### 3.9.3.4 Reflection as a social practice

No matter Schon and Wallace allow scope for reflection as a social practice, it has been mainly conceived as an individual activity. During the last decade, there have been voices from various quarters arguing for conceptualization of reflection as a social process. Notwithstanding the wider acceptance in recent years that ‘reflection is best understood as a socially situated, relational, political and collective process’ (Reynolds & Vince, 2004:6), reflection as a social or collective process has remained under-conceptualized (Collin & Karsenti, 2011).

#### 3.9.3.4.1 Verbal interaction as a means of reflection

Influenced by Vygotsky’s sociocultural approach, Collin and Karsenti (2011) have made a considerable attempt to conceptualize reflection as a social practice. They believe that Vygotsky’s central concept of semiotic mediation offers scope for conceptualization of reflection through verbal interaction. While corroborating the findings of an exploratory study by Collin (2010), they propose that teachers, in addition to their individual cognitive capacity for reflection, can also benefit from verbal interactions with their colleagues and peers. They consider a certain level of collaboration integral to reflection as a social practice. At the same time, they believe that reflection taking place in the interpersonal interactions can also be progressively internalized and contribute to a process of intrapersonal interactions thereby
enhancing professional competence (also see 3.7.1: Private speech). This conceptualization is further supported by what Vygotsky (1962:47) underscored that ‘there remains a constant interaction between outer and inner operations, one form effortlessly and frequently changing into the other and back again’.

Interestingly, reflection, since the seminal works of Schon (1983, 1987) has become an important component of teaching and teacher learning (Beauchamp, 2015). Even the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2005:8) declares reflection at ‘the heart of key competencies’. One instance of the tremendous interest in the reflection are its numerous definitions put forward by a large number of researchers and practitioners from across the multifarious epistemological spectrum. It might be interesting to read the 55 different definitions of reflection collected by Beauchamp (2006) from the times of Dewey (1933) up to 2006. However, there are voices in the literature still justifiably bemoaning the inadequate clarity of the concept and lack of sound models or tools to effectively engage in the practice of reflection (Russell, 2013). Numerous tools and techniques, such as use of critical incidents, autobiographies, metaphor analysis, peer-observation, journal writing, portfolios, Socratic discussions (Appleby, 2003), story-telling, and reflective essays, have been offered to engage teachers in the process of reflection (Norsworthy, 2008:35). However, Cole (1997:21) argues that ‘overall we have not helped teachers be reflective practitioners’ and thus highlights the need for further research in this area.

3.9.4 Professional Learning Community Model

3.9.4.1 Scope for professional learning communities

According to Hargreaves (2000), teacher professionalism, passing through three ages, has now entered its fourth age – the postmodern age. The current age, with the collegial professionalism still emerging, is full of diversity and challenges, where teachers have to handle diverse, complex, and uncertain professional situations to protect and advance their professionalism. This age has number of features but the most significant one, which is based on increasing evidence, is creation of strong professional cultures of collaboration to cope with complexity, uncertainty and reforms in the field of teaching. It also aims to develop a stronger sense of teacher efficacy and promotes continued PLD. Furthermore, this age conceives PLD as most effective when it is embedded in the work of educational institutions (Hargreaves, 2000).

In the postmodern world, teaching has become increasingly complex, requiring the highest standards of professional practice to raise academic standards and student achievement (Hargreaves & Goodson, 1996). A significant factor in raising academic standards and student achievement is the improvement of teachers’ instructional capacity in the classroom. Previous research has set forth some key characteristics of PLD that help improve
instructional capacity of teachers (The Annenberg Institute for School Reform (AISR), 2004; Knapp et al., 2003; Little, 1992; Senge, 1990). To that end, PLD is supposed to be an ongoing, context-specific, collaborative and inquiry-based enterprise. While extending the frontiers of teachers’ professional knowledge, it should enhance their teaching competence and instructional flexibility, and contribute to their ongoing professional growth. As a matter of fact, an effective professional learning community (PLC) has a convincing scope for embracing all these features, and thereby serving as a platform for enhancing PLD of the member-teachers at different rungs of a career ladder.

Theoretically centred in Lave and Wenger’s (1991) and Wenger's (1998) situated learning and community of practice theory (see 3.8), a PLC is defined as ‘a group of people sharing and critically interrogating their practice in an ongoing, reflective, collaborative, inclusive, learning-oriented, growth-promoting way, operating as a collective enterprise’ (Stoll et al., 2006:223). In academic settings, a PLC is premised upon two assumptions: First, that knowledge is situated in professional lives and experiences of teachers, and collaborative critical reflection of teachers on those experiences will render best understanding of professional knowledge (Buysse, Sparkman, & Wesley, 2003). Second, teachers’ active engagement in a PLC increases their professional knowledge and skills, and thereby enhances student learning (Vescio et al., 2008). Likewise, DuFour (2004) identifies three ‘big ideas’ to guide the work of professional learning communities: a) a focus on learning; b) a culture of collaboration and c) a focus on results. The wider acceptance of learning as a social process and the role of PLC in the learning and development of educational professionals have convinced experts in the field of education to view setting up of PLCs as a promising strategy for teachers’ lifelong PLD (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 1999; Dufour & Eaker, 1998; Fullan & Germain, 2006; Senge et al., 2000). A PLC, for that matter, strives to develop congenial working conditions through collaborative work cultures (Thompson, Gregg & Niska, 2004), where the essence of learning and development is a steady, positive and ongoing interaction among its members (Enthoven & Bruijn, 2010).

3.9.4.2 Key features of a professional learning community (PLC)

A quick review of the works of Newmann et al. (1996); Westheimer (1999); Mercer (2000); AISR (2004); Stoll et al. (2006) and Vescio et al. (2008) renders a comprehensive list of traditional key features highlighting the strength of a PLC in an educational setting. These features include shared beliefs and values, collective identity of PLC members, history of shared experience, capacity for continuous teacher learning, a clear focus on student learning, collaboration/interaction and participation, interdependence or reciprocal obligation, concern for individual and minority views, meaningful, harmonized relationships, supportive structural conditions such as availability of time and space for PLC affairs, and reflective professional inquiry – a kind of reflective exchange of ideas on important issues.
3.10 Factors Affecting or Contributing to Professional Learning and Development

3.10.1 Contextual and Individual Factors

In order to further deepen our understanding of the phenomenon of PLD, a brief discussion of various contextual and individual factors that affect PLD will be in order. During the last four decades, a large body of research has focused on understanding and identifying the factors that influence teachers’ professional development and lead to professional effectiveness (Eraut, 1994; S. Johnson, 2006; Kwakman, 2003; Scribner, 1999; Thurlings, Evers & Vermeulen, 2015).

Context is considered to play a major role in learning and professional development of teachers (Webster-Wright, 2009). Eraut (1994) describes context as multidimensional comprising academic, organizational and classroom elements. Academic context provides for theoretical knowledge of the field, organizational context - unique in nature - consists of specific norms, policies and procedures guiding the professional conduct of the teachers, and classroom context – most crucial in substance – requires professional knowledge augmented and refined by experiential knowledge. Although Biesta et al. (2008:2), based on a major study on human learning, found that learning ‘can be self-initiated or forced by others, or be incidental, one fact is quite well-established that workplace or professional context can enhance or constrain teachers’ learning and professional development (Bryk & Schneider; Johnson et al.; McLaughlin & Talbert; Rosenholtz, cited in S. Johnson, 2006).

Kwakman’s (2003) work on contextual and personal factors that affect PLD can be considered a good starting point for further research on the subject (Evers, Kreijns, Van der Heijden, & Gerrichhauzen, 2011). Kwakman (2003) has conducted an extensive review of studies discussing factors affecting teachers’ participation in PLD activities and constructed a model revealing 13 influential factors. She has discussed five personal factors (professional attitudes, appraisals of feasibility of learning activities, appraisals of meaningfulness of learning activities, emotional exhaustion, loss of personal accomplishment) and sub-divided eight contextual factors into five task factors (pressure of work, job-related emotional demands, variety in learning activities, autonomy, participation in decision-making) and three work environment factors (management support for interaction among staff, voluntary collegial support, intentional learning support (for reading, reflection and experimentation)). Based on the findings of her research, she argued that ‘participation in professional learning activities depends to a large extent on the personal characteristics of teachers themselves’ (p. 167), thereby conferring greater personal agency on the teachers for their learning. For detailed rationale and description of the factors, see Kwakman (2003).

Expanding upon Kwakman’s (2003) model, Evers et al. (2011) attempted to develop a more comprehensive model, encompassing a wide range of contextual factors sub-divided into organizational factors and task factors, to support teachers’ professional development and
occupational expertise. In addition to contextual factors posited by Kwakman’s (2003), they have laid emphasis on the structural (system of the institution, job description of teachers), cultural (learning climate, collaboration and trust), and social-psychological aspects (transformational leadership, job satisfaction and reward, social support from immediate supervisor) of the organization.

Building on Ever et al.’s (2011) model for professional development and occupational expertise, which describes influential contextual factors for PLD, Evers, van der Heijden, Kreijns, & Vermeulen (2015) conducted further research to develop our understanding about the relationship between PLD and flexible competence. They define flexible competence with reference to occupational expertise and personal flexibility. Occupational expertise is supposed to encompass (1) knowledge, (2) meta-cognitive knowledge, (3) skills, and (4) social recognition (of capabilities) (p. 3), whereas personal flexibility is the ability to handle professional diversity and adapt to changing work environments. As a result of their large-scale research, Evers et al. (2015) conclude that PLD of teachers – supported by contextual factors (job resources) – has strong correlation with flexible competence. More importantly, they emphasise the need for concerted effort on the part of institutional leadership for the provision of the contextual environment that supports teachers’ PLD and thereby flexible competence.

With the empirical understanding that strong professionals are reflective practitioners, van Woerkom, Nijhof, and Nieuwenhuis (2002) propose eight dimensions that can contribute to PLD through reflection: reflection on oneself in relation to the job, learning from mistakes, vision sharing, challenging group-think, seeking feedback, experimentation, sharing knowledge, and awareness of employability. Additionally, they discuss three individual factors (motivation, self-efficacy, and variety of experience) and ten contextual factors (workload, alternation, autonomy, task obscurity, information, participation, cooperation, communication, coaching, and organizational climate for learning) that can possibly influence PLD vis-à-vis reflection. However, based on results of the data collected from 742 participants, they underscore self-efficacy and participation as the strongest factors impacting PLD. Endorsing their emphasis on self-efficacy, Thurlings et al. (2015), in their study on factors that influence innovative behaviour in teachers, noted that the most important among a wide variety personal and contextual factors that contributes to innovative behaviour is the self-efficacy of teachers.

3.10.2 Self-efficacy

The widespread appreciation of teacher self-efficacy as a major factor in PLD merits some elaboration of the concept. Bandura (1995:2), ascribing a central role to self-efficacy in human agency, defines it as the ‘beliefs in one’s capability to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations’. Pajares and Schunk
(2001:244) conceive of self-efficacy as ‘a judgment of the confidence that one has in one’s abilities’. In other words, self-efficacy beliefs, strongly influencing people’s feelings, thoughts and actions, motivate them to attain their desired personal or professional objectives. There is ample evidence that ‘individuals with high levels of self-efficacy approach difficult tasks as challenges to master rather than as threats to be avoided’ (Williams & Williams, 2010:455).

Bandura (1995) posited that people develop their self-efficacy beliefs through four major sources: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological and emotional states. Mastery experiences are considered the most important source of self-efficacy. Experiences perceived as successful increase self-efficacy, whereas the ones negatively viewed undermine it (Pajares, 1997). For Bandura, a vicarious experience can produce substantial results in terms of enhancing beliefs in self-efficacy, although it is not as strong as a mastery experience. By observing a model performance, we can learn and enhance our abilities and experience an increase in our self-efficacy. Verbal persuasions, albeit a weaker source, if coming from someone considered as competent and trustworthy can add to self-efficacy beliefs (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). Human vulnerability to physiological and emotional states such as stress, anxiety, palpitations, and fatigue also impact self-efficacy beliefs. An optimistic bent, positive mood, and the will and ability to reduce stress and self-doubt can also enhance self-efficacy beliefs.

3.10.3 Critical Incidents and Critical Persons

In addition to self-efficacy, teachers’ prior influences from student life, and initial teacher training and teaching practice also have strong impact on their PLD (Flores & Day, 2006). These influences can be the outcome of critical incidents and/or critical persons, encountered by a teacher during their past life, which may lead to turning points in the professional life and learning of a teacher (Kelchtermans, 1993; Tripp, 1993). Considering the vital role of these two factors in PLD of teachers, a brief description of the same is just in order:

3.10.3.1 Critical incidents

Incidents occur in (professional) life, but to view them as critical or unimportant solely lies with the individual facing those incidents. No incident is inherently critical: depending upon the individual and contextual circumstances, what may be an insignificant incident for one may be critical for another (Cunningham, 2008). Patricia, Measor, & Woods (1985:57) define critical incidents as ‘key events in an individual’s life, and around which pivotal decisions revolve. They provoke the individual into selecting particular kinds of actions which lead in particular directions’. According to Cunningham (2008:166), ‘a critical incident comprises an event in professional life that creates a significant disturbance of our understanding of important principles or of effective practice, and which following a period of focused reflection will be experienced as a turning point’. Cunningham (2008) emphasises that for a sound
understanding of a critical incident we should know that it is unique in nature – a critical incident for one may be nothing of the sort for another, needs focused reflection for a certain period of time, and may be ‘a series of events connected in a way that are chronological, structural or emotional – or an amalgam of these’ (p. 168)

Tripp (1993:8), attributing a principal role to critical incident analysis for enhancing PLD, believes that ‘a critical incident is an interpretation of the significance of an event’. When faced with a critical incident, teachers engage in an action inquiry process of reflection which Tripp (2012) names as triple loop learning, comparing it with Argyris and Schon’s (1978) double loop learning. First loop is the initial reflection on the critical incident to identify and understand the source of the problem or dilemma and think about alternative workable strategies in a similar situation. The second loop aims at problematizing the resolution gained in the first loop for a deeper understanding of the incident. The reflection in the second loop will lead to a strategic cycle – the third loop – of looking at things in a broader work context to improve professional practice. By analysing critical incidents in this way – with the awareness of what we have done, what we want to do, and what we can do – will ‘have a profoundly liberating effect on reflective practitioners’ (Tripp, 2012:xv).

3.10.3.2 Critical Persons

Critical persons are the individuals a teacher has encountered or interacted with in their life, and these critical persons have impacted the professional behaviour, professional self and teaching approaches of the teacher in one way or the other (Kelchtermans, 1993). The most prominent among the critical persons influencing the professional life of teachers are their own teachers who have taught them in schools, colleges and universities (Freeman, 2002). Lortie (1975:61), in his magisterial work on teachers, introduced the term ‘apprenticeship of observation’, meaning that teachers usually teach the way they had been taught in their schools. Researching in the field of TESOL, Bailey et al. (1996) called this phenomenon a teacher factor that was evident in the biographies of teachers they interviewed, acting ‘as ‘good’ or ‘bad’ teaching models’, and they concluded: ‘It became clear that the teacher factor in general was more important to us as learners than were the materials or methodology per se’ (p. 15).

3.10.4 Factors Proposed in Kelchtermans’ (1993, 2009a) Framework

Kelchtermans (1993, 2009a) has developed a Personal Interpretive Framework comprising professional self-understanding and subjective educational theory. Dynamic and embedded in the professional context, this framework, representing teachers’ lifelong learning and development, guides their professional actions and opinions. The four out of five components of professional self-understanding: self-image, self-esteem, job motivation, and future perspective can be considered among the factors contributing to teachers’ PLD (see a detailed discussion in 4.5.4.2).
3.11 Being and Becoming a (TESOL) Professional

Rising from the crucible of research and reflection is a new metaphor of learning as Becoming. Scanlon (2011) has made a clear distinction between Becoming and Being a professional. She contends that, as suggested by scholars such as Berliner, Dreyfus and Dreyfus, and Kagan (cited in Scanlon, 2011), Being a professional denotes the notion that expert is the final stage in a lineal professional development beginning with the novice; whereas she conceptualizes professional identity (professional self-understanding) as Becoming, which means that PLD is evolutionary and contiguous with notions of lifelong learning where ‘final expertise is unachievable’ (p. 14).

To elaborate it further, William James’ (1907) distinction between ‘knowledge about’ and ‘knowledge of’ a context is pertinent. The ‘knowledge about’ is unverified and untested knowledge mostly based on hearsay, whereas ‘knowledge of’ is the context-specific, insider knowledge gained through experience in the thick of practice. The grasp on this context-specific knowledge is the main qualification for becoming a professional (Scanlon, 2011). Otherwise stated, one of the objectives of any PLD programmes should aim at strengthening teachers’ knowledge of context and supporting them in the process of becoming a professional.

3.11.1 Metaphors for Seeing Learning

Cognizant of the fact that human beings have a tendency for using metaphors to ease or enhance the process of verbalization, Hager and Hodkinson (2011) also argue for utilizing the metaphor of becoming to elucidate the process of PLD. Illuminating further, they have presented a critique of the three common metaphors of acquisition, construction, and participation used for seeing the product or the process of learning. They assert that when the features of learning as construction and learning as participation are combined a new understanding of learning emerges, which can be captured in the metaphor of Becoming. For them, learning as Becoming – bridging dualistic trends such as mind and body, individual and social – conflates formal, informal, and non-formal learning, and conceives learning as an ongoing process. Indeed, the PLD passage is always under construction. Success, in this context, is a progressive course, not an end to be reached (Robbins, 1986). Likewise, our understanding of human learning is also a fluid construct that will always remain in flux:

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\text{If we actually could understand every aspect of the learning process, then we would understand the person in society and we would be able to manipulate people like cogs in the complex machine of society, but we will never be able to do this in its totality – if we could, then we would understand life itself to the full (Jarvis, 2006:199).}
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3.12 Key Empirical Research in the Domain of Teacher PLD

The literature review offers a comprehensive survey of the pioneering research on teacher PLD undertaken in the ambit of social learning paradigm. Highlighting specifically the
relevant empirical research from academically advanced countries discussed in the literature review, I cannot avoid citing Johnson and Golombok’s (2011) seminal work that contains several empirical studies done on teacher PLD in light of Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory. Another significant research is carried out by Swain et al. (2015), which although mainly utilises Vygotsky’s theory, also refers to Lave and Wenger’s (1991) CoP theory in the course of narrative analysis. In the area of PLD models, Clarke and Hollingsworth’s (2002) Change Model and Education Scotland’s (2014) Career-long Professional Learning Model have sound empirical basis in theories of reflective practice and CoP. For empirical research on factors that affect teacher PLD, Kelchtermans (2009), Ever et al. (2015) and Thurlings et al. (2015) have made substantial contributions to the body of relevant knowledge (see 3.10 for details).

3.12.1 Empirical Research on Teacher PLD in KSA

After presenting a detailed discussion of voluminous theoretical and empirical literature followed by a short recap of major empirical studies (in 3.12) on teacher PLD produced mostly in the developed Western world, a succinct analysis of the relevant empirical research conducted in KSA is also in order. To that end, I searched thoroughly through the available research databases for studies done on teacher PLD in KSA. Surprisingly, I found a goodish number of variably relevant master’s and doctoral theses, and research reports and articles; however, I felt obliged not to include most of them in my thesis, because they were either quite restrictive or less rigorous as regards the nature and scope of their research. However, I did discover some considerable studies on teacher PLD in the Saudi context, which deserved a citation for the sake of relevance and record.

One significant research is conducted by Assalahi (2016), which aimed to explore TESOL teachers’ perspectives on their engagement in PLD activities at a Saudi university. He developed a three-dimensional conceptual framework encompassing micro (individual teacher) factors, meso (institutional) factors, and macro (sociocultural) factors influencing teachers’ engagement or disengagement in PLD initiatives. The study, underscoring complexity in teachers’ PLD affairs, shared a web of factors that affect teachers’ attitude towards PLD. While essentializing sophisticated understanding of the context, the study directs our attention towards the importance of a dialectical understanding of teachers’ and institutional perspectives on PLD.

Alharbi’s (2011) doctoral study is another serious attempt that, highlighting the significance of teachers’ CPD for student learning achievement, investigates the development and impact of a CPD programme for newly qualified teachers in KSA. The researcher collected data from the programme designers and a sample of the teachers to study their perceptions and views about the programme designing, content, delivery and implementation. In light of the findings, the study mainly conceptualized CPD as ‘collective authorship’ (p. iii), implying that
teacher CPD calls for collective engagement of all stakeholders to effect a positive change in the teaching context. In addition to these two studies, a cautious reading of Hakim’s (2015) case study exploring links between teacher valuation and professional development in TESOL, and Al Asmari’s (2016) survey research uncovering TESOL teachers’ perceptions and practices vis-à-vis professional development might also help raise our awareness of the phenomena of TESOL teachers’ PLD in the Saudi context.

3.13 Conclusion

In the course of the literature review, I traversed a wide terrain in the learning theory with a primary focus on Vygotsky’s sociocultural learning theory, Lave and Wenger’s situated learning and community of practice (CoP) theory, and seminal works on professional development models with special emphasis on the reflective model for teachers. Additionally, I surveyed key literature on factors that affect or contribute to teachers’ PLD. Enlightened by the comprehensive literature review, I have been able to develop a lens or a scaffolding that could help me accomplish the research objectives of looking into the participants’ PLD experiences, discover the factors influential in their becoming highly effective TESOL professionals, and explicate the theoretical nature of their lifelong professional learning. Hopefully, armed with the clear research objectives (see 1.3) and the extensive conceptual framework (see 3.3), my journey into the learning biographies of the participants will help bring forth some bits and pieces of knowledge that may enhance our understanding of the phenomena of teacher PLD in the field of TESOL. With this aspiration, before I delve into the participants’ narratives for analyses and meaning-making, I proceed to delineate, in the next chapter on research design, my ways of knowing and telling the meanings that may be obvious, implied or hidden between the lines in their narratives.
Chapter Four

The Research Design: Ways of Knowing and Telling

Human reason has this peculiar fate that in one species of its knowledge it is burdened by questions which, as prescribed by the very nature of reason itself, it is not able to ignore, but which, as transcending all its powers, it is also not able to answer.

— Immanuel Kant (1781), Critique of Pure Reason

Who thinks to rise above partiality...betrays his secret predilection in his choice of materials, and in the nuances of his adjectives.

— Will Durant (1968), The Lessons of History

4. Introduction

As ‘life overrides death through reproduction’, it supersedes ignorance through knowledge (Durant, 1968:94). In broad terms, mundane sources of human knowledge include the knowledge based on perception (senses), conception (intellect), intuition, and research. Disappointingly, all of these are essentially limited and imperfect in different ways. However, I believe among these the most reliable source is the knowledge based on research. As defined by Bassey (1990), research is ‘a systematic, critical and self-critical inquiry which aims to contribute to the advancement of knowledge’ (p. 35). Following a similar line, Ernest (1994) conceives research as ‘a systematic enquiry with the aim of producing knowledge’ (p. 8). Now the question arises: To what end will research lead us through its production of knowledge? Is the purpose of research-based knowledge to empower us, as in summative evaluation, to give a terminal and conclusive judgement; or as in formative evaluation, to aim at improving the situation through awareness of strengths and weaknesses and thereby to function as a tool for enlightenment; or, as Cronbach (1982) conceived it, to at least reduce uncertainty if truth is still beyond reach; or disregarding the regulative ideal of objectivity, to make an attempt at ‘enhancement of meaning’, rather than a reduction of uncertainty (Barone, 2001:161)?

I believe the purpose of my research venture is the enhancement of meaning, or more specifically, as Thomas (2009:83) views it, the ‘enhancement of multiple meanings’ by highlighting some relative, tentative, and situated truths in the realm of TESOL teachers’ professional learning and development (PLD). Additionally, my research seeks to offer food for thought that can inspire ongoing individual (intra-mental) and social (inter-mental) processes of reflection and dialogue (Barone, 2007). With the primary objective of building on the body of knowledge in the ways set forth above, the current research is designed to have an appropriate theoretical framework that is linked to my professed research paradigm or worldview (Troudi, 2010), to develop a sophisticated research design in order to produce genuine knowledge, to use sound and robust methods for data collection and analyses, to be able to make justifiable claims based on evidence, and last but not least, to have purpose, relevance and worth (K. Richards, 2003).
Setting the context with this brief vignette about the research phenomena, this chapter furnishes details of the research design and the ensuing methodological decisions taken to achieve the key objectives of my research. Considering the fact that the spectrum of research is vast and varied, I have provided an outline of the relevant ontological, epistemological, and methodological underpinnings of the current research, which is significantly influenced by Guba and Lincoln’s (1994) seminal work on research paradigms – a work accepted as a benchmark by most researchers (Allison & Pomeroy, 2000). Following that I have presented details of my chosen methods of data collection, the rationale for the selection of participants and sampling approach, a description of data analysis processes, a discussion of research quality, ethical issues, and finally my position as a researcher including as well a brief account of my own lifelong PLD.

4.1 Research Paradigm: Interpretivism

The present study is centred in the interpretive research paradigm. Before I proceed to discuss the nature of interpretive research, it is pertinent to exposit its ontological and epistemological underpinnings. Ontology defines nature of reality and what is true. Interpretive researchers, professing a relativist ontology, believe that objects depend for their existence on the perception of people, the viewers, and reality is constructed and interpreted by individuals according to their ideological and cultural positions, which can cause a single phenomenon to have multiple interpretations or meanings. Therefore, they view themselves as part of the research instruments depicting the study under discussion (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007; Crotty, 1998; Grix, 2010). Whereas, epistemology comprises theory of knowledge and ways of finding out what is true (Ernest, 1994). Declaring the epistemology of interpretive paradigm as subjectivism, interpretive researchers believe that knowledge is personal and unique, which entails their inevitable influence on the observed phenomena allowing them space for personal involvement with their participants in related social events (Bryman, 2008).

Mindful of the fact that reality is not real but relative and socially constructed, while humans are gregarious by nature and their actions are influenced by their physical environments and behaviours of their fellow-beings, I am inclined to consider the Interpretivism as the most suitable paradigm or worldview to guide my doctoral research. I believe as far as research in social sciences is concerned, particularly the educational research: ‘the hardest-to-do-science of all’ (Berliner, 2002:18), objectivity is an unattainable aim (Sayer, 2000); whereas, interpretive research offers enormous scope for investigative depth (in-depth understanding of the researched phenomena), interpretive adequacy (presenting a thicker, richer and more complex, yet comprehensible picture of the research subject), illuminative fertility (enhancing understanding by offering fresh or renewed insights into the research topic), and participatory accountability (the researcher’s emic perspective affording opportunities to see finer and
more intimate details of the research subjects, but also requiring a strong ethical stance in
the research process) (Shank & Villella, 2004:46).

The interpretive paradigm, also known as humanistic, constructivist, naturalistic, and anti-
positivist paradigm of research (Ernest, 1994), conceives research as ‘guided by the
researcher’s set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and
studied’ (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005:22). In line with the Nietzschean sense, the interpretive
paradigm assumes that ‘facts have no meaning whatsoever apart from the interpretation’
(Covey, 1989:29), as well as ‘it is not possible in linguistic, conceptual terms to give any final
or absolute account of what there is’ (Heron & Reason, 1997:278). Hence, Interpretivists
believe in the inseparability of understanding from interpretation. They see all social research
as interpretive because all such research is guided by the researcher’s desire to understand
(and interpret) social reality (Bhattacharya, 2008) with the aims to explore individuals’
perceptions, share their meanings, and develop insights about the phenomena under study
(Bryman, 2008; Grix, 2010).

Unlike the Positivist research which, viewing (social) reality as objective and independent,
aims at generalization of its findings, the Interpretive research seeks to ‘illuminate the
general through the particular’ (Ernest, 1994:26). It is, in the words of a great Persian and
Urdu poet, Mirza Ghalib (c1862), to see the whole of River Tigris in its one drop of water.
Such capacity for insight demands some additional strengths in Dornyei’s (2007) good
enough researcher whom he defines as one having a genuine and strong curiosity, common
sense, creative thinking and a sense of discipline and responsibility; whereas, for an
interpretive researcher simply being a good enough researcher is not enough: on top of all
these qualities, s/he has to demonstrate empathy, reflectivity and reflexivity.

4.1.1 Methodology

Methodology is the philosophy underlying the procedures and principles in a particular field
of inquiry (Crotty, 1998). It depends on ontological and epistemological assumptions about
the nature of reality and the most appropriate ways of gaining access to that reality.
Research methodology of Interpretivism is hermeneutical and dialectical in its essence
(Guba & Lincoln, 1994): In the process of conducting an interpretive research, the researcher
enters a hermeneutic circle that necessitates a process of cyclical interpretation or
interpretation of participants’ interpretations through engagement in a dialectical exchange of
ideas in order to reach a more sophisticated understanding of the research phenomenon
(Crotty, 1998; Rich, 2011). For this purpose, interpretive researchers carefully look into
details, complexity, and situated meaning of the everyday life of individuals or social
phenomena (Schwandt, 2000), and adopt from a diverse set of research methodologies
which, encompassing a broad spectrum of our life, include phenomenology, ethnography,
narrative and biographical research, historical and documentary research, ethno
methodology, and case study. For the current research, following an intra-paradigm methodological eclecticism, I adopt a combination of methodologies.

4.2 Research Approach: Intra-Paradigm Methodological Eclecticism

The vociferous support for methodological eclecticism and compatibility thesis from some quarters could not convince me to ever consider any inter-paradigm, mixed-method research design for my doctoral study (Howe, 1988; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Schwandt, 2012; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998, 2003). Further raising my understanding of the issue, Yanchar and Williams’ (2006) critical analysis of Onwuegbuzie and DaRois-Voseles’s (2001) inter-paradigm, mixed-method study, combining quasi-experimental design with phenomenological inquiry, clearly highlighted the tenuous nature of such research ventures. However, with the increasing complexity of research designs, a more flexible approach to choice of research methods or mixing of methods to enhance the trustworthiness of research may be deemed a judicious idea. Going a step further, I even believe ontological and epistemological beliefs do not prevent a qualitative, interpretive researcher from utilizing data collection methods typically used in quantitative research (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Moreover, a researcher’s use of any data collection methods, qualitative or quantitative, should not be interpreted as an indicator of an ontological or epistemological position (Troudi, 2010). Notwithstanding this flexibility, I admit my inability to find any model or means to reconcile the divergent philosophical assumptions of positivism and interpretivism for inter-paradigm methodological eclecticism. Conversely, I deem intra-paradigm ‘methodological eclecticism’ a useful approach, which seems to have the potential to enhance the depth and breadth of qualitative research endeavours (Benson et al., 2009; Yanchar & Williams, 2006). Hence for the current research, I utilize two interpretive research methodologies – narrative-biographical inquiry and ethnography – to achieve my research objectives by informing the research questions proposed for the current study.

4.2.1 Narrative-Biographical Inquiry

There are few things more fascinating or informative than learning about the experience of other conscious beings as they make their way through the world. Accounts of their lives have a power to move us deeply...to provide insights into the workings of lives, and perhaps to provide a frame of reference for reassessing our own experiences, own fortunes, own possibilities of existence (Runyan, 1982:3)

Since the 1980s, there has been growing interest in narrative and biographical research in the fields of social and educational research (Kelchtermans, 2010). Interestingly, this trend has also found a warm welcome during the last decade or so in the field of TESOL (Barkhuizen, Benson & Chik, 2014). The growing awareness of the significance of individuality, reflexivity and identity, with a quest for research tools which could ‘prise open the different dimensions of lived totality’ (Gottfried 1998:452) through an analytical reconnection with issues of everyday lives at both macro (social) and micro (individual)
levels, has paved way for the narrative and biographical turn in social sciences (Chamberlayne, 2000). This turn also denotes ‘a reaction against forms of social enquiry that tended to deny subjectivity in research and neglect the role of human agency in social life’ (Merrill & West, 2009:17). Further illuminating the background factors, Barone (2007:467) asserts that the prominent features of the narrative turn include ‘the prior legitimation of qualitative research, the successes of postmodernist theory, and the incursions of literary criticism into the field of philosophy’.

For many, this turn was a milestone in social and educational research, but still there was no dearth of doubting Thomases, who were inclined to question the viability of narrative and biographical research on the basis of reliability and validity (Roberts, 2002; Merrill & West, 2009), and disparaged it as ‘fine, meaningless detail’ (Fieldhouse, 1996:119). To counter such criticism and gain further ground in the arena of research, narrative and biographical research must demonstrate the strength of its methodologies: A strong connection between individual biographies and wider frameworks of understanding must be established. Biographical research, with its epistemological underpinnings focused on capturing the particularity of lives, should not be reduced to study of individual lives for mere elaboration or glorification per se through meaningless details (Merrill & West, 2009). Rather, it should aim at a deeper level of understanding through incisive meaning-making and highlighting the typicality and uniqueness of human life in such a way that enables ‘societies and cultures to be studied from the individual “upwards”, rather than from the social structure “downwards”’ (Rustin, 2000:45).

Before delving into further details of narrative and biographical research, it is pertinent to look at the range of relevant contested terms and try to understand their scope in social and educational research. According to Denzin (1989), biographical research is the umbrella term encompassing narrative inquiry, life history, life story and other relevant research methods and approaches; whereas Hatch and Newsom (2010) argue that narrative research as a blanket term covers the landscape where research approaches such as biography, life history, life story and oral history are utilized. On the other hand, Goodson and Gill (2011:23) view narrative and life history as ‘related and not necessarily distinct approaches’; likewise, Merrill and West (2009:10) prefer biographical method as a ‘convenient term’ that can encompass various labels such as narrative, life writing, and life history. Despite the risk of being tagged as simplistic, I tend to simplify this issue of terminology for the current research and use the term narrative-biographical inquiry, which is specifically proposed by Kelchtermans (2009a) to study professional learning biographies or career stories of teachers. However, it is not tantamount to any denial of distinctions and nuances in these terms, as pointed out by some influential researchers (Cole & Knowles, 2001; Goodson &
With this background, I present a brief discussion of narrative-biographical aspect of my inquiry.

(Vygotsky’s) Social learning theory and narrative-biographical inquiry are bosom buddies (Moen, 2006; Swain et al., 2015). Social learning theory conceives learning and development as taking shape in sociocultural contexts over a period of time (ontogenetically) (Vygotsky, 1978). Likewise, narrative-biographical inquiry not only covers relational and contextual aspects of the research participants, but also captures the continuity of their experience in backward and forward dimensions.

As Bruner (1991) asserts that human beings organize their experiences in life in a narrative form, narrative inquiry, considering features of human individuality and uniqueness, particularly values experience (Clandinin, 2006). To better understand the concept, it is apt to see how different philosophical traditions have viewed experience on their own terms of reference, such as:

Aristotle’s dualistic metaphysics in which knowledge of particulars and universals were considered separately, to early empiricist atomistic conceptions of experience, Marxist conceptions of experience distorted [or influenced] by ideology, behaviorist notions of stimulus and response, and poststructuralist assertions that state our experience is the product of discursive practices. (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2006:38)

Clandinin and Connelly (2000), two distinguished researchers on narrative inquiry, define experience in light of John Dewey’s ideas on the subject. They view the role of social interactions and the element of continuity in human experiences as crucial factors. They argue that human beings need to be understood as individuals, but a deeper understanding of human affairs is not possible without careful attention to their sociocultural contexts. Additionally, seeing strong connection between human past, present, and future experiences, they believe that ‘experiences lead to further experiences. Wherever one positions oneself in that continuum - the imagined now, some imagined past, or some imagined future – each point has a past experiential base and leads to an experiential future’ (p.2). Building on these ideas, they define narrative inquiry as:

…a way of understanding experience. It is collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieu. An inquirer enters this matrix in the midst and progresses in the same spirit, concluding the inquiry still in the midst of living and telling, reliving and retelling, the stories of the experiences that made up people’s lives, both individual and social. Simply stated…narrative inquiry is stories lived and told. (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000:20)

Similarly, Beattie (1995:54) argues that narrative inquiry affords us an opportunity to recognize ‘that educators know their situations in general, social and shared ways and also in unique and personal ways, thus validating the interconnectedness of the past, the present, the future, the personal, and the professional in an educator's life’. The scope of narrative inquiry, encompassing individual and sociocultural dimensions of human life, is succinctly...
summed up by Clandinin and Rosiek (2006) as such: ‘Beginning with a respect for ordinary lived experience...narrative inquirers study an individual’s experience in the world and, through the study, seek ways of enriching and transforming that experience for themselves and others’ (p. 42).

Narrative inquiry offers enormous potential for investigating the lifelong PLD experiences of (TESOL) teachers, because such experiences cannot be studied in real time (Benson, 2011). By according teachers a central place in the research process and exploring their learning experiences, narrative researchers can seek new ways of enhancing and transforming those experiences not only for the teachers participating in the inquiry, but also others in the field of teaching (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2006). From Vygotskian perspective, when narratives of teachers’ professional learning are shared within the broader TESOL professional fraternity; they act as tools for expanding the knowledge base of TESOL teacher education by enriching the repertory of relevant cultural artifacts (Johnson & Golombek, 2011). Canagarajah (1996) sheds light on yet another strength of narrative inquiry. He cogently argues that ‘in opposition to grand theories and global knowledge structures, narratives represent knowledge from the bottom up; ...in opposition to explicit forms of theorization, they embody implicit forms of reasoning and logic’ (p. 327).

The ‘biographical turn’ offers a considerable opportunity to researchers to focus on the lives of ‘organic intellectuals’ (e.g. teachers, doctors, nurses, journalists), ‘whose work involved articulating social experiences on behalf of various collective subjects’ (Rustin, 2000:49). The biographical experiences as narrated first-hand by the organic intellectuals (teachers) are the main focus of a narrative-biographical inquiry in educational research, which allows ample scope for reconstruction and interpretation of subjectively meaningful features and critical episodes of a teacher’s life (Cortazzi, 1993). As a research approach, the narrative-biographical inquiry is characterized by five general features: narrative, constructivist, contextualised, interactionist, and dynamic, which are briefly discussed below based on Kelchtermans' (1993, 2009b) works.

Narrative-Biographical approach is narrative in the sense that it aims to collect and analyse narrative accounts of teachers’ learning biographies or career stories, and give them a narrative structure for further meaning-making. This approach is also constructivist as in the process of narration, teachers (re)construct their learning experiences in a way that is meaningful to them. And the researcher is not much concerned about the historical accuracy of the narratives, rather s/he is more interested in the meanings attached to them by the narrator. The meaning-making of narratives has to take place in light of contextual factors affecting the learning of teachers, which also adds the (temporal and spatial) contextual dimension to this approach. In addition, there is a strong interactionist feature in human life and learning. The human self is always influenced by meaningful interactions with the
sociocultural context that includes various social actors affecting the life and learning of the narrator.

Finally, the above-mentioned features of narrative-biographical approach imply the non-deterministic nature of the process of narration: whatever a person tells is the story of their life. It does not matter if the meaning attached to different experiences may change over time. That reflects the subjective and dynamic nature of biographical narrative or career story as shared at one point in time, which also has the potential to change if re-storied in the future. Narrative-biographical inquiry, armed with these features, can afford an in-depth study of teachers’ PLD experiences.

4.2.1.1 Teachers’ learning biographies

Adult educators who are willing to reflect deeply on how adults learn during their lives will find themselves inspired by the practice of educational biography (Dominice, 2000:13). For the current study, my narrative-biographical inquiry is primarily focused on the learning biographies of my participants. What I have actually targeted are the ‘briefer, more focussed biographies’ (Smith, 1994:287) of my participants particularly relevant to my research design and objectives. With the significance of research on teachers’ (learning) biographies already established (see Dominice, 2000; Kelchtermans, 1993), narrative-biographical research approaches have also secured a niche for the study of adult and lifelong learning. They are well equipped to explore different dimensions of learning, to understand the level of synergy between these forms, which include the whole range of informal, non-formal, and formal learning (Edwards, 1997; Hodkinson et al., 2004; Merrill & West, 2009).

Teachers’ learning biographies, a sub-approach in narrative-biographical research, record details of their formative learning and teaching experiences, which influence their professional thinking, pedagogical decisions and practices, and the future course of their professional lives (Gudmundsdottir, 1997). Teachers’ professional learning and knowledge, beliefs and practices, and actions and behaviours can be best understood through teachers’ own voice; the most intimate knowledge of learning and teaching belongs to none other than teachers themselves. Hence, research on teachers’ learning biographies is one of powerful ways to give voice to teachers’ professional selves (Doyle, 1997). In the current research, the narrative accounts of my participants’ learning biographies encompass the details of their PLD; the impact of different pedagogical and professional experiences; decisions and actions; milestones, turning points, critical incidents and metaphors; and critical persons in their lives.

4.2.2 Ethnography

In addition to being a narrative-biographical inquiry, the current study has considerable ethnographic element due to my reflexive stance and the professed qualitative approach to the data collection, analysis and meaning-making. As a matter of fact, there is strong synergy
between narrative-biographical research and ethnography. Tedder (2012), highlighting the focus of biographical research on research participants’ perceived meanings of their experiences, directs our attention towards the ethnographic feature of such research. He proposes that:

[Biographical] research can be regarded as a kind of ethnography if we take that as signifying that the main concern is with meaning, that the enquiry is interested in the ways that people describe and understand themselves and their actions and their interactions with others (p. 322).

Similarly, Spradley (1979) also argues that ethnography as a research methodology helps us to understand ‘how other people see their experience’ (p. iv). He further adds that ‘rather than studying people, ethnography means learning from people’ (p. 3). Whilst in this process, what our emic perspective affords us to learn from the participants, we can transmute that into an etic description for the enlightenment of others in the community (Riemer, 2009). Unlike phenomenological research where bracketing (setting aside prior knowledge and suspending personal judgement about the phenomena under study) is a methodological requirement, ethnography can allow a researcher to employ their ‘ability to identify, empathize with the people they are studying. This implies that there exists in ethnography a certain playful element which consists of changing the familiar into the strange and, vice versa, the strange into the familiar’ (Duranti, 1997:86). With ethnography’s strength to bridge the gap between researchers and teachers, thinkers and doers, theoretical research and classroom practice (Woods, 1986), it can be usefully applied to study educational institutions, classroom practices, curriculum problems, and teachers’ PLD (Colyar, 2003).

4.3 Participants and Sampling

At the outset of my research, I had an extremely ambitious research plan with six participants and a range of research objectives to achieve for my EdD thesis research. I realized my folly when all the interview data (comprising 147000 words) were transcribed and fed into NVivo 10 for coding and analysis. Data collected through documents, artifacts, and two questionnaires was in addition to that cornucopia. Interestingly, seeing the young Geert Kelchtermans faced with a similar plight during his PhD, Michael Huberman said to him, ‘life is long, let research be short’, implying ‘don’t try to achieve all your research ambitions in one project’ (Kelchtermans, 2008:29). Heeding the Huberman’s advice and being a bit pragmatic as well, I learnt that Riessman (1993) also suggests that narrative studies generally focus on small sample sizes that are usually drawn from an unrepresentative pool. Eventually, I decided to select three Pakistani TESOL professionals and use the rest of the data collected from three other participants - a Pakistani-Canadian, an American and an Australian - for some postdoc project with their fresh informed consent. The three finally selected participants, Ali, Sarmad and Omer (pseudonyms), who hail from Pakistan, belong to the same age group and social milieu. They have been most successful in their professional
practice and ranked among approximately the top 4%-13% of the faculty at an English language institute of a Saudi university. The status of a teacher being highly effective was decided on the basis of his high ranking (4+ or 5) in annual faculty evaluations, which are based on: i) Instructional skills (Evaluated through class observation by members of the PDU), ii) Professionalism, iii) Professional development, iv) Service to the institute, and v) Students’ evaluation of teacher (see details in Chapter 2). Their credentials were also matched with European (EAQUALS) Profiling Grid for Language Teachers (https://www.eaquals.org/resources/the-european-profiling-grid/), and they seem to fall in the Development Phase 3 – the Proficient category -- combining features of 3.1 and 3.2 teachers (see p. 5/6). Their academic qualifications, teaching experience, and number of years spent in the research context were integral to the selection criteria (Table 4.1). They have the minimum qualification of DELTA or masters in TESOL (or equivalent), with at least five years relevant teaching experience (at least 2400 hours) in general and two years in the research context (also see 1.2).

Table 4.1: Participants’ Profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Participant’s Name</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Qualification</th>
<th>Total years of Experience</th>
<th>Years in the research context</th>
<th>Birth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>ALI</td>
<td>Pakistani</td>
<td>Doctorate in TESOL (on-going), MA Applied Linguistics, MA English, Diploma in TEFL</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>SARMAD</td>
<td>Pakistani</td>
<td>Doctorate in TESOL (on-going), MPhil (Applied linguistics), MA TEFL, MA English Linguistics &amp; Literature, CELTA</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>OMER</td>
<td>Pakistani</td>
<td>MA English Linguistics &amp; Literature, CELTA, DELTA</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1983</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Patton (1990:169) maintains that ‘nothing better captures the difference between quantitative and qualitative methods than the logics that undergird sampling approaches’, the selection of an appropriate sample is undoubtedly a crucial decision in a narrative-biographical research. Considering the breadth and personalized nature of biographical research, a researcher has to take into account participants’ research-related knowledge and experience, reflective and communicative skills, and their genuine willingness and availability for long interviews (Morse, 1991). Hence, as more concerned about ‘particularization’ than ‘generalization’ (Stake, 1995:8), I have used purposive sampling in order to select the most suitable participants for the current research. Purposive sampling is a non-random selection
of research participants, based on their specific qualifications or knowledge helpful in advancing understanding of the subject under research. I believe my decision for purposive sampling as the most suitable approach for the current study has facilitated the endeavour to derive in-depth knowledge about the research phenomena from those information-rich individuals who are in a strong position to impart it (Cohen et al., 2007; Patton, 2002).

4.4 Data Collection Methods: From Field to Field Texts

In this section, I present the rationale and description of data collection processes in addition to details of how the journey from field to collection of field texts was completed with the help of interviews, documents and artifacts, and open-ended questionnaires (see Table 4.3).

4.4.1 Narrative Interviews

In narrative inquiry, interviews are used as a common tool to collect data as they offer a window into participants’ life, ideas, experiences, and meanings that they have given to different experiences and situations (Punch, 2014). Moreover, through their dialogic nature, interviews help us ‘understand the world from the subjects’ points of view, to unfold the meaning of their experiences, to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations’ (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009:1). Therefore, being aware that people make sense of their experiences through narration, I have mainly used narrative interviews to explore the learning biographies of my participants. I conducted at least three interviews with each participant to collect details of their academic qualifications, lifelong PLD, pre/in-service professional trainings, critical incidents, milestones, turning points, challenges, key factors in PLD and their impact on professional life, means and models utilized for PLD, and future plans for PLD.

Deriving from the works of Atkinson (1998), Dominice (2000), Goodson (2008), Merrill and West (2009), Thompson (2000), and some personal research documents generously shared by my supervisor (Michael Tedder), I prepared a detailed interview guide with clear aims and themes for each interview (Appendix 2). Although the study mainly focused on lifelong PLD of the participants, I started data collection from participants’ early education as conceived in the theoretical framework of the current study: In order to understand and encompass the process of learning and development of a person, we need to trace it ontogenetically (historically) to its very beginning in a life (Vygotsky, 1978).

Data collection took about three months to complete. For the interview scheduling, I made it a point to conduct all the interviews according to the convenience of the participants. Therefore, I did not push them for interview dates and timings. Interview timings were of their choice, and I told them to choose a time when they felt most relaxed and free. Most of the interviews were scheduled during breaks or non-teaching university weeks which occur after every 7/8-week teaching module. Participant Information Sheet with the Consent Form
(Appendix 3) was sent to the participants before the first interview. Two to three days before the date of each interview, details of the interview objectives, relevant themes and key questions were emailed to the participants for any inevitable forethought and reflection (see Table 4.2).

Table 4.2: Aims and Themes of the Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview One (Unintrusive)</th>
<th>Aims</th>
<th>Major Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To help develop biographical profiles of the participants</td>
<td>Family background, early life, schooling up to grade 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To learn about participants early learning interests, aptitude, challenges and achievements</td>
<td>Undergraduate studies – college/university life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To explore participants’ learning biography during pre-service phases</td>
<td>Postgraduate studies and pre-service professional training courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Reflection on pre-service professional learning and development</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Two (Unintrusively Interactive)</th>
<th>Aims</th>
<th>Major Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To explore participants’ learning biography during in-service phases</td>
<td>Choice of language teaching profession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To track participants’ efforts for professional learning and development, and involvement in various PD related activities</td>
<td>In-service professional learning and development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To understand participants’ ideas and experiences about the nature and process of professional learning and development</td>
<td>Key factors in professional learning and development and their impact on professional life</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Three (Unintrusively Interactive)</th>
<th>Aims</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To take stock of professional learning and development challenges and opportunities in the Saudi Arabian context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To learn about the means and models of professional learning and development that participants have utilized for their professional excellence in the present context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To understand the nature of professional competence effective in the present context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Professional learning and development in the research context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Secrets of success in the present teaching context</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With Ali, all the three interviews were conducted between 10:30pm--1:00am at night at my place. Interview 1 and 3 took place on the weekends and interview 2 was held during the weekdays. The interviewee considered these timings as his best when he felt most relaxed and alive. There was a short break during each interview and some refreshments were also served.

Sarmad invited me to his place for all the three Interviews. First two interviews were conducted during the week when there was a university break for one week and the participant had a lot of free time. Interview 1 was conducted between 10:30am–1:00pm in a
very relaxed atmosphere. The interview 2 was conducted between 10:00pm-12:00am two
days after the first interview, and the interview 3 was done between 1:00pm-3:00pm after
three days. I sent him a reflective question about the process and experience of going
through three biographical interviews, which he returned after about two weeks.

Omer had his interview 1 on the first day of the weekend between 8:00pm-9:30pm at his
residence. He was a bit nervous at the start of the first interview. After about 10 minutes he
cut loose and started speaking about his life in an uninhibited way. The interview 2 was
conducted three days after the interview 1 between 6:30pm-8:30pm again at his residence.
Omer had no classes to teach on the next working day. The interview 3 was conducted
between 1:00pm-2:30pm at my place on the weekend. After the interview we had our lunch
together, specially prepared by my better half.

My interviewing style although interactive was unintrusive in approach (Goodson, 2008). As
Kvale (1996:4) suggests that a qualitative interviewer behaves like a 'traveller' instead of a
'miner', and the 'traveller's' journey will naturally lead them to new knowledge and allow
access to hitherto unforeseen territory, I 'travelled' along my participants, as preceded in
Thomas's (2009) research journey, listening to and for their stories with an unintrusive
engagement, focussing less on the pre-meditated prompts and more on participants
responses to guide the flow of the narrative. During these interviews also came the moments
which set off a chain reaction of reflective process startling me into new ways of self-
awareness (also see 4.7.2: Footnote 6).

All the interviews were voice recorded and sent to a trustworthy professional for verbatim
transcriptions. However, as I had no intention of doing any discourse analysis of the data, I
instructed my transcriber to opt for a broad transcription approach, removing hesitation
markers (e.g. eeh, erm, err), pet words (e.g. you know, like), and any other solecisms in
order to save time and money. When all the interviews were transcribed, they were sent to
the participants for their review. Participants were given the choice to add or edit anything in
the transcription if they so desired.

4.4.2 Documents and Artifacts

Bogdan and Biklen (2007:64), using the term documents to refer to range of artifacts and
other personal and official written materials, argue that documents can usefully supplement
the data collected through interviews or observations. Utilizing secondary data in narrative
analysis process, I also collected some ‘documents’ or ‘artifacts' from the participants in the
form of classroom observation reports, annual faculty evaluation reports, references from
previous employers, and their expanded resumes. These documents served as ethnographic
evidence reflecting their achievements during the previous years, and also offered an
opportunity to triangulate the data and thereby further enhance the trustworthiness of the
study.
4.4.3 Open-Ended Questionnaires

Sarmad and Omer also participated in a Professional learning community (PLC) for two semesters (one academic year) that I established for teachers' professional excellence in the research context. To evaluate the impact of their participation experience in the PLC on their PLD, I used two open-ended questionnaires designed by Wenger et al. (2011) to collect data from them: 1) Personal value narrative and 2) Reflecting on value creation in the PLC (Appendix 4). Wenger et al. (2011) have developed various questionnaires for the evaluation of different aspects of a CoP/PLC. I used these already prepared questionnaires for my data collection as the flexible nature of these questionnaires helped the participants to conveniently evaluate the value created by the PLC for their roles as TESOL professionals. Additionally, these questionnaires were the latest and developed by someone who was one of the pioneers on the subject. These questionnaires aimed to capture the short narratives of their learning experience in the PLC covering details of their engagement, activities, and interactions, and any roles and responsibilities they undertook as a member of the PLC. In addition to these tools, I had a number of informal discussions with them to pick their brains and see things in a larger picture.

Table 4.3: An Overview of Field Texts Collected for the Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of field text</th>
<th>Number of field texts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Individual interviews with 3 participants</td>
<td>3 x 3 = 9 interviews totalling 13 hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Ethnographic evidence or artifacts for the three interview participants</td>
<td>Faculty evaluation reports, classroom observation reports, reference letters, expanded CVs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Two open-ended questionnaires, designed by Wenger et al. (2011), completed by 2 PLC participants</td>
<td>2 x 2 = 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Questionnaire 1 for a ‘Personal value narrative’ on PLC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Questionnaire 2 for ‘Reflecting on value creation’ in PLC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Additional field texts</td>
<td>Face-to-face, telephonic and email communications for clarification or additional information about participants’ life, professional learning and development</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.5 Analysis of the Data

The aspiration of the qualitative researcher is to capture the immediacy and vividness of that dust hanging in the afternoon air that my grandmother pointed out to me.  
(William F. Pinar – In an interview published in Cooper & White, 2012:29)

The journey from collection of field texts to the development of final research texts is probably the most arduous and painful in the narrative inquiry. Once all the data was transcribed and the requested documents and artifacts were received, I looked at the magnitude of work ahead and for next few days I felt completely overwhelmed and clueless. I considered various options for data analysis. During data collection, I thought about writing a
brief 600 to 800 words biographical profiles for each participant and then proceed with horizontal, cross-sectional thematic analysis of the whole data. However, the more I immersed in the data, the deeper I sank in the variegated beauty of my participants’ narratives, compelling me into taking a more difficult route to data analysis. A cross-sectional thematic analysis probably would have rendered, with much less effort, some kind of useful typology or set of themes for projecting the context-specific variety as well as commonalities of TESOL professionals’ learning and development. However, that could have seriously compromised the uniqueness, particularity, and narrative quality of individual learning biographies which could possibly be captured in a vertical (single-case) narrative analysis. As an interpretive researcher, I was acutely conscious of the fact that whatever I could discover or create out of these narratives should not qualify as an objective reality, rather be deemed as one of ‘human constructions of models or maps of reality’ (Polkinghorne, 1997:7), which are meant to enhance our understanding of the phenomena of teachers’ PLD. Therefore, instead of producing a ‘nameless and faceless’ horizontal, cross-case thematic analysis (Riessman, 2005:6), I have decided to preserve the individuality of my participants’ narratives and attempted a vertical, single-case thematic analysis. These analysed and interpreted narratives are followed by a discussion chapter where I have compared and contrasted these narratives in an effort to reflect further and theorise (suggest a set of ideas that enhance understanding) the findings not by imposing any meanings rather by constructing meaning through a reflexive and collective negotiation with and between my participants (Lather, 1986).

4.5.1 Why Analyse a Narrative?

Unlike some researchers who consider any type of analysis in narratives as an act of ‘abduction’ or ‘colonization’ (see Thomas, 2009:115), Riessman (2005), viewing narratives as representations of human experience, contends that interpretation of narratives is ineluctable because they ‘do not speak for themselves or have unanalyzed merit; they require interpretation when used as data in social research’ (p. 2). However, in the process of analysis, interpretation and meaning-making, issues of voice and representation in narrative analysis are important considerations for an ethical researcher, which I have dealt with in appropriate sections in this chapter.

4.5.2 What and How of Narrative Analysis

Narrative analysis aims at a systematic interpretation of a narrator’s experiences and the processes of their meaning-making of those experiences with attention to (any of the) various aspects of the narratives (Esin, 2011). Lieblich et al. (1998) divide approaches to narrative analysis along two axes: holistic vs. categorical and form vs. content. They maintain that these axes show intersecting dimensions with multiple possibilities for analysing a research text in light of the matrix of four cells, which are as follows:
For narrative analysis, a researcher may choose to focus on the plot/structure - as conceived in Labov’s (1972) classical six-part model (abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, result and coda) - or the content of the narrative and perform a thematic/categorical analysis, or look at stylistic/linguistic/dialogic features of the narrative. Riessman (2008), a seminal researcher on narrative analysis, further adding to Lieblich et al.’s (1998) dimensions, identifies overall four distinct types of narrative analysis: thematic, structural, performative or dialogical, and visual. Menard-Warwick (2011) adds yet another dimension, analysis of relevance, to Riessman’s (2008) typology of narrative analysis, suggesting a clear focus on the proposed research objectives and questions during the analysis. Moreover, Cohen et al. (2011) and Benson (2011), highlighting various features of narratives deserving a careful attention in the course of narrative analysis, further enrich the criteria that can be utilised for a variety of narrative analysis endeavours (See Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1: Approaches to Narrative Analysis

4.5.3 Preferred Approach to Narrative Analysis

For the current research, influenced by Lieblich et al.’s (1998) categorical-content and Riessman’s (2008) thematic narratives analysis approach, also paying attention to major
decision points, critical incidents/events, major themes, behaviours and actions, critical people, key experiences (Cohen et al., 2011), and analysis of relevance (Menard-Warwick, 2011), I chose to conduct a vertical, single-case thematic analysis of my participants’ narratives (see 4.4 & 4.5) by exclusively focusing on the content of the narratives - on what is told rather than how it is told (Riessman, 2008).

Until the last few years, thematic analysis was considered a fluid and loosely-demarcated approach, despite the fact that the first magisterial work ‘Qualitative Data Analysis’ by Miles and Huberman was published in 1994, laying down elaborate and systematic procedures for coding and thematic data analysis. However, with some recent high-quality publications on the subject by Braun and Clarke (2006), Bazeley (2013), Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014), and Krueger and Casey (2014) have tremendously contributed to the strength of thematic analysis in qualitative research (see Figure 4.2). Following the guidelines proposed in the works cited above, I provide details of my trodden path, adopted procedures, and considered recommendations for the thematic analysis of my participants’ narratives.

Figure 4.2: Approaches to (Thematic) Qualitative Data Analysis
As mentioned earlier, during the early days of data analysis, I actually had the feeling of being drowned in the data with no clue as to how to handle the great magnitude of the narrative-biographical research data. The feelings of those days noted down in my journal reflect my plight:

*What to leave and what not to leave was the question that plagued my mind for quite some time. Like Hamlet, I procrastinated my data analysis task for weeks and found refuge in further literature review in order to gain more and more depth in the art and science of data analysis despite my supervisor’s advice that I should stop reading further literature and delve into the data now (Researcher’s journal).*

### 4.5.4 Narrative Analysis Process

#### 4.5.4.1 From field texts to interim research texts

I fed all the interview data into NVivo 10 for initial coding and data condensation. I started coding with Sarmad’s interviews using open coding although not as strictly as conceived in Charmaz (2006) and Corbin and Strauss’s (2008) grounded theory analysis, where usually every line has a code. Still Sarmad’s interview data generated 94 codes. Descriptive and responsive nature of the coding will testify to the inductive data analysis approach that I adopted in the beginning (Appendix 5). Once done with coding on Sarmad’s data, I downloaded all the coded extracts from NVivo for categorizing the initial codes and developing condensed data into an interim field text. The breadth of the data and the range of codes led to another ‘block’ and I, once again, relapsed into reflective, procrastinative mode.

After weeks of void reflection and vain groping, I had a brainwave about the Kelchtermans’ (1993, 2009a) *Personal Interpretive Framework*, which I had read during my literature review phase of the thesis. However, it occurred to me during the later stages of analytical coding and further condensation of the data to utilize this framework for the data analysis of participants’ PLD narratives. With the help of Kelchtermans’ (1993, 2009a) framework, I was able to reconstruct the stories of my participants, which I had already deconstructed in NVivo during earlier stages of the data analysis. However, it is important to note that I had to slightly expand the scope of Kelchtermans framework to interpret my data in its light, which I will define in the next section.

#### 4.5.4.2 Data analysis framework (Derived from Kelchtermans, 1993; 2009)

Kelchtermans (2013:1) argues that ‘we need conceptual tools and frameworks to capture and disentangle the multilayered, intertwined reality of teachers’ professional lives and the on-going development of their professional self. Likewise, Peshkin (2001) using the term *lens* for a framework views them as tools that help us look more intently and attentively into the phenomena. He argues that lenses ‘alert and arouse us to mobilize resources of interest, energy, time, and attention. To be so mobilized is to foreground and background what is out there and thus to construct what is available to see’ (p. 238). Using an established analytical
framework to examine extensive and rich data can also strengthen data analysis process and minimize the tendency of researchers’ ‘lapse into ad hoc use of commonsense interpretations’ due to their personal biases or predilections (Silverman & Marvasti, 2008:289). However, I believe the primary purpose of adopting an analytical framework is further strengthening and tightening of data analysis process. Such a choice should not be allowed in any way to delimit or compromise the quality and richness of the whole process.

For the current research, I have found Kelchtermans’ (2009a) Personal Interpretive Framework as usefully relevant to my research. As at the time of data collection I was not aware of Kelchtermans’ framework, it intrigues me to further see his framework’s strength and breadth to help capture the process of my participants’ lifelong PLD. However, I do not rule out the possibility of strange and wonderful coincidences in life: it might be just a coincidence that my data easily yielded to this framework. The rationale for this framework can be traced to seminal work of Nias (1989), who posits that teachers in their professional lives engage in ‘persistent self-referentialism’ (p.5): talk about themselves when referring to professional actions and activities – leading Kelchtermans (2009a) to expound Nias’s thesis into an effective framework.

Based on extensive research spanning over two decades, Kelchtermans (2009a) has presented his Personal Interpretive Framework comprising two different yet interlinked domains of professional self-understanding and subjective educational theory. Dynamic and embedded in the professional context, this framework, representing teachers’ lifelong learning and development, guides teachers’ professional actions and opinions. The professional self-understanding has five components: self-image, self-esteem, task perception, job motivation, and future perspective. These components can be analysed as intertwined with each other or as separate factors affecting the professional self-understanding of a teacher. Specifically, task perception closely linked to subjective educational theory reflects a teacher’s attitude towards their profession as well as efforts driven by that attitude for PLD. Encompassing more practical and pedagogical elements, the subjective educational theory epitomises a teacher’s ‘professional know-how’ and its enactment in the teaching practice (Kelchtermans, 2009a:263). As suggested by Kelchtermans himself, seeing close link between task perception and subjective educational theory, I discuss them together as representing teachers’ professional learning experiences; whereas the other four elements, self-image, self-esteem, job motivation, and future perspective, I discuss alongside the factors contributing to teachers’ PLD. Brief explanations of the framework terms are provided in the Table 4.4.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Explanations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Childhood, Schooling &amp; Post-secondary Education</td>
<td>Covers learning from early childhood to under-graduate studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Formal Professional Education</td>
<td>Covers learning from post-graduation onwards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Professional Career</td>
<td>Covers professional career from beginning to date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Professional Self-understanding</td>
<td>It refers to teachers’ conception of themselves as teachers. It includes five components: self-image, self-esteem, task perception, job motivation, and future perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Self-image &amp; Self-esteem*</td>
<td><strong>Self-image</strong>: Who am I? What other people think of me? <strong>Self-esteem</strong>: What do I like/dislike about myself? What do I think about myself? How well am I doing in my job?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In other words: My self-image is what other people think of me, and my self-esteem is what I think of myself. <em>&quot;self-image is the descriptive component and self-esteem is the evaluative component of self-understanding. As suggested by Pajares and Schunk (2001) that empirical research has not or could clearly separate these two components, and there is a tendency for using them interchangeably. Despite the overlapping nature of these two terms, a fine distinction may be discernable at places in my study. However, considering their overlapping nature, I choose to use the two terms as one combined theme in my research.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Job Motivation</td>
<td>Why become a teacher? What makes me choose to become a teacher, stay in the profession or quit the job? What is the role of context in job motivation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 Future Perspective</td>
<td>What kind of teacher will I become? What are my expectations/plans for the future in my job? How do I see myself as a teacher in the years to come and how do I feel about it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4 Task Perception</td>
<td>How do I define my job? What do/must I do as a teacher to be and become an effective teacher? What are the tasks I have to perform in order to have the justified feeling that I am doing well? What constitutes my professional programme, tasks and duties in order to do a good job? What are my deeply held beliefs about what constitutes good teaching?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.1 Being and Becoming a Teacher</td>
<td>This section aims to capture what teachers have already learnt to be effective in this context and what their efforts are for their continuing PLD.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.2 Learning in specific experiences and situations</td>
<td>Teacher learning in experiences such as CELTA and situations such as observing or being observed in a class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Subjective Educational Theory</td>
<td>What is my personal system of knowledge and beliefs about teaching (content knowledge, beliefs about effective teaching strategies, and rules of thumb)? What are my personal answers to the questions of how to act as a teacher and why to act that way? How should I deal with any particular situation? (Subjective educational theory develops out of the teacher’s formal, non-formal and informal learning experiences and day-to-day practice. It is thus embodied experiential knowledge, embedded in the career experiences of the teacher.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Additional factors in PLD</td>
<td>This section covers various contextual and individual factors contributing to PLD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
With my mind set on a framework, my further coding of the data got influenced as well: Hereafter, I used a combination of deductive and inductive analysis approach utilizing both pre-ordinate and responsive coding schemes. Next I coded the interviews of Ali and Omer which rendered comparatively less number of codes. I was able to generate 75 (Appendix 5C) and 59 codes respectively from Ali’s and Omer’s data, partly due to more focus on themes proposed in the adopted framework, and partly due to my increasing immersion in data that helped bring similar or linkable data under existing codes. Once all the data was coded, the extracts were downloaded and copied to individual files of each participant for further condensation and development of themes. The discarding, splitting and segregation of parts of data although inevitable is an atrocious compulsion of thematic analysis. However, one can get solace from Peshkin (2001), who, perceiving all such moves for enhancement of perception in qualitative research as ad hoc and artificial, argues that despite this segregation inseparability is inevitable: ‘things are connected. We wrench them from their contexts knowing that we do a disservice to their natural interrelatedness; we must do this if we are not to be paralyzed by the immense complexity of the world of social phenomena’ (p. 247). The magnitude of the narrative analysis process is usually overwhelming, which has to be countered through making the data more accessible both for the reader and the researcher, and the process of thematization of the data can lead to that objective. As Thomas (2009:120) asserts, ‘People do not tell stories and narrate their lives in a linear fashion – in neat, tidy sequences; they move back and forth, revisiting, reframing, adding and altering’. She further adds that a researcher has to take steps during data analysis to frame the narratives of participants in a way that they make sense to readers.

Some of the important considerations during the development of field texts into interim research texts include memo writing on regular basis; literal reading of the data and semantic coding; reflexive reading of the data for personal orientation; which led to, interpretive reading of the data for more latent themes; keeping the distinction between descriptive coding and analytical coding in mind; and doing an analysis of relevance: as the true value of data analysis lies in its strength to inform the research questions and thereby contribute to the relevant body of knowledge.

4.5.4.3 From interim research texts to final research texts

Once the themes and sub-themes were developed and other ethnographic details from documents were included in the interim research texts, the next stage was the development of final research texts in view of the research objectives. The ‘pencil sketches’ of the participants depicting their experience of lifelong PLD were ready for final ‘colouring’. The final research texts included the findings and interpretations combining individual participant’s voice with researcher’s non-critical voice. These reconstructed vertical, single-case narratives, documenting the experience and impact of lifelong professional learning of
three *highly effective* TESOL professionals, are meant not only to enhance my own professional self-understanding, but also engage other professionals 'to read their own stories between the lines and begin to interrogate their own practice' (Renner, 2001:2). More importantly, the discussion of the findings presented in chapter six offers researcher’s critical voice substantiated by voices from the literature with a specific aim to inform the research questions.

### 4.6 Quality of the Research: Trustworthiness

The ‘scientific holy trinity’ of validity, reliability and generalizability are contested terms in the field of interpretive research (Kvale, 1995:20). Some researchers, such as Mouton (1996), tend to gauge the reliability and validity of qualitative research in ways similar to quantitative research; others, like Eisner (1998), reject this notion and argue that reliability and validity are incompatible with qualitative research. In this regard, Lincoln and Guba (1985:219) propose a parallel term *trustworthiness* to substitute *validity* and *reliability*. The *trustworthiness* of a research embodies four aspects comprising credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (see Shenton, 2004). These criteria have been widely appreciated and some recent publications have advocated the implementation of these terms in qualitative research (Bryman, 2008). While Shenton (2004) has delineated the ideas of Lincoln and Guba in a matrix, Klein and Myers (1999) and Tracy (2010) have made considerable efforts to further expand the scope of quality criteria for interpretive research. In the field of narrative inquiry, Polkinghorne (2007) has laid down some specific criteria to establish rigour and quality in the research. Counting primarily on the works of Shenton (2004) and Polkinghorne (2007), I highlight the quality of my research reflecting on and thereby showcasing my position, decisions, and steps that I have taken to establish trustworthiness of my research.

In the context of quality in narrative inquiry, Polkinghorne (2007:474) defines trustworthiness or validity as ‘believability of a statement or knowledge claim’. He further adds that the readers of narrative research should ‘make judgements on whether or not the evidence and argument convinces them at the level of plausibility, credibleness, or trustworthiness of the claim’ (p. 477). Polkinghorne (2007) specifically highlights two important considerations for narrative researchers. First one is to address the issue of ‘disjunction’ (p. 480) – the gap between the experienced meaning and the expressed or languaged meaning of participants. The participants’ capacity to fully verbalize the meaning of their experience is affected by their language repertoire, level of self-awareness, personal decision or constraints about self-disclosure, and often the co-constructed nature of their narrative. In order to enhance the trustworthiness of narrative inquiry, researchers have to empower their participants by acknowledging their ownership of the experienced meaning and adopting ways to minimize the distance between the actual experienced meaning and the meaning shared with the
researcher. In order to address this issue, as suggested by Polkinghorne (2007), I empowered my participants to review their oral narratives and my interpretations. Once the field texts were transcribed and proofread, I sent them to my participants with the choice to add, edit or alter anything to ensure more accurate representations of their experiences. Again when the field texts were developed into research texts, I sought their feedback for the validity and suitability of my interpretation and meaning-making of their narratives.

Second key consideration is related to interpretive position of the narrative researchers and its evidence in the research texts. For instance, I believe, as an interpretive researcher, I should make an excursion into the context and perspective of my participants in order to gain empathic understanding (or Verstehen) of their experiences, but I am also aware that I can never fully transcend my ‘own historical and situated embeddedness’ (Polkinghorne, 2007:483). With Durant’s (1968) assertion that any claim to total impartiality is absurd, I have clarified my position in this chapter and elsewhere in the thesis. Moreover, in an effort to support my interpretation and meaning-making of my participants’ experiences, I have quoted ample evidence from their narratives.

In light of Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) concept of trustworthiness of research, counting on the matrix developed by Shenton (2004), I provide a brief summary of the steps taken to ensure trustworthiness of my research (also see Appendix 5):

**For credibility** (truth and value of research):

- I have used a methodological eclecticism employing established research methodologies, and presented clear rationale for my choices.
- I have had prolonged engagement and familiarity with the research context.
- I have explained my position and described my professional experience and learning.

**For dependability** (consistency or reliability) and **confirmability** (accuracy and neutrality):

- I have provided an audit trail in the form of details of methodological and procedural decisions.
- I have taken a reflexive stance and discussed my personal beliefs and biases, and ontological and epistemological assumptions of the study.

For **transferability** (generalizability / applicability of findings to similar contexts):

- I have provided details of the research context, and interpretation are supported by thick descriptions of the phenomena under study.

**Generalizability**

Guskey (1995) argues that all efforts at uniformity of reforms in the educational system are destined to fail due to the uniqueness of different contexts. ‘The teaching and learning process is a complex endeavor that is embedded in contexts that are highly diverse. This
combination of complexity and diversity makes it difficult, if not impossible, for researchers to come up with universal truths’ (P. 117). For the current research, I leave the decision of any possibility of generalization of the findings to the reader with Atkinson’s (1998) observation on the subject:

If a particular life story gives us a new idea about how things connect in our own life, how our own life experience is similar to [or different from] another's, or how people may better understand how and why the parts of a life are connected by telling a story about them, then we may have taken the first step toward generalizing from one life story. (p. 73)

4.7 Ethical Concerns

Guba and Lincoln (1994) define a research paradigm with reference to the trilogy of ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions. About the axiological or ethical underpinnings of a research they express no concern, which, according to Heron and Reason (1997:286), is ‘a serious omission’. In interpretive research, a researcher’s ethical assumptions guide their relation with participants and research context, their stance on reflexivity and mutual respect, and their handling of issues of consent, confidentiality and anonymity in data analysis and presentation of results (Cole & Knowles, 2001; Merriam, 2002). Discussed below are a range of ethical issues covering the dimensions of my personal attitude as well as the procedures adopted to address them (Thomas, 2009).

4.7.1 Consent, Confidentiality, and Representation

In light of the Code of Human Research Ethics set out by the British Psychological Society (BPS, 2014), I sought permission for data collection from University of Exeter’s ethics committee (GSE unique approval reference # D/13/14/3) and from the Saudi university where the research was conducted. Subsequently, I got the informed consent of all the participants (see Appendix 3) in the study after providing them detailed information about the objectives of the study, and analysis and utilization of the data. Additionally, I made them fully aware of their right to withdraw from the research at any time. Issues regarding confidentiality and anonymity were carefully considered. Individual results of the study remain absolutely confidential and anonymous. Pseudonyms are used to protect the identity of the participants. A reasonable effort is made to ensure that no output will provide information which might allow any participant or institution in the research context to be precariously identified from names, data, contextual information or a combination of these. However, maintaining total anonymity can be a challenge in a qualitative study with a small sample size as there is a likelihood of participants’ identity being recognized by colleagues who are professionally close to the participants and are aware of their demographical and biographical details (Murphy & Dingwell, 2007). Worse still, in the Saudi context any identity disclosure can have serious repercussions in terms of job prospects in case any comment in the data is perceived as criticism of the system or official policy.
Another challenge in a narrative inquiry is being fair and ethical in representation of participants’ narrated experiences and ideas, which has already been mentioned in the previous section that participants were given opportunity to review the texts at two stages of the data analysis. Even though all the participants were proficient speakers of English language, some omissions or unusual turns of phrases were natural in such long-duration interviews. Nespor, Tech and Barber (1995:57) also warn that ‘people do not speak on paper. Transcripts are written forms, and when we freeze interview speech into print, we construct those we have talked to as subordinate writers: We make them look ignorant’. Therefore, I had all the solecisms removed from the data. Additionally, at places some minor addition or deletion of a word or two were made to maintain the flow of the discourse. However, I can assure that such sparse fine-tuning of the speech in the narratives in no way compromised the trustworthiness of the research texts.

4.7.2 The Researcher’s Positioning: A Reflexive Stance

Every version of an ‘other’... is also the construction of a ‘self’ (Clifford, 1986:23).

Reflexivity, a crucial feature of narrative and ethnographic research, is fast becoming a watchword in the fields of social and educational research. ‘He jests at scars that never felt the wound’, laments Romeo in Shakespeare’s play. In order to experientially understand the import of a message relayed by a research participant, a qualitative researcher has to be reflexive by way of a ‘heightened awareness of self, other, and the self-other dialectic’ (Cole & Knowles, 2001:30). Reflexivity aims to ensure contextual, intellectual and empathic depth in investigating and understanding lives of research participants. A researcher views and reflects on the knowledge and experience of the researched in the light of their own understanding and experiences. In this way, research on others’ lives and learning has a tinge of the researcher’s autobiography. Therefore, the professional skills and personal acumen of researchers can greatly affect the quality of any qualitative research endeavour (Cole & Knowles, 2001; Papantoniou-Frangouli, 2009). Additionally, as it is natural for qualitative researchers to bring their own biography into the research process, they should, however, be keenly aware of how their own perceptions, choices, biases, and paradigmatic stance can impinge upon the research process (Cohen et al., 2007).

Naturally, there is a downside to reflexivity gaining a central position in research activity and becoming more fashionable in some disciplines. Instead of functioning as a means to an end, it is frequently being considered as an end in itself, exaggerating the role of researcher’s self in the research process. Canagarajah (2005a:309) warns us against this trend and argues that reflexivity has to be ‘negotiated effectively in relation to the research and pedagogical objectives, disciplinary context, audience, and genre of writing...And there are no easy answers regarding how to achieve this’. One answer comes from Geertz (1988:9), who argues for a balanced approach by keeping our presence in the research process as neither
too ‘author-saturated’ nor too ‘author evacuated’. Still, it is not easy to have just the right balance when we are aware, that in the qualitative research where the aim is ‘re-representation and re-construction of social reality’, our presence is ‘not only justifiable, but essential’ (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995:338). With this reflexive stance, I unequivocally acknowledge that I have had a longstanding personal presence in the research context and an intimate and frank relationship with my participants, which is purposefully reflected in the thesis write-up. Additionally, I choose to share an abridged version of my professional life and learning in order to further highlight my positioning vis-à-vis the current research. In the next chapter, I present narrative analysis of the data in an effort to reconstruct the participants’ learning biographies with excerpts from their narratives and my non-critical interpretations. See footnote 6 for my learning biography.

6 My Learning Biography: Graves (1994) observes that one good language teacher in the entire learning history of a student will be enough to make them a successful language learner. Fortunately, I had that ‘good teacher’ - Mr Aqil Khan - in grade 8, who was able to effect a volte-face in my perception of the subject of English: the nightmarish experience of learning English transfigured into an interesting and worth-pursuing endeavour in a matter of a few weeks. Even afterwards in my student life, I was lucky to encounter some great teachers whom I still profoundly revere and owe a debt of personal gratitude. Despite the fact that I was deeply impressed by at least three teachers during my pre-service life, I never thought of becoming a teacher. I precisely joined the teaching profession as a stepping stone, because the nature of work allowed substantial time to spare for other ‘more desirable’ pursuits. But with opportunities elsewhere shrinking or losing their lustre for me, and with my soaring self-image and self-efficacy as an English teacher, I decided to enhance my self-esteem as well by excelling in this profession.

The earliest source of my motivation for personal and professional excellence was Stephen R. Covey’s (1989) landmark book, The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People that I read in 1998-9. Subsequently, I developed familiarity with writers in the field of Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP) – a branch of knowledge devoted to study of personal excellence (Revell & Norman, 1997) – which further whetted my appetite for excellence in various spheres of life, impelling me into a perpetual quest for books and people invested with the potential to help me realize my lifelong passion for excellence in tangible results. With the clear aim of further learning and development, I decided to go for another masters in English language teaching (ELT), although with a Pakistani master’s degree in English literature, I had already been teaching in a higher secondary institution for 5 years. That decision was the beginning of a new phase in my life. A year after completing that degree in 2006, I got accepted at University of Cambridge, UK for a research degree in second language education. But, unfortunately I could not manage to get the scholarship I needed and deserved, and did not have the means either to self-finance my studies at Cambridge. The following year in July, I got a job offer from a renowned university in KSA and decided to leave my home country for a brighter future for myself and my family. As University of Cambridge had no option for part-time studies for students residing beyond 70 miles (now 4 hours travelling distance), I had to explore other options for higher studies. After a short while, in 2010, I hit a milestone and secured admission at University of Exeter, UK in Doctor of Education (EdD) in TESOL.

Now hurtling towards the end of my doctorate, I must acknowledge the tremendous benefits of the gruelling nature of EdD study. Although I am a part-time student; it is a full-time occupation for me. As a result of that commitment, I see a sea change in my professional knowledge and calibre. Within around six years of doctoral study, I have experienced extraordinary professional growth, which has expanded my intellectual horizons and extended my academic frontiers far beyond my expectations. My hard work, which is indeed a labour of love, has been fruitful in various personal and professional
ways. For instance, one of the entries from my ‘Researcher’s Journal’ may give some idea of the learning in the course of my doctoral research, where the impact of an interview experience with a participant sparked a reflective process startling me into new ways of self-awareness:

Interview 2 was a kind of unsettling experience for me. I felt as if I was shaken out of my complacency. It was an experience that caused cracks in the edifice of my knowledge and understanding of different aspects of my personal and professional life. Although I had numerous experiences in my adult life which added to my self-awareness, but this was a totally different experience that made me realize that I was smug about my level of self-awareness and professional achievements. Now I was face to face with a genuine prodigy about 8 years my junior, who had a very high level of abstraction with significant academic achievements in his life. The striking feature was the participant’s extraordinary ability to deeply reflect and analyse his professional decisions, actions, and interactions stretched over a decade (Researcher’s Journal).

In the meanwhile, another phenomenal learning experience came in the shape of my selection as an IELTS examiner at the British Council Jeddah. The four-day long highly intensive training for IELTS examiners was a transformative experience in terms of giving me a fresh perspective on my lifelong learning as a language teacher. This new professional status not only boosted my self-esteem as a TESOL professional, but also helped during interviews for my data collection for the current research. As an IELTS examiner, I have interviewed hundreds of candidates, where I am required to phrase and rephrase my questions according to candidates’ language proficiency and comprehension in order to test their oral language skills, which has also considerably enhanced my general interviewing skills.

As a TESOL professional, my personal pedagogical theory — grounded in the triad of subject, pedagogical, and experiential knowledge — is laced with my cherished values of pursuit of excellence, diligence in work, and devotion to teaching. Over time, influenced by methodology fatigue (Sowden, 2007) and informed eclecticism that is primarily developed as a result of my doctoral studies, I have come to believe that there is no one right way to teach English. Hence, embracing Communicative Language Teaching as an overarching methodology, I appropriate from the vast array of TESOL methods, with an immensely flexible pedagogical approach, to engender a clear sense of learning and achievement in my students. In a nutshell, my teaching approach — tech-savvy, learning-centred, and context-specific — is primed for localized pedagogical needs of my students. Additionally, never deficient in empathy, I regularly employ motivational strategies, particularly derived from Dornyei’s (2001) foundational work, to make the learning process meaningful and interesting for my students. My top priority is to build a ‘strong rapport’ with my students through the golden principles of empathy, care, and respect, assuring them of my mental, emotional and physical availability. Indeed, listening to someone empathetically is the single most powerful transaction that affirms our respect for and acceptance of that individual as a human being. More importantly, as narcissism prevails in human life, I consciously create opportunities to offer genuine and ‘effective praise’ to my students in an effort to enhance their self-esteem.

At my workplace in KSA, where I conducted this research study, I got the ‘outstanding’ ratings as a language instructor during classroom observations and annual faculty evaluations. In April 2013, most probably by a stroke of luck, I was asked to join as the head of the research unit by relaxing recruitment conditions as that position required a doctoral degree. That position afforded me opportunities to be part of some high-profile research initiatives and contribute to developing a new MA TESOL programme. These undertakings, indeed quite prestigious, also brought me further out of my comfort zone and resulted in tremendous professional learning. In April 2014, I went to UK to present my research at IATEFL international conference, where I got through an interview for a lecturer position at Qatar University. Presently, working at Qatar University, I am also exploring postdoctoral opportunities in Canada where I am destined to have my next abode in the foreseeable future.
Chapter Five

Narrative Analysis: Findings and Interpretations

To form a self-narrative more must be done than simply recall and recount certain life events. One must also consider these events reflectively and deliberate on their meaning to decide how they fit together (Zahavi, 2005:112/3).

In understanding something so intensely personal as teaching it is critical we know about the person the teacher is. (Goodson, 1992:4)

5. Introduction

The aim of making my research meaningful in relevance to my stated research objectives behoves me to engage myself in the process of interpretation and meaning-making, which, according to Hoskins and Stoltz (2005:97), ‘is the foundation of narrative research’. Being an interpretive researcher, the process of negotiating meaning with my participants results in reconstructed narratives of their learning biographies (Riessman, 2005; Atkinson & Delamont, 2005), which I will present in this chapter. Importantly, following the first tenet of Vygotsky’s (1978) sociocultural theory, these narratives trace the participants’ learning journeys ontogenetically (from their early days to date), in an effort to better understand the current status of their PLD. These narratives cover the participants’ formal, informal and non-formal aspects of their learning starting from early school education up to the present. After a concise account of a participant’s childhood, formal education and professional career, each narrative moves into their professional life reporting their ideas, actions, and intentions about their PLD and how it is reflected in their practice. All the narratives follow a framework (see Table 4.4) to sequence different elements and dimensions of the participants’ lifelong PLD. However, despite following a framework with a fixed set of themes to capture their narratives, the details and sub-themes in each narrative are diverse, reflecting the uniqueness of the learning process in each participant’s learning biography.

5.1 Ali: A Learning Biography

5.1.1 Childhood, Schooling and Post-Secondary Education

Ali was born in 1981 in Karachi, a megalopolis of Pakistan on the shores of the Arabian Sea. He grew up in a deprived town of the city, characterised by gang violence and drug infestation. In his early childhood and schooling, he experienced two contrasting life styles. Part of his childhood was spent in Pakistan and he went to a small public school. The memories of his early school life are somewhat hazy, and he believes he was just an average student. Later with his father’s job in Oman, his family moved to the rich Gulf country. He studied grade 6 and 7 in a school in Oman with comparatively higher standards of education and facilities. Oman being a prosperous Gulf country, he was able to enjoy a more affluent life. On his return to Pakistan in 1994, after his father lost his job in Oman, he was sent to a better resourced school in Karachi this time. Within a few months in the new
school, Ali realized he was nonpareil among his peers and his English proficiency was extraordinary.

With a rare talent for the English language, Ali’s best educational experiences came through the medium of English. In the meanwhile, he developed a great fondness for encyclopedias, purchased for him by his father, which he believes played a major role in his educational development. His intense involvement in the world opened up in the encyclopedias, his growing fascination for ancient history, and a little later in life, his profound interest in the works of Jean-Paul Sartre, Bertrand Russell and the ancient Greek philosophers all further whetted his appetite for excellence in English:

*I began to see a kind of beauty in the English language and I plunged myself into reading all these books by famous writers….For me, the way to educational and mental adventure was the reading of the encyclopedias that we had, and as a kid I was more interested in Alexander the Great and the invasion of the Normans and things like that….then I had another explosion a little later in life when I wanted to learn more about philosophy….For me, whatever I wanted to know, the means to that end was English.*

Ali’s proficiency in English led him to participate in English debates in the school. It did not take him long to make his mark as a speaker par excellence. With successive resounding successes in declamation contests, which are a regular feature of co-curricular activities in most urban Pakistani schools, his fame skyrocketed in the school:

*We had a debate competition and I still remember the roar of the crowd when I finished my debate and I felt like a rock star; that’s the part which brought a revolution in my life.*

With each passing day, his fondness of the English language grew and he developed the habit of looking keenly at the English words and phrases, which resulted in tremendous growth in his linguistic competence. Till grade 8, Ali remained an average student in all the subjects except English, but in grade 9, his percentage shot up in other subjects as well. With a greater interest in his secondary school subjects, he stood first in grade 9 and 10 in most semesters and also earned widespread fame as an excellent debater. However, by the time he left school, he had a low opinion about life mainly due to his unfavourable financial circumstances:

*I was a pessimistic person. The idealism that a person has, that feeling of ‘I am a superman, I’m going to conquer the world, I will become a great scientist, I’m going to be the best football player in the world’, all these things that kids dream about at a certain point in life, that had already vanished a long time ago for me; I think, maybe, not just getting to know myself and knowing my own limits….also the fact about us coming back from Oman, realizing the reality of life in Pakistan, that our standard of*
living had come down permanently, so I didn’t have any high hopes; perhaps a vague idea of getting a good job sometime in the future, but nothing really concrete.

Ali got admission in a college as dictated by the norms of his family and social milieu, but soon he got frustrated and felt himself unfit for all the baggage that comes with college level education in Pakistan and decided to discontinue his studies. He started thinking about doing some small job but had vague ideas about his future course of action. Seeing him being indolent, his elder brother suggested something which Ali found extremely upsetting:

[My elder brother] said to me there was a motor garage near the place where he worked and that he knew the owner and would talk to him about taking me under his wing, making me an apprentice and in a few years I’d be a qualified auto mechanic. That idea sounded so outrageous to me that I nearly erupted…

The idea of an auto mechanic with grease smeared face and hands was so disconcerting for Ali that he experienced a volte-face and decided to not only continue his studies but also excel in the English language. With an aim to do masters in English language and become an English teacher, Ali got enrolled in Bachelors of Art (BA) at the University of Karachi. However, life ahead for Ali was fraught with difficulties. On the one hand, with his family’s dwindling financial situation, his father had to request for concession in an already small tuition fee in a government university; on the other hand, his lack of interest in compulsory and elective subjects available for BA in Pakistan was another kind of mental and emotional strain for him. Despite all his frustrations and lack of interest in BA subjects, his aim for masters in English kept him motivated to continue his studies without any interruption.

5.1.2 Professional Education

After completing BA, Ali continued his studies for masters in English at the renowned University of Karachi. The degree title ‘MA English’ is a bit deceptive in Pakistan, which Ali soon realized that he was reading chapters on Shakespeare, Ben Johnson, Dryden and other figures from English literature, whereas he was looking forward to studying English language and language teaching. By mistake, he ended up in the wrong programme. At that stage, he had no chance of quitting that course and joining a more relevant master’s programme.

During his MA English, Ali also availed the opportunity to do a 120-hour diploma in TEFL in the evenings, which was offered by the Society of Pakistani English language teachers (SPELT), an affiliate of University of Cambridge in Pakistan. Ali was not sure about any concrete learning in that course; however, he was mainly attracted to the course for its commercial value. The course content and structure of the diploma in TEFL was designed after Cambridge CELTA.
In the course of his MA English studies, he came to know about MA in Applied Linguistics, which was less theoretical and more relevant to the field he desired to join and excel. As soon as he completed his MA English, he got admission in MA in Applied Linguistics (evening session), which being his second masters, he was allowed to complete in one year. Ali’s journey of further education did not end with his two master degrees and a diploma in TEFL. He recently got enrolled in Doctorate in TESOL at a high-ranking British university. It is only a matter of time before his name will have the prefix of doctor.

5.1.3 Professional Career

During his undergraduate studies, Ali worked as a part-time English language teacher at two different places for a meagre pittance. However, his greater motivation at that stage was to gain some language teaching experience; he did not care much about money at that time. At one place he was paid a hundred rupees per student and a time came when he had only three students in his class, and he was getting a negligible remuneration of 300 rupees (3$ approx.) per month. After a diploma in TEFL and the MA in English degree on his CV, Ali got a job offer from a school in 2007. He met the principal, who was also his course mate in the diploma in TEFL, and after exchanging some pleasantries, he got down to business:

I don’t know what got into me at that time… I said to this guy I wasn’t going to be a cheap acquisition… In hindsight, I often think, why was it that I was so snobbish or perhaps I had such a high opinion of myself… that’s how I got the job, and because of my education and my training they also made me the head of the English language department.

For the next three years, Ali worked at that school. In 2010, he got an opportunity to work at an elite private school in Saudi Arabia. He left Pakistan and joined at his new workplace. He had hardly completed his first academic year at that school when he got a really attractive job offer from a renowned university in Saudi Arabia, which he gladly accepted. At his current workplace, a mega English language institute (ELI) of a Saudi university, Ali’s talent was soon spotted by his superiors and senior colleagues, and he got the opportunity to work at some key positions in the Curriculum and Professional Development Units. Within a short span of time, I witnessed that Ali was regarded as a genuine prodigy at the ELI. He is indeed someone who has made his mark and carved out a prominent place for himself among his 220+ peers hailing from different parts of the world, and a good number of them actually come from highly developed countries. Recently, he was offered a position in the elite Research Unit of the university, where he would be involved in the MA TESOL programme and various TESOL-related research endeavours.
5.1.4 Ali’s Professional Self-Understanding

5.1.4.1 Self-image and self-esteem

Ali has always enjoyed a distinctly positive self-image at his workplaces. In his current work context, once the American director of the English Language Institute (ELI) publically said that the extraordinary language proficiency and native-like accents of Ali and Omer (the third participant in this research), all developed in a non-English speaking country, would ‘deserve a research study’ on their language learning histories. Ali’s teaching skills are ‘remarkable’ and he is a ‘highly dedicated professional’ (Faculty Evaluation Report). He is not only ‘seriously committed’ to his own continued professional development, but his contributions to the Professional Development Unit of the institute, which he served for a year, are also considered ‘exceptional’ by his superiors (Faculty Evaluation Report).

Ali’s command of the English language, academic credentials, and professional progression and achievements, by no means ordinary, have given him enormous confidence in his ability as an effective teacher, thereby leading to high level of his self-esteem as a TESOL professional:

*I’ve been working now for 12-13 years in different capacities, not just as an English language teacher, I’ve never been fired; but every time my jobs have been getting better and better, and every time the jobs that I’ve had, the hiring process has been really good. It’s as if I just had to apply and I was a shoe-in, and in many ways that’s what I always wanted…I never thought that I’d be able to have a good job, I would be able to buy a house and buy so many things, be able to travel to different countries, I’d be able to pursue a doctoral course from England, and in just a few years I’ve been able to do that after I got these great jobs; and now being in a situation where if I send my CV somewhere, automatically it filters itself up; I see these things as sources of pride for myself, and milestones for me.*

Aware of his intellectual capital and linguistic competence, Ali, without any reservation, mentions his strengths which help him excel in his professional life:

*My English was great to begin with, and excuse me for saying that again, because I’m not one of those who consider false modesty to be a virtue. I don’t go about saying, ‘oh I know nothing!’ I’m not like that; if I’m good at something then that’s the way it is.*

5.1.4.2 Job motivation

Ali has seen the vicissitudes of fortune in his life. Compelled by his circumstances he started looking for a job quite early in his life. With his high proficiency in English and sound American accent, becoming an English language teacher was a natural choice for him. However, as an underpaid profession, teaching did not hold any special glamour for him and
he ever felt sorely disgruntled at the way his life had been in Pakistan. But with his job in a university in the rich Gulf country, he has begun to feel satisfied and relaxed:

My proficiency in language forced me into this channel, into this method of earning bread and butter, and I was cursing myself every day. From a person who hated his job I have now converted into being a person who, it’s hard to say likes his job...because up until 2010 I was still under the condition that I was cursing myself every day for choosing this profession, but I don't anymore...partly because of our organizational setup, our job is relaxing, and just like a doctor who has a well-paying, relaxing job, he’ll be satisfied with himself. Speaking to you, I’m getting confused right now. Why is it that I’m satisfied now? Is it because my job is easy, or have I evolved professionally? That would be an interesting thing to chew on and think about more actually.

Being personally aware of Ali’s status as one of the finest TESOL teachers at the ELI, I could not resist asking him about the source of his extraordinary motivation for professional excellence as he looked down upon his profession for quite some time and still is not sure about the reasons for his recent satisfaction:

Well, I don’t really know where it [motivation] stems from...I don’t know if I’m really a motivated person, I want to do well, or is it because there’s some kind of insecurity, I don’t want to lose my job, I just want to make myself so indispensable, so that I don’t have to keep begging people all my life, and always have to look over my shoulder and be worried about my job. I just want to create a situation where I am the one who is sought after...So I just want to have something which will give me some kind of job security, really.

No matter whether his true source of motivation is the threat of losing the job or a sense of professional responsibility or a passion for excellence, he does possess a genuine flair for teaching. He believes that context plays a big role in boosting his passion for hard work. If he finds a situation really conducive to teaching, he experiences a gush of motivation for quality work. He compares his hard work in a likable situation to playing chess or watching sumo wrestling – two of his favourite pastimes:

For me it’s hard to describe, because this flair, this passion is not always there, sometimes it comes out in a burst and everything goes according to plan. When I get a group of students that I enjoy spending time with then that person comes out in me, and I find myself preparing a lesson for 3 hours and enjoying it; it’s not hard work. I would rather do this than, let’s just say, do something enjoyable like watching Sumo or playing chess, I would rather prepare this lesson, I don’t consider that to be work, I enjoy doing that, but that thing does not always click for me. I’m like an animal which has a sex drive once a year. I go into these massive work drives every once in a while,
but I know one thing though, that these work drives are defined by what’s happening around me, professionally, it’s not totally random.

5.1.4.3 Future perspective

Ali’s extraordinary achievements as a TESOL professional have not made him in the least complacent about his professional development. His desire for further improvement and growth as a TESOL professional is fully alive, and he intends to continue his process of deep reflection on his professional micro-teaching skills and fine-tune them. To that end, he has given careful thought to his plans for further professional development. He plans to devour the vast literature on teaching various language skills and design high quality lesson plans, which he will implement in classes with his most competent colleagues observing and giving feedback on his teaching. Besides honing his pedagogical skills, Ali desires to teach students at postgraduate level or become an outstanding teacher trainer in his field:

I either see myself as a [teacher] trainer, or I see myself teaching at a, maybe doctoral level is a little too ambitious, but at the Masters level; but then again, that would also be a taster and either I’ll find my thing and I’ll stick to it, or maybe I’m just destined to be a professional migrant, I’ll just keep going here and there, like a professional tourist. Let’s see where time takes me.

5.1.4.4 Task perception

Task perception comprises at least two aspects of Ali’s PLD experience: 1) learning as being and becoming a professional and 2) learning happening in specific experiences and situations.

5.1.4.4.1 Being and becoming a teacher

Professional self-awareness

Ali is well aware of the requisite knowledge and skills of a language teacher. While reflecting on his early days in the profession, he highlighted his strengths and limitations as a language teacher by admitting the fact that despite his near-native proficiency in English, as a TESOL teacher he was quite unsuccessful. Recognizing his inadequacies, he decided to develop his professional skills:

My language proficiency was that of a near native speaker but professionally as a teacher I was an absolute dunce; I didn’t know anything. I’d just go in front of the students and show off by speaking impeccable English, tell them a story or something; but there’s so much more that goes into teaching, into teaching them how to cover a text even, as pre-reading activity, while, post, and reading between the lines, different levels of questions of literal comprehension, so many things are involved, but that was non-existent for me…sooner or later, with the number of bombed lessons that one
sees, it’s then that you actually see your own reality, and that’s when I felt the need to develop myself professionally.

Context-specificity and culture-sensitivity of pedagogy

As Ali understands that no book offers 100% accurate, ready-made solutions to pedagogical problems, it is the teacher’s job to understand, reflect and adapt the contents of a course book according to their contextual and pedagogical requirements. With his firm commitment to the course objectives, he goes an extra mile and develops additional materials that are more context-specific and culture-sensitive, and sufficiently make up for the deficiencies in the course book:

This professional context makes me study things in a different way, it makes me create extra material, I have created a lot of extra material in the recent past, because the more I think about achieving the objective, the more imperfect the Headway book looks to me, not because it’s imperfect but because of the context, the Saudi students. It is supposed to be Middle Eastern version but they didn’t change anything, they just put hijabs on some women and they deleted the beach pictures, but academically the content is the same.

Autodidacy (Self-learning) and reflection

Ali has no teachers as his role models or someone who inspired him to excel in life or his career. While emphasising the fact that whatever he has achieved professionally is mainly due to his personal effort and self-learning, he strongly believes the mainstay of his continued professional development is his ability and inclination for reflection-in/on-action:

For me, most of my in-service learning, if I were to use one word here, I would say autodidact. I’m an autodidact, whatever I did, whatever qualifies as professional development, you see, because one of your favourite writers, Day, he defines professional development as all the activities and all the things that are done consciously for some kind of improvement, loosely that’s what he said…So, for me, to always look at my professional learning and to see where I was yesterday and where I am right now, I think that I did most of it myself…When I look at all the things that I’ve done consciously, to bring some kind of improvement in myself, not a lot of them have been successful; perhaps one thing brought some kind of improvement in me and that’s reflection…when I do a lesson, that’s not the end of it, depending on the kind of lesson of course, not each and every lesson, but depending on the topic and the kind of interaction involved, I think about it, and I think about it a lot, and I ask myself a hundred different questions in a hundred different ways, about why something happened, what should have happened; so this thinking, this reflection has been my main pillar, it’s been like professional development for me.
The reflective model

Wallace (1991) described three models of professional development: the Craft Model, the Applied Science Model, and the Reflective Model. In the Craft Model, a novice teacher learns the tools of his trade from a master-teacher. Referring to Wallace’s (1991) Craft Model, Ali gave an interesting description of his reflective process:

*I think to myself that this is one model [Craft Model] that could work for me actually, if such a thing [master-teacher] existed, but in the absence of this I created a fantasy master for myself, and that fantasy master teacher was myself, and I would talk to myself; this whole process of long reflection was not always one way, it was as if two people inside me were talking to each other, one part of me would ask a question, whatever was in my mind, and the other part was responsible for providing the answer, and that other part was the one which did all the thinking, and which went out and did the literature review, and which let all the other stuff to simmer and come up with an answer.*

In the absence of a real master-teacher to guide his steps, Ali based the process of his reflection on the lines of the craft model by developing a master-apprentice relationship with his own alter ego. He also alludes to his social circumstances and deficient work contexts which might also have affected his pursuits of professional development and led to waste of some of his time and talent:

*It [Craft Model] became the reflection model because of the absence of the real master…So, having my own alter ego or my doppelganger act as my master, I wasted a lot of time, because my alter ego was myself, that alter ego did not have a lot of knowledge. If that other party had been a real person with 20-30 years of experience, that person would have helped me save a lot of time.*

Learning in the community of practice: Role of colleagues in PD

In the current context in KSA, Ali has experienced some real professional growth due to interaction with the well-qualified faculty at the ELI. However, he emphasises that any likelihood of learning in a community of practice is contingent upon the capability and competence of its members:

*You can only learn if you’re surrounded by people mentally your peers and this is the first time in my life I’m surrounded by people who are professionally my peers…In the current situation I have had one on one discussions with my colleagues and sometimes observing their lessons, I really saw a lot of benefit and potential for growth for myself…if I get a chance where I am academically involved with my colleagues, once again, when I say colleagues, they were my peers, and people who are mentally at the same level as myself, I could learn a lot from them.*
Reading for professional development

Ali has a flair for reading, and it is his starting point for gaining depth and grounding in any topic in the field of TESOL. Being highly selective in his choice of books, like Bacon (1597/1908:234), he seems to be aware that ‘some books should be tasted, some devoured, but only a few should be chewed and digested thoroughly’:

There are some writers, very few, that I respect, and reading their works I get the feeling that this person is actually trying to say something; he did not write this book just because his publisher told him to write because they had to compete with a rival publisher…but if I see a book by a writer whom I respect, someone like Kathleen Bailey, or James Dean Brown, some of these writers that you feel as if they are Penny Ur; you feel that these people are talking to you and saying something sensible, then I consult their books.

He also has a specific approach to conducting a literature review on a chosen topic. He has articulated the process of his learning using some metaphors which reflect the rarity of his learning process:

One can never expect to get any direct answers from them [books] of course, no book is a ready-made recipe of answers anyway. I would say, perhaps, this is my research background coming in, I do some kind of a literature review of that topic if I can, very brief one, and then all of that goes inside and I let it simmer; at this point I move back, and I put myself in auto pilot, and then the concoction cooks till I have a eureka moment. Sometimes I grab the bull by the horns and find the answers that I’m looking for, and sometimes, I reach a cul-de-sac, and then I close the chapter and say to myself forget it for now, you’ll be frustrated, we’ll live to fight another day, I still have some professional years left in me.

5.1.4.4.2 Learning in specific experiences and situations

Peer observations: A transformative experience

For Ali, his stint as a member of the PDU, where he had the opportunity to observe teachers and give them detailed feedback on their observed lesson, he experienced tremendous professional growth. Hence, he believes peer observations as a highly effective way of rapid professional growth:

Peer observation for me is the key, or perhaps the best, and the most realistic way of learning, because when we talk about observations done by trainers, or whatever, those kind of situations are rare in real life. When you look at it at the institutional level, how many times is your institution going to observe you, one or twice…Peer observation is there for the rest of your life; it depends on what kind of colleagues you have, and what kind of understanding you have with your colleagues.
Based on what he learnt in the PDU, he considers his time in the PDU as the most rewarding period in his professional life. During his work as a PDU member, Ali went for the ‘Trainer Development: A Course for Teacher Educators’ offered at Norwich Institute, UK, which further raised his awareness about professional development and training in TESOL. As a result, he was able to engage in deep discussions with his colleagues after observing their classes, which led to great improvement in his own pedagogical skills:

When I left it [PDU] and went back to the class, in module four last year, I was like a different human being and I could not recognize myself anymore…that tenure of 10 months and many observations with the PDU’s brought about a complete metamorphosis in me; different people and different approaches and so many different teachers that I observed, teachers much older than me…After speaking to them and inquiring about their teaching beliefs in depth…their thought processes, and what they were thinking when they prepared those things. So, with that cornucopia and treasure of information inside my head…once I went back to teach inside the class myself, I was in a much better position to be a language teacher…I think after teaching [one module] I said to myself I can teach any language course anywhere in the world under any circumstances.

5.1.5 Subjective Educational Theory

5.1.5.1 Personal theory of bonding with students

With his persistent efforts, Ali has developed a knack for building a strong bond with his students. For this purpose, he gives his students utmost respect by appreciating their individuality and uniqueness as human beings. Once teacher-student rapport is developed, students usually feel at ease and develop better mental focus in the class:

You have to bring their [students’] affective filter down; they have to relax inside the classroom, and this is what I want to achieve every time I walk into a class; and that’s why for the first 2 or 3 days whatever module I’m teaching I spend time having a one to one relationship with each student, and somehow after a few days, that process helps me create a bond with the students which, let’s just say, I find satisfying…I consider my ability to create a bond with the students to be really important, because I don’t think I’ve had situations in my current teaching context where I requested a student to pay attention, or if they are trying to disturb the class in one way or another, I would just say a word and they would apologize and really be involved in the class. This is only possible if I created a bond with the students.

5.1.5.2 Seeking evidence of student learning

Ali demands a lot from himself whether it is lesson planning, material development or lesson delivery in the class. He endeavours to seek evidence of student learning to ensure students’
sense of achievement in his lessons. To that end, he has devised a mechanism where he pastes the final task of a lesson on the wall as a key goal for the students to achieve in that particular lesson. In this way, the final task doubles as a source of motivation for the students and an evidence of student learning for the teacher:

*I really focus on a lot about student achievement…That is why I have devised a system where the last bit, the last activity, the last exercise which is really the proof of learning, that one I paste on the wall in my classroom, not only as a reminder for myself that I've taught them something, but this is also a kind of mechanism that I use to motivate the students, so when I tell them that I'm going to paste it on the wall, they become really serious and do it. Proof of learning is always there one way or the other for me, but…I had this system of the final activity which is the proof of their [students'] achievement.*

5.1.5.3 Student level-appropriate scaffolding for pedagogical success

Ali believes what may be a hopeless pedagogical situation prima facie, he ventures to make it fruitful for his students through level-appropriate development and scaffolding of resource materials. While formulating a lesson’s objectives in light of the Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs), he sometimes finds most of the activities in the course book as insufficient to achieve the specific SLOs, which makes him develop fresh, more relevant resource material to accomplish his lesson objectives:

*When I look at a lesson, and I look at my students, my adaptation skills kick in…and my adaptation skills help me to bring down scaffolding, and all this stuff helps me to bring these exercises down to the level of the students…and I ask myself what I can do here, and it's not rare but sometimes for one SLO if there are 5, 6, 7, or 8 different exercises in the student book and the workbook, I reject all of them, and I create everything from scratch from myself.*

5.1.5.4 Teacher’s adaptive skills

Referring to the Professional Learning Community (PLC) that I established at the ELI for enhancing teachers’ professional effectiveness, Ali underscores his point of view about the role of teachers’ competence and capability in effective teaching and student learning. Assigning a pivotal position to the teacher in the whole scheme of teaching and learning, he believes that a teacher’s adaptive skills can turn an otherwise hopeless pedagogical situation into a success story:

*Look at our own context here, Headway [the course book] comes up short in so many different ways, and when you made that Professional Learning Community and all these teachers were coming up with these massive amounts of worksheets, why was the need felt, because when the teacher is good that teacher will come up with all kinds of resources, You could have the best designed course in the world, but if the teacher*
is crap, nothing could happen really, and vice versa, on the other hand, conversely if the teacher is good and the course is crap, then the teacher will come up with material...to get to the students, what needs to be delivered to them; so, for me, the key things would be the teachers.

5.1.6 Additional Factors in Professional Learning and Development

5.1.6.1 Contextual affordances in the Saudi context

Ali is quite aware of the role of context in supporting and sustaining teachers’ PLD. Recalling his time as a teacher in Pakistan, he lamented that in the Pakistani context, professional growth is minimal and teachers do not feel the urge or push for going out of their comfort zone and developing professionally. Ali also believes that at his workplaces in Pakistan, he was like a figure among the cyphers; whereas in the Saudi context, at the ELI, he found numerous learning opportunities and experienced massive professional development. Ali considers it a place with a lot of professional benefits:

[The current] context at least gives you the motivation to do whatever you want to do on your own, in your own style; whether it’s a technical course, whether it’s about talking to your colleagues, whether it’s about creating a professional learning community, or whether it is about more, deep reflection...I really think that the ELI had a massive role to play, without actually doing any professional development program, just the program itself, the ELI and all the things included in it, really helped me in many ways...On the other hand, in the previous context, I wasn’t motivated to do anything, because there was no incentive for me, I don’t mean any monetary incentive but any kind of incentive, nobody cares, so just let it go. I think perhaps, and this idea hasn’t really matured itself in my head, but speaking to you right now, this could be the single most important factor, not necessarily is, but could be, the most important factors in people’s professional development.

5.1.6.2 High expectations of diligence

It probably fell to his lot that wherever he worked, people had very high expectations from him and he had to live up to those expectations, which as a result led to his tremendous professional growth. In Pakistan, he had to work really hard because he was being paid the highest salary in that school:

You always react to what you are expected to do...As the head of the English department I was expected to do many things which I had not done before and I was supposed to be the best teacher there and the head of the English department...I was pushed to do things and I was expected to do things, but all these expectations really had me scraping the bottom of the bucket to come up with different ideas...they were giving me an outrageously good salary according to the wage structure of that
school...so I had to come up with stuff, so that was also one of the factors, high expectations from me.

In the above narrative, I have attempted to string together some of the key events, ideas and experiences that Ali shared from his learning biography. In the next section, I present the key aspects of my second participant’s learning biography that are relevant to the current research.

5.2 Sarmad: A learning Biography

5.2.1 Childhood, Schooling and Post-Secondary Education

Sarmad was born in a small town of the Punjab province of Pakistan in 1981. Growing up in a humble home, he had a strong interaction with the people residing in his immediate neighbourhood. With total freedom to move around unsupervised in the vicinity, he spent a greater part of his childhood playing cricket in the street outside his house. Although, he believes too much freedom can cause the child to go off the track; nevertheless, in his case, it had a salubrious effect on his being making him grow into a strong, independent and decisive individual:

_In my case this [freedom] had a very positive effect because I started making my own decisions from the very beginning, and it gave me a sense of accomplishment and I started feeling confident that yes I can do that, so I might not need somebody’s decisions to be imposed upon me; I think that was a key point in my early life._

Sarmad completed his early education in a government school where rote learning was the order of the day and modern methods of teaching and learning were unknown. Following the old dictum, spare the rod and spoil the child, every teacher in his school, irrespective of his teaching prowess, would freely use the baton on the children. Motivated partly by the fear of punishment and partly by the exhortations of his mother, Sarmad stood first in the 10th grade, and his name, among those of the school’s high-achievers, still graces the honour board in the principal’s office.

Fascinated as he was by the glitz and glamour of city life, Sarmad decided to get admission in a renowned college away from his home in a big city of Pakistan. His father did not approve of his decision to leave the native town, as he could hardly afford to pay for his education in a big city. But Sarmad turned a deaf ear to his father’s requests and remonstrations and decided to go his own way even though the financial odds being stacked against him. He, however, considering his father’s desire, resolved to become a medical doctor. Therefore, he opted for pre-medical stream in the college. Coming from an ordinary Urdu-medium school, he faced an enormous challenge at the college in the shape of English language, which was the medium of instruction for pre-medical subjects. Consequently, with
low proficiency in English and lack of aptitude for science, he could not achieve the marks required for admission in a medical college.

As Sarmad realized he was not tailored for science subjects, he decided to explore his talent in Humanities. For his two-year ordinary bachelors, he chose English literature and Persian literature as his majors. Owing to his growing interest in literature, he was eventually able to offset the challenges posed by English language at this level. With some extra coaching in English and a notch better learning environment than the previous one, he was able to get through his bachelors without much difficulty. Although he had a feeling that the bachelors programme was not well organized and standard of education was quite low, he was happy with his achievement thus far. In fact, his greatest asset of that period was the development of his reading habit. During those two years, he read voraciously and was able to go through a wide range of literature available in Urdu. Thereafter, armed with a life-long penchant for reading and a BA degree under his belt, he was all set for his two-year masters in English literature and language.

5.2.2 Professional Education
Sarmad sat in the entrance exam for Masters in English Language and Linguistics at a renowned university in Pakistan. As the required level of English language to pass the test was quite high, he was not able to secure a seat in the programme. Determined as he was for the masters in English, he got down to improving his English language skills to the optimum level. After around three months of intensive language learning, mainly focusing on reading and writing skills, he was able to get admission in the masters in the next term. Thus was laid the foundation for his career as a teacher — a career most probable and least competitive for someone in Pakistan with a master degree in English. However, it was not a smooth sailing for Sarmad. On day one in the new class, he came to the terrible realization that he could not speak English — a common problem faced by the students coming from government schools and colleges — even though he had gained reasonably good command of English reading and writing skills:

_When I came into my Masters class, I saw different people, who came from very prestigious institutions of Islamabad and Rawalpindi, and some other parts of the country as well. They were very fluent in English…when our first teacher came into our class and asked us to introduce ourselves; it was, you know, a dreadful experience for me because I had no idea how to make sentences in English…I hadn't spoken English at all till that time…and I saw my classmates talking so fluently about their achievements and hobbies and interests, and I was just staring at their faces, with a scare._

That was a moment of crisis for him, as he had to decide whether he would continue in his MA studies or quit. He knew if he wanted to complete his masters, he had to work hard.
Especially, he had to improve his spoken English. He deliberately started looking for friends who were confident and had good spoken English. With his determination to grab every possible opportunity, where he could practice speaking English, he came across a class fellow, who came from Gilgit (a city in the North of Pakistan) and mainly used English for communication as he knew little Urdu. He was looking for someone to share his hostel room. For Sarmad, it was a Godsend, and he quickly consented to be his roommate. In this way, he found an opportunity to speak English all the time when he was in his room. In brief, Sarmad passed his MA English Language and Linguistics with flying colours. Right after his first masters, he completed another, a practice-based master's in TEFL as a part-time student, to gain further grounding in microteaching skills. In 2007, four years into the teaching profession, as a man determined to learn and grow in his career, Sarmad began his MPhil Applied Linguistics (a prelude to PhD in Pakistan) in a Pakistani university as a part-time student. Never complacent about his professional competence, his in-service learning continued afterwards, and in 2011, after a few months of his teaching in a foreign context, he went to UK for Cambridge CELTA. Passionate as he always is about his continued professional development, the moment he attained a bit of financial prosperity, he got himself enrolled in doctorate in TESOL at a University in the UK in 2014.

5.2.3 Professional Career

From the outset of his studies for the masters, Sarmad was clear that teaching was going to be his profession. Towards the end of his masters, Sarmad got his first job in a private secondary school as an English teacher. It might be a bit surprising; he got the job merely because of his general knowledge and personal traits. He was not asked a single question during the interview regarding his ability to teach or his knowledge of English language. As he started his teaching career, his knowledge of language teaching was mainly based on his experience as a student. Being a novice, he faced numerous challenges, some due to his outbursts of fiery temperament inherited from his school teachers; others because of his inexperience and lack of proper training, but somehow through trial and error he was able to manage his teaching affairs well. Three months in his first job, on one fine morning, he was shocked to receive his job termination letter from the school principal. To his utter dismay, he came to know that he was actually fired on suspicion of being part of a group opposed to the principal. Hence, he was a victim of school politics he had no affiliation with whatsoever.

After working as an honorary teacher at another school for a month, he found a paid job at a college in Islamabad. In the next three years, he switched from one position to another in search of better future and worked at different institutions as a full-time or part-time teacher. Eventually, he found a decent job as a lecturer in a public sector university in Pakistan, where he worked for about five years before moving to his current position of English language instructor at a famous university in Saudi Arabia. At his current workplace, an
English Language Institute (ELI) of the Saudi university, he has already earned the reputation of an excellent teacher, and among his over 220 colleagues at the ELI, he has carved a place for himself among the top ranking teachers. Undoubtedly, he commands unreserved respect of his seniors, colleagues, and students alike for his professional expertise and diligence.

5.2.4 Sarmad’s Professional Self-Understanding

5.2.4.1 Self-image and self-esteem

Sarmad’s lesson observers have used phrases like ‘an excellent teacher’ and ‘a highly competent teacher’, to appreciate his professional knowledge and skills (Lesson Observation Reports). His annual faculty evaluation reports declare him as someone ‘committed to professional development’. Sarmad seems to have enjoyed a great self-image since his early days in the teaching profession, which has, over the years, built his confidence in his abilities as an excellent language teacher. The positive feedback from his students, class observers, and colleagues has led to high self-esteem:

Well, when I was teaching at the National University…where I taught for five years as an English lecturer, we used to have a lot of problems…but the only achievement that we had were the students’ remarks, like, ‘teacher! You did very well or we are happy that you are our teacher’. So the real achievement was student satisfaction and nothing can be compared with that. A teacher needs nothing except that his students are saying at the end, “you are a great teacher”. So this is what I believe is the greatest asset in my life.

However, maintaining a strong professional self-image in the Gulf, especially KSA, as a non-native TESOL professional, is more challenging and complex, where the ability of non-native English teachers is not easily acknowledged by the administration and the students:

I was not born in an English speaking country, and the language that I teach is not my mother tongue. So, in this context, it’s very hard for me sometimes to face certain people, because they feel that a person whose language is not English, cannot teach English. This is a misconception that exists and I encounter it in different situations. But still, that perception is not long-lasting…when they come to know that language teaching is more about practicing the skills than knowing the language…if you are performing well in your particular situation, people can’t say you shouldn’t be in this particular field; rather they accept and appreciate you, and commend you on doing a great job. So I personally feel that now, to some extent, I have developed a kind of identity with which I’m quite satisfied.

Sarmad’s pursuit of professional excellence and practice of relevant specialist skills result in high quality teaching, which his superiors and students both acknowledge and appreciate.
Hence, such a strong feeling of satisfaction, if not a sense of achievement, bestows high level of self-esteem on him.

5.2.4.2 Job motivation

Initially, there was no particular motivation for Sarmad to become a language teacher except that it was probably the easiest profession to join in Pakistan. Although an underpaid profession, education is the biggest sector in terms of job availability:

*The reason that I became a teacher after passing my MA was that it was the obvious profession I had in my mind at that time because teaching was the easiest way to start with in our society. You don't need any particular courses, any particular pre-service trainings...So I thought that the realistic aim should be that I should see where I can find more opportunities; where I could work and earn some money.*

Another factor in his job motivation is the influence of some good teachers. In fact, he had his fair share of good and not-so-good teachers. He believes as most of our actions are based on our experiences, the influence of our teachers, either good or bad, on our professional behaviour and practices is inevitable. Some of his spontaneous outbursts of anger during his early days in the profession, he unconsciously picked up from his irascible school teachers. However, later in his student life, he had teachers who left an indelibly positive impression on his consciousness. They were not only great teachers in terms of command on their subject and teaching style, but also had pleasant personalities with sophisticated manners, which probably got them the respect and love of their pupils:

*During my Masters there were a couple of teachers who were very influential because of their language and their teaching style; they inspired me. One of them was...an excellent teacher...his accent was fabulous; the way he used to teach was amazing. He was always cool and calm. I admired him in every respect and...learned so many things from his teaching style; and then there was another teacher...she was also a wonderful teacher and I really liked the way she used to teach...The way they carried themselves was also very impressive. They were very sophisticated and they really took great care of their appearance.*

After coming to KSA, Sarmad continued his journey towards professional excellence to ensure smooth continuity of the job and recurrent renewal of the job contract. He believes that although a negative one, the threat of losing a job is also one of the strong motivators for professional development. Besides the fear of losing his job, he is also aware that he needs to develop for various other reasons such as better job opportunities in the future and his professional responsibility towards his students who always expect to have a qualified teacher. Hence, multiple factors impelled Sarmad to be tenacious about his continued professional development:
If you ask me about one particular factor then I can say that it was the threat, the threat of losing my job that really triggered this interest…CELTA was an enchanting word at that time so I went for that; but I equally knew that this was the opportunity where I would learn so many new things; so I personally feel that…I needed to develop, I needed to improve so that I could get better opportunities in the future, and also, when I have chosen this profession then my students expect me to have the best skills that are required for this particular field.

5.2.4.3 Future perspective

While talking about his PLD journey, Sarmad opined that the professional development journey has no final destination; the road here will always be under-construction. With his passion for lifelong learning, he leaves no stone unturned in grabbing any opportunity that could be useful for his professional development. Never complacent about his command of the subject and his knowledge of the profession, he believes he has to vigorously continue the process of updating his professional knowledge and skills. For that purpose, Sarmad studies key texts and latest books in the field, reads research papers and articles in the relevant journals, and attends conferences, workshops, webinars and online courses. These endeavours have also played an enabling role in his learning and professional development. He considers these means as effective ways to keep oneself updated about latest developments in the field and also find specific guidance on areas of key interest or concern:

It was a rough road I was travelling on and I reached a particular point. Still, I feel this is not the destination, this is not the ultimate goal; I have to learn many things. I look back and see that I still don’t know a lot of things about the field, I’m still learning…I believe that if one stops learning that’s the death of that professional; so for me every passing day, every passing minute comes up with certain things to learn…there are different ways that I generally utilize to know something new. The first source of course is the books that are published in the field…second is the research papers published in journals like TESOL quarterly…The third thing is that I go to different workshops, for example, I have been regularly attending KSAALT conferences where different presenters share their experiences…Along with that I also opt for some online courses. I have already registered on Cambridge English, which is a course related to language awareness for English language teachers…I think that this is a kind of profession that never lets you get bored; it always keeps you alive because you are always learning something new.

Notwithstanding his current ‘teacher par excellence’ status in the university, Sarmad had a long-cherished desire for doing doctorate in TESOL. A few months after I interviewed him for my research, he got admission at a British University to earn his doctorate in TESOL:
Though I wasn’t sure but I used to say that I will do PhD in my life in this particular field, and the purpose of doing PhD is two-fold: one is, it’s essential for my survival in this field, back in my country; and the second thing is, it’s also part of my life vision that I should get maximum knowledge not only about this field but life in general…I should know that why I am doing a particular practice, what’s the rationale behind this, why is it working and sometimes why doesn’t it work; like, I should know these minute details behind the practices.

5.2.4.4 Task perception

Task perception comprises at least two aspects of Sarmad’s PLD experience: 1) learning as being and becoming a professional and 2) learning happening in specific experiences and situations.

5.2.4.4.1 Being and becoming a teacher

Context-specificity: Understanding the unwritten rules of the context

For Sarmad, the teaching context is at the heart of the TESOL pedagogy. Not only the teaching approaches need to be reviewed in accordance with the context, a teacher has to realign his professional behaviour with students from a different culture and context. To be successful in a new context, a teacher has to learn the ‘unwritten rules’, the dynamics of that place. Otherwise, his survival in this context will be at stake and he could lose his job sooner rather than later:

Context is extremely important, it defines you all the time; because you can’t use the same techniques, the same strategies and same methods of teaching in every context; no, not at all. I still remember when I was teaching in a university in Pakistan, there the context and culture was totally different as compared to the context I’m teaching in here. Here, the teacher is no more an authority, the whole and sole authority. Here the teacher is a kind of facilitator. Same is the case with students; a student doesn't mean that they are submissive; of course they are very respectful, but they have their own freedom; you can't cross a particular limit, you have to understand the limit where you can go and where you can't; if you don't understand, you can't exist in this context… for a new teacher who has taught in a particular context and comes to teach here, that person has to learn so many unwritten rules on how to teach, how to work here if he wants to be a successful teacher, otherwise it would be a horrible place for him.

Culture-sensitive teaching

Sarmad believes that an important part of teacher development is the awareness of culture-sensitivity in teaching practice; therefore, a teacher must learn and learn quickly about the cultural sensitivities of their teaching context. Not only that, a teacher should also carefully consider them in the choice of their resource materials:
Here [in the Saudi context] you have restrictions, like I played a video a few days back and there was background music and one of the students came to me and said that music wasn’t allowed in Islam, and he requested me not to play the videos in the class; so I have to rethink about these things, though the video was ok; this is culturally sensitive, so I have to rethink and next week change my plans.

Reflection: Teaching as ‘playing tennis’

Being a fine teacher, Sarmad endeavours to execute his lessons with finesse. Therefore, he always has lesson-specific personal aims inside his classrooms, which keep him focused on lesson objectives and help him achieve those objectives to the best of his ability. He is well aware that the best way to deepen his understanding of teaching practices is cultivation of a habit of regular reflection. Hence to keep refining his personal teaching aims and maximizing their achievement, he indulges in the process of reflection:

I play tennis so I compare my teaching to playing tennis, because both are skills that need constant reviewing, and if I can’t review my current practice then it’s not possible that I can make it better. In tennis if you play a bad shot, you have to review that to make it a better shot next time. The same rule applies to teaching, because everything that we are doing in class, it needs to be reviewed, and then it can be made better. Sometimes I take a voice recorder to class and later listen to it to see how I was doing in my class, how I was responding to the students’ questions; so this is how I keep on reflecting and thinking…then I read and share with friends how it could be made better. So, I keep on reflecting on my previous experiences, everyday experiences, and they give me hope to be better and better with the passage of time.

Flexible competence

Another probable factor in the extraordinary professional growth of Sarmad is his open-minded and flexible attitude which helps him adapt conveniently to any changing situation:

I have changed a lot throughout my professional career; so if I look back, the way I started and if I think now, there is a lot of change, and every part of that change is a success for me because this is how I see myself that not only have I become a reasonable teacher but I also a far better human being with the passage of time, because now I feel I have more patience, more tolerance as compared to the past.

Community of Practice: Role of colleagues in professional development

Sarmad has actively participated in communities of practice in his workplaces since the outset of his formal professional career. While teaching in Pakistan, dissatisfied with working conditions and the attitude of the administration, he feels lucky that he had a wonderful group of colleagues with whom he would engage with and discuss various issues of professional and pedagogical importance. He believes his discussions with his colleagues have always
been mutually beneficial and picking each other’s brains and sharing relevant ideas always help refine their teaching practices. He also thinks learning within the community of practice is a remarkable idea for developing professionally as it costs no money:

*My colleagues have been a great treasure; they have been like a guiding star for me throughout my professional career and I have learned so much from them. Otherwise, we did not have any other opportunities where we could develop, like opportunities generally available to people in developed countries, but my colleagues were always there and supported me, they were a remarkable bunch of people…Same is the case now [in KSA]; here I have some wonderful colleagues like you, who are always there to guide and help. One is not perfect all the time; you need somebody to give you feedback on your practices, on your efforts, so I believe that without good colleagues a true professional can never be an effective professional.*

**Participation in a TESOL Professional Learning Community**

While appreciating the role of his colleagues in general, Sarmad also highlights the tremendous professional benefits of his active participation in a TESOL Professional Community set-up by me (the researcher) at the ELI. Above all, the interdependent and collaborative nature of work in the PLC was a boon for his professional learning and practice:

*For me, sharing is the key idea. It motivates me to help and get help from other colleagues because this is the only way out that can lead us towards professional development and personal learning. I have shared my own collection of material and got the access to the material created by my colleagues…Indeed, participation contributed effectively to lessen my own isolation and professional loneliness…When you share things you learn, basically; and you also come across the weaknesses and strengths of your understanding about how well you understand a particular thing…So it’s the sharing that tells you [about the weaknesses of your ideas] and you have to rethink and reflect on them again…So I personally feel that sharing is wonderful and I feel I am more flexible in sharing ideas and learnt how to work interdependently. Even now if someone asks for any worksheets we made in the PLC, I simply share with them. I don’t feel any hesitation in sharing that. So I feel that this is a remarkable way to develop ourselves.*

Sarmad readily acknowledges that his participation in the PLC was a synergistic affair. With lots of material developed as a result of joint efforts of the PLC members, Sarmad experienced better efficiency in his work with less effort:

*I have seen the practical application of the idea of synergy. It was a great experience as the amount of time I used to spend for preparing my lessons reduced quite considerably…It was very rewarding for me because I have practiced many new things*
learnt from my colleagues. Particularly, the effective and better use of technology is a valuable addition to my own teaching methodology. In addition, I got the insight into utilizing the text book in a variety of ways. I can see, my goal to be an influential and effective teacher can easily be attained if this practice [participation in the PLC] continues in future.

On the one hand, he shared his excitement that new ideas and a variety of material had positive impact on his students’ class involvement and performance, and he expects better results in the final exam; on the other, he raised a concern about some members’ reluctance in sharing their ideas and materials probably due to criticism or ridicule from others. Sarmad highlights the significance of empathy and maturity on the part of the PLC teachers:

I realized that the new ideas have really brought positive changes in my class and my students get more involved in their lessons because all of us are teaching in the same context and experimenting different strategies. However, some of the members were passive and reluctant to contribute but their remarks during face to face discussions were quite useful…I think people should be given ample time to learn how to trust and share and they should feel secure while sharing and contributing rather than making fun of them on committing mistakes.  

Empathy is reflected in our efforts for a deep and genuine understanding of others’ feelings, and maturity is shown in our ability to express our feelings and convictions with courage balanced with consideration for the feelings and convictions of others.

5.2.4.4.2 Learning in specific experiences and situations: CELTA — A turning point

In professional life sometimes, a small step equals a big leap in terms of impact on the development of professional confidence. Sarmad started his career without any practical professional training. Although he made an effort to learn high quality teaching skills, but the most of what he studied was either theoretical or superficially practical. Therefore, his practical teaching knowledge before coming to KSA was primarily based on his prior teaching experience mostly gained through trial and error method. In KSA, he heard a lot about a popular course called CELTA. As soon as he completed his first academic term in the Saudi university, he went to the UK for doing this course. CELTA was a key experience for Sarmad: CELTA validated Sarmad’s practice, gave him a theoretical rationale for it, enhanced his confidence and gave him motivation to continue his PLD:

I went to Oxford, UK and did CELTA from the Cambridge Centre. That was the first time I realized that I’ve been a teacher for a long period of time but the things that I was doing, were ok, they were fine, but what was the rationale behind them, that I realized for the first time; then I got the confidence that yes I’m doing fine…Before CELTA I was doing so many things but was not sure if I was on the right track or whether it was an
established practice in ELT because I didn’t have any pre-service training…Along with that, I learned a lot of new things while I was there in CELTA, so it was a great change in my professional development.

5.2.5 Subjective Educational Theory

5.2.5.1 Context-specificity and culture-sensitivity

When it comes to pedagogy, Sarmad has his own peculiar set of ideas and practices to share. He considers deep understanding of the teaching context including culture, learning needs, and learning habits and styles of students as a prerequisite for effective teaching and learning. With authentic knowledge of the context, a teacher must develop and adapt their teaching materials according to the students’ interests:

Personally I feel that teachers must understand the context in which they are teaching. This is the way you learn how to perform well. If I don’t know about the ground I can’t perform well in that ground; so this is the ground you need to know, the different aspects of it. So the context is critical for the success of a teacher. The first thing is the context, which includes the culture of the students, their learning need, and learning habits and styles…The material you take into your class, how appropriate it is for your students, is it relevant.

5.2.5.2 Rapport building for student motivation

Sarmad also goes out of way to build a strong rapport with his students. To increase their motivation, he makes an optimum effort to make learning more relevant, stimulating and enjoyable for his students. He also tries to learn about their choices and personalise most of the tasks and activities by relating the subject matter to students’ everyday experiences and backgrounds. With a greater interaction with his students, Sarmad realized that there was disconnect between the course materials and the students personal interests which led to a lack of enthusiasm in their language learning. He also came to know, contrary to common perception, that the Saudi students were not dumb and lazy:

They were very talented, they were excellent singers, actors and sportsmen but they were not good at academics. The reason was that nothing interesting was there for them so I worked with them and it worked very well…they were not motivated at all and teachers didn’t bother about that but I decided that this wouldn’t be my way…So I started developing a kind of interaction with the students outside the class; we used to sit in the café and gossiped, and tried to investigate why they were not interested.

5.2.5.3 Empathy for the students

Sarmad believes that a teacher should be an embodiment of tolerance, patience and politeness. Job-related issues, workload, and domestic pressures should not impinge on his
teaching. For a teacher, a sense of humour is also one of their strengths which can help lighten the atmosphere of the class and bring students' affective filter down. On top of all these traits, the most important characteristic of an effective teacher is his empathy for his students:

A teacher must have empathy for his students; they are the ones sitting in class listening to you hoping to learn something, and be educated by you, and I'm the one whose task is to guide and facilitate them; so I need to understand their situation. I always make an effort to put myself in their shoes and try to look at things from their perspective, and then teach them in a way they feel more comfortable with...Put together, all these things contributed to my becoming a reasonable teacher in this context.

5.2.5.4 Teacher's integrity

For Sarmad, an important personal trait of a teacher is their firm attitude. Students should know that whatever the teacher says they really mean it. Hence, Sarmad strives to build the foundation of trust through his professional integrity, which leads to interpersonal relational growth between him and his students. Integrity, as defined by Covey (1989), is an interdependent reality where a person instead of being fickle or protean practises consistency and fairness by treating everyone in light of the same set of principles:

Some personal traits are also important for a teacher; like a teacher must be firm, whenever we set certain rules or talk about decorum, firmness is a very important thing. If I say something once, I must stick to that; it must be my last statement. It doesn’t mean that I should be stubborn. The whole idea is to be firm not stubborn. If the teacher is protean and vacillates, he won’t be taken seriously and will be pushed around...you have to be firm and consistent in certain policies. So this is the area that you establish your credibility in the very beginning of the module and then this credibility takes you till the end of the module with dignity.

5.2.6 Additional Factors in Professional Learning and Development

5.2.6.1 Contextual affordances

In the Pakistani context, where Sarmad received his pre-service education, and initial in-service training and experience, the government had scarcely earmarked any funds for teachers’ professional development. Worse, at the institutional level, there was no planning and facilitation for the professional development activities. In situations like these where people, especially in a developing country, have to work really hard to make both ends meet, teachers usually skip professional development activities. Sarmad was, however, self-motivated enough that despite his scanty resources, he still invested some of his time and money on his professional development. Anyhow, in KSA there were ample opportunities for
professional growth. A landmark development at Sarmad’s workplace in KSA was the establishment of a Professional Development Unit (PDU). The PDU organizes various activities for the professional development of the teachers. It has set up discussion groups which serve as professional learning communities where teachers come together and share their ideas and materials. It also organizes various workshops and seminars for continued professional development of the faculty.

5.2.6.2 Class observations: Annual Faculty evaluation

One of the key responsibilities of the PDU is to arrange lesson observations of teachers, which are a key component of teachers’ annual faculty evaluation at the ELI. Each observation has a pre-/post-observation meeting where a useful exchange of ideas takes place. These observations, although a bit coercive, are considered quite fruitful for professional development of the teacher:

*Classroom observations are providing people with an opportunity to simply test their mettle, they [PDU specialists] can come and see how well you are doing, and you can feel the pressure of that particular situation when someone is sitting and observing you. While preparing for our observations, we search and research; it is the time when all the schematic knowledge is activated and people refresh their knowledge. So I think this is another positive aspect on the part of PDU that they really provide you with a chance to do your best, and then you get the feedback where you get positive things as well. So this is wonderful because they have really put people on their toes in this particular context.*

After sharing the vital aspects of Sarmad’s learning biography above, I move on to depict the significant elements of Omer’s learning biography on the following pages.

5.3 Omer: A Learning Biography

5.3.1 Childhood, Schooling and Post-Secondary Education

Omer was born in 1983 in a small city of Southern Punjab in Pakistan. He grew up in a large family residing in a lower middle-class vicinity. His uncles, cousins and other members of his extended family lived together. That was an exciting place for the little Omer, and he had a lot of opportunities to play and have fun. However, born to a mother who was ill and diabetic, he did not enjoy good health in his early days. Diabetic treatment was expensive and not easily accessible for people with meagre income. As a consequence, with each passing day his mother’s health deteriorated, and when he was in grade 2 his mother passed away. He recalls that the two major factors that adversely affected his early life were the poor health and the eventual demise of his mother and the strict and unrelenting attitude of his father. Before long,
his father remarried and brought Omer's step-mother home. The loss of his mother in his early life and his father's stern disposition left him alone in his grief.

As soon as he recovered from the crisis, he started paying full attention to his studies. He went to a government primary school, where none of the modern-day facilities were available. Even the basic classroom furniture was non-existent. However, he recalls that he had a good teacher, who was quite strict but knew how to motivate the students. The memories of his early school years are hazy, but he reminisces that he was an outstanding student who stood first in his class from grade six to ten.

In the meanwhile, Omer developed fondness for Indian movies. He would watch movies, memorize the dialogues and perform in front of his extended family members, which in a way helped him develop his public speaking skills. His teachers in the high school soon realized that he could do well in debates and speeches. As a result, he got plenty of opportunities to participate in speech contests organized in various schools and win the ‘best speaker’ titles. His extraordinary success in curricular and co-curricular activities made him a favourite student, and he got a lot of attention from his teachers. The combined effect of all these contributed significantly to his academic growth. Domestic motivation to excel in his studies being next to nothing, though not mingy with due appreciation of his several teachers, Omer is particularly all praise for one of them whose encouragement made him feel important leading to his extraordinary success at school.

After his grade 10 (matric) exams, Omer was free for about 4 months, waiting for his exam results. He decided to make his free time worthwhile and do an English language course:

One day, I was walking down a road and I saw a banner that said ‘Free Seminar for English Language Courses’ and I thought, let’s try it, after all English was my favourite subject in school and I was fascinated by English since my early childhood. I went there and I saw a tall man speaking in fluent English, and I took him as a role model, and that was the moment when I made the decision to pursue English language and find my identity. I didn’t think at that time that English would be my career but I was sure of the fact that English was the only way to find my place in the society. I think that was a turning point in my life.

Omer returned home and persuaded his father to pay for his course in English language. He completed the English language course in one and a half month. The prominent feature of that course was the lessons on English pronunciation. Instantly, Omer became deeply interested in English phonemes, and phonetic transcriptions became his obsession and listening to BBC his only pastime.

A month or so later, passing his grade 10 with flying colours, Omer got admission in a local college in the science stream as his father wanted him to be an engineer. With his natural
inclination for English, he never had to make any extra effort for learning English. Rather, he enjoyed learning it without any coaching or teaching. However, subjects like Physics, Chemistry and Maths beset him with problems and he developed a kind of distaste for science, which led to his failure in three subjects in the year-one exam. He also thinks one reason for developing hatred for the science subjects was the poor quality of teaching in the college. Like an obedient and loving son, he worked really hard to live up to his father’s expectations, but he experienced insurmountable difficulty in coping with his science subjects. However, he got through his intermediate exams albeit with low grades. For his under-graduation, he switched his science subjects with Statistics and Double Maths and persuaded his father that he would go into business administration and do an MBA, which was also quite popular those days. Still he felt challenged by his new subjects and got the feeling that here, too, he was not in his element. Anyway he muddled through his bachelors with average grades.

During that period, he realized that his taste and talent lay in oratory and achieving astounding feats in the course of his 3-4 years of under graduation studies, he became one of the finest English debaters in the Punjab province:

_The biggest achievement was that I was one of the best English debaters of the entire Punjab region; I had about 12 trophies from different places like Karachi, Hyderabad, and Lahore; so that was something I consider a huge achievement._

5.3.2 Professional Education

With his poor performance in the undergraduate studies, Omer realized he should make his own decision about his further studies. He had had enough of the decision forced upon his life. Hence, he made up his mind about pursuing a master’s degree in English language despite the fact that people had a low opinion about degrees in arts as the most probable profession for such degree holders was teaching. However, with the decision that he will do what he really wants to do in life, his life took a pleasant turn and he felt so relieved. Omer got admission in Masters in English Linguistics and Literature, a degree with an element of TESOL exclusively offered at a renowned university in Pakistan. At last, Omer landed in a programme, which matched his talent and interests. He loved the phonetics and phonology course above all and spent hours after hours on the work of Peter Roach, the great English Phonologist. He also found the works of Penny Ur and Jeremy Harmer, particularly relevant to his interests as they in fact helped him grow into a good teacher in the early days of his career in TESOL.

5.3.3 Professional Career

Omer’s deep interest in English Phonetics and Phonology and his untiring efforts for developing the RP accent were extremely fruitful. His flawless southern British accent and his deep and distinctive timbre earned him a rewarding appreciation. He had his first real teaching experience on completion of his year one in MA English Linguistics and Literature
when he came back to his hometown to spend his long summer holidays. Hearing about a new private language institute in his city, he visited the place in search of a part-time job. To his delight, impressed by his accent, they offered him to teach IELTS preparatory classes for the next two months. Till that time, he had no training in micro teaching practice; it was a ‘trial and error’ kind of teaching. However, he was successful in getting a positive feedback from the students, which boosted his confidence in his abilities.

After completing his master’s degree, he was one of those ‘chosen ones’ who were offered a contract lecturer position at the same university. But due to his father’s serious illness, he decided to return home and spend time with his father whom, despite all his harshness, he so dearly loved. On his return home, he started looking for a teaching job. Contrary to his expectation, he immediately got a job offer with an extremely handsome salary from a private college. A country where a fresh government school teacher would get a monthly salary between 6-8 thousand rupees at that time, he got an offer with four times higher than that salary. He hardly completed a year in that job when he hit another milestone in his career and got selected as a language teacher for a US funded English language teaching project for underprivileged children in his city:

*After my Masters, because there was a demand for my skills, and in my city there weren’t a lot of qualified people for teaching English, I started teaching straight after my Masters. I consider myself really lucky because my brother who had an MBA degree was getting 20,000RS, and in my first job I was getting 30,000RS for only four hours of work a day, and at the end of the second job I was getting 70,000RS. That was a huge amount!*

While working for the US funded project, he also taught communication skills and general English to Master level students at the local government university as a part-time lecturer. Two years into his second job, in 2010, he got a lucrative offer from a university in Saudi Arabia, which he happily accepted. Like his previous workplaces, his talent and abilities are highly valued in his current workplace in KSA. He is a member of the Professional Development Unit (PDU), which inducts the *highly effective* teachers with the best classroom observation reports and annual faculty evaluations. His passion for professional excellence has led him to further polish his teaching skills. Hence he completed Cambridge CELTA in 2013. Presently, he is working on his third module of Cambridge DELTA with a future aim to earn a doctorate in TESOL from some reputed university in the UK or USA.

### 5.3.4 Omer’s Professional Self-Understanding

#### 5.3.4.1 Self-image and self-esteem

A professional development specialist after observing Omer’s lesson wrote in his post-observation report: *‘A bright young star at the ELI has just been discovered. The instructor*
has been teaching for over five years and it clearly shows that he has worked hard to become the positive and effective teacher he is.’ Omer’s annual faculty evaluation reports are interspersed with phrases like ‘delighted to witness [Omer’s] exceptional commitment to our ELI’, ‘demonstrates high standards of professionalism’, and ‘makes outstanding contribution to core areas’. As mentioned earlier, the director of the ELI regarded his extraordinary achievement in learning English language as worthy of a research study. Such a positive self-image reflected back from the top boss, professional development specialist, and other senior colleagues indeed gave a boost to Omer’s confidence in his abilities generating high levels of self-esteem. Considering his strong professional credentials, he was inducted into the PDU:

Being at this age and having gained all this experience, I consider myself lucky to be a member of the Professional Development Unit here at my university. I observe teachers and I give them feedback and I work as a mentor, so that’s a milestone for me...I've got so much respect from the community and the university...I enjoyed respectable standing in my reports, my formal observation reports, that certifies that I’m on the right track and an effective teacher.

His phenomenal professional growth and success at such a young age gives him a sense of satisfaction and happiness:

My journey was upwards, I don't think there were any downs. The way I started from a job in a private college, then getting into projects, then getting to teach in a university, then coming here, so my move is upwards, my graph is going upwards. This is what makes me happy and satisfied...I feel like I've got my goal and this is the profession where I'd like to spend my life in. It is also my interest and hobby, not only my career. It's something I always dreamt of which came true, and I'm absolutely satisfied.

5.3.4.2 Job motivation

Omer’s fondness for English and British accent and his aversion to science subjects catalysed his entry into the language teaching profession. He believes if he had not come into language teaching profession, life would have been meaningless for him. His deep interest in and personal motivation for learning the English language was the mainstay of his life, which on the one hand paved the way for his entry into the field of TESOL; on the other hand led to his meteoric rise as a highly effective TESOL professional at his workplace. However, he feels, in addition to his personal motivation, inspiration from his teachers, university environment and availability of opportunities were also important factors which influenced his choice of profession, and passion for growth and excellence in his teaching practice:

[English] was the only motivation I had in my life to survive. Otherwise, there was no reason for me to survive. It motivated me to do more and more...I think up to Masters it
was all my personal efforts. I just had my 44 phonemes to play with, and I would transcribe anything I saw written, for instance on biscuit wrappers, billboards etc. I would transcribe them all, so that was my cricket, my sports, my enjoyment…I would have had no career if I hadn’t come into the field of applied linguistics. I got into applied linguistics and there I think it was 60% me and 40% my teachers…I got my inspiration from the teaching styles of a couple of teachers which unknowingly was preparing me to be a teacher…The challenging atmosphere of my university was another motivating factor.

After coming to KSA, Omer felt the need for some international certification in his field as he had attained all his qualifications in Pakistan. With the fear of losing his job in KSA at the back of his mind, he decided to go for Cambridge CELTA, which in fact proved fruitful on two counts: He availed an opportunity to brush up his already superior teaching skills and get them certified and also secure his job for the near future with a popular certification. His ‘Pass B’ in CELTA, which is quite uncommon, was another feather in his crown.

5.3.4.3 Future perspective

Despite his professional success and recognition at such a young age, Omer uncomplacently sees his desire for professional excellence gaining further momentum with the passage of time. With his acknowledged status of highly effective TESOL professional at his workplace, he is not much concerned about his job security anymore. Now further professional development is meant for his personal satisfaction. At present Omer is working on the third module of the DELTA course from Cambridge and doing small-scale research on different aspect of his class dynamics. In the future, he intends to go for doctorate in TESOL from UK or USA. But considering his financial means, he would prefer a part-time degree where he can work and study at the same time:

Well, it [passion for professional development] is increasing with the passage of time...
Nowadays I’m more into finding different things which can impact the classroom dynamics in general; I’m very much interested in improving the classroom environment. People talk a lot about things happening outside the class, but no one talks about the things happening in the class, so I’d like to see how to keep a balance. My long term plan is to start PhD in a couple of years. However, I have to see my financial circumstances before. I can’t go for a full-fledged on-campus degree because I’m doing a job and I don’t have enough resources to go to the UK and do that.

5.3.4.4 Task perception

Task perception comprises at least two aspects of Omer’s PLD experience: 1) learning as being and becoming a professional and 2) learning happening in specific experiences and situations.
5.3.4.4.1 Being and becoming a teacher

Flexible competence

Flexibility in the teaching approach and commitment to the professional learning are Omer’s major strengths. He gives great importance to his students’ learning, and has a variety of activities in his repertoire to use them according to his students learning needs. When Omer started teaching in the class, he came to realize that what he read in the books was not easily applicable in the teaching context. Hence, he had to be flexible in his approach to keep adapting his teaching techniques and materials according to the context:

*English language teaching is not an easy field to be into. The world is changing rapidly in ELT. I would strive hard to make myself a well-informed teacher who always looks for new techniques and new ways of making his classroom a better place…Perhaps I still remember one book, Larsen and Freeman’s book, which was in my Masters, “Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching” if I remember correctly; there they discuss different techniques like direct method, CLT, and other methods. But I couldn’t see all those things [I read in books] happening in the real class, so it was a kind of challenge for me to see the real teaching happening in the class…I always like experimenting with new techniques and activities. I’m a very flexible teacher; if one thing didn’t work I would try something else; that gave me confidence to build my own repertoire of activities and techniques.*

Contextual understanding for effective teaching

Understanding the context of his teaching is another important factor that helped Omer become an effective teacher. While in KSA, he spent a substantial amount of time in discussions with his senior colleagues to understand the Saudi teaching context. He also reflected on his teaching techniques and materials which could resonate with the students’ interests and motivate them for better involvement in the classes. His deep understanding of the context enabled him to build his own repertoire of activities and give them a local touch:

*When I got here I realized the fact that my knowledge and whatever experience I had in Pakistan were not enough in this context. After a module I realized the fact that I had to do something about my professional development. So, I started taking help from my colleagues, reading books for different techniques, understanding the context as to how religion plays an important role in this society, and also other factors…The Saudi learners are not intrinsically motivated; the motivating factors are mostly extrinsic…In Saudi Arabia the motivating factors are: travelling abroad, getting monthly scholarship, a kind of stipend [for university studies]. This makes it more important for a language instructor to control his classroom environment/dynamics in such a way that the students should find it fun to attend English classes.*
A culture-sensitive teacher

Omer is also aware that an important factor in effective teaching is the knowledge of culturally sensitive topics and issues. He again sought his colleagues’ advice to this effect and raised his consciousness on the matter. With prior knowledge about culture-sensitivities in the context, he has been able to perform well and to the satisfaction of his superiors:

*I respect the culture and that is the secret to success… I also had to find out the topics I shouldn’t be discussing in my classes… I came to know that sex, religion and politics are completely forbidden in the language classes. Using pictures of the women without ABAYA are also forbidden. Understanding all these cultural things saved me from many problems and helped me survive in this difficult context!*

Managing continuing PLD

Once into the TESOL profession, Omer got off to a nice start in the field. He was quite lucky to land highly lucrative jobs, one after the other without much struggle. However, he still felt financially insecure in his homeland and wanted to move to some rich Gulf country for more economic prosperity in personal life and learning and development in the professional arena. Thanks to constant struggle and lucky stars, just three years in the profession, he was able to grab a great position in KSA. When he arrived at his new workplace in KSA, he soon realized that the field of TESOL was growing apace and he had landed in a really vibrant work culture where he had to work hard to be on a par with qualified people from different parts of the world. Omer underscores that in a teaching profession, like TESOL, progress is an on-going process. The journey never ends. Therefore, he utilizes summer holidays and semester breaks for continued professional development:

*This profession is ever growing and it provides many opportunities for professional development. It’s ever changing, it creates new challenges. You explore new horizons and move into new directions. You progress from one stage to another, it’s a kind of ongoing process, this is what makes me love this profession… I don’t miss any of the British Council PD opportunities, if I find anything I go there. I love webinars, different kind of online professional development opportunities provided by the Cambridge English teacher website, the Oxford teacher website and there are others also like International House, and Bell.*

Community of Practice: Role of colleagues in professional development

He completed his CELTA course with distinction and he gives the credit for that to his colleagues at the ELI. He thinks that there is a lot of collegial support in the ELI and it mostly comes from the Pakistani community. Appreciating the support of his community of colleagues at the ELI, Omer highlights the contribution of his colleagues to his professional effectiveness.
The special discussion groups organized by supportive colleagues saved a lot of his time that he would have spent looking for the right resources:

*We’ve got a kind of helpful community which prepares you before the course starts. As I told you, I’ve got a couple of colleagues who help and provide you the entire CELTA material. They allowed me to sit in their classes; they allowed me to look at their personal TP reports. So I knew everything about the CELTA before starting the course. I would say it was a kind of pre-CELTA training from my colleagues. So I think this kind of sense of synergy helped me to reap more benefits… I’m thankful to them for giving me support and resources. So, colleagues are important, but you need to be in the right community, so, you have to be with the right people, who can support each other. I consider myself lucky to be the part of a helpful and robust community.*

**Participation in the TESOL Professional Learning Community (PLC)**

Omer was an active member of the PLC I established at the ELI with the aim to enhance our professional effectiveness as language teachers, and he considers his participation in that endeavour as extremely fruitful in terms of his professional learning as he was a less experienced teacher who joined at a new, unfamiliar workplace:

*[For the ‘Professional Learning Community’, we generated and prepared different tasks for different levels; we sat together, discussed different problems and we came up with good solutions and tasks that increased my repertoire of activities and techniques. This was a learning experience for me. That is the experience which helped me to change myself… from a novice teacher into a somewhat experienced teacher… I refined and enriched my existing knowledge by adding new and modern English language teaching tools, which I learnt and practiced while working with this group. It also made it possible for me to have an idea about the ways the senior teachers conduct activities in their classes. Having tough teaching schedule ceases opportunities for professional development. This community greatly helped me to brush up my TESOL knowledge in the most efficient way. Being a part of this community also helped me to increase my confidence as a teacher.*

Omer highlights the far-reaching benefits of interdependent and synergistic interaction in a PLC. He believes that such endeavours improve teachers’ effectiveness with minimal financial support of the institutions, and collaboration of people with a variety of experiences leaves a positive impact not only on the members of a PLC but also on the students:

*If I had a problem in my class and I’m trying to search an answer in the books it would have probably taken me months to find a solution, but because of the Professional Learning Community I got the most accurate and relevant answers…I would evaluate that PLC can be considered the most effective tool for professional development using*
the minimum resources an institute has. In these communities different people from different backgrounds work together. CELTA qualified teachers and PhD scholars all get together and discuss classroom related issues. This impacts the whole community, faculty and, most importantly, classrooms. The PLC helped me to have a collection of activities which worked well with my students. The PLC team designed activities according to university exam format that immensely helped our students to cope with anticipated problems in the exam with ease.

The teachers in the PLC also considered the exam format while preparing the resource materials, which significantly contributed to the students’ achievement in their exams. Not only the PLC helped develop materials with exam focus, but also made the teachers resourceful as they had a variety of worksheets and hand-outs to utilize according to their students’ specific needs. Omer attributes his resourcefulness as a TESOL teacher to the prevalence of synergy in the functioning of the PLC. He was able to perform much better with much less effort:

Working in this group provided me loads of activities that can easily be used in pairs, groups or individually. Before becoming a part of this group, I had to spend huge amount of time for designing and planning activities and worksheets, but PLC helped me to save my time and use it more effectively.

Central to any collaborative and synergistic enterprise such as PLC is the participants’ practice of empathy and maturity in the routine affairs of a PLC. Empathy is reflected in our efforts for a deep and genuine understanding of others’ feelings, and maturity is shown in our ability to express our feelings and convictions with courage balanced with consideration for the feelings and convictions of others. Awareness of Omer’s growing maturity and empathy for other PLC members is reflected in the following comment:

My experience with professional learning community is really positive. I learnt how to be patient, feedback positively, respect other’s opinions and apply interpersonal skills.

5.3.4.4.2 Learning in specific experiences and situations

 CELTA: A milestone

His passion for professional excellence is also reflected in his efforts to attend training courses, workshops and webinars for his continued growth and grounding in the profession. With his job in the KSA, he soon became more financially independent and decided to pursue further training in the language teaching. Thus, he went for Cambridge CELTA:

I consider myself a practicing teacher. I had taught English in EFL context before CELTA, but my decision to do the CELTA was a life changing experience; it was an eye opener for me. That rigorous teaching practice and training in one month completely transformed my teaching style. Before CELTA, all my teaching techniques were
scattered, but after CELTA course they were organized. I never thought that the CELTA course will be such an enriching experience. There might be some criticism against CELTA but I believe it has completely transformed my teaching style. One thing I felt was that, although before CELTA I was quite an effective teacher and I got good ratings in my observations, after doing CELTA I manage my energy well in the class. I don’t waste my energy on irrelevant details now.

Although Omer had a master’s degree in the relevant field, he felt the need for further training in micro-teaching practice. Rather he believes, based on his experience of observing so many teachers in their classrooms, that even if somebody is a PHD in TESOL, he may not be a good teacher if he does not have the necessary toolkit for language teaching in the class. He also believes, contrary to common understanding that CELTA is for the novices in the field, that CELTA is more beneficial for teachers with good familiarity with TESOL terminology. Teachers with some prior experience will gain more from the course:

When you teach, you understand the basic concepts and terms related to ELT. CELTA is an extremely intensive and tiring course and if you don’t have a sound base in ELT related terminologies, it will be really difficult for you to reap maximum benefit from the course. Being a non-native teacher will be an added pressure. So I think prior teaching experience is very important in a sense that you get over all those fears related to classroom teaching.

Peer Observations: An opportunity for reflection

Omer was observed 6 or 7 times during his four years at the ELI. Owing to his excellent evaluation reports, he was selected as a member of the PDU. Being a PDU member, he got the opportunity to observe classes of number of teachers. That experience has resulted in tremendous professional development for him, which has led to manifold increase in his own ability as TESOL professional. He believes peer observations followed by in-depth discussions with the teachers have accelerated the pace of his becoming an effective language teacher:

In 2012, a great opportunity came in my way to work for the Professional Development Unit. This was a unique opportunity which placed my professional development process on a speed way. I had a great opportunity of sitting and observing classes of experienced ELT instructors which helped me immensely to reflect and develop my own teaching style and it made my classrooms a better place for learners‘ development and progress. Being a PDU member was a blessing in a sense that I saw different lesson types in action in the classrooms which helped me to develop my own most effective repertoire of activities. Secondly, giving feedback to experienced, challenging and tough teachers turned me into a Professional Development expert who is responsible for giving different alternatives for different activities. This made it compulsory for me to research and find
out the best possible options which can accelerate learners’ learning process in the Saudi context. So, I’m still a member of the PDU and enjoying my work immensely.

5.3.5 Subjective Educational Theory

5.3.5.1 Rapport building

The first thing Omer does with a class of new students is to build a strong rapport with them. For that, he memorises their names and learns about their preferred learning styles to prepare a variety of activities and correlate them with his students’ talents and tastes:

I read in a famous ELT book ‘Learning Teaching by Jim Scrivener’ that until the relationships are good within a class, the learning is likely to be of a lower quality. So, it becomes significantly important to build a strong rapport from the first day of the class. I explore different ways to learn the learners’ names and understand their different learning styles i.e. kinaesthetic, visual etc. from the beginning. This helps me greatly to build a strong rapport with my learners and plan a variety of activities according to the taste and needs of my learners.

5.3.5.2 Context-specific choice of teaching methods

With thorough knowledge of language teaching methodologies, Omer is able to practice informed adaptation of various teaching approaches according to the level of his students. He also highlights the fact that some teaching techniques that are successful in other contexts may not be effective in the current context:

I have always been keen to improve my repertoire of techniques and activities to teach ‘systems’ and ‘skills’ lessons most effectively. I try to use ‘Guided Discovery’ when teaching intermediate or higher level students. In case of elementary or beginner level students I opt for ‘Text Based Approach’…I also think that not all CELTA techniques and strategies work in this context. For instance, if you try to have a guided discovery lesson in these classes where the students don’t have enough basic information about grammar and L2, it might not work well.

5.3.5.3 Scaffolding: Adapting the materials to students’ level

For learning to take place, Omer is aware that he has to plan his tasks and activities according to the level of his learners. As he finds numerous activities in the prescribed course books too difficult for his students to handle, he develops additional material to scaffold the learning process for students’ achievement:

I try my level best to modify the activities given in their text books according to the level of my learners. At the ELI, I am teaching the ‘New Headway Plus’ [course book series]. Most of the activities in the books are beyond the level of my Saudi students. In this...
case, the role of a teacher to adapt activities according to his learners’ level becomes significantly important.

5.3.5.4 ‘Demand high’ and student achievement

He also employs the ‘Demand High’ approach in his teaching, which aims at making the learners capable of doing a bit more than what their level of language ability can allow. Expert teachers can sometimes make small adjustments and tweaks in their lesson materials and create space for greater and deeper learning:

I found that the concept of ‘Demand High’ is an innovative idea to push my learners to perform better in the classes and do more than their level…I like planning activities which could challenge my learners a bit more. I make sure that I should plan material and activities keeping in mind the level of my learners. I believe when we demand less from the learners, this might make the teacher happy that there wasn’t any digression in the lesson and he managed to achieve the aims of his lesson, which are mentioned in the pacing guide, but the low challenge of the activities might demotivate the learners. Hence, I always ask my students to go an extra mile.

5.3.5.5 Evidence of learning: Feedback and reflection-for-action

Omer thinks that a teacher is as good as his ability to give effective feedback to his students on their participation and performance. Feedback serves two purposes for Omer: one, it helps the students reflect on their learning; two, it also helps him plan his next lesson keeping in mind the problems faced by the students in the previous lesson. Hence he makes it a point to spend last few minutes of each lesson on reviewing and giving a reflective feedback to his students:

I try to make sure I give feedback at the end of all tasks. Feedback provides the learners a great opportunity to reflect on the target language and make it a part of their learning repertoire. I use various ways of conducting feedback, such as: peer check, whole class feedback and displaying answers etc. This helps my learners’ learning process immensely…reviewing what the learners have learnt and what they still have problems with also helps me to plan my next day’s lesson.

5.3.6 Additional factors in PLD: Contextual Affordances

The ELI context is quite vibrant and challenging. With the institute’s affiliation with a US accrediting body, the administration pushes the faculty for continued professional development. On the one hand the ELI impels the teachers to have thoughtful professional development plans for each year; on the other hand, it arranges and facilitates various opportunities for learning and development. Although Omer had a very tough first year when he was struggling to settle down in his new context, he is now quite satisfied with the kind of progress he has made on various professional fronts.
Here you have to move upward because the situation is changing rapidly. People are enrolled in different courses and you don’t have room to just linger on with different things, so if you stop you’ll be thrown away; I think here the challenge is that you are a part of the competitive international community and this is a challenging place to work at. You always have to improve professionally and academically to compete and survive…They do provide us with workshops, 3-4 day long workshops, symposium and presentations. Sometimes they invite international speakers, you might remember Alan Firth came last time. So, these kinds of opportunities are there and these opportunities are created keeping in mind the needs of the faculty.

5.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented the learning biographies of the participants collected through a narrative inquiry, primarily focusing on their lifelong PLD. The narratives are presented mostly in participants’ own voices with my non-critical interpretations to give them context and coherence for the sake of clarity and relevance. In the next chapter, I discuss the findings of these reconstructed narratives with my critical voice substantiated with voices from the literature in an effort to reflect further and theorise (suggest a set of ideas that enhance understanding) the findings not by imposing any meanings rather by constructing meaning through a reflexive and collective negotiation with and between my participants (Lather, 1986).
Chapter Six
Discussion and Meaning-making

Authentic Professional Learning is as much about ontology (who the professional is) as it is about epistemology (what the professional knows). (Webster-Wright, 2009:726)

6. Introduction

With a view to enhancing our understanding of the nature and processes of the research participants’ professional learning and development (PLD), I intend to make an endeavour, in this chapter, to capture their PLD experience in their task perception and subjective educational theories; trace the factors that contributed to their success by delving into their professional self-understanding and ‘substantial selves’ as represented in their ‘self-defining beliefs, values and attitudes’ (Nias, 1989:203); and explicate the nature of their learning in light of the conceptual framework of the current study. The discussion, based on the findings set forth in the previous chapter, is geared towards informing the three research questions developed for the current study. For convenience sake, the research questions are reiterated in footnote 7:

6.1 Professional Learning and Development Experience (RQ1)

The strength of the participants’ PLD experience is evident in their task perception and subjective educational theories, which – grounded in the triad of subject, pedagogical, and experiential knowledge (Shulman, 1987; Wallace, 1991) – is subject to a constant process of evolution. Being highly effective TESOL professionals, they understand that, despite their current professional accomplishments, they must continue their journey of PLD in order to excel in the TESOL profession. To inform the research question one, which seeks to understand the lifelong PLD experience of Ali, Sarmad, and Omer, I would mainly discuss their Task Perception and Subjective Educational Theories (see Figure 6.1). Task perception captures the ‘what’ of teachers’ professional programme to become an effective teacher, and subjective educational theory – strongly linked to task perception - reflects ‘how’ the outcome of that professional programme is enacted in practice (Kelchtermans, 2009a).

6.1.1 Task Perception

For the current research, I define the construct of task perception in Kelchtermans’ (2009a) framework (see 4.5.4.2 above) as comprising at least two aspects of the participants’ PLD

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7 1. How do the highly effective Pakistani TESOL professionals, working at a Saudi university, experience professional learning and development?

2. What are the factors that have contributed to their becoming highly effective TESOL professionals?

3. What learning theories and models can help explicate the nature of their professional learning and development?
experience: 1) learning as being and becoming a professional and 2) learning happening in specific experiences and situations (see definitions in Table 4.4).

**Figure 6.1: Professional Learning and Development Experience**

6.1.1.1 Learning as being and becoming a professional

Central to Ali’s task perception as becoming a teacher is his keen awareness of professional knowledge and skills required for effective teaching practice, which he primarily manages through autodidacy (self-learning) and reflection-on-action. In addition, he is cognizant of the fact that his pedagogical approach should be adapted to the unique aspects of students’ culture and teaching context. Analogous to the two aspects of Ali’s task perception as being and becoming a teacher, Sarmad’s task perception revolves around context-specificity, culture-sensitivity, reflection, and flexible competence. He believes that a teacher should be wise enough to understand the ‘unwritten rules’ of the context. To work successfully in a country other than one’s own, a teacher has to be flexible enough to adapt their teaching material and approach in view of the culture-sensitive issues. Having an element of commonness with Ali’s and Sarmad’s task perception, Omer’s task perception incorporates context-specificity, culture-sensitivity and flexible competence, which influence his management of pedagogical affairs.

6.1.1.1.1 Professional solicitude: A Context-specific and culture-sensitive approach

One common theme in the participants’ task perception as becoming a teacher is their professional solicitude (earnest concern) for context-specificity and culture-sensitivity of
TESOL pedagogy. Context-specificity of pedagogy is closely related to the issue of culture-sensitivity in the teaching method and materials, which is considered particularly vital for the success of a teacher in the Saudi context. As Rich and Troudi (2006:616) maintain that TESOL practices are ‘neither value-free nor apolitical’, culture, whether target or source, cannot be ignored in language teaching. Cortazzi and Jin (cited in Mckay, 2003) argue for a three-dimensional approach to cultural representation in language teaching methods and materials. The first is representation of the source culture, drawing on learners’ own culture as content that they are already mostly familiar with. The second should be the target culture that is derived from the culture of a country where English is spoken as an L1. The third dimension of cultural aspect in TESOL should reflect international target cultures of various countries around the globe.

It is worth stating that the rapidly globalizing world has paved the way for the emergence of the paradigm of English as an International Language (EIL). Composed of the inner and outer circles of English varieties, as described in Kachru’s (1985) model, the EIL, in addition to the target culture, lends ample space to the cultural norms and values of EFL/ESL learners across the world, emphasizing as well the crucial role of learners’ understanding of their own culture, because that will help them develop an understanding of the target culture and other international cultures (McKay, 2002). More importantly, the status of English as an International Language (EIL) also gives licence to TESOL teachers to appropriate the language according to their specific cultural dynamics (Canagarajah, 1999). The renowned Pakistani novelist, Sidhwa (1996:231), contends that, ‘English…is no longer the monopoly of the British. We, the excolonised, have subjugated the language, beaten it on its head and made it ours’.

Hence, Sarmad and Omer have explicitly highlighted the culture-sensitive nature of pedagogy in the current research context, whereas Ali made some implicit references to it. As Canagarajah (1999:14) asserts that ‘socio-cultural conditions always influence our cognitive activity’, in order to activate students’ prior knowledge, develop new schemata or increase their motivation, all the three participants design, modify or adapt the teaching resources, although with distinct rationales and approaches, to meet the cultural and context-specific pedagogical needs of their students. They seem to have imbibed the advice of Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005:359), who stress that the ultimate goal for teachers is to ‘become professionals who are adaptive experts’. What is more, the cultural-Historical dimension of Vygotsky’s theory underscores the cultural and contextualized nature of human learning and development (Schunk, 2012).

6.1.1.1.2 Professional practice: Reflection-in/on/for-action

In addition to a context-specific and culture-sensitive pedagogical approach, Ali, Sarmad and Omer are reflective practitioners. Ali’s forte seems to be his ability for reflection-on-action
(Schon, 1983, 1987). Looking at the what, how, and why of Ali’s reflective process (Nelson & Sadler, 2013), one can see that he reflects on his teaching practices, lesson plans, relation with his students, material development, and his own learning and professional development; his process of reflection involves a kind of private speech (addressed to the self) or internal dialogue with his own alter ego (see 5.1.4.4), which helps mediate his reflective process leading to his professional development (Swain at el., 2015; Vygotsky, 1978); and the outcome of his reflective practice is development of his lens that serves him to critically review and refine his personal pedagogical knowledge and skills. **Sarmad**, like Ali, is also quite explicit about his process of reflection-on-practice. He compares his reflective process with playing tennis (see 5.2.4.4). Like a good tennis player who regularly reviews their wrong shots, he reflects on his pedagogical actions in order to make better decisions in the future. However, unlike Ali whose reflection is mainly an individual, intra-subjective process taking place within his mind, Sarmad engages his colleagues as well in his reflective process by inviting their opinions about the issues under consideration. For him, reflection, having features of an intra-personal as well as inter-personal phenomenon, creates opportunities to interact with his colleagues and pick their brains on various professional issues. In a bit different way, for **Omer**, his task of observing his colleagues teaching practice brings ample opportunities for reflection on his own pedagogy, probably by way of comparisons and contrasts. Additionally, in the course of his routine teaching practice, particularly towards the end of his lessons (see 5.3.4.4.2 & 5.3.5.5), his feedback on students’ performance affords him an opportunity for reflection-for-action, where he plans relevant aspects of his next lesson in light of assessment of his students’ performance.

Indeed, the ultimate goal of reflection is development of professional competence, which if done during the action based on experiential knowledge will lead to creation of new knowledge-in-action (Schon, 1987). In case experiential knowledge is insufficient to allow reflection-in-action, the process of reflection-on-action (with or without mediation) will be no less useful in improving teaching practice and enhancing professional competence (Eraut, 1995). Being reflective practitioners, the participants seem to enhance their professional effectiveness ‘by bridging theory and practice, integrating prior beliefs with theory and practice, and reconstructing professional knowledge from experiential knowledge’ (Seng, cited in Thorsen & DeVore, 2013:90). (Also see 6.3 for a discussion on the theoretical nature of the participants’ Reflective processes).

### 6.1.1.1.3 Professional awareness: Flexible competence

Third major theme in the narratives of the participants is **flexible competence** (Evers et al., 2015). They pursue professional excellence with an awareness of the strength of flexible competence. Sarmad and Omer have explicitly claimed their flexibility in various aspects of their professional life. Sarmad attributes his professional success mainly to his flexible
disposition. Likewise, Omer views himself as a very flexible teacher who adapts not only the teaching methods and materials to the contextual needs, but also adjusts himself according to changing professional circumstances. Ali although does not express anything about his flexibility in professional affairs, his ability to adapt his resource materials to contextual requirements, his knack for scaffolding his teaching activities in accordance with students’ ability, and his tremendous professional growth help us infer that he is not at all rigid in his professional life. A new term: flexible competence, coined by Evers et al. (2015) seems relevant for the current study. They argue that when professional expertise, comprising subject, pedagogical and experiential knowledge, is combined with personal flexibility, which is the ability to handle diversity and adapt to changing work environments, the outcome will be development of flexible competence. Supported by contextual affordances, flexible competence has strong correlation with teachers’ PLD. With a reflexive stance, I have no doubts that without flexible competence an advanced level in PLD is not achievable.

6.1.1.4 Professional diligence: Engagement in various undertakings for learning

The participants’ will and effort for on-going PLD reflect their professional diligence which is evident from their participation in communities of practice and the professional learning community (PLC), their passion for reading to expand their knowledge, and their pursuit of learning by attending various webinars, workshops, conferences and seminars.

Participation in CoP and PLC

All the three participants have acknowledged the benefit of their participation in the communities of practice at their workplaces. In addition to recounting the professional benefits of informal participation in the community of practice, Sarmad and Omer have also highlighted the boon of their planned and active participation in a synergistic PLC specifically established to enhance professional effectiveness and resourcefulness of the members (NB. A detailed discussion on CoP and PLC is presented in 6.3.2).

A penchant for reading

Krashen (2004) has combined the findings of a myriad of research studies on the benefits of reading. He argues that reading is a powerful source of input which not only pleases, but also develops better thinkers. Similarly, Evers et al. (2015) include the habit of reading for keeping up to date with the profession among the major PLD activities. Aware of the boon of reading, Ali is an avid reader. With an advanced level of abstraction, which bestows on him the higher cognitive skills of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation (Bloom, 1956), he knows what to read and what to skip. Not as selective, Sarmad also has a voracious appetite for reading relevant books and research articles. In the fast growing field of TESOL, reading keeps them up to date with the latest research and supports PLD (Kwakman, 2003).
Webinars, workshops and seminars

While Ali, being critical of the effectiveness of the various workshops and seminars organized locally, primarily relies on reading on the subjects of interest for expanding his intellectual and professional horizons, Sarmad and Omer make it a point to attend webinars offered by renowned organizations, such as Cambridge English Teacher, Oxford Teachers’ club and Bell Language School, and participate in workshops, seminars and conferences organized by the British Council and various other local and international bodies. Such PLD endeavours, transmissive in nature (Kennedy, 2005), are usually one-shot episodes of learning, which, according to Jesness (2000), fail to bring any substantial improvement in teachers. However, Tallerico (2005) suggests that in such professional programmes the deciding factors will be the duration of the learning activities and the time-span between current and follow-up activities. If participation in webinars, workshops and seminars has an element of continuity in the form of a carefully planned follow-up activities, such endeavours can lead to acceptable professional outcomes, which I suppose is considered in most learning initiatives organized by institutions like Cambridge and Oxford and organizations like the British Council. As Lohman (2006) argues that majority of teachers’ prefer interactive learning activities to independent learning activities, another important consideration for the success of such PLD activities is the element of interaction between the participants.

6.1.1.2 Learning in specific experiences and situations

6.1.1.2.1 Professional ‘fusion’: Learning in observing and being observed

An important milestone in professional careers of Ali and Omer is their selection for the Professional Development Unit (PDU) of their institution and the ensuing responsibility of classroom observations. Their experience as an observer was extremely fruitful in terms of their own PLD. The opportunity as an observer to engage in in-depth pre/post observation discussions with the observed teachers about their teaching approaches, pedagogical practices, and underlying teacher beliefs was a transformative experience for them which led them to re-examine their own teaching approach and question some of their untested assumptions about teaching. Sarmad, on the other hand, only had opportunities to be observed by members of the PDU. He believes that although the process of being observed is somewhat coercive, it has a positive dimension to it as it compels us to refresh our knowledge and really stretch ourselves while preparing for the class observation. Additionally, the feedback and exchange of ideas that follow this experience offer a different perspective to the observee. Peer observation in fact affords a rare opportunity to both the observer and the observed to discuss and reflect on the teaching issues and approaches in a really meaningful way (Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2005).

As an observer, the experience of peer observations on the one hand has elaborated Ali’s and Omer’s ‘existing frames of references’; on the other hand, it has created some ‘new
frames of references’ (Mezirow, 2000:19), adding to their already rich repertoire of professional self-understanding. They are not only conscious of an experience they have undergone, but they have also consciously learnt out of that experience, which shows a strong presence of their agentic self in the whole experience. Bandura (1991) believes that a vicarious learning experience is as good as a direct learning experience in terms of enhancing belief in self-efficacy. By observing a model performance, we can also experience an increase in our self-efficacy. As an observer, they have acted as ‘sentient agents’ of their learning experience rather than simple ‘undergoers of an experience’ (Bandura, 1999:4).

The intensity and outcome of the experience as an observer is somewhat different for Ali and Omer. Both of them experienced tremendous professional growth during the process of observing their colleagues and engaging in in-depth discussion with them during the post-observation meetings. But Ali declares it an immensely fruitful experience for himself. He in fact experienced such a subtle transformation in his professional self that, after working as an observer for ten months and observing scores of teachers, he exclaimed, ‘I was like a different human being and I could not recognize myself anymore’. He further added, ‘[Now] I can teach any language course anywhere in the world under any circumstances’ (see 5.1.4.4.2). His admission of such a profound change in his being as teacher is not just an epistemological change but also an ontological change where he views himself as a new self – a completely transformed TESOL professional with a substantially refined and enhanced Task Perception (also see 6.3.2.1).

6.1.1.2.2 Professional pursuits: The Cambridge CELTA as a critical incident/milestone

Quite early in his career, Ali completed an English language teaching course in Pakistan, which was identical to the Cambridge CELTA in content. Whereas, Sarmad and Omer both started their career without any proper teaching qualification. Although they had an ELT module in their master’s programme, it was more theoretical than practical in nature. Sarmad leaves no stone unturned to expand his repertoire of professional knowledge and skills. Employed by a university in KSA and with more financial independence, the moment he came to know about the pedagogical benefits of the Cambridge CELTA, an extremely intensive teacher training course, he flew to England for this course. Looking back, he believes that CELTA was a turning point in his career as it validated some of his teaching techniques, gave him a theoretical rationale for his teaching practices, enhanced his confidence and gave him motivation to continue his journey of PLD. The significance he attaches to his decision for and outcome of CELTA, and the kind of dissonance it created in Sarmad’s understanding of his practice leading to a process of reflection on his pedagogy, raises his CELTA experience to the level of a critical incident in his professional career (Cunningham, 2008). As a result of this critical incident, Sarmad engaged in a reflective
process which eventually led to deeper understanding of his professional role and responsibilities (Tripp, 2012).

Omer passed the CELTA with distinction, an uncommon achievement for a non-native English teacher. Declaring his CELTA experience as a milestone in his career, Omer believes that it transformed his teaching style. Although he was already considered a good teacher, his training during CELTA made him become more effective with less effort saving a lot of his time he used to spend on some of his teaching practices with little real benefit. Interestingly, Omer offers a different perspective on the usefulness of CELTA: Contrary to common perception that CELTA is designed for novices in the field of TESOL, Omer argues that CELTA is more fruitful for teachers already familiar with the TESOL terminology (see 5.3.4.4.2). Being a highly intensive course, teachers without prior experience in the TESOL field will hardly reap any substantial benefits from CELTA. In the current research context, scores of experienced teachers completed CELTA due to its deep appreciation by the management of the English Language Institute. Their feedback combined with abundance of testimonial and anecdotal evidence also support Omer’s viewpoint about CELTA.

6.1.2 Subjective Educational Theories

Teachers, over time, premised on their experiential and reflective learning, develop a deeper understanding of pedagogy – a Subjective Educational Theory – which ‘encompasses their professional know-how’ and helps them make personal pedagogical decisions (Kelchtermans, 2009:263). J. Richards (2015) considers the development of such ‘a personal system of knowledge, beliefs, and understanding…as theorizing from practice’ (p. 125). Various terms, such as Personal Practical Theories (Fairbanks et al. 2009), Hidden Pedagogy (Freeman, 2002), and Implicit Theory (Clark & Peterson, 1986), have been used to capture the import of this personal practical knowledge for pedagogical success. The participants’ narratives of their learning and professional development also help construct their Subjective Educational Theories, which shed light on various aspects of TESOL pedagogy worth considering in the present research context. A brief discussion of the major themes is presented below (see Figure 6.1 above):

Ali’s subjective educational theory lays emphasis on at least four different aspects of pedagogical significance in his context. He considers building a bond with his students, seeking evidence of their learning, scaffolding to achieve their learning outcomes, and teacher’s skills for context-specific adaptation of resource materials as pivotal to his pedagogical approach. However, building a bond with his students tops his list of pedagogical priorities.

Sarmad believes the success of a teacher first and foremost depends upon their growing awareness of the teaching context. For him, every context has some ‘unwritten rules’ which a teacher must explore and follow to be truly effective in their teaching practice. In addition, he
considers building strong rapport with the students, practicing empathy for their concerns and problems, and establishing personal integrity in all student-related affairs as his key professional and pedagogical strengths.

Omer’s subjective educational theory views building a strong rapport with the students as foundational to his pedagogy. Additionally, he employs context-specific choice of teaching methods, student level-appropriate scaffolding of teaching materials, the demand high approach to create space for greater and deeper learning, and seeking evidence of learning through reflective feedback strategies for accomplishing his routine pedagogical objectives.

In addition to the over-arching theme of Context-specificity and culture-sensitivity influencing all the participants’ task perception and subjective educational theory, the determination to build a strong rapport with their students is a common element in their subjective educational theories. Ali believes that in order to bring his students’ affective filter down and keep them at ease, he must build a strong bond with them. He considers himself quite skilful in building a strong rapport with his students which eventually creates a bond, a kind of relationship, between the students and the teacher. Sarmad’s aim for building a rapport with the students is to be able to investigate the cause of their lack of motivation and know more about their talents and interests. Whereas, Omer, citing Jim Scrivener that until the relationships are good within a class, the learning is likely to be of a lower quality, states that he develops rapport with his students by learning their names on day one and exploring their preferred learning styles, which help him design a variety of activities according to his students’ taste and needs. Rapport building is a precursor to a strong bond between the teacher and the students as it leads to effective communication between them. It is probably the most viable means to develop a harmonious relationship, maximise mutual interest and minimise differences between teachers and students (Revell & Norman, 1997). Developing a bond with the students can also play an important role in students’ learning motivation as students develop an affiliative motive to please their teacher through their hard work (Dornyei & Csizér, 1998).

One of the key strengths of a (language) teacher is their ability to utilize appropriate scaffolding in their teaching practice. Scaffolding, which was initially conceived by Wood et al. (1976) to operationalize Vygotsky’s concept of Zone of Proximal Development (Wells, 1999), has become an important construct in Vygotsky’s (1978) sociocultural theory. Scaffolding aims to enable a learner to achieve a learning goal which without proper assistance is not possible. Ali’s and Omer’s use of scaffolding in their lessons on the one hand reflects their inclination for social constructivist learning theories, and on the other hand shows their refined pedagogical skills that maximise students’ tasks achievement. Being aware that Regulation forms the stages through which learning passes from object-regulation, to other-regulation, and to self-regulation (McCafferty, 1994), they adopt level-
appropriate scaffolding for their students to make them go through both the stages of object-
regulation and other-regulation until they reach a good degree of self-regulation charac-
terized by mastery over confusion, thereby becoming autonomous learners. Ali allows
his students a feeling of relative freedom for the final-task he pastes on the wall, which they
are encouraged to complete in order to gain a sense of self-regulation (Skehan, 1998). In this
way, he believes that he is able to handle the challenge of increasing students’ engagement
with the content and interaction with fellow students. Ali and Omer probably understand that
ZPD bridged via appropriate scaffolding, in the form of other-regulation (interactive
assistance), usually through group work and teacher’s interventions, also shows the strength
of Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory contrasted with Krashen’s (1985) i+1 (input hypothesis),
which requires a purely cognitive intra-subjective process without any scope for external
mediation in case the students are not able to handle the cognitive load of any learning task.
Another important strength of scaffolding is its scope for generation of L 2 motivation
(Dornyei, 2001), as the final aim of scaffolding is to lead to self-regulation in learning, which
ultimately strengthens students’ academic self-efficacy.

Central to any TESOL pedagogical approach is seeking evidence of learning via student
assessment of their learning and performance. Ali gives due importance to assessment of
student learning and achievement on almost daily basis. He has devised a system to seek
evidence of student learning through the final task which he pastes on the wall to give
students a sense of their final learning goal. Omer utilizes the last few minute of every lesson
for assessing students’ learning and giving a reflective feedback to them, which helps the
students reflect on their learning as well as affords him the opportunity to plan his next lesson
keeping in mind the problems faced by the students in the previous lesson. Based on a review
of 250 sources, Black and Wiliam (1998:3) conclude that ‘innovations that include
strengthening the practice of formative assessment produce significant and often substantial
learning gains.’

According to Covey (1989), the renowned author of the Seven Habit of Highly Effective
People, empathy is one of the seven habits of highly effective people. Showing empathy to
someone means listening to that person with the intention of understanding their frame of
reference and feelings. An empathetic person listens with their ears, eyes and heart (Covey,
1989). Sarmad believes that a teacher should be tolerant, polite and above all empathetic in
order to be successful in any context. Hence, making an all-out effort to be empathetic,
Sarmad tries to understand his students’ situation and be sensitive to it in his teaching
practice. Another important trait of Sarmad is his professional integrity. According to Covey
(1989:34), the principles of integrity are ‘the foundation of trust’ which is integral to
interpersonal relational growth. He goes on to explain that integrity as an interdependent
reality is simply that you treat everyone by the same set of principles. When you do that,
people will come to trust you. Sarmad argues that a teacher should be firm in their disposition. If he is considered as someone fickle and wavering by his students, he will not be taken seriously and thus fail to command any genuine respect from his students.

6.2 Factors Contributing to Professional Learning and Development (RQ2)

Although teachers’ task perception, as defined for the current research, reflects their PLD experiences, it is also one of the various factors that affect or contribute to the process of the participants becoming highly effective TESOL professionals. In this section, in addition to the factors proposed by Kelchtermans (1993, 2009a) as part of a teacher’s professional self-understanding, which include self-image, self-esteem, job motivation and future perspective of a teacher, I will also discuss other important factors that have surfaced in the narratives of the participants (see Figure 6.2).

6.2.1 Individual Factors

6.2.1.1 Self-image and self-esteem

All the three participants - Ali, Sarmad, and Omer - seem to enjoy a positive self-image reflected back from their superiors, observers, colleagues and students. In Sarmad’s case, although his professional skills were commended by his observers and colleagues, he mainly takes pride in the positive feedback from his students on his teaching; whereas, Ali and Omer got extraordinary appreciation for their language proficiency and native-like accents. Both of them have invested considerable time and energy in this venture. So much so that the American director of the English Language Institute (ELI) deemed their achievement as worthy of research on their language learning histories. Wider recognition of Ali’s and Omer’s

![Figure 6.2: Factors Contributing to PLD](image-url)
professional credentials probably led to their induction into the elite Professional Development Unit (PDU) of the ELI. As Frankl (1959) suggests that experiencing a sense of meaning in our actions is the best thing that happens in human life. The positive self-image of my research participants is the outcome of the meanings that they have given to their professionalism. Their self-image determines their place and stature in the professional arena; whereas in situations where they may feel threatened or face criticism, the high self-esteem will offer a defence mechanism and assure them of their true worth as a professional (Francis, 2015). In this way, their self-image and self-esteem, certainly extremely personal in nature, are concomitant in their functioning: one adds to the other or is rescued by the other. Nias (1989) argues that the teacher is considered not only central to the classroom but also to the whole educational process; therefore, ‘who and what they are’, and how they perceive their self-image as practitioners, is important to them and to their pupils (p. 203). High self-esteem is not just the outcome of positive self-image formed by praise and appreciation; it is also enhanced through regular self-evaluation of professional performance. As self-aware individuals, they seem to know their professional strengths and foibles and show commitment to their lifelong professional learning and development. As once a professional attains an advanced level of professional self-understanding which includes a high self-esteem as well, it becomes self-sustaining. With their accomplished high professional stature, they will continue to make a sustained effort to rise higher and higher in their profession. Rosenberg (1979) also highlighted this phenomenon:

The self-esteem motive rests on its own foundation; high self-esteem is innately satisfying and pleasurable, low self-esteem the opposite. A major determinant of human thought and behaviour and a prime motive in human striving, then, is the drive to protect and enhance one's self-esteem. (p. 57)

6.2.1.2 Self-efficacy

As high self-esteem plays a crucial role in bestowing a feeling of ease and comfort upon a teacher in their job-related tasks (Kelchtermans, 2009a), self-efficacy determines an individual’s capability to plan a course of action in order to accomplish a goal (Bandura, 1997). In this way, a strong sense of self-efficacy bears on task perception and performance. Defining human agency as the ability for self-determination enacted through self-regulation, Bandura (1997) considers self-efficacy as the central volitional component of human agency. To better understand the centrality of self-efficacy in human agency, it is pertinent to discuss Bandura’s ideas about determinism and free will in human life. In fact, Bandura’s (2006) views about determinism and free will are quite promising. He believes in reciprocal causation where people shape their environments and are shaped by them. He asserts:

Human action, being socially situated, is the product of a dynamic interplay of personal and situational influences...people are self-organizing, proactive, self-reflecting, and self-regulating, not just reactive organisms shaped and shepherded by external events. People have the power to influence their own actions to produce certain results (Bandura, 1999:154-5).
However, Bandura (2006) also believes that despite a certain measure of control that people have over their circumstances, there are a lot of fortuitous happenings in life: sometimes extremely trivial circumstances lead to highly important decisions in life. During his early days in the college, Ali decided to quit his education, which prompted his elder brother to advise him to become a car mechanic instead of being an indolent cadger. That suggestion, which Ali considered extremely disconcerting, led to a turning point in his life and he decided to pay full attention to his studies and become an English teacher in the future as he believed he had genuine talent for English language. Ali’s desire for a better future and belief in his self-efficacy led to his eventual rise as one of the most sought-after and highly effective teachers in his professional context. Various episodes in his professional life testify to his strong sense of self-efficacy, such as his professed ability to develop a bond with his students for their academic achievement and his well-thought-out planning for acquiring further professional qualifications. Above all, his experience of observing teachers led him to claim his ability to teach effectively any course, at any level, anywhere in the world (also see 6.1.1.2). In Omer’s professional life, his early career achievements, learning during CELTA experience, and observation of teachers have also endowed him with strong self-efficacy belief. For Sarmad, his excellent ratings in observed lesson and learning during CELTA have strengthened his professional self-efficacy. Such mastery or vicarious learning experiences, further strengthening their self-efficacy beliefs, breed optimism for self-enhancement and impel them for continuing professional learning and development (Bandura, 2006), which is further corroborated by their strong commitment to their lifelong PLD.

6.2.1.3 Job motivation

In a schismatic and class-conscious society such as Pakistan, teachers do not enjoy a high social status. The teaching profession in Pakistan is underpaid and mostly considered the last resort for those who cannot find any other reasonable job. Bernard Shaw’s (1903) satirical assertion, ‘He who can, does. He who cannot, teaches’ (p. 334), might not be true in the developed world, but in a developing country like Pakistan, it hits the bull’s eye. For the participants of the current study, Kelchtermans’ (2009a) understanding of teachers’ job motivation is quite relevant. He views teachers’ job motivation as an evolving and alterable phenomenon. Teachers may choose the profession for their interest in the subject, passion for teaching, or absence of any other job option, but over time their motivation undergoes a change and teachers find different reasons to stay in the profession. For my participants, I can say unreservedly that Bernard Shaw’s infamous maxim cannot plague them. Rather they are strong representatives of what Shulman (1986:4) maintains about the teachers: ‘Those who understand, [teach]’.

Ali’s motivation for his profession has gone through an evolutionary process (see 5.1.4.2). Though he worked really hard to perform as a good teacher, he remained deeply dissatisfied
with his professional life and learning in Pakistan. In any case, after he moved to KSA, luck smiled on him and he obtained a well-paid job here. Additionally, this exodus of sorts brought him psychological composure and made him feel relaxed in his work. However, he still cannot pin down precisely the exact source of his satisfaction – whether it was handsome salary, professional growth and evolution or something else. But one thing is quite clear that he is quite satisfied with his learning and earnings in the current context, which also explains the context-specificity of his job motivation. Among other sources of motivation for professional excellence is his desire for being indispensable in his professional context, where his professional expertise is highly valued and he is much sought-after by his employers. Being a committed teacher, Ali shows involvement in his job-related activities beyond his immediate contextual work demands (Lortie, 1975). Nias (1989:30) considers level of ‘commitment’ to job a distinguishing point between teachers ‘who take the job seriously’ and those ‘who don’t care how low their standards sink’. Ali shows the guts to rise above mediocrity and perform more and better than he is paid for (Hill, 1937/2010). His proclivity for going the extra mile in his work both in terms of quality and quantity brings him abundant returns. According to Hill (1937/2010), such self-motivated people who go beyond the call of duty eventually gain favourable attention, become indispensable, find more opportunities, and experience significant self-improvement and self-confidence. Ali’s narrative provides evidence for the presence of all these merits in his professional character. Such professional strengths also seem to have an enhancing effect on his professional self-esteem and self-efficacy.

For Sarmad, on the other hand, the choice of the teaching profession was a pre-mediated decision (see 5.2.4.2). For someone with a master degree in Pakistan, teaching is probably the easiest profession to join. Overall, his job motivation is a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic orientations. In the research context, as the contract is renewed on yearly basis, the threat of losing the job hangs like the sword of Damocles over the head of teachers. Although Sarmad’s professional competence has been acknowledged, the fear of losing the job for him is a kind of blessing in disguise, which impels him to perpetually invigorate his already tenacious commitment to his professional learning and development. In addition, his personal quest for learning and the community of well-qualified colleagues are also strong factors in his job motivation.

Like Ali, Omer’s fondness for English language was a major factor that led to his choice of the teaching profession (see 5.3.4.2). Call it a freak of fortune, a stroke of luck or somebody’s generous appreciation of Omer’s talents, he from the very outset of his teaching career got very handsomely paid jobs. The kind of struggle and financial strain we see in the early days of Ali’s and Sarmad’s careers, Omer did not have to go through all that. Among the factors that motivated him to join the teaching profession include above all easily available attractive
job opportunities in the TESOL profession and his inspiration coming from a couple of his university teachers. Once into the profession, he did not look back as he had ample opportunities for PLD. In Pakistan, although such opportunities were very limited, still he was lucky to avail a good number of them, mainly due to his association with US funded educational projects. Once he reached KSA and gained more financial freedom, his appetite for professional excellence increased manifold, and he went to England for CELTA and joined various professional organizations for his continuing PLD and job security as well. Other reasons for his job motivation include the vibrant work culture at his workplace in KSA with qualified professionals from various countries and the variety and richness of the fast growing field of TESOL. His sense of belonging to his workplace and positive work ethics are also a source of motivation for him.

6.2.1.4 Critical incidents and critical persons

Early on, Ali had met with a critical incident in his life when his brother suggested to him to become a car mechanic, which led to his resolve for further studies and becoming a language teacher. Later, during his career, his experience as a PDU observer also had a transformative effect on his professional self-understanding, which can also be defined as a critical incident in his life. In Sarmad’s life one can see the kind of impact CELTA experience had on his professional self-understanding and his own interpretation of it as a turning point in his career raises it to the level of a critical incident (also see 6.1.1.2). Omer also had his share of critical incidents like the death of his mother in early childhood and his encounter with a language teacher speaking impeccable English, which motivated him to excel in his studies, especially English language, but his subsequent life seems without any kind of setbacks or critical incidents.

Another factor that can affect the PLD of a teacher is the role of critical persons in life. Ali being an autodidact and extremely independent has no critical persons in the guise of teachers or any other role. However, in Sarmad’s and Omer’s life, one can see a strong teacher factor (Freeman, 2002). Their job motivation is influenced by their ‘apprenticeship of observation’ (Lortie, 1975:61). Teachers not only influence our way of teaching, and we follow the way we were taught at school; teachers can also impress us deeply about the teaching profession through their personal and professional strengths. Sarmad was also profoundly impressed by the professional competence and the pleasant personalities of at least two of his university level teachers and idealized their teaching styles, who in this way motivated him to choose the teaching profession. Conversely, some of Sarmad’s outbursts of anger during his early days in the profession were unconsciously acquired from his school teachers, who used to beat the school boys black and blue on slightest mistakes. Looking back to his university days, Omer also recalls the strong influence of a couple of his teachers who unknowingly motivated him to become a teacher later in his life.
6.2.1.5 Future perspective

Kelchtermans (2009a) argues that we can only properly understand teachers’ professional learning temporally, in the backdrop of their past learning experiences, present professional circumstances, and Future Perspective on learning. Put together, these three elements ‘constitute the inevitable “situatedness in time”, that characterizes teachers’ work’ (p. 224).

Ali’s professional self-understanding encompasses a strong Future Perspective on his learning and professional development. Like most highly effective teachers, he has not only given enough thought to strategic career planning, but also demonstrates commitment to his lifelong learning (Coombe, 2014). With his aim for further refinement of his teaching skills, he states that he intends to read voraciously the relevant literature, design DELTA inspired professional lesson plans, and arrange peer observations of his teaching in the near future. A few years hence, he visualizes himself involved in teacher development and teaching at the master’s and probably the doctoral level.

Sarmad’s account of his learning trajectory is also no less interesting. He believes that his journey of PLD has not been a smooth sailing and he had to traverse a rough road in the initial years of his learning as well as professional career. Despite various financial and logistic issues, he has never been lackadaisical about his PLD. Not in the least complacent about his current level of professional achievements, he strongly believes that the moment ‘one stops learning that’s the death of that professional’ (see 5.2.4.3). Hence, he strives to benefit from every available opportunity to extend his frontiers of knowledge. Recently he got admission in a British university to fulfil his long-cherished desire for doctorate in TESOL.

Besides his futuristic vision, he never shies away from any learning opportunities that come his way by chance, rather he shows strong will for his participation in such activities.

Omer believes that his desire for PLD is gaining momentum with each passing day. Based on his professional accomplishments so far, he feels quite confident about his job security. Further learning for him now is more a matter of personal satisfaction than annual contract renewal. Already enrolled in DELTA, he has his future path clearly cut for him: in the foreseeable future he sees himself doing PhD from some British university.

Bandura (1999) cogently sums up the developmental aspect of our Future Perspectives:

Another distinctive human characteristic is the capacity for forethought. The ability to bring anticipated outcomes to bear on current activities promotes foresightful behavior. It enables people to transcend the dictates of their immediate environment and to shape and regulate the present to fit a desired future. Much human self-directedness is the product of forethought (p. 174).

Bandura (2005) emphasizes the role of intentionality and forethought in giving a sense of direction to life. Nevertheless, he clarifies that future cannot incite current motivation, but through a process of cognitive representation in the present, future plans and actions turn into current motivators and self-regulators. One can see that Ali, Sarmad, and Omer not only
exercise forethought and their personal agency in future planning, but also have an element of self-regulation in their lives. Pintrich’s (2000) definition of self-regulation serves a good purpose to underscore my understanding of the role of Future Perspective in my participants’ PLD. Pintrich defines self-regulation as ‘an active, constructive process whereby learners set goals for their learning and attempt to monitor, regulate, and control their cognition, motivation and behaviour, guided and constrained by their goals and contextual features in the environment’ (p. 453).

6.2.2 Contextual Factors

6.2.2.1 Institutional affordances for learning

For all the three participants, unlike their previous professional contexts in Pakistan, the present context has provided affordances (Gibson, 1979) for their PLD and in this way contributed to the process of their becoming highly effective TESOL professionals. It has offered reasonable level of professional autonomy, arranged discussion groups, workshops and seminars, established an annual faculty evaluation system with observation of teaching as key element, provided space for establishing PLCs, and allowed opportunities to avail the boons of a large and diverse Community of colleagues. Kelly (2006) argues that when professional context allows for professional activities which encourage thinking and reflection, teachers experience significant professional learning.

6.2.2.2 Vulnerability and threat

Kelchtermans (2009a) considers vulnerability a structural characteristic of the teaching profession, which, appearing in different shapes and guises such as ‘regulations, quality control systems, policy demands’, influences the lives and works of teachers (p. 265). The nature of motivation for continuing PLD in my participants is primarily intrinsic; however, it also has a considerable element of extrinsic motivation in the form of yearly job contract renewal and stringent faculty evaluation system at the university in KSA. Ali, on the one hand, desires to do his best in his profession; on the other, he wants to neutralize the threat of losing his job. He wishes to attain a professional status, which can make him one of the most sought-after professionals in the field. Here again one can see the prevalence of his strong self-efficacy beliefs. Instead of being a creation of circumstances, he wants to create the circumstances of his choice. And undoubtedly, his life so far reflects his determination for hard work and an on-going process of learning and development. Even though Sarmad and Omer have considerable intrinsic motivation for professional learning and excellence; nevertheless, the system of yearly contract renewal with a stringent faculty evaluation system further strengthens their personal commitment to diligence by adding on through extrinsic motivation. Notwithstanding the element of threat and fear of losing the job can have adverse emotional and psychological effect, and in some cases it can lead to teacher burnout, it impels them to continue their journey of PLD.
6.2.2.3 High expectations of diligence
Ali believes that another factor in the professional development of people is the level of expectation attached to their work by the bosses. Wherever he worked his employers had high expectations from him; and they, assigning him challenging tasks, expected of him to make a substantial contribution to his workplace. He thinks that his superiors' great trust in his potential and abilities probably led to increase in his self-efficacy beliefs, and as a result, living up to the expectation of his bosses, he strained every nerve and 'scraped the bottom of the bucket to come up with different ideas'. Being a researcher with added awareness as a colleague, I can vouch for his claim as in the current research context he is probably one of the most trusted teachers in terms of professional competence.

6.3 An Explication of the Nature of the Participants’ Professional Learning (RQ3)
In this section of the discussion, I make an effort to understand the nature of the participants’ PLD in the light of Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory and Lave and Wenger’s situated and community of practice theory (see Figure 6.3). As discussed earlier, I have come to understand the former as social constructivism aligned with the metaphor of learning as construction; whereas the latter as social constructionism epitomized in the metaphor of learning as participation.

Figure 6.3: The Explication of the Nature of Participants’ PLD
6.3.1 Social Constructivism: Learning as Construction

This part of the discussion surveys the nature of the participants' PLD in light of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory.

6.3.1.1 Mediation: Internalization and transformation

6.3.1.1.1 Cultural artifacts

During his early days in the profession, Ali had a limited repertoire of 'scientific concepts' and did not have sufficient cognitive tools to design and deliver a successful lesson. Although he prepared lesson plans, the ZPD between his current ability and the required level of competence was not mediated properly as he did not have the right mediating tools to bridge that gap. He continued to be object-regulated in his lesson planning and delivery for some time until he realized that he needed to develop himself professionally to attain self-regulation. In earnest, he committed himself to search for useful artifacts to mediate his PLD. Being a fond reader, Ali has a sense to choose the right books as artifacts to mediate his learning. He is aware that wrong artifacts or poor choice of artifacts will be a waste of time and energy. As Ibarra (1999) states that when individuals face new situations, these situations demand that the individuals produce ‘new repertoires of possibilities’ (p. 765).

Whenever Ali experiences cognitive dissonance, when his recipe knowledge is insufficient to handle a pedagogical or professional situation, he mediates his learning through a focused literature review (reads books or articles) of the subject. He other-regulates his learning needs. Depending upon the nature of the learning need, sometimes total internalization takes place and he attains self-regulation where his reading mediates a change in his higher cognitive processes leading to transformation (Swain et al., 2015); however, sometimes he is not successful in finding the right tools to mediate his learning gap, and he closes the chapter with the intention ‘to fight another day’ (see 5.1.4.4.1).

While Ali primarily mediates his learning through reading of literature, Sarmad in addition to reading relevant literature to expand his knowledge of ‘scientific concepts’, also mediates his ongoing learning process through regular participation in workshops and conferences, and attending his learning-need specific webinars or watching lectures of renowned TESOL teacher-trainers on YouTube. Omer although seems familiar with key texts in TESOL is not as keen a reader as Ali and Sarmad. Instead, he prefers to mediate his learning through myriad opportunities such as professional development events at the British Council, workshops, seminars, and webinars. Through the process of internalization mediated by tools, their sustained participation in PLD activities leads to transformation of their professional self and skills instead of mere replacement or addition in the existing repertoire (Valsineer & Van der Veer, 2000).
It is important to consider how *internalization* leads to transformation of self and activity through a dialogic process mediated by tools (Johnson & Golombek, 2003). Once the *internalization* of learning via literature review takes place in case of Ali and Sarmad; and via webinars and workshops in case of Sarmad and Omer, it enables them ‘to voluntarily organize and control (i.e. mediate) mental activity and bring it to the fore in carrying out practical activity in the material world’ (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006:62). Another important consideration about the process of mediation is the participants’ relation with the mediational tools for their PLD. The relationship between them and the tools is reciprocal in nature which may lead their PLD in bi-directional trajectories. In other words, as they use the artifacts to mediate their learning, they change or adapt them in the process for their specific needs; whereas these artifacts also lead to transformation in their professional selves as a result of *internalization* of learning (Swain et al., 2015).

6.3.1.1.2 Changing context and ZPD

It is common for human beings to *cross boundaries* for personal and professional reasons (Hager & Hodkinson, 2011). All the three participants left their home country and moved to KSA for better prospects. This boundary crossing also landed them in a different context, obliging them to reconsider their pedagogical approaches. Worse still, at times they sensed that given the new context, their professional repertoire was deficient, thus making them feel like a novice despite their previous work experience. One way to interpret this situation is to maintain that every new context creates a new zone of proximal development (ZPD) or various zones of proximal development, necessitating further initiatives for PLD. Interestingly, the common concern about the context-specificity of the pedagogical process, as mentioned in the Task Perceptions and Subjective Educational Theories of the participants, also supports the above stance. They felt the need to bridge this new context-generated ZPD in order to become effective teachers. This need was more strongly felt by Sarmad when he said that he needed to learn the ‘unwritten rules’ of the context; and by Omer when he realized that not only he had to adapt his teaching materials but also the ‘teaching method’ to be successful in this context. Hence, it obliged them to seek help from their colleagues as well as consider strengthening their knowledge base of ‘scientific concepts’ through further training, eventually leading to their decision for Cambridge CELTA.

In addition to a changing context, two other instances are recorded by the participants regarding the development of new ZPDs. Sarmad believes that the process of being observed in the class by a PDU member for the purpose of annual faculty evaluation generates extreme pressure. The threat of losing the job or sometimes extra effort to maintain one’s professional status creates a new ZPD for professional excellence, which usually forces the teachers to utilize every possible means to deliver a ‘perfect’ lesson. Another instance of the creation of new ZPD emerged in Omer’s narrative when, highlighting
the fast growing nature of the field of TESOL, he remarked that the ever growing and changing nature of TESOL ‘creates new challenges’ and lets you explore new horizons. Reflecting the never-ending process of human learning, every new context, situation or development creates new ZPDs engendering new opportunities for learning and development.

6.3.1.3 Human mediation

When Sarmad and Omer initially arrived in the research context, they mostly relied on human mediation sought from senior colleagues in the form of guided participation (Rogoff, 1995) to settle down in an unfamiliar work situation. Another possible reason for their reliance on the guided participation is the fact that they still were quite young (late 20s) and less experienced. However, in Ali’s case, it is hard to see any kind of human mediation in the form of guided participation. Most of his engagement with his colleagues for discussion on any professional topic or during post-observation meetings seems a participatory appropriation (Rogoff, 1995:142) – ‘a process of becoming’ where he did not require any human mediation for learning and development. In light of the relevant findings in sections on Contextual Affordances in the previous chapter, I feel the concept of Human mediation in Vygotsky’s theory, due to its explicitly dialogic nature and generative potential, seems theoretically very close to the concept of participation in Lave and Wenger’s situated learning. More importantly, for Vygotsky, the higher cognitive development through internalization is generally ‘a dialogic process of transformation of self and activity rather than simply the replacement of skills’ (Johnson & Golombek, 2003:732).

6.3.1.2 The participants as reflective practitioners

6.3.1.2.1 Ali: Reflection via private speech tool

Ali believes that in his professional life, from both ontogenetic and microgenetic perspectives, reflection has played a major role in his PLD. To develop his task-specific competencies (microgenesis), he reflects on his routine teaching, focusing on lesson objectives, planning and delivery, and issues related to student involvement and interaction. For his lifelong learning and PD (ontogenesis), although he desires to have some kind of human mediation – a Master-Apprentice model (Rogoff, 1995) – for his learning needs; however, in the absence of a real master he has adopted, in quite a unique way, the Reflective Model of professional development (Wallace, 1991). He has created a fantasy master-teacher for himself, who is none other than his own alter ego, with whom he talks about his professional issues. This is how he engages himself in the process of reflection where an intra-personal communication takes place in his mind.

Ali’s reflective practice can be viewed in the light of Vygotsky’s (1962) construct of private speech — a cognitive tool that mediates our thinking process through an intra-personal
dialogue (Swain et al., 2015). There is empirical evidence that adults use private speech for intra-psychological purposes, particularly when faced with a difficult task, and it serves ‘a mediational role in problem-solving and self-regulatory processes’ not only ‘during early adulthood’ but also ‘throughout the life span’ (Duncan, 1999:160).

Ali’s narrative raises our awareness about the process of reflection and offers another useful lens, the ‘private speech’ – an already empirically established construct in Vygotsky sociocultural theory of learning – to operationalize the process of reflection. Vygotsky (1960:198) argues that ‘all higher psychological functions are internalized relationships of the social kind, and constitute the social structure of personality’. Such a question/answer format dialogue that is observed in Ali’s reflective process is in fact an internalized replication of the patterns of participation in social interactions that occur in I-You dialogue (Swain et al., 2015; Vocate, 1994).

6.3.1.2.2 Sarmad: Reflection as individual and social externalization

As discussed above (see 6.1.1.1), for Sarmad, reflection entails a process with both individual and social dimensions. It may not be a very frequent process but it does take place in his professional life. Like a tennis player, he engages in an intra-psychological reflective mode and evaluates his pedagogical moves and decisions mainly indulging in the process of reflection-on-action. Unlike Ali, he does not mention in explicit terms the occurrence of any intra-personal dialogue where he communicates with his own self. Instead, after his bout of individual reflection, he externalizes his understanding with a ‘temporary other’- a colleague (K. Johnson, 2007:181) through an inter-personal (I-You) dialogue. This process of externalization of understanding with a colleague mediates the process of higher understanding of professional situation, which once internalized leads to transformation (Collin & Karsenti, 2011).

6.3.1.2.3 Omer: Reflection as creating spaces for ZPDs and scaffolding

Omer has a different set of impetus for reflection. Being a designated class observer, he faces situations during observations which not only impel him to reflect deeply on his professional-self, but also create new ZPDs for further research on the subject. Faced with assertive teachers (observees) who demand elaborate rationale for his comments on their teaching practices, he has no option but to utilize all possible mediational tools for better and higher understanding of the debatable pedagogical issues. His reflection primarily necessitated by his structural conditions is a kind of blessing in disguise which leads to his PLD. Notwithstanding the impact of structure on his process of reflection, his personal agency cannot be denied in his pursuit of professional excellence. Being a PDU observer visiting a class for summative observation, he wields enough sway that he cannot be cowed into a situation unpalatable to him.
Another impetus for Omer to reflect comes from his approach to seek evidence of student learning as a result of his teaching. Reviewing what his students have learnt and what they found hard to learn, allows him to reflect-for-action. While planning his next lesson, Omer takes into account the learning difficulties of the students and makes an effort to design better scaffolding to bridge his students lesson-specific ZPD. In this way, Omer’s reflective process aims to scaffold two different ZPDs: One for his own learning and development; another for his students’ learning and development.

6.3.2 Social constructionism: Learning as Participation

6.3.2.1 Ali: Learning experience as a class observer

When Ali moved to KSA, he landed in a place where he found himself surrounded by highly qualified people armed with rich experiences gained in a variety of contexts. With his penchant for engaging with intelligent people around him, he found it a great opportunity to learn through fruitful discussions on topics of professional significance. He sees great potential for his professional development through informal and incidental learning in a context where professionally qualified people have the freedom and opportunities to observe teaching of peers, sit together and engage in discussion on issues of mutual importance.

Probably, the most transformative learning phase in Ali’s life was his work as a classroom observer, which afforded him an opportunity to engage in in-depth pre/post observation discussions with his colleagues and ‘dig deep into their teaching beliefs…and their thought processes, and what they were thinking when they prepared those things [lesson plans and related resources]’. Ali’s participation in the process of teaching observation and the in-depth discussions preceding and ensuing the participation seems to have all the four components of situated learning as described by Wenger (1998:5): one can see meaning (learning as experiencing), practice (learning as doing), community (learning as belonging) and identity (learning as becoming) in the learning experience of Ali as an observer.

It could be discerned that his embodied understanding (based on physically seeing the enactment) of his colleagues’ teaching beliefs and practices, which was further extended and deepened through dialogic exchange of ideas on the subject led him to consider it a transformative experience that substantially enhanced his professional competence. Gadamer (1975/2013) attaches great importance to dialogic interaction to understand people’s perspectives on their experiences. He believes that human beings have horizons of understanding and when they engage in a meaningful conversation they experience a ‘fusion of horizons’ (p. 406) where they reach a level of common understanding with their interlocutors. He argues that in order ‘to reach an understanding in a dialogue is not merely a matter of putting oneself forward and successfully asserting one’s own point of view, but being transformed into a communion in which we do not remain what we were’ (p. 387).
What is more, Ali has a strong sense of belonging to his context as he is deeply appreciative of the numerous personal and professional gains that he has made in this context. In terms of change in his identity, his process of becoming more and better, his effusive statement that ‘I was like a different human being and I could not recognize myself anymore’ testifies that the change in his identity was not just a transformation in his professional self but also a transmutation in his whole person. In other words, he underwent an epistemological as well as an ontological change as a result of his PLD as an observer.

6.3.2.2 Ali, Sarmad and Omer: Learning in the CoP

Collaboration and collegiality, in addition to reflection, are among the major factors in the PLD of teachers (Wallace, 1991). Colleagues at an institution become a community of practice when their mutual engagement (discussion, sharing of perspectives and exchange of ideas) in the joint enterprise (common professional goals, interests or activities) is bound by a shared repertoire (artifacts, concepts, experiences, tools, etc.) (Wenger, 1998). With an ongoing process of engagement in a community of practice, members of the community develop new perspectives on their professional issues or concerns (Wenger & Snyder, 2000), and convert their implicit knowledge into explicit professional knowledge thereby enhancing their professional competence (Choi, 2006).

All three of the participants have acknowledged the role of the communities of practice in their PLD. Ali has a different take on learning in a community of practice. With his phenomenal professional growth and acute self-awareness of his calibre, it is quite natural for Ali to let his ego find expression in his discourse. I have no doubts that he is entirely justified for asserting his individual identity by saying that he is far ahead of most people he has worked with at various workplaces. He argues that any possibility of learning in a community of practice hinges upon the professional ability of its participants. In his previous workplaces, he could not find people who could come close to his professional stature, hence he could not benefit from his peers in those contexts. However, in the current multicultural context, he has found individuals among his colleagues who are professionally his peers and his discussions with them and observation of their classes have been quite beneficial for him. In such a community of practice he sees tremendous scope for PLD. Likewise, Sarmad and Omer highly value the role of their colleagues in their PLD. They believe without the community of their colleagues, it would have been impossible for them to become effective teachers. As highlighted in their narratives, in Ali’s case, his learning in the CoP is primarily collaborative in nature mainly resulting from mutual engagement with his colleagues for exchange of ideas related to their joint enterprise. Whereas, for Sarmad and Omer, their interaction in the CoP has strong element of collegial support: their participation mostly brings the needed support to fill a knowledge gap or transform their implicit knowledge into explicit knowledge through advice or feedback from a more knowledgeable
other. However, it does not rule out their collaborative engagement in the CoP. Somehow while discussing the role of colleagues in general, they have only highlighted the role of collegial professional support they received in the CoP and not the vice versa. Probably recalling their early days in the Saudi research context, when after boundary crossing (coming into a new context) (Hager & Hodkinson, 2011), they acutely felt the inadequacy of their existing professional repertoire for the new context, which also highlights the crucial role of collegial support for new entrants in an unfamiliar context, no matter how much work experience they already possess. Sarmad’s and Omer’s learning with a stronger collaborative element is discussed in the next section.

6.3.2.3 Sarmad and Omer: Learning in the PLC

Sarmad and Omer participated in the TESOL PLC with the express aim of enhancing their professional effectiveness in the research context. Most commonly, the fundamental features of a PLC include the capacity for teachers’ professional learning and a clear focus on student achievement (Vascio et al., 2007). Both Sarmad and Omer agreed that their participation in this initiative brought multiple professional and pedagogical benefits. Being less familiar with the context, participation in a PLC strengthened their knowledge of context (insider’s knowledge with trusted recipes) with the focused support of the peer PLC members (Scanlon, 2011). Whenever they felt that their repertoire of skills was inadequate for any situation, they had access to a senior, more experienced or more context-aware colleague for help and guidance. With their better contextual knowledge and being equipped with an abundance of quality resource material developed through collaborative efforts of the PLC members, they were able to have a positive effect on student achievement. As a result, they reported considerable improvement in the students’ class involvement, learning motivation and rapport with the teachers.

In addition to the two basic features mentioned above, Sarmad and Omer have highlighted some uncommon aspects of their PLC experience which have hitherto not been commensurately factored in the relevant literature. Some of the prominent features highlighted in their narratives include the rewarding nature of interdependent participation, the synergistic dividends of participation in the PLC, and collegiality enhanced by empathy and maturity of members (see 5.2.4.4 & 5.3.4.4).

6.3.2.3.1 Interdependence and Synergy: The cause and effect of a PLC

As Covey (1989:9) maintains that ‘interdependence is a higher value than independence’, Sarmad and Omer unanimously emphasise benefits of interdependent nature of their participation in the PLC where every member contributed according to their chosen area of strength and interest. As a result, high quality resource material was developed which was evaluated by other members before dissemination in the community. As Sarmad and Omer, highlighting the presence of synergy in the functioning of our PLC, acknowledge that they
had better and more productive teaching with less effort, and experienced great ease and comfort with a substantial reduction in work-related stress. There is no doubt that synergy can lead to miraculous results. ‘It is a fundamental principle at work throughout the natural world... Birds in a V formation can fly nearly twice as far as a lone bird because of the updraft created by the flapping of their wings’ (Covey, 2011:12/13). Likewise, when human beings collaborate in a unified and harmonized fashion, they generate tremendous amount of creative energy for the accomplishment of feats in different fields. According to Covey (1989), synergy means that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts (1+1=3 or more). Synergy is a natural characteristic of a PLC, but, strangely enough, in the available literature on PLC, it is not paid much attention, except a passing reference in Wenger’s work published on his personal website.

In fact, we live in an interdependent world in which the well-being of each part is tied to the overall well-being of the whole (Covey, 2011). Interdependence is based on a shared vision and a win/win frame of mind. In the context of PLC, interdependence is definitely transformational in nature: ‘It literally changes those who are party to it... It is the ultimate “moving of the fulcrum” – the exponential increase of creativity, capacity, and production that comes from combining the energy and talents of many in synergistic ways’ (Covey & Merrill, 1994:196). In addition to generating synergy, our truly interdependent relationships empower us to be highly effective, to develop strong bonding, to be sincere friends, to give honest feedback and to communicate in authentic ways.

6.3.2.3.2 Empathy and Maturity: Key success factors for a PLC

The comments of Sarmad and Omer brought another area of concern to light. Some members of the PLC showed their reluctance in sharing their resource material probably because they feared criticism and ridicule from other colleagues. If that was the case, such feelings in any member of a PLC reflect lack of empathy and maturity in (some of) the community members. Empathy is a deep and genuine understanding of others’ feelings. When we listen to a community member with empathy, we make an effort to get inside their frame of reference. Without empathetic listening no genuine feedback or support is possible. It is also an important characteristic of members of any genuine PLC. Another important feature for the strength and long-term survival of a PLC is the quality of maturity among the members. Covey (1989) defines maturity as the balance between courage and consideration: The ability to express one’s feelings and convictions with courage balanced with consideration for the feelings and convictions of others. We cannot benefit from our participation and collaboration in a PLC if we lack maturity. Immaturity on the part of one member can easily repel or discourage another member of a PLC. The presence of such immaturity in a PLC is particularly fatal for fresh members at the periphery.
6.3.3 Learning as *Becoming*

Ali, Sarmad and Omer learn in a variety of individual and social ways which cannot possibly be captured in one learning theory or perspective. Engestrom (1994:1) reassures us that ‘learning is meaningful construction and creative use of intelligent cognitive tools, both external and mental modes and external instruments. Learning is also participation, collaboration and dialogue in Communities of Practice’. As we see that like most autodidacts, Ali, in his learning approach, seems ‘strongly autonomous, passionate, and future-oriented’ (Solomon, 2003:178); however, one can also see that he finds learning in a community of practice quite fruitful as well. Likewise, Sarmad and Omer although more grounded in social learning approaches also reflect individual dimensions of learning in their narratives. Learning as *construction* and learning as *participation* both are clearly reflected in the participants’ narratives. For such a scenario, Hager and Hodkinson (2011) offer a new metaphor of learning as *becoming* which, combining the features of learning as *construction* and *participation*, conceives learning as an ongoing process. Additionally, they argue that learning as *becoming* — bridging dualistic trends such as mind and body, individual and social — conflates formal, informal, and non-formal learning and views learning as an inherent, unceasing element in life. If I combine my participants’ past, present, and future (aims for) learning, I can conveniently envisage it in the metaphor of *becoming*. Hence, the current study presents and promotes teachers’ PLD as a process of *becoming*. 
Chapter Seven
Conclusion

Indeed, in these stories, there is a lesson for those who understand.

— (The Quran, 12:111)

7. Introduction

In this chapter, after an introductory vignette, I present a concise summary of the major conclusions and implications of the study, as ‘fragmented pieces of knowledge’, that TESOL teachers and researchers may utilize to improve or inform their professional ideas and practices (Kelchtermans, 2004:219). Subsequently, discussing the limitations of the study, I offer some suggestions for further research and conclude this treatise with a few words of final confession.

My enduring interest in personal and professional excellence led me to myriad places in pursuit of books and people invested with the potential to help me realize my lifelong passion for excellence in tangible results. My initial inspiration in this regard was indeed derived from the works of Stephen R. Covey (1932-2012). Later, I developed familiarity with writers in the field of Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP) – a branch of knowledge devoted to study of personal excellence (Revell & Norman, 1997) – which further whetted my appetite for depth and grounding in this area. In fact, driven by my personal ambition, I decided to conduct a study on those teachers in my professional field who had already been declared excellent and highly effective in the research context. The principal aim of my research was to enhance our understanding of the phenomena of professional excellence in the field of TESOL. To accomplish this purpose, I delved into the learning biographies of three highly effective Pakistani colleagues and explored, described and analysed their professional learning and development (PLD) experiences, with a hope that the sum and substance of my understanding, enriched through this process, would bestow some epistemological authority on the outcomes of the current research. Earnestly, I believe my efforts to present coherent learning biographies of my participants may capture the experiences and processes of their lifelong PLD in terms that others may identify with, relate to, and benefit from them (Zhao & Poulson, 2006). In any case, I am not much concerned about the mimetic or replicable features of my research, rather my focus is on advancement of our understanding of the research phenomena, illumination of the participants’ vital strengths and qualities, and deepening of our awareness of the factors, conditions and contextual dynamics that perpetuate and invigorate their professional lives (Barone & Eisner, 1997).

The narratives of PLD journeys of Ali, Sarmad, and Omer, on the one hand, portray the ineluctable vicissitudes of human life, which hardly spare any mortal in the deprived regions of the world. On the other hand, these narratives reflect how some individuals, braving the
daunting circumstances, get through the test of humanness and create hope and meaning in life. Moreover, their extraordinary PLD despite the elements of threat of losing the job in case of any errors of commission or omission and vulnerability as expatriate teachers in the research context further accentuate the motivational significance of their professional accomplishments. Indeed, the participants’ narratives depict the immense courage they have shown to manoeuvre out of the precarious situations into a life of learning, success, and independence. I believe that my participants’ success in their professional careers, with their education in a developing country, humble family backgrounds, and the unusually challenging working conditions in the research context, is phenomenal and its dissemination might raise the consciousness of the larger teaching fraternity about the phenomena of professional excellence in TESOL.

7.1 Conclusions of the Study

The conclusions of the study seek to inspire a vision or multiple visions for becoming highly effective teachers in the field of TESOL, and other educational disciplines as well. These visions may be utilized by teachers working in contexts having situational resemblance or foreseeable potential for transferability of findings (Bandura, 1997), keeping in view the fact that ‘the knowledge developed from narrative inquiries is textured by particularity and incompleteness – knowledge that leads less to generalizations and certainties…and more towards wondering about and imagining alternative possibilities’ (Clandinin & Huber, 2010:439/40). With this awareness, I summarise the major conclusions drawn from the narratives of the participants.

First, the findings reinforced with additional evidence that TESOL professionals learn in a variety of ways and their PLD features idiosyncrasy and complexity rendering all attempts at uniformity of the process of learning as problematic. Whereas, an inclusive, non-dichotomous approach combining a variety of learning theories and models, covering both individual and social dimensions, can help capture the ubiquitous and variegated nature of teachers’ PLD. For instance, reflection as considered at the heart of teachers’ professional learning and competence can be practiced in a variety of ways. All the three participants have different processes of reflection in the course of their professional practice. Ali reflects via private speech engaging himself in an intrasubjective dialogue with his own alter ego; Sarmad’s reflective process entails both individual and social externalization where he is involved in an intra-subjective thought process as well as inter-subjective dialogue with knowledgeable others; and for Omer, the process of reflection-on-action creates new zones of proximal development (ZPDs) which he mediates through various means, whereas his reflection-for-action leads him to consider better scaffolding techniques to bridge his students’ lesson-specific ZPDs.
Second, the findings underscored that such learning experiences which tend to effect an epistemological as well as an ontological change in teachers, can lead to profound transformation in their professional-selves. In the teaching profession, observing and being observed are usually not stress-free experiences for both the observer and the observee. It becomes more challenging when the observation is summative and the outcome can have a direct bearing on the future job contract renewals, as is the case in the research context. Ali as an observer had the opportunity to engage in intense and meaningful post-observation discussions with the observed teachers, which often created situations for fusion of horizons—a level of common understanding—leading him to a feeling of subtle transformation in his knowledge and being during his ten-month stint as an observer. Consequently, he professed his transformation as follows: ‘I was like a different human being and I could not recognize myself anymore’. As a matter of fact, learning happening in the process of observation has extensive empirical evidence (Bandura, 1995; Wallace, 1991). If the exercise of peer observation is given further thought and planning, there is possibility of it leading to deep transformation taking place in the knowledge (epistemology) as well as personality (ontology) of teachers. One important consideration in planning PLD tasks is the time factor. The longer a programme or activity continues, the better will be the result in terms of qualitative change in the person and practice of the teacher (Tallerico, 2005).

Third, there are a multitude of contextual and individual factors discussed in the study which seem to have considerable impact on the PLD of the participants. However, the participants’ concern for context-specificity and culture-sensitivity in their teaching practice significantly contributes to their PLD. Whenever the process of boundary crossing takes place in a teacher’s life, in the form of a job in a different context or change in professional status (Hager & Hodkinson, 2011), it brings new challenges as well as opportunities for further learning. In case of my participants, all three of them moved to a new work context in a foreign land, which created new ZPDs for them to be bridged before they could teach effectively. It also implies that learning is a process of becoming because an experienced and effective teacher may act like a novice in a new, unfamiliar context, thereby requiring considerable enhancement in their learning repertoire.

Fourth, the findings also envisaged hope for the vital context-specific PLD through participation in synergistic PLCs. Two of the participants’ feedback on their participation in a PLC, founded on the notion that interdependence is a higher value than independence (Covey, 1989) and synergy should be the natural outcome of participation in a PLC, reflected that participants gained more with less effort supporting the presence of synergy in the affairs of the PLC. Strangely enough, in the available literature on PLC, synergy is not paid much attention, except a passing reference in Wenger’s work published on his personal website (Wenger, 2007). More interestingly, the support for synergy comes from a different field.
where the proponent of the idea, Covey (1989:283), argues that synergy is ‘effectiveness in an interdependent reality – it is teamwork, team building, the development of unity and creativity with other human beings’. Another crucial feature of a synergistic PLC is the members’ empathy and maturity. Without genuine respect for and clear understanding of each other’s perspectives, any hope for the success of a PLC will be elusive.

Fifth, the narratives of lifelong PLD of these highly effective Pakistani TESOL professionals are a substantial contribution to the extremely deficient body of knowledge about the learning lives of Pakistani TESOL professionals working in or outside Pakistan. There is little qualitative research, let alone narrative inquiries, on the PLD of language teachers or teachers in other disciplines in Pakistan. After numerous searches, I could trace only one significant qualitative study on the PLD of teachers that is conducted by Chaudary and Imran (2012).

Finally, I share a quick summary of the key traits of the participants that have surfaced in their learning biographies. The summary aims to placate the anguish of rushing and rummaging through thousands of words of the narratives in order to find the nuggets of knowledge that could help in becoming a highly effective TESOL professional. In a nutshell, the highly effective TESOL professionals in the research context more often than not:

- have professional solicitude for context-specificity and culture-sensitivity in their pedagogical approaches, which motivates them to make concerted effort to bridge their new ZPDs, emerging particularly in the event of boundary crossing (moving into a new professional context), via various mediational tools and means,
- show capacity for both epistemological (knowledge) and ontological (personality) transformation in their professional selves: They seek or engage in activities, such as peer observations that create opportunities for professional ‘fusion of horizons’ through pre/post-observation in-depth discussions on professional and pedagogical beliefs, practices and ideas,
- are reflective practitioners, and their reflective practices entail a variety of ways, means and ends,
- show flexible competence that makes them adaptive experts, and they, with their commitment to the programme mission and the course objectives, endeavour to make up for any deficiencies in the course materials, procedural practices and administrative systems,
- are collegial and collaborative professionals; are interdependent and synergistic, and recognise and practice empathy and maturity in Communities of Practice and PLCs,
- are diligent professionals, and their diligence is reflected in their persistent, lifelong pursuits of PLD,
• profess well-defined *personal pedagogical theories*, which also exude a high level of emotional intelligence (in features like rapport-building, *empathy, maturity*, and culture-sensitivity),
• build the foundation of trust through their professional *integrity*, which leads to interpersonal relational growth between a teacher and their students. Integrity, defines Covey (1989), is an interdependent reality where a person instead of being fickle or protean practises consistency and fairness by treating everyone in light of a same set of principles,
• enjoy high self-image, self-esteem and self-efficacy (see p. 12 for precise definitions),
• have strong future perspectives on their PLD,
• take advantage of contextual affordances for their PLD,
• see the positive side of the elements of threat and vulnerability in the context,
• gain strength from *critical incidents*,
• derive motivation from *critical persons*, and
• strive to live up to the expectations of their superiors.

The study has presented the personalized, unique qualities of individual learning experiences narrated in the learning biographies of the participants, which are probably not possible to capture via traditional, horizontal and reductionist data collection and analysis approaches (Thomas, 2009). In this way, these learning biographies offer scope for a situated understanding of TESOL teachers’ PLD highlighting features of individuality and idiosyncrasy of human beings. In addition to endorsing the previous research that highlights the diversity in human learning potential and landscape, the current study extends our understanding, with substantial evidence, about the ways and means teachers adopt to learn and develop professionally.

7.2 Implications of the Study

In light of the key findings of the study set forth above, I tend to believe that the study has some significant implications which may be of interest to a myriad of people. These findings may be thought-provoking for institutional policy-makers and researchers, enlightening for fellow TESOL professionals at different rungs of their career in various parts of the world, and particularly motivating for TESOL aspirants in Pakistan and the Gulf.

The findings have crucial implications for institutional role in teachers’ PLD and eventual transformation in their pedagogical knowledge and professional selves. For teachers to avail opportunities for truly transformative learning experiences, institutions should create *affordances* (scope and space) for long-term mutual engagement of teachers in meaningful discussions, such as pre/post peer observations discussions on their *personal pedagogical theories* and active collaboration on important pedagogical and professional issues, which
can potentially lead to a subtle change or transformation not only in teachers’ epistemology (knowledge) but also in their ontology (personality).

Considering the crucial role of context-specificity and culture-sensitivity in language teaching methods and materials, it behoves educational institutions to facilitate teachers’ PLD especially in the event of a boundary crossing that brings new challenges as well as opportunities for further learning. In case of boundary crossing – moving into an unfamiliar context, when experienced teachers may find their professional repertoire as deficient for newfound situations, the institutions should create affordances in the system to foster strong professional and collegial support in communities of practice. One way is that more experienced and context-aware faculty members should mentor new entrants in the context in order to mediate their learning in the new ZPDs and help them enrich their professional repertoire for more effective handling of pedagogical issues. What is more, institutions can help teachers to form synergistic PLCs with more explicit PLD objectives, which can go a long way in enhancing the professional effectiveness of teachers by fostering genuine collaboration among the colleagues. More importantly, PLC members should be made aware of the blessings of interdependence and synergy in (professional) life and significance of empathy and maturity for successful functioning of a synergistic PLC.

In addition to indicating considerable scope of synergistic PLCs, the current narrative inquiry offers three different lenses to look at the process of teacher reflection. As Shulman (2002:65) suggests that ‘one of the most important things we do in the educational research community is to offer lenses, both analytic and perceptual, which make the invisible visible, which make the hidden apparent’, the three lenses or tools, namely the private speech (an intra-subjective dialogue), externalization of issues through inter-subjective dialogues in a CoP or PLC, and bridging of teachers’ and students’ ZPDs through reflection, can be further studied by researchers in an effort to explore novel ways leading into the reflective process.

On the individual level, these narratives of the highly effective teachers offer considerable scope for critical self-reflection on our own professional selves through an exercise of comparison and contrast with their stories. These narratives are also potentially inspiring, because they capture the learning journeys of those teachers who came from humble backgrounds and faced daunting circumstances, yet they have been outstandingly successful in their careers. Thus, they can encourage other teachers to be resolute about their professional growth and generate resources requisite for their professional excellence by the sheer sweat of their brow. Not only this, TESOL teachers worldwide, and particularly those working in the Gulf, while identifying with some of the ideas, themes and patterns shared in the study, may develop them further for application in their own contexts and beyond (Kelchtermans, 2004).
Lastly, the following quote, enlarging the scope of narratives, enhances my confidence about the wide-ranging potential fruition of my research endeavour:

Stories and narrative, whether personal or fictional, provide meaning and belonging in our lives. They attach us to others and to our own histories by providing a tapestry rich with threads of time, place, character, and even advice on what we might do with our lives. The story fabric offers us images, myths, and metaphors that are morally resonant and contribute both to our knowing and our being known. (Witherell & Noddings, 1991:1)

7.3 Limitations of the Study

Perfection is not of this world; hence, ‘the search for the complete and coherent is a delusion’ (Goodson & Sykes 2001:16). No matter how much finesse a researcher has employed, there will always be a likelihood of some limitations calling for further depth and improvement. The current study is also not free from certain unavoidable limitations:

First is the issue of gender representation: The data for this study are collected only from male participants primarily due to constraints dictated by the conservative nature of the research context where mixing of unrelated men and women is forbidden. Whereas, the narrative-biographical and ethnographic nature of the research necessitated not only long-duration interactions with participants for data collection, but also a long-drawn relationship for in-depth understanding of the socio-cultural and historical aspects of the research phenomena. As Clandinin and Connelly (2000:81), highlighting the relational dimension of narrative inquiry, assert that narrative researchers ‘must become fully involved, must fall in love with their participants’, I had no option but to have only easily accessible male participants with whom I could get ‘fully involved’.

Secondly, in addition to the absence of female perspective on professional excellence in TESOL in the research context, I could not directly engage the relevant students for their views about these highly effective professionals. However, I included the annual faculty evaluation reports of the participants in the data which take into account students' feedback on their teachers' professional skills and performance.

Thirdly, the magnitude of the data was potentially a challenge as well as an opportunity. I confess that my decision to reduce the number of participants in the current study was partly driven by the daunting nature of the huge data and partly by my desire to make a worthwhile contribution to my professional field. The path I chose for the data analysis was one of the many possible avenues that could be taken for this purpose. My decision to opt for a vertical, single-case analysis instead of horizontal, cross-case approach or a combination of the both might be the best choice given my specific circumstances which offered although less generalizable but deeper insights into the phenomena of PLD in TESOL. Nevertheless, I believe the latter approach could have covered a broader ground in the field and furnished...
more wide-ranging research outcomes. Based on my reflection on current research experience, I will offer my advice for further research on the subject in the next section.

Finally, one of the limitations has something to do with my own narrative inquiry skills. Given that I do not possess the magic pen of a master like Edward Gibbon (1737-1794), nor his phenomenal perspicacity to do real justice to my role as a narrative researcher, I express my inadequacies in terms of research experience, precision of expression, and intellectual strength required for such research endeavours. However, despite being a novice in the field of (narrative) research, and the current study being my maiden attempt at narrative inquiry which mainly depends on the skills and experience of the narrative researcher to engage the audience in the perspectives offered by the participants (narrators) (Riessman, 2008), I have worked my fingers to the bone to present in this research something to be deemed less negligible and more worthwhile.

7.4 Suggestions for Further Research

For the current research, I have used a telescopic lens covering a vast terrain of my participants’ PLD journey that has its particular strengths and weaknesses. With voices calling for localized pedagogies with bottom up resource materials (Canagarajah, 2005b; Kumaravadivelu, 2006), another useful approach can be large-sample studies focusing on one or two aspects of teachers’ PLD: I consider substantial scope for multiple studies with microscopic lens on teachers’ task perception and subjective educational theories or personal pedagogies to develop more bottom-up, localized knowledge of TESOL pedagogy, further expanding the knowledge base of TESOL teacher development. Research in this area will also cater to issues of context-specificity and culture-sensitivity in TESOL. With a narrow focus, such studies can also use a triangulation approach to data collection through interviews, class observations and document analysis of lesson plans, students’ feedback and faculty evaluation reports. Yet another possible avenue for research on teachers’ PLD is by selecting a multicultural medium-size sample (5-6 participants) for more wide-ranging comparisons and contrasts, but such project will be more suitable for a PhD thesis with its extensive word-limit. Initially, I had a similar plan for my study, which I had to change by reducing the sample size to make my research manageable within the remit of an EdD thesis.

Besides the above suggestions, a longitudinal study of synergistic PLCs can be a potentially beneficial project for further research. The current study discussed the role of interdependence and synergy and the issues of maturity and empathy based on a relatively limited data on a synergistic PLC in the research context. A longitudinal study with a large sample, considering the relevant findings discussed in this study, stands a fair chance to make a valuable contribution to the body of knowledge in the area of teachers' lifelong PLD.
7.5 Final Word

I conclude my study with the following quote which in a way highlights the limits of human intellectual endeavours:

The most a researcher can come up with is a new angle that might be helpful for particular problems. And it is not clear beforehand which problems may be solved and which others may be generated through particular interventions. Moreover, this is no different for a philosopher than it is for a so called empirical researcher. (Smeyers, 2008:698-9)

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Appendices
Appendix 1

A. Summary of Professional and Pedagogical Areas Considered in Classroom Observation

1 Use of Classroom and Resources

- **Use of Space**—appropriate seating arrangement, teacher moves around, reshuffles learners, equal attention to all learners
- **White Board and/or Projector Use**—use for a variety of purposes; neat, organized, legible; selective and discreet use

2 People Skills

- **Rapport**—pleasant, friendly, use of encouragement, sensitivity to culture and to learners’ needs, patience, listening to learners, uses names
- **Classroom Management skills**—teacher deals with disruptive behavior firmly, promptly involves latecomers, students talking, playing with phones. Improvises to engage disruptive learners.

3 Lesson Components and Flow

- **Warm-up**—Effective and appropriate lead in for a lively start, uses visuals skillfully to activate schema, presents lesson in an interesting and familiar context
- **Instructions**—focused and clear, uses gestures and examples, checks instructions were understood, breaks up instructions for complex tasks
- **Effective Questioning**—Asks questions to effectively elicit background knowledge and answers from learners, asks concept check questions to ensure materials is grasped, teacher does not explain everything and tries to pull info from learners.
- **Range of Learning-Centered Activities**—wide range generates a large amount of student talk time, blend of individual, pair, and group interaction patterns; interesting, varied, focused activities
- **Monitoring**—ensures all learners are focused, moves around to check, teacher is alert and attentive—notes errors, motivates students to do tasks, corrects errors unobtrusively, is fully aware of class needs and divides his/her time very well among a variety of learners.
- **Feedback and Assessment**—clear, crisp feedback balancing elicitation, explanation, and illustration; error correction—effective, varied, tactful; appropriate assessment activities
- **Subject knowledge**—all info accurate, knows vocab and grammar well, knows reading and writing strategies as appropriate to the lesson, handles questions effectively, accurately, and clearly.
- **Well-Timed, Well-Paced lesson**—achieves vast majority of stated objectives, doesn’t digress, smooth and logical transitions, activities neither too fast nor too slow for learners.

4 Delivery and Teacher’s Linguistic Competence

- **Voice**—clear, audible, lively, smooth, and appropriate modulation
- **Fluency and Accuracy**—no fumbling/groping for words; pronunciation is clear, accurate, intelligible; correct models in pronunciation drills.
- **Grammar and Vocab**—appropriate vocab, correct grammar in speaking and writing, few to no grammar or spelling errors on white board, language is graded according to level.
## B. Formal Observation Evaluation Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EVALUATION CRITERIA</th>
<th>Above Average</th>
<th>Outstanding</th>
<th>Satisfactory</th>
<th>Needs Development</th>
<th>Unsatisfactory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### A. Planning and Preparation
1. Develops a focused and logically staged lesson with clearly stated and appropriate lesson objectives

### B. Classroom Environment
2. Builds rapport with learners to create a cordial and supportive learning environment
3. Demonstrates effective classroom management skills to enhance and support learning

### C. Lesson Delivery
4. Uses engaging warm up activities to personalize the learning context and stimulate learners' interest
5. Gives clear and concise instructions for activities
6. Monitors learners closely to ensure they are focused during activities
7. Uses effective questioning techniques to elicit learners' responses and to check their understanding
8. Provides effective, focused, and communicative pair and/or group work activities to increase student talking time
9. Demonstrates command of the subject matter and the lesson content
10. Delivers a well-timed and well-paced lesson with minimal digression to achieve the stated lesson objectives
11. Evaluates learners' work with clear and constructive feedback & assessment activities
12. Makes effective use of white board/visual presentation

### D. Language Proficiency
13. Demonstrates fluency and accuracy in pronunciation
14. Uses appropriate vocabulary and grammatical structures in both oral and written communication

### Overall Rating
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 3+ | 4 | 4+ | 5 |
C. Summary of Evaluation Ratings and Guidelines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5. OUTSTANDING</th>
<th>4. ABOVE AVERAGE</th>
<th>3. SATISFACTORY</th>
<th>2. NEEDS DEVELOPMENT</th>
<th>1. UNSATISFACTORY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Summary:** A model teacher, whose teaching embodies the best ELT practices, exceeds expectations in almost all criteria and meets global EFL benchmarks in terms of planning, instructional quality and communication skills. Could be filmed and observed by other teachers for the purpose of training and development. | **Summary:** A good teacher who meets all expectations & exceeds some. Has the potential to develop into an outstanding teacher with training and constructive feedback. Possesses exceptional communication skills but needs to fine-tune lesson delivery skills to meet the 'best practices' standards. **Guidelines:**  
- Receives ‘Above Average’ or ‘Outstanding’ rating in approximately 10 out of 13 evaluation categories.  
- Should not receive ‘Needs Development’ or ‘Unsatisfactory’ ratings in any category.  
- Has ‘Above Average’ or higher ratings in most of the following key areas: B2, B3, C5, C6, C7, C8, C9, C11, D12, D13 | **Summary:** An effective teacher who meets most but not all expectations. Delivers satisfactory performance in most categories. May receive 'Needs Development' rating in some areas but has the ability to meet all or exceed some expectations with further training, experience and feedback. **Guidelines:**  
- Receives ‘satisfactory’ or higher ratings in approximately 10 out of 13 evaluation categories.  
- Should not receive ‘Unsatisfactory’ rating in any category.  
- Should receive ‘Satisfactory’ or higher ratings in most of the following key areas: B2, B3, C5, C6, C7, C8, C9, C11, D12, D13 | **Summary:** A teacher with weaknesses who meets some but not most expectations. Has developmental needs in some core areas and has to work hard to meet the requirements of the Institute in terms of planning, classroom management, lesson delivery skills and language proficiency. **Guidelines:**  
- Receives ‘Needs Development’ rating in D12 or D13  
- May receive ‘Unsatisfactory’ rating in one or more categories.  
- Receives ‘Needs Development’ rating in approximately 4 out of 16 categories or any 3 of the following key areas: B2, B3, C5, C6, C7, C8, C9, C11, D12, D13 | **Summary:** Meets few expectations and is unlikely to satisfy the requirements of the Institute. Demonstrates fundamental weaknesses in terms of language skills. Teaching skills are weak and ineffective and are unlikely to improve with training or coaching. **Guidelines:**  
- Receives ‘Unsatisfactory’ rating in D12 or D13  
- Receives ‘Unsatisfactory’ rating in approximately 4 categories or any 3 of the following key areas: B2, B3, C5, C6, C7, C8, C9, C11, D12, D13 |

| 4+ Excellent Guidelines: | 3+ High Satisfactory Guidelines: |  |  |  |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|  |  |  |
| - Meets all criteria for a rating of 4 and has at least 7 categories rated “Outstanding”.  
- Has not received “Needs Development” or “Unsatisfactory” ratings in any category. | - Meets all criteria for a rating of 3 and has at least 7 categories rated “Above Average” or “Outstanding”.  
- Has not received “Needs Development” “Unsatisfactory” ratings in any category. |  |  |  |

**Instructor’s Overall Rating**  
1  2  3  3+  4  4+  5
Appendix 2
Researcher’s Guide for Interviews

Interview One

Aims
- To help develop biographical profiles of the participants
- To learn about participants early learning interests, aptitude, challenges and achievements
- To explore participants’ learning biography during pre-service phases

Major Themes and probable questions*

A- Family background, early life, schooling up to grade 12
Tell me when and where you were born?
Talk about some of your childhood experiences. What people and events do you remember?
How did they affect you?
How do you see your early life?
Describe your own experiences as a student in elementary school, and in high school.
While you were at school, how well did you do in the class?
Did your parents encourage you with your school work?
Can you remember the teachers? How did you feel about them?
Was any teacher an important influence on you?
Did you have any critical incident / turning point in your early life and schooling which had a deep impact on the course of your life?
What challenges did you face in your early life and schooling?
Tell me about your achievements or accomplishments during school life?
What were your own dreams and hopes on leaving school?

B- Undergraduate studies – college/university life
Where did you complete your undergraduate studies? What were your majors?
How do you see your learning experiences during undergraduate studies?
Did they prepare you well for your higher, post graduate studies?
Was there any critical incident / turning point during your undergrad studies which had a deep impact on the course of your life?
Did you face any academic challenges during your undergrad studies?
Tell me about your achievements or accomplishments in undergrad studies?

C- Postgraduate studies and pre-service professional training courses
Tell me about your studies for the DELTA / postgrad / masters? Why did you choose this subject?
How do you see your learning at the masters’ level?
Did it prepare you well for your professional career?
When you left university, where did you get your job?
Did you have to do any courses prior to your job?
When you started working as a teacher did you face any pedagogical challenges?

D- Reflection on pre-service professional learning and development
How do you reflect on your pre-services studies?
Did they help you to develop as a good language teacher?
Were there any critical incidents or milestones that affected your professional learning and the process of becoming a good language teacher?

Interview Two

Aims
- To explore participants’ learning biography during in-service phases
- To track participants’ efforts for professional learning and development, and involvement in various PD related activities
- To understand participants’ ideas and experiences about the nature and process of professional learning and development

Major Themes and probable questions

A- Choice of language teaching profession
Now I would like to talk about your working life.
Tell me how you became an English teacher. Why did you choose this teaching profession?
Who/what influenced you to become a language teacher? Who were your role models?
How do you feel about your profession?
What is your pride in the profession / job?

B- In-service professional learning and development
How do you see your in-service professional learning and development?
Did you have enough opportunities for professional learning and growth in your working life? Were these opportunities provided by the institutions you worked for or you had to struggle for grabbing such opportunities?

C- Key factors in professional learning and development and their impact on professional life
What motivated you to develop and excel as an English language teacher?
What are the milestones in your professional career as an accomplished English language teacher?
Was there any critical incident that proved to be a turning point in your career?
Can you recall any learning experience(s) that had a deep impact on your professional life?
How do you see your desire or passion for professional learning and development?

D- Means and models utilized for professional learning and development
How did you manage your professional learning and development?
Tell me about your journey on the way to becoming a highly effective language teacher.
Tell me about the challenges you faced on this journey.
How do you see the effectiveness of those professional development activities?
How do you see the role of professional development activities organized by the institutions you worked at? Did they offer any benefits in terms of professional learning and development?
How do you see the role of professional learning communities (PLC) in educational institutions?
Have you ever actively participated in any PLC? How do you evaluate your experience of being a part of a PLC?
How do you see the role of your colleagues in your professional development?
How do you compare the role of your pre-service training and learning and in-service training and learning opportunities in your development as an effective language teacher?
What is the role of professional context in your professional development?

E- Future plans for continued professional learning and development (CPLD)
What are your plans for further professional development in your field?

Interview Three

Aims
- To take stock of professional learning and development challenges and opportunities in the Saudi Arabian context
- To learn about the means and models of professional learning and development that you have utilized for professional excellence in the present context
- To understand the nature of professional competence effective in the present context

Major Themes and probable questions

A- Professional learning and development in the research context
How do you see your experience of teaching English to Saudi Arabian EFL learners?
Do you think that your previous professional learning and development had sufficiently prepared you to perform as an excellent teacher in the Saudi context?
What do think about your present work context in regards to your professional learning and development?
How do you see the professional development opportunities available at the ELI?
How do you see their role in your professional performance as an excellent language teacher?
How do you see the ELI faculty as a community of practice? Have you found any professional support in this community of language teachers?
Have you participated in any professional learning community at the ELI?
How do you see the benefits of such collaboration for professional excellence?
How do see the role of Professional Development Unit (PDU) in your performance as an excellent language teacher?

B- Secrets of success in the present teaching context
How have you performed so well in the present context? Please share some of your secrets of success as an English language teacher in Saudi Arabia?
When you are inside the class, what are your personal aims as a language teacher?
How would you describe yourself as an English language teacher? How has your identity as a language teacher evolved? What is your identity now?

Final Questions
How do you see your experience of being a participant in this biographical study?
In what ways has this process of recalling and reflecting on your learning biography impacted you?
* These questions were rephrased, modified or skipped according to each participant’s narratives evolving in the course of the interviews.
Appendix 3

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Information Sheet for the Research Participants

Study Programme: EdD in TESOL

Thesis Title: The Odyssey of Professional Excellence: Becoming a Highly Effective TESOL Professional

Dear Research Participant,

Convinced as I am that success leaves clues that can be traced and documented for the motivation and enlightenment of other aspirants, the present study will attempt to unravel, via a narrative-biographical inquiry, the phenomena of your professional and pedagogical success at the ELI. By means of studying your learning biographies, I will explore, describe and analyse the journey of your lifelong professional learning and development, and thereby endeavour to enhance our understanding of the ways and means culminating in successful professional practices in the fields of TESOL.

I will conduct at least three interviews with you. The details of each interview are as follows:

**Interview One**

**Aims**
- To help develop biographical profiles of the participants
- To learn about participants early learning interests, aptitude, challenges and achievements
- To explore participants’ learning biography during pre-service phases

**Major Themes**
- Family background, early life, schooling up to grade 12
- Undergraduate studies – college/university life
- Postgraduate studies and pre-service professional training courses
- Reflection on pre-service professional learning and development

**Interview Two**

**Aims**
- To explore participants’ learning biography during in-service phases
- To track participants’ efforts for professional learning and development, and involvement in various PD related activities
- To understand participants’ ideas and experiences about the nature and process of professional learning and development

**Major Themes**
- Choice of language teaching profession
- In-service professional learning and development
- Key factors in professional learning and development and their impact on professional life
- Means and models utilized for professional learning and development
- Future plans for continued professional learning and development (CPLD)
Interview Three

Aims
To take stock of professional learning and development challenges and opportunities in the Saudi Arabian context
To learn about the means and models of professional learning and development that participants have utilized for their professional excellence in the present context
To understand the nature of professional competence effective in the present context

Major Themes
Professional learning and development in the research context
Secrets of success in the present teaching context

Benefits of Participation in this Research Study

1. Taking part in the project will give you an opportunity to talk about your professional work with someone who will actively listen and who is interested in what you have to say.

2. People who have taken part in similar projects have often found that reflection on their previous learning is an enlightening experience. It can lead to more self-awareness, and to personal and professional growth.

3. Your participation will help in timely collection of solid data for my project which aims to contribute to the fields of TESOL and teacher education. In addition, as a token of gratitude, I will give you a special gift on completion of the project. However, I understand that the time and effort you expend for this research will be invaluable.

Finally, I am deeply grateful to you for accepting my request to participate in this intensive research project which expects from you to share the contents of your (personal and) professional life in graphic details. I assure you that your ideas and opinions, thoughts and feelings, knowledge and experiences, and any other shared information will be utilized confidentially and anonymously, and will only be used for the research purposes. Please read the 'consent form' below for the details of your rights as a research participant.

Best Wishes,

Muhammad Athar Hussain Shah
Head of Research Unit / Lecturer in English,
English Language Institute (ELI), King Abdulaziz University.
Doctoral Student (EdD in TESOL),
Graduate School of Education, University of Exeter, UK.
athar.hussain@hotmail.com
Mobile # 00966(0)530050492
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

CONSENT FORM

Study Programme: EdD in TESOL
Thesis Title: The Odyssey of Professional Excellence: Becoming a Highly Effective TESOL Professional

I have been fully informed about the aims and purposes of the project.
I understand that:

- there is no compulsion for me to participate in this research project and, if I do choose to participate, I may at any stage withdraw my participation
- any information which I give will be used solely for the purposes of this research project, which may include publications
- any personal information which I give will be used in an anonymised form and will be treated as confidential
- the researcher will make every effort to preserve my anonymity
- all the interviews will be recorded on a digital audio recorder, and these interview recordings will be kept secure and confidential
- I will be given a chance to review the transcriptions of my interviews and approve them for utilization in the thesis.

.......................................................... ..........................................................
(Signature of participant) (Date)

........................................
(Printed name of participant)

One copy of this form will be kept by the participant; a second copy will be kept by the researcher(s)

Contact phone number of researcher: 00966(0)530050492

If you have any concerns about the project that you would like to discuss, please contact:

Muhammad Athar Hussain Shah
athar.hussain@hotmail.com

Data Protection Act: The University of Exeter is a data collector and is registered with the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner as required to do under the Data Protection Act 1998.
### Questionnaire 1: Personal Value Narrative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name: TESOL Professional Learning Community at ELI-xxx</th>
<th>How participation is changing me as a teacher (e.g., skills, attitude, identity, self-confidence, feelings, etc.)</th>
<th>How participation is affecting my social connections (e.g., number, quality, frequency, emotions, etc.)</th>
<th>How participation is helping my teaching practice (e.g., ideas, insights, lesson material, procedures, etc.)</th>
<th>How participation is changing my ability to influence my world as a teacher (voice, contribution, status, recognition, etc.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reasons for participation</strong> (e.g., challenges, aspirations, professional development goals, meeting people, etc.) +/-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Activities, outputs, events, networking</strong> (e.g., lesson material, discussion, visits, etc.) +/-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Value to me</strong> (e.g., being a better teacher, handling difficult students, improving my students learning, Improving school performance, etc.) +/-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Notes:**  
1. +/- Indicates that you can provide positive / negative experiences  
2. Please read the sample answers before you give your responses. | | | | |
1) Immediate value: What happened and what was my experience of it?

i) What were significant events? What happened?
What was the quality of the mutual engagement?
How relevant to me was the activity/interaction?
Do I trust them enough to turn to them for help?
Do I feel less isolated?
Comments:

ii) What access to resources has my participation given me?
Do I have new tools, methods, or processes?
Do I have access to documents or sources of information I would not have otherwise?
Comments:

2) Realized value: What difference has it made / or will make to my ability to achieve what matters to me or other stakeholders?

Did I save time or achieve something new?
Am I more successful generally? How?
Comments:

3) What difference do I feel after being a part of a TESOL Professional learning community?
Comments:

4) Any further suggestions
Appendix 5

A. Coded Samples from Ali’s Transcribed Interviews
B. NVivo Coding Summary by Source
C. List of Initial Codes

A. Coded Samples from Ali’s Transcribed Interviews

Interview 1
I: This is the first round of interviews; this interview has three aims, first, to help develop a precise teacher profile, second, to learn about your early learning interests, aptitude, challenges and achievements, and third, to explore your learning biography during pre-service phase.

Let’s start with your family background, early life and schooling up to grade 12. Please tell me when and where you were born.

R: I was born in Karachi, Pakistan in 1981. I happened to live in an area of Karachi called Lyari, which is not a very developed part of Karachi, and in rough language I would call it the slums of Karachi, with high levels of gang violence, drug infestation, and all kinds of bad things; so that’s where I was brought up.

I: Please share some of your early childhood experiences.

R: My childhood is divided into two parts, the early bits, because my father was working in the Middle Eastern country of Oman; sometimes we’d be there in Oman and sometimes in Pakistan, so those were two completely different lives, different environment, different people, different schools, and of course different standard of living, because Oman is a prosperous Middle Eastern country with all kinds of benefits and a high standard of living. I was studying in a Pakistani school there which was not a great school but way better than some of the schools that I studied in in my early days in Pakistan, because till grade 4 I studied in small schools in and around Lyari. Even in a social sense my life was totally different, because in Pakistan I had, up until a point in my life, I remember the exact day and time actually when I changed, I was 12 years old at that time, but before that, in Pakistan I had friends, I would hang out with my cousins, we would play football, cricket and do many other things that kids do; but in Oman it was different, I was the complete opposite, even when my family used to go to relatives I wouldn’t go with them and stayed at home watching cartoons. This is what I remember of my early life.

I: Can you recall any important events in your early life, related to education?

R: In an educational context, I wouldn’t say there was any particular critical incident; one thing that really had a great impact on my educational development was that I was really into encyclopedias. My parents had bought some encyclopedias for us and even as a kid I remember going through them; because, as you know, growing up back then was much different than kids growing up today. Now, a kid would be more interested in Facebook compared to a kid of yesteryears who would be more interested in faces and books. A modern kid plays video games, while a kid from our time played actual games. Nowadays kids love Twitter, while in the past they loved Twinkle, Twinkle. So there’s a world of difference between the different worlds of kids from our time and kids today. For me, the way to educational and mental adventure was the reading of the encyclopedias that we had, and as a kid I was more interested in Alexander the Great and the invasion of the Normans and things like that; but even that, I would say, was outside the class. When I look at it from a formal setting, my early days are just a haze, if I’m honest with you. I was just an average student, later I became one of the better students and in terms of my English I would always stand out, but not in the early days; in the early days I was just ‘one of the girls’ quote unquote.

I: You just mentioned some event which transformed your life; would you like to share that?

R: That happened later in life, around 1999 or 2000, that’s why I didn’t mention it earlier because were asking about my early childhood; what happened was that I was in college, because of some issues I wanted to drop out of college, I didn’t want to pursue my studies, because education is not just ‘going’ to college, it’s a commitment, and I thought myself unfit to deal with all the baggage that came with it; I just wanted to do a small job somewhere, but even that thought hadn’t germinated fully, it was in the amoebic stage, you could say I was vacillating and was indecisive. One day my eldest brother asked me what I wanted to do now that I had left college. I told him I would look around and find something to do, and he said something to me that really shook me, and he wasn’t joking or anything, he was dead serious. He
said to me there was a motor garage near the place where he worked and that he knew the owner and would talk to him about taking me under his wing, making me an apprentice and in a few years I’d be a qualified auto mechanic. That idea sounded so outrageous to me that I nearly erupted, the world almost had another Krakatoa, but before the lava started to flow out of the crater of Popocatepetl, my volcanic head, I controlled myself, after all he was my elder brother by 10 years, I just told him that I had other things in mind and let’s just wait and see what happens. In a nutshell, I thought to myself, I’m not going to work as an auto mechanic in the slums of Lyari with a grease smeared black face. For days after that incident I was in a bad mood. That ‘suggestion’ by my brother got me thinking, and I asked myself if I didn’t want to become a ‘grease monkey’ then what was I going to do in life. I started thinking about this seriously because I was at a point in life when I was about to be married, I married quite young, in a couple of years I was going to be married, my parents are old, there’s no other source of income. I was in a quandary. Then I thought to myself, the only thing that I have is my proficiency in English, and I have seen other people use that to earn their bread and butter; so I decided then and there that I’m just going to look at this, I’m going to specialize in English, accumulate a myriad of degrees and certificates so that I’d be able to walk into any job in the world, and from then on it was just a one man mission for me.

I: Please describe your experience as a student in elementary or high school.

R: Elementary school, once again, I would say is still a haze. I just remember I was one of the not so bright students. The memory that I have can be classified under the theme ‘I don’t know what the hell is going on inside the class.’ None of the subjects appealed to me. I remember being in the class and the teacher is writing on the board, he will give us homework which I won’t be able to do; to be honest with you, in elementary school, I don’t remember ever opening my bag at home, like you sit down and study, I never went for tuition ever in my life, that’s why I never understand this stuff about kids going for tuitions or having a private tutor; this idea never existed for us. My parents were concerned about my education but no way near, I would say, the kind of attention and in some cases obsession that I see some parents show, that they are totally, directly involved. Never once in my life my mother or father sat me down and said show me your work and what you’ve done, the kind of thing that you expect. I don’t say this in a grudging sense, my mother is not that well educated, academically that is, but she is an erudite person and very wise, I respect her very much, and she has had a very important role to play in my educational life, but not in the sense of direct involvement. The same goes for my father, he was in fact more detached in that sense; occasionally he would play the dads role, he would ask about the marks I got in the exams but that was about it. Up until the 7th grade it was like that, and half of my education was in Oman and half in Pakistan, in both places it was the same. Once we came back to Pakistan in 1994, I was admitted in one of the better schools in Karachi, not the best but definitely better than those small schools I had studied in inside Lyari. During that time I realized that I was light years ahead of most of the other students; I think part of it also relates to the fact that the two years I spent in Oman, during grades 6 and 7, I don’t know whether it was the classroom environment, or my focus on watching more English cartoons, my English totally transformed and there was a revolution inside my head; before that whenever I’d hear my brothers speaking in English I wouldn’t understand anything, but after my ‘brainstorm’ I became one of them, my English improved greatly, I developed a relatively good accent considering where I come from; before this I don’t remember being better than the others in terms of English, but during that time, during grades 6 and 7 in Oman, the realization didn’t hit, it hit me when I came back to Pakistan. The book that they taught us in our English class was a very good book called Grammar and Comprehension, it was one of those old school thick books, and it had really advanced exercises and all that stuff. It was kind of challenging for me but for the others it was almost impossible. During the exams I would be mobbed by all the other students asking me about different questions, I was like a small time celebrity, I used to feel really important. We had a debate competition and I still remember the roar of the crowd when I finished my debate and I felt like a rock star; that’s the part which brought a revolution in my life, but once again, it was mostly related to English, somewhat also the other subjects but not as much.

I: Where did you get your motivation for learning English and developing your accent?

R: If I’m perfectly honest with you, nowhere, because it just kind of happened. I want to take credit for it, I want to be able to say, ‘you know what, I really work hard at it, I spent sleepless nights, did this and that…’ I’m sorry, the reality is much less romantic than that; I just realized one day that my English was really good and I could keep up a conversation in English, most people around me cannot do that, the way I speak and the way I write. Later in life, once I became a professional, once I really decided to become a
full time teacher, then proficiency in English is a given, it's not such a big deal, before I was comparing myself to the people around me, but now I was in a community of practice with other English teachers and I was just another one of those guys; OK, yeah, it's still better than most other teachers but still. During that time in the early 2000's, when watching a movie or TV show I started paying more attention to listening, how the actors were speaking, how the narrator was speaking and all that; but again, I wouldn't say I had any kind of inspiration, or an inspiring figure, nothing like that.

I: Did you spend some time in memorizing idioms, collocations and phrases in the English language?
R: No, not in the sense of looking in the book, reading them, looking at the meanings and then using them; not in that sense, but mentally I was aware of them. I'm kind of fascinated by idioms and collocations once I hear them. When I'm watching a movie or a TV show and I hear an interesting idiom or a collocation or a structure, I get a jolt; I rewind it and listen to it again, then again and then again because I want to drink in the beauty of that construction; there are some which I always remember, not necessarily idioms or collocations, but certain structures, a way of putting something. Let me give you an example, Arthur Hughes in his book 'Testing for Language Teachers' wants to just say, ‘this is a good idea,’ but the words he uses are, ‘consideration might be given to the advisability of this.’ I loved the way he put it; he has protected himself in so many different ways, it’s really hard to disagree with this, he didn’t make a claim; these kind of things. There was another one where a guy just wants to say ‘I never insult anybody’, and you cannot deny that it was really beautiful the way he put it; incidentally the man who said that was Alfred Hitchcock. I cannot resist telling you the third one where this man wants to say ‘that’s not funny’, but the words he uses to express that are ‘I do not possess a temperament that appreciates the kind of acidulous pleasantry that clearly amuses you.’ For me these are moments of beauty, it’s like watching Wasim Akram bowling at his best. This is the way idioms and collocations and these kind of things clicked for me.

I: Tell me about your achievements or accomplishments during school life.
R: In school life, outside of getting first position in grade 4, which was in a school inside the slums of Lyari, so I'm not sure what the merit of that achievement is; but up until grade 8, as I mentioned before, I was one of the invisible ones. Even in grade 8, when everyone started realizing I was great in English, overall my grades were not good, but in grade 9 my percentage shot up and I would be first in class, and I think part of the reason is that there was a little bit of winnowing; until grade 8 we were studying a lot of stuff, but when we went to grade 9, there was a science group and a general group, that's when some of the more irrelevant stuff went out of the window, and that’s when I was able to show my proficiency in things that I cared about to a certain extent. I stood first in grade 9 and 10, in most semesters, not all, but most, and I got marks in the board exams as well in the general group, it was not great but OK. The best thing was the debate competition, I would always be pitted in the debate competitions; it's just so unfortunate that I was always put in the losing team, that’s the unfortunate thing; for example, there was a debate ‘For and Against’ ‘modern inventions have made life difficult’, and I was arguing ‘For’, ‘Yes they have made it difficult...’ it was a losing cause but I put in my best effort; even after losing I was congratulated as if we had won, and I was mobbed like a celebrity, by guys and girls both; that for me is a bit of an achievement, maybe not official but unofficial; so the first positions and the debates, perhaps at a low level, nothing really high, but still.

I: What were your dreams and hopes on leaving the school?
R: By the time I left school I already had a very low opinion about life, I was a pessimistic person. The idealism that a person has, that feeling of ‘I am superman’, I'm going to conquer the world, I will become a great scientist, I'm going to be the best football player in the world, all these things that kids dream about at a certain point in life, that had already vanished a long time ago for me; I think, maybe, the fact that, not just the reality of the situation, not just getting to know myself and knowing my own limits, I was a laidback person, I could not apply myself to work hard on my studies, I didn’t even try to do that, and even when I did after a little while I’d quit; also the fact about us coming back from Oman, realizing the reality of life in Pakistan, that our standard of living had come down permanently, so I didn’t have any high hopes; perhaps a vague idea of getting a good job sometime in the future, but nothing really concrete.

I: Do you think that your undergraduate studies prepared you well for your higher postgraduate studies?
R: No, because they had nothing to do with what I wanted to do. I wanted to do MA in English, and even that idea was not that well developed in my head, that's why, by mistake, I ended up doing MA in English literature (laughs) because without meeting the prospectus and the course guidelines or anything I just thought to myself I was doing MA English, but later, after a month of starting my studies I realized that the chapters were on Shakespeare, Ben Johnson, Dryden and other figures from English literature. When you look at my undergraduate studies, because I had not chosen English Advanced as one of my subjects, I ended up studying a lot of useless things, like commercial geography and all that extra nonsense that I had to put up with just because I was going to do the BA.

I: Where did you get your TEFL diploma from?

R: My diploma in TEFL was from SPELT, Society of Pakistan English Language Teachers, which is an affiliate of Cambridge; if you go to the Cambridge university website and look at their centers around the world where they run the CELTA courses, they also have SPELT as their affiliates in Pakistan, although they do not offer CELTA, somebody told me that they have started it recently, but at that time they were doing a six month diploma and a one year certificate course they used to call COTE Course of Overseas Teaching English, then they changed it to something else, it was very close to CELTA; now when I look at the setup of CELTA and everything that comes with it, it was based on that, and we who did the six month diploma we attended the same classes. The course that I did, the diploma in TEFL, and another one month course, it was like CELTA, 27 days minus the weekends, six hours a day, with micro teaching initially, then after that real observed teaching, observed by your peers and later by the teachers, by the trainers themselves. That was a really difficult time for me, because it was supposed to be an in-service training course, but I didn't have an English language job at that time, and considering the Pakistani context, I don't think they even had pre-service training courses, the kind that I'm thinking about, like many independent training centres; most of the courses they are offering are in-service courses. Although I had taught English before that for 8 months but I was totally different from all the others inside that class, because there were professors from Aga Khan University doing that course, there were experienced teachers from schools like Beacon House, and teachers who were earning a lot of money, and with a lot of experience, very well versed in teaching techniques and that kind of stuff, having already done previous courses before their diploma in TEFL. Compared to them I was like a babe in the woods. Perhaps I would have learned more if I had had more teaching experience or at least more recent experience because my last job, which was also my first job, was 2 years before this TEFL course, I didn't teach for 2 years. So, that diploma itself, great on the CV but as a learning experience, not much to write home about. I did that diploma in 2005 during my Masters.

I: When you started working as a teacher, after the diploma and the Masters, did you face any pedagogical challenges - challenges related to your teaching and students learning?

R: Yes, when I think about it, honestly, even after doing my first Masters, that was just a Masters in English literature, and the diploma was done without any prior, serious, teaching experience, so that's why when I got the job in 2007, the good job, in a way, I was groping in the dark, and I kept groping in the dark for the next 4 years that I taught in schools. My Masters in Applied Linguistics changed me dramatically because it gave me more background on the field, more of an intellectual outlook, and I was able to make changes inside the school; and it wasn't until I got this job, the current job, that I'm really starting to feel the benefits of all the professional learning that I had done in my life, because before here, I had taught in schools, not counting the 8 months I taught English in my friends institute prior to my Masters and my diploma when I didn’t even know what I was doing. When I look at my post diploma and post Masters teaching, it was done in schools, and that is not a very conducive environment for learning English.

Interview 2

I: This is the second round of interviews; this interview again has 3 aims, first, to explore your learning biography during in-service phase, second, to track your efforts for professional learning and development, and your achievements in various professional development related activities, third, to understand your ideas and experiences about the nature and process of professional learning and development.

Let’s start with your professional life and your choice of language teaching profession. Please tell me about your professional life, how do you see it?
I: But you still have enough motivation to perform well, as far as the job is concerned.

R: Well, for me it’s not really complicated because I look at myself as, maybe a plumber would look at himself, or maybe a fruit seller or anybody else, this is the only way I know of making money, I’m into the business, otherwise I don’t see myself as being in the profession, because I don’t really enjoy it, not because there’s anything wrong with the profession itself, it’s just that I’m a lazy person, it’s hard work for me, and everyday going to work is hell for me in a way; that’s it, nothing complicated there, really.

I: This is a kind of repetition, but why did you choose this teaching profession?

R: I cannot resist giving this reference from the movie Troy in which the character of Briseis asks Achilles why he chose ‘this’, and Brad Pitt playing Achilles asks, ‘chose what’, and she says, ‘why did you choose to be a great warrior,’ Achilles says, ‘I never chose anything, I was born and here I am.’ In many ways that is the situation with me too, but, when I look at it at the micro level, it’s just that once I got to that point in life where one starts to feel some kind of responsibility, and I had seen some people with not so much ability opening a language institute and making some kind of living based on teaching English, and I thought to myself this was one way for me to make money too. I remember racking my brain at that time and thinking about many different things, I had thought about doing LLB very, very seriously, but all these ideas were half cooked, and once I realized that this ability in English has already given me a head start over so many people so why not develop this and make this my livelihood.

I: Did you have any role models in this profession?

R: If there are, I’m sure my ego will not permit me to say so, but really, honestly I’m telling you, I’m thinking hard right now, I don’t think there were any, especially during that phase in my life. Now, being much more professionally mature and all that, I’m in a better position to appreciate something good when I see it. You know the saying ‘the price of a diamond can only be appreciated or appraised by a jeweler, for a lay person an uncut diamond would be just like another piece of stone. Perhaps it was my professional blindness at that time which did not permit me to see anything special in anyone or to see them as role models; so my entire early professional life was pretty much based on groping in the dark and trial and error, so, no, I didn’t have any role models. Also, I might add, it’s really hard to have a role model in this profession, after all it’s not a very glamorous profession, people don’t make a lot of money, especially in that context where I was growing up.

I: Let’s talk about your in-service professional learning and development. How do you see your in-service professional learning and development?

R: For me, most of my in-service learning, if I were to use one word here, I would say autodidact. I’m an autodidact, whatever I did, whatever qualifies as professional development, you see, because one of your favorite writers, Day, he defines professional development as all the activities and all the things that are done consciously for some kind of improvement, loosely that’s what he said. When I look at all the things that I’ve done consciously, to bring some kind of improvement in myself, not a lot of them have been successful; perhaps one thing brought some kind of improvement in me and that’s reflection. It’s only after I did 034 that I found a big argument about the word reflection itself, but I’m not going to go deep into that, let’s just say thinking about myself, about my teaching, and investing my intellectual powers on that, that’s the one thing that helped me have some kind of learning; because for me, it’s like telling a little kid a scary story, once you tell them, that’s not the end of it, those stories will haunt them for weeks or months and
they have nightmares and stuff; for me, when I do a lesson, that's not the end of it, depending on the kind of lesson of course, not each and every lesson, but depending on the topic and the kind of interaction involved, I think about it, and I think about it a lot, and I ask myself a hundred different questions in a hundred different ways, about why something happened, what should have happened; so this thinking, this reflection has been my main pillar, it’s been like professional development for me.

I: This process of reflection on your work, is it automatic, or you have to make some kind of conscious effort?
R: It's a combination of both, because the process of thinking, that's automatic, that switches itself on automatically, but then channeling that mental process into a certain direction that requires some kind of mental energy, because it's so easy to just think about it and feel frustrated and then just forget it, so easy for that to happen, but I try to channel my thoughts, and then I keep thinking and thinking. There are some writers, very few, that I respect, and reading their works I get the feeling that this person is actually trying to say something; he did not write this book just because his publisher told him to write because they had to compete with a rival publisher, and this writer has to write a book in 3 months and he comes up with 300 pages of drivel and they put it in the market and everyone buys it just because it’s from Cambridge or McGraw or whatever. Sometimes that happens and you see all these crappy books in the market; but if I see a book by a writer whom I respect, someone like Kathleen Bailey, or James Dean Brown, some of these writers that you feel as if they are Penny Ur, you feel that these people are talking to you and saying something sensible, then I consult their books. One can never expect to get any direct answers from them of course, no book is a readymade recipe of answers anyway. I would say, perhaps, this is my research background coming in, I do some kind of a literature review of that topic if I can, very brief one, and then all of that goes inside and I let it simmer; at this point I move back, and I put myself in auto pilot, and then the concoction cooks till I have a eureka moment. Sometimes I grab the bull by the horns and find the answers that I'm looking for, and sometimes, more often than not, I reach a cul-de-sac, and then I close the chapter and say to myself forget it for now, you’ll be frustrated, we’ll live to fight another day, I still have some professional years left in me.

I: Can you recall any learning experience or experiences, up till now, including this context, which impacted your professional life deeply?
R: I think I referred to this in the previous interview as well, it was my experience in the PDU that completely transformed me. I went into it, had a wonderful time, and by the time I came out I had completely metamorphosed. In this context where the observation system is a complete part, and a permanent mainstay of our educational system here at the ELI; for many people this is the first time in their lives they are being observed, which is incredible considering some of these people have taught for 10 or 20 years, and they say this is the first time they are being observed. This is something really perplexing because observation, whether it’s from the institution or for summative reasons and evaluative reasons, or whether it's done by peers for developmental reasons, it’s a great way to actually look at the teaching process, and to delineate different things and look at them one by one and then put them together, and to think that so many people coming from so many different parts of the world, are not engaged with it, it really tells you that a lot of us are missing out on something; and coming here and being observed myself once as a teacher, and as a member of the PDU and observing so many other guys, in many ways it’s like going on a peregrination, voyaging to different countries and tasting the best dishes of different cuisines from all over the world; so many people with different teaching backgrounds trying to do their best; that I think was something that really changed me, and like I told you in the last interview, when I came out of the PDU and went back to teaching I struggled for a little while, but once I got on my feet I said to myself, ‘I can go anywhere in the world and teach in any context.’ I consider that to be a massive leap for myself, because up until very recently I was saying that ‘cursed was the day when I chose the teaching profession.’ Mostly because I had to put up with so much crap during school teaching; most of my life was spent in school teaching and putting up with so much crap from so many different people, and I always used to say to whoever would listen that I made the wrong choice, and that every day was torture for me. At least now I could say that things have changed for the better, and I’m not desperate to get out of this job, in fact I could do it for the rest of my life now, it’s not as painful as it used to be.

I: Let’s move on and talk about means and models that you utilized for professional learning and development. How did you manage your professional learning and development; tell me about your journey on the way to becoming a highly effective TESOL professional?
R: Michael Wallace talks about three different models of professional development; many authors talk about many different models, but right now I’m talking about Michael Wallace’s three models, the Craft Model, the Applied Science Model, and the reflective model. I’m going to talk about the Craft Model here, which talks about the teacher and the trainer as the apprentice and the master; I remember when I was doing the course in Norwich, our trainer told us that this model was really dominant some decades ago, but then it came really down with the rise of the reflective approach, and I don’t know how empirical this is but he said that now the master teacher approach is making a comeback. I think to myself that this is one model that could work for me actually, if such a thing existed, but in the absence of this I created a fantasy master for myself, and that fantasy master teacher was myself, and I would talk to myself; this whole process of long reflection was not always one way, it was as if two people inside me were talking to each other, one part of me would ask a question, whatever was in my mind, and the other part was responsible for providing the answer, and that other part was the one which did all the thinking, and which went out and did the literature review, and which let all the other stuff to simmer and come up with an answer. So, for me, to always look at my professional learning and to see where I was yesterday and where I am right now, I think that I did most of it myself, although if I were in a better situation and working within the Craft Model, or even within the reflective model, because different people have spoken about the reflective model in different ways. Another model, the developmental model, you approach teachers in three different ways; depending on their level of abstraction you either lead them directly or you help them along, or the non-directive approach. So for me the leading and non-directive approach could have worked, and now when I look at myself as a trainer, because I was involved with the PDU and I might go again even now in my coordination job, so one way or another I’m involved in coaching and training, so I say to myself that if I use this model, I could really help teachers, and if I could have had that in my time things could have been different, but hey, C’est la vie.

I: The way you use the Craft Model, again, it is a kind of reflection, a kind of very deep reflection that you’re able to connect with your alter ego.

R: Yes, it became the reflection model because of the absence of the real master, that’s why, for me, it became just the reflection model, but this one could have been better for me; just look at the teaching context, what is the biggest beef that people have with the silent approach? As the name suggests, in the silent approach the teacher is just silent, you elicit everything from the students, even simple things like sounds, let’s just say the sound connected to the letter B, and one of the biggest beefs people have with this is that there is a lot of time wasting in that. Sometimes you could just give something to the students very easily and let them reflect more on something worthwhile, but they waste so much time on simple things. So, having my own alter ego or my doppelganger act as my master, I wasted a lot of time, because my alter ego was myself, that alter ego did not have a lot of knowledge. If that other party had been a real person with 20-30 years of experience, that person would have helped me save a lot of time. Like the great Imran Khan once said about Saeed Anwar, ‘as far as talent is concerned Saeed Anwar is not far behind Lara and Tendulkar,’ those guys were the big guns at that time, but talent is not everything. You have to be at the right place at the right time; so that’s the thing. I could have all my preferences but I had no control about where I was born, what kind of things I grew up with, and what kind of job I got first; so I had to make do.

Just an aside, since I mentioned Brian Lara, I remember that he wrote in his book that as a kid he would practice alone, and while practicing batting he would place 2 flower pots as fielders, then throw the ball at the wall in front of him and play shots on the rebound from the wall trying to avoid the flower pot fielders; that’s how he says he practiced his stroke play. That is not an ideal situation, would have been so much better playing with real fielders and a real bowler who would bowl different deliveries. I’m not saying my Brian Lara, I’m just saying that when one finds oneself in a handicap position and that person is thinking of doing something which is not possible within those means, and you come up with different options.

I: Let’s talk about the challenges that you might have faced on this journey of professional growth.

R: There are massive challenges, this is a path not easy to tread, like Kirk Douglas said about show business, he said it humorously but it’s very true, he’s surrounded by many other actors and producers and directors and he says humorously, ‘show business is not an easy business, just look at all the casualties around me.’ He said it just for fun but of course there are so many casualties in show business. In professional development, for me, the biggest hindrance was the fact that I had to deal with people, for example, in the current context, people complain about how observers look at things differently and all
that, and ‘I’m doing things in one way but the observer has a different view point;’ so in my entire life, every time I’m doing something or I’m trying to learn something or make an experiment or try something new, you’re surrounded by people who are mentally light years behind you, and they’re asking you really dumb questions, and you’re in a position because they happen to be superior, you have to defend different things. I remember one incident when I had to, perhaps beg is a strong word here, but I actually had to beg the academic coordinators and the principal of my branch and the principal of the other branch in the school that I used to teach in Pakistan, I had to beg them to hold a meeting just to convince them to gather together and make a curriculum, at the moment there’s nothing there, there’s no English language program, we just have a book, ‘Oxford Reading Circles,’ the teachers come and teach chapters 1 to 10 and that is their English course, let’s have a curriculum, let’s have a superordinate goal, let’s have intervening goals divided into different levels, then in each and every level those intervening objectives are further broken down into goals and aims and objective for each and every lesson; it was a complete waste of time. I also remember talking to a person of authority within that organization about how to create a curriculum and what are the steps involved in curriculum development and what are the purposes of that. He listens to me for half an hour and then he goes, ‘I know what you’re talking about, but what’s your point?’ And once again, to quote Kirk Douglas from the end of the Stanley Kubrick directed film ‘The Paths of Glory’ he says that, ‘General if you don’t know the answer to that one, I pity you.’ I felt exactly like Kirk Douglas at that time and said to myself, ‘if you’re still asking me this question, what else do I want then, that’s the end of it.’ When one is on the path of professional development you need to be surrounded by people who have the same vision, who are actually willing to take risks, who understand the importance of trying out new things, or who, at least know something about education. If you’re surrounded by people who are dunces, you can forget about it. They will say something stupid just to sound intelligent, and waste your time. I remember in the same setting I once said to someone, a person in middle management, I said that, ‘it’s really hard to work in an organization like this when the people above us are not trained to be educators,’ and he said, quite rightly, forget about being trained to be educators, these people were not educated themselves, some of these people came straight out of a madrassa or something, and they were running the whole school and the English department, the Math department, the Science department, being in charge of running the Science exhibition and all that. I don’t necessarily want to bad mouth those guys, they were trying to do the best they could within their means, but for someone like me, for a time, it was a good learning experience for me, but there’s only so much you can learn within a small setting, sooner or later you just want to break free and go further ahead. I think that if I were surrounded by people who are at least mentally close to me or the same level as me, and who had the same vision, it would have been so much better, and this something I have seen here. I don’t have a car so I usually come and go with a different colleague, depends on who has what kind of schedule, and sometimes I’m with one colleague on our way to, or from the institution, and we are together for an hour or so, and if we happen to be in the same level, we discuss the lesson, what we did with it, what we could have done with it. This whole discussion, in one module if I’m spending one hour with a colleague every day in the car, that’s about 60-70 hours in discussion for two modules; this is an incredibly different situation here.

I: Let’s talk about another important area of professional learning. How do you see the role of professional learning communities in educational institutions or educational settings?

R: Up until now, I have never seen a professional learning community in the institutions that I have worked in, so I really cannot talk about it intelligently, but I could see massive potential for this, because, like I told you before, in chance situations, like when I’m going or coming from the university with my colleagues, in chance conversations we just happen to talk about lessons, how we taught and what we did, and I saw that as a very important learning area for myself. If these things become more organized, not just because I need a ride; we actually come together, we set a time and we sit and we think about things together, or we come up with different answers for different things, or whichever ways these professional communities function; I think there’s massive potential for it.

I: Because PLC’s also encompass the Craft Model in it. There is a kind of Master apprentice relationship in a PLC.

R: I do see massive potential for this, and I would prefer this a hundred times over one off workshop system. You only have to look at the names of the workshops, we’re going to have another workshop week, I haven’t seen what the PDU is doing yet, but I could bet that even reading the names of some of those workshops would make you puke; like last year one guy was talking about ‘Differential Testing.’ I
don't know but this person must have given this presentation in South Korea or something, or he must have made this presentation 10 years ago, and now he has come here... what are you trying to do here? So these one off workshops are really painful for me. On the other hand, a professional learning community, although I haven't been involved in it, but I have been involved, one way or the other, with some of the people who were part of the professional learning community in the current organization, and I've had one to one discussions about, when we were teaching the same level and we were commuting together, so perhaps if more people are together and they sit together for this purpose, it could only be for the better. This is one thing that I want to see and I need to see.

I: How do you see the role of your colleagues in your professional development?
R: As far as the colleagues are concerned, I think only in the current situation, I could say that some level of learning has taken place, because this is the first time in my life I'm surrounded by people who are professionally my peers, before that, again, in the land of the blind, the one eyed man is the king. In the current situation I have had one on one discussions with my colleagues and sometimes observing their lessons. I really saw a lot of benefit and potential for growth for myself. I think that's why I consider my time in the PDU to be so precious, even though I did not want to, but the nature of my job required that I interact with the other teachers, not only observing their lessons but the way I designed the feedback sessions after coming back from England, it required a lot of deep discussion about the lesson; so all of this interaction, which is part of my job, really helped me improve. In the current capacity, or as a normal teacher, or in the coordination, it's not part of my job to be involved academically with my colleagues, but I think that if I get a chance where I am academically involved with my colleagues... once again, when I say colleagues, they were my peers, and people who are mentally at the same level as myself, I could learn a lot from them.

I: How do you compare the role of your pre-service training, and in-service training and learning opportunities in your development as an active language teacher?
R: For me, there was no pre-service training, unfortunately. The diploma in TEFL that I did in 2005, in some ways I see that as pre-service training for me, but the reality of the situation is that it was not designed to be a pre-service course, it was an in-service course aimed at a completely different audience, and although I had taught a little bit at that time, but I don't think that in-service courses are for people who only have a few months, or maybe one year's teaching experience. I believe a person needs more than that, before he or she does any kind of in-service training; so I haven't had any pre-service training, I could not compare that, and to be honest with you, I may have mentioned this before, I don't think the idea even exists of pre-service training in a Pakistani context. The courses that all these organizations, the SPELTS, TBS, ERDC's, all the courses they provide are in-service courses, and I guess the field of teacher development and trainer development still has to develop a lot more in the Pakistani context, and maybe then the idea of pre-service training becomes an established idea right now, otherwise, now, every Tom, Dick and harry can become a teacher without pre-service training, or an licensing or anything.

I: How do you see your in-service training?
R: The in-service training, if I compare all of them, if I consider external courses, the diploma in TEFL, another one that I did from TRC, and the ones provided by the organizations that I was working in, it's really hard for me to judge those. I would talk about them the same way that I talk about ELT books, there's a lot of fluff out there, very little to pick out from, from these workshops and trainings and whatever, and at the end of the day, the real learning that happened for me was with myself, with my fantasy craft guy with me; so not a lot of good things to say for me right there.

I: What’s the role of professional context in your professional development?
R: For me, that's absolutely key, because it depends on the context, like in the Pakistani context English was being taught because it happened to be one of the subjects, where they're giving you failed science and math teachers as English teachers, so in a context like that it's really hard to do your job properly, or even to motivate yourself to do your job properly. On the other hand, in a professional context where everybody is talking about teaching and learning English, whatever imperfections there are, that context at least gives you the motivation to do whatever you want to do on your own, in your own style; whether it's a technical course, whether it's about talking to your colleagues, whether it's about creating a professional learning community, or whether it is about more, deep reflection. I look at myself, here in this context, sometimes I plan one lesson for 2 or 3 hours, sometimes I'm amazed at myself, why am I spending so much time here, I don't have to do this, my office hours are over, I should be home; but because the professional context is such, that it's all about objectives. I don’t want to get into the debate about whether

176
they're serious about the SLO's or not, but I'm given an objective here, and by the end of the lesson my students are supposed to exhibit this competence; I take it like that, and this professional context makes me study things in a different way, it makes me create extra material, I have created a lot of extra material in the recent past, because the more I think about achieving the objective, the more imperfect the Headway book looks to me, not because it's imperfect but because of the context, the Saudi students. It is supposed to be Middle Eastern version but they didn't change anything, they just put hijabs on some women and they deleted the beach pictures, but academically the content is the same, I taught the Headway book 10 years ago, that was in my first teaching job, they haven't changed anything there. On the other hand, in the previous context, I wasn't motivated to do anything, because there was no incentive for me, I don't mean any monetary incentive but any kind of incentive, nobody cares, so just let it go. I think perhaps, and this idea hasn't really matured itself in my head, but speaking to you right now, this could be the single most important factor, not necessarily is, but could be, the most important factors in people's professional development.

I: Last question, about your future plans for CPD, continued professional development. What are your plans for further professional development in your field?

R: Very interesting question. I've only been in this professional context for 2 and a half years, and I haven't been in one position for more than six months. I was a teacher for six months, I was drafted into the testing unit, after a few weeks I was drafted into the PDU, worked in it for about a year, and then I left the PDU and taught for one module again, now I've been drafted into the coordination unit, and I'm actually thinking about joining some different units even now, maybe the research unit, or maybe even teach some of these classes in the English department, as an assistant lecturer or whatever. I don't know what it is, I don't know what is making me do this, I still haven't found the thing that I'm comfortable with, or is it that I just want to explore the teaching field. At the moment, with all this aspiration, there is one field that I feel myself more comfortable in, and that is teacher development, and training in workshops; but I want to explore this further, and I'm going to keep exploring it, and I think it's going to be one of two things. I either see myself as a trainer, or I see myself teaching at a, maybe doctoral level is a little too ambitious, but at the Masters level; but then again, that would also be a taster and either I'll find my thing and I'll stick to it,
or maybe I’m just destined to be a professional migrant, I’ll just keep going here and there, like a professional tourist. Let’s see where time takes me.

Interview 3
I: This is our third round of interviews, and this interview has 3 aims, first, to take stock of your professional learning and development challenges and opportunities in the Saudi Arabian context. Second, to learn about the means and models of professional learning and development that you have utilized for professional excellence in the present context; and third, to understand the nature of professional competence effective in the present context.

Let’s talk about your professional learning at the ELI. How do you see your experience of teaching English to Saudi EFL learners?
R: Just so that things are clear for me, this current interview is about the current working environment, or is it about my Saudi Experience? Because I have previous Saudi experience as well.
I: Yes, you can talk about that as well.
R: OK. Personally, if I were to put it very succinctly, I would say I enjoy it very much, because I have my own philosophy about human beings, which I was surprised later to find out was also an episode of The Twilight Zone, people are the same all over, and the general ways and themes of having relationships with people, is the same; so, I could get along with youngsters, young adults in Pakistan, and in most other contexts I’m sure I’d be able to get along. In this context these young learners, like I told you in the first interview, my first focus is usually to create some kind of a bond with the students, and I find it really easy with these guys, in so many different ways, sometimes with one little flick of the wrist... For example, I have a history of trying to learn Arabic all my life; I spent the first 12 or 13 years of my life in Oman, an Arabic speaking country, I studied Arabic grammar in Pakistan, and now I’ve been in Saudi Arabia for around 4 years I still cannot speak Arabic, so sometimes this is a constant theme of jokes in my classes. In some ways this also helps them to have, let’s just say, better self-esteem, because it’s easy for so many people to be discouraged when they have difficulty learning a certain language, and they can lose motivation very quickly; so, in my case, when they see me then they think about themselves, and say, ‘hey, we’re not so bad after all, this guy’s like us.’ So, having this personal bond with the students really helps me to enjoy my work; and as far as competence is concerned, up until now I’ve only taught in 2 different countries so I can only speak of these 2, but I’m pretty sure, and once again I don’t want to make any bombastic claims without much empirical and personal experience, but I’m pretty sure that if I were to teach in different places in the world, I don’t think these students would be any better or any worse than most others. They are general human beings, and yes, they do have some handicaps, considering that the educational system in this country is very young, and with the current king, King Abdullah starting his massive drive for education and sending the Saudi youth to foreign countries for scholarships, I think, I’ve heard different figures but it’s in the tens of thousands, that boys and girls go to foreign countries for education and come back. It’s started recently, it hasn’t even been a generation yet, so the educational system is still young, they come to the university level and they’re still not very well advanced and all that, not just in the sense of language competence, although they’re supposed to have learned some English at school, but in most other cases as well. Taking that into consideration, which doesn’t really reflect anything about them it’s just the social structure of this country at the moment, so, I think that, yeah, I enjoy it, I love the professional context, and the Saudi students.
I: Do you think that your previous professional learning and development had sufficiently prepared you to perform as an excellent teacher in the current context?
R: Very hard to say yes, and very hard to say no, because, like I have said so many times, all my life, before coming here, I had taught in schools, except for that 10 month stint at the very beginning of my career when I taught in that language institute, schools completely different and language institute is completely different, in every way, it’s almost like another profession. You could say that I was an English teacher there, I’m an English teacher here, yes, but once again, they’re antipodal to each other. It’s really hard for me to say that those experiences helped me, but again, I would find it very hard to say no, because all the books that I had read, and all the experiments that I had tried in different contexts, in one way or another, they were there somewhere in my mind, they were not just going to waste, and perhaps in some way they were helping lay the foundations of an intellectual structure, albeit a very tenuous one, but some kind of structure was there, then coming to this environment and coming to terms with these
conditions, I don’t think I had to start from scratch; in some ways I did have to start from scratch, but not in most ways, and after that it was just continuing on from the foundations.

I: You had already completed a Master’s degree in Pakistan in the relevant field, and got a certificate course from SPELT. Do you think they prepared you for this context?

R: Once again, hard to say; my second Masters, which was really the one I consider to be a real course that I’ve done in my life, I don’t really rate my first Masters because that was a Masters in English Literature, that has nothing to do with teaching, and my course in SPELT at that time I had only had about 10 months of teaching experience, and then I had a 2 year break, between my last job and the course, so if I were engaged in teaching and had had some experience, not massive amounts, but just some experience, the course in SPELT would have been more beneficial for me, but in that case, I don’t know what kind of example to give, but for me, I was like a baby trying to swallow solid food at that time. Intellectually and professionally I was a baby and I was being presented with these pedagogical feasts, which I feel helped me in anyway, so I don’t think those had a massive impact on me; however, it’s not like the SPELT course was a complete waste, because as my career progressed I would go back and look at the stuff I had studied and reflect on some of the stuff, and in many ways, having done most of the things, at least I wasn’t nervous about doing those things again. This thing about preparing a lesson plan, and actually have one of your teachers and trainers sit inside the class and teaching in front of them, this is all part of the experience, and in some ways, professionally, it helped me to come out of my shell, but as far as the core learning is concerned, those course did not help me; once again, I repeat, not because there was anything wrong with the course, but because of my own personal circumstances. As far as my Masters degree in Applied Linguistics is concerned, I think that helped me but in a very primitive way, because it was a one year Masters course with 6 or 7 modules, really nice modules, but then again, in a one year course you have a TESL module which is looking at 6 or 7 different core areas, how much time was spent on one core area, 9 or 10 hours, and then a project, 2 projects; so it was really a taster, but at least it helped me to decide about what I wanted to choose in the future.

I: Do you see any change in your identity, or whatever, as an English language teacher, over the years?

R: This one I could answer; I see that early in my career my proficiency in language forced me into this channel, into this method of earning bread and butter, and I was cursing myself every day. From a person who hated his job I have now converted into being a person who, it’s hard to say likes his job, because I don’t like jobs at all. Reminds me of this proverb where this camel is asked, ‘when you’re carrying a load, do you enjoy going uphill or downhill?’ The camel answers, ‘Screw both of them, don’t put any load on me!’ Just like that camel I don’t like any kind of load, or job, but at least now after all these experiences working in different settings, and growing up as a human being and becoming older, with so many different parts of myself coming down or dying out as a person, emotional development, or de-development or whatever, I see myself as a different person than I was maybe 10 or even 5 or 6 years ago; because up until 2010 I was still under the condition that I was cursing myself every day for choosing this profession, but I don’t anymore. Part of it, maybe, not only because I really am a language teacher right now but also because of the current institutional environment, our job is very relaxing, that could also be a reason...
Document

Internals\Interviews 1-6\2-ALI-INTERVIEWS

Nodes\2- ALI\Birth in humble circumstances

No 0.0015 1

1 SHAH 3/31/2015 6:10 PM

R: I was born in Karachi, Pakistan in 1981. I happened to live in an area of Karachi called Lyari, which is not a very developed part of Karachi, and in rough language I would call it the slums of Karachi, with high levels of gang violence, drug infestation, and all kinds of bad things; so that’s where I was brought up.

Nodes\2- ALI\Interest in encyclopedias

No 0.0017 1

1 SHAH 7/24/2015 3:19 PM

I wouldn’t say there was any particular critical incident; one thing that really had a great impact on my educational development was that I was really into encyclopedias. My parents had bought some encyclopedias for us and even as a kid I remember going through them; because, as you know, growing up back then was much different than kids growing up today.

Nodes\2- ALI\An average student but good at English

No 0.0015 1

1 SHAH 7/24/2015 3:20 PM

When I look at it from a formal setting, my early days are just a haze, if I’m honest with you. I was just an average student, later I became one of the better students and in terms of my English I would always stand out, but not in the early days; in the early days I was just ‘one of the girls’ quote unquote.

Nodes\2- ALI\Natural talent for English

No 0.0133 2

1 SHAH 9/5/2015 1:42 PM

I: Where did you get your motivation for learning English and developing your accent?
R: If I’m perfectly honest with you, nowhere, because it just kind of happened. I want to take credit for it, I want to be able to say, ‘you know what, I really work hard at it, I spent sleepless nights, did this and that…’ I’m sorry, the reality is much less romantic than that; I just realized one day that my English was really good and I could keep up a conversation in English, most people around me cannot do that, the way I speak and the way I write. Later in life, once I became a professional, once I really decided to become a full time teacher, then proficiency in English is a given, it’s not such a big deal, before I was comparing myself to the people around me, but now I was in a community of practice with other English teachers and I was just another one of those guys; OK, yeah, it’s still better than most other teachers but still. During that time in the early 2000’s, when watching a movie or TV show I started paying more attention to listening, how the actors were speaking, how the narrator was speaking and all that; but again, I wouldn’t say I had any kind of inspiration, or an inspiring figure, nothing like that.
whenever I'd hear or my focus on watching more English cartoons, my English totally transformed and there was a revolution inside my head; before schools I had studied in inside Lyari. During that time I realized that I was light years ahead of most of the other students. I came back to Pakistan in 1994, I was admitted in one of the better schools in Karachi, not the best but definitely better than those small schools I had studied in inside Lyari. During that time I realized that I was light years ahead of most of the other students; I think part of it also relates to the fact that the two years I spent in Oman, during grades 6 and 7, I don't know whether it was the classroom environment, or my focus on watching more English cartoons, my English totally transformed and there was a revolution inside my head; before that whenever I’d hear my brothers speaking in English I wouldn’t understand anything, but after my ‘brainstorm’ I became one of them, my
English improved greatly, I developed a relatively good accent considering where I come from; before this I don’t remember being better than the others in terms of English, but during that time, during grades 6 and 7 in Oman, the realization didn’t hit, it hit me when I came back to Pakistan. The book that they taught us in our English class was a very good book called Grammar and Comprehension, it was one of those old school thick books, and it had really advanced exercises and all that stuff. It was kind of challenging for me but for the others it was almost impossible. During the exams I would be mobbed by all the other students asking me about different questions, I was like a small time celebrity, I used to feel really important. We had a debate competition and I still remember the roar of the crowd when I finished my debate and I felt like a rock star; that’s the part which brought a revolution in my life, but once again, it was mostly related to English, somewhat also the other subjects but not as much.

My first Masters was in English, and the name of the subject itself is deceptive; I thought that would make me a Master of English, my English was great to begin with, and excuse me for saying that again and again, because I’m not one of those who consider false modesty to be a virtue, I don’t go about saying, ‘oh I know nothing!’ I’m not like that; if I’m good at something then that’s the way it is.

By the time I left school I already had a very low opinion about life, I was a pessimistic person. The idealism that a person has, that feeling of ‘I am superman’, I’m going to conquer the world, I will become a great scientist, I’m going to be the best football player in the world, all these things that kids dream about at a certain point in life, that had already vanished a long time ago for me; I think, maybe, the fact that, not just the reality of the situation, not just getting to know myself and knowing my own limits, I was a laidback person, I could not apply myself to work hard on my studies, I didn’t even try to do that, and even when I did after a little while I’d quit; also the fact about us coming back from Oman, realizing the reality of life in Pakistan, that our standard of living had come down permanently, so I didn’t have any high hopes; perhaps a vague idea of getting a good job sometime in the future, but nothing really concrete.

Once again, I think the only challenge for me was the reality that I’m not a great student; didn’t matter how much I tried, I just couldn’t be one of the good ones. I remember that I had a friend who was really rich and his father had a lot of influence, and perhaps the father bribed the teachers, because this boy would know the content of the exam papers, and he happened to be my best friend at that time, and needless to say, he would tell me the content, and I remember he told me about one particular mathematics question, with these particular numbers is going to be in the final paper, don’t understand it, don’t think about it, just memorize the process; I think because it was an important question and carried a lot of numbers; for weeks he kept telling me, but true to form, I didn’t memorize that question; there was something about me, really, and I think that is still my outlook on life, I’m not really incredibly serious about most things, and at that time, as long as the reality of having to earn, let’s just say, my bread and butter, once that reality came into my mind that’s when I really seriously started pursuing a career in language teaching, but at that time that feeling had not sunk into me, so I used to take everything lightly; but the reality sometimes used to punch me in the face and I would realize I was not a great student, that feeling itself was the only thing that bothered me; but around grade 12 there was a serious, let’s just say, issue for me, and that was continuing my education, because from grades 11, 12, 13 and 14 I did not attend college or university. I was a regular student, I was not a private candidate, I was not an external student, but I would not go to the university, because of many reasons. Number one, I used to consider, and I still consider, the educational system to be absolutely rotten, they force people to read stuff and learn and memorize, stuff they don’t need and will never need for the rest of their lives, and it was clear to me even at that stage when I was in my first or second year of college, it was clear to me that I want to be a teacher, the only thing I could teach is English. I decided I wanted to do MA in English, but before MA I had to do BA and before that I had to clear intermediate, and to pass intermediate and all these levels you have to study commercial geography, banking, accounting, Urdu literature, I mean, give me a break; so, my approach to education was kind of lax, that was the reason for my not attending college. Coming back to the point about continuing my education, that was a strange time in our family; my dad had just lost his job and we had come back from Oman to Pakistan, and my dad didn’t have a steady job at that time, and for the next 2 or 3 years my dad tried to go back to Oman and find a job there, but once the reality sank in that, no, we have to stay in Pakistan, there is no going back to Oman; also my dad was old and we couldn’t expect him to be the main breadwinner of the family, so my brothers started working, I myself was not old enough to start a job, I had just finished school, and I remember when I was in my second or third year that my father had to ask for a concession in my fee at the university, which was not a lot considering it was a government university, but even that fee looked like a waste of money let’s just say; and even for me the attachment was not that great, because I was just thinking it would be beneficial for me in the long run, after four years when I’d be doing my Masters; so in every way I was in a perilous position, financially, academically, you name it; let’s just say it was not a great part of my life; when we talk about it privately, I call it my dark years.
I chose subjects like International Relations, which I thought would be interesting, well, maybe not interesting, but less painful; so that was my approach during that time. I was laid back, not serious, but every now and then, I'd be haunted by my Masters and dream of being a teacher and I'd say to myself, ‘don’t look back, just march ahead, do it, get it done, get it over with.’

The Applied Linguistics Masters, once again, I think in some ways considering those qualifiers that I told you about, that it’s just a taster, then I think the standard was OK, related to some modules, other modules could have been better, like the research module, we were taught about different research traditions and how to make questionnaires and how to do literature review and different components of a research proposal and we had to make a research proposal, and when I look back at that stuff, I think that could have been better. On the other hand, some other modules were really good, like pedagogical grammar was great. TESL was the best because it was really hands on, and we had to do micro teaching and there were so many other projects we had to do, so I rate that slightly high; but once again, only as a taster, something that is going to set you up for the rest of your life on continuous professional development, but not as a complete thing in itself.

Yes, after my first Masters and my diploma in TEFL, I did that diploma in 2005, we haven’t spoken about that yet but it will come up. By that time my CV looked reasonably good, in a Karachi context. A friend of mine who was with me in that TEFL diploma called me and told me that this other guy who was also with us in the TEFL diploma was a principal in a school and asked him to join that school as an English teacher, but since he was engaged at that time, he asked me to give it a try. So I called that guy who was the principal, and after exchanging pleasantries, we got down to business; he asked me if I was available to teach English, I told him I had a price, make an offer, I wasn’t going to work for peanuts. I told him, I don’t know what got into me at that time, because the first job that I told you about, at my friends institute, I was paid a hundred rupees per head, and because of drop outs and everything, in the end, I just had 3 students in my class, so I was making 300 rupees a month (laughs) and in my other job where I was teaching Quran, my salary was 3000 rupees, and after a lot of raises and promotions, it got up to something like 5000 rupees; but still, I said to this guy, I wasn’t going to be a cheap acquisition, I won’t work for a pittance. In hindsight, I often think, why was it that I was so snobbish or perhaps I had such a high opinion of myself, I’m not sure; but I told him, I wanted a big salary. I asked him how much they will pay me, he said we will negotiate, I told him, I didn’t have a lot of time and wasn’t going to waste my time if they were going to pay me a lousy salary, like 5000 or 10,000, then good bye, I’m not talking to you anymore.

That was outrageous, wasn’t it? For someone who didn’t have a good job or anything (laughs)
I: Did your two Masters and one diploma prepare you well to become a good language teacher?
R: That’s an interesting question, and I really don’t know how to answer that one, because, you see, in language teaching they say, and I hate to quote people without actually knowing who I’m quoting but this is like a common thing that I’ve heard many people say although I don’t know what the original source is, that sometimes learning takes place because of the teachers teaching, and sometimes it takes place despite the teachers teaching. Good learners learn regardless of the teacher whether that teacher is a good teacher or he’s an absolute dunce. When I look at myself, I ask, was it the diploma that improved me or was it the Applied Linguistics Masters, was it the teaching of the teachers that improved me, or was it me myself who caused the improvement. This bit confuses me even now, when I think about it, whatever book I read, whatever article I read, or any pedagogical issue that I think about, I have a thing for reading a lot; for example, on how to teach speaking, I devoured all the material on that subject, by people like Jeremy Harmer, Martin Bygate and all these other guys who had written about teaching speaking. After condensing everything that I had read, and what the main themes are and who’s saying what, some of that ocean of material is sucked into a syringe or a dropper and one drop is translated into my class. All of that effort of reading that stuff and then condensing it, who deserves the credit? Shall I say I read these books and these guys improved me, or shall I say I am a good reader, I’m the kind of person who’s capable of digesting reading that stuff and then condensing it, who deserves the credit? Shall I say I read these books and these guys improved me, or shall I say I am a good reader, I’m the kind of person who’s capable of digesting this information and implementing it in my situation? If the books themselves and the theories, which are really shallow, you see our field is one big ball of fluff, nothing is really set, sometimes we pretend and talk by using a lot of jargon as if this is a massive field with a lot of empirical research, but it’s all just oversimplified generalizations and context specific statements. The question remains, who deserves the credit? The people who are churning out these thousands of pages, or the people who are capable of extracting meaning from these things and implementing them in their context; and I think it’s the latter, that I myself, maybe I’m being arrogant or something but if these people with all their books and all the literature produced by them was really good, most people would have benefited from them; and it’s my personal opinion, it’s not empirical, I did not conduct any research on this, but looking around me and having spoken to so many teachers over the years, I keep hearing the same thing, this is not applicable in our situation. Yes, some things aren’t applicable in our situation, and I think sometimes the level of adaptation that I have to do, whatever that book told me I’m completely away from that now, I did something on my own. Let me be really simple here, let me use a very crude example here, when I look at the Headway Plus book and I look at some of the lessons about teaching, let’s say second conditionality, you need a condition, here is an absolute like a teacher has to do something on her/his own. How I did it, or shall I say I read the books and they improved me, or is it the books that improved me versus me trying to understand the book by myself, I think it’s like both. I: Please tell me about your professional life, how do you see it?
R: Well, for me it’s not really complicated because I look at myself as, maybe a plumber would look at himself, or maybe a fruit seller or anybody else, this is the only way I know of making money, I’m into the business, otherwise I don’t see myself as being in the profession, because I don’t really enjoy it, not because there’s anything wrong with the profession itself, it’s just that I’m a lazy person, it’s hard work for me, and everyday going to work is hell for me in a way; that’s it, nothing complicated there, really.
I: This process of reflection on your work, is it automatic, or you have to make some kind of conscious effort?
R: It’s a combination of both, because the process of thinking, that’s automatic, that switches itself on automatically, but then channeling that mental process into a certain direction that requires some kind of mental energy, because it’s so easy to just think about it and feel frustrated and then just forget it, so easy for that to happen, but I try to channel my thoughts, and then I keep thinking and thinking. There are some writers, very few, that I respect, and reading their works I get the feeling that this person is actually trying to say something; he did not write this book just because his publisher told him to write because they had to compete with a rival publisher, and this writer has to write a book in 3 months and he comes up with 300 pages of drivel and they put it in the market and everyone buys it just because it’s from Cambridge or McGraw or whatever. Sometimes that happens and you see all these crappy books in the market; but if I see a book by a writer whom I respect, someone like Kathleen Bailey, or James Dean Brown, some of these writers that you feel as if they are Penny Ur, you feel that these people are talking to you and saying something sensible, then I consult their books. One can never expect to get any direct answers from them of course, no book is a readymade recipe of answers anyway. I would say, perhaps, this is my research background coming in, I do some kind of a literature review of that topic if I can, very brief one, and then all of that goes inside and I let it simmer; at this point I move back, and I put myself in auto pilot, and then the concoction cooks till I have a eureka moment. Sometimes I grab the bull by the horns and find the answers that I’m looking for, and sometimes, more often than not, I reach a cul-de-sac, and then I close the chapter and say to myself forget it for now, you’ll be frustrated, we’ll live to fight another day, I still have some professional years left in me.

R: I think I referred to this in the previous interview as well, it was my experience in the PDU that completely transformed me. I went into it, had a wonderful time, and by the time I came out I had completely metamorphosed. In this context where the observation system is a complete part, and a permanent mainstay of our educational system here at the ELI; for many people this is the first time in their lives they are being observed, which is incredible considering some of these people have taught for 10 or 20 years, and they say this is the first time they are being observed. This is something really perplexing because observation, whether it’s from the institution or for summative reasons and evaluative reasons, or whether it’s done by peers for developmental reasons, it’s a great way to actually look at the teaching process, and to delineate different things and look at them one by one and then put them together, and to think that so many people coming from so many different parts of the world, are not engaged with it, it really tells you that a lot of us are missing out on something; and coming here and being observed myself once as a teacher, and as a member of the PDU and observing so many other guys, in many ways it’s like going on a peregrination, voyaging to different countries and tasting the best dishes of different cuisines from all over the world; so many people with different teaching backgrounds trying to do their best; that I think was something that really changed me, and like I told you in the last interview, when I came out of the PDU and went back to teaching I struggled for a little while, but once I got on my feet I said to myself, ‘I can go anywhere in the world and teach in any context.’ I consider that to be a massive leap for myself, because up until very recently I was saying that ‘cursed was the day when I chose the teaching profession.’ Mostly because I had to put up with so much crap during school teaching; most of my life was spent in school teaching and putting up with so much crap from so many different people, and I always used to say to whoever would listen that I made the wrong choice, and that every day was torture for me. At least now I could say that things have changed for the better, and I’m not desperate to get out of this job, in fact I could do it for the rest of my life now, it’s not as painful as it used to be.

I: How do you see your passion or flair for teaching? Because I can see from all these discussions that you have a flair for teaching.
R: For me it’s hard to describe, because this flair, this passion is not always there, sometimes it comes out in a burst and everything is going according to plan. When I get a group of students that I enjoy spending time with then that person comes out in me, and I find myself preparing a lesson for 3 hours and enjoying it, it’s not hard work, I would rather do this then, let’s just say, do something enjoyable like watching Sumo or playing chess, I would rather prepare this lesson, I don’t consider that to be work, I enjoy doing that, but that thing does not always click for me. I’m like an animal which has a sex drive once a year. I go into these massive work drives every once in a while, but I know one thing though, that these work drives are defined by what’s happening around me, professionally, it’s not totally random. When I see things going wrong and when I see myself in a level 103 class where, if I’m teaching them the second conditional and I have 30 students, and I have to set the tone for teaching that, I have to do the review of the past tense first, and when I do that in the first class I have 10 students in front of me, and in the next session when I build on that knowledge and tell them about if and past and would, I have 10 completely different students in front of me. In these kind of situations everything within me dies, and I say to myself ‘just forget everything, just show up for work, do the best you can, don’t be dishonest,’ but that thing, that robot inside me does not function anymore.
There is always a desire to be better one way or the other, a vague sense of trying to do some things in a better way, and thankfully I don't see this desire going away any time soon really, because every time you step into a new class you see something new. This is a job which is connected to human beings and we spend our entire lives with human beings and we keep learning something new about human beings every day, I mean, nothing new in human nature, that's always been the same, but about different individuals, and classrooms are a set of 15, 25, 30 different individuals, and different mixtures create different situations, and the opportunities are limitless, so there's always one way or the other to improve yourself, and for me that desire does exist, and perhaps there are one or two things that are based on professionally provided courses that I want to do but mostly I want to do it the way I've done it up till now which has really helped me be a good teacher, and that is reflection and thinking, and trial and error, and coming up with my own stuff.

For me, that's absolutely key, because it depends on the context, like in the Pakistani context English was being taught because it happened to be one of the subjects, where they're giving you failed science and math teachers as English teachers, so in a context like that it's really hard to do your job properly, or even to motivate yourself to do your job properly. On the other hand, in a professional context where everybody is talking about teaching and learning English, whatever imperfections there are, that context at least gives you the motivation to do whatever you want to do on your own, in your own style; whether it's a technical course, whether it's about talking to your colleagues, whether it's about creating a professional learning community, or whether it is about more, deep reflection. I look at myself, here in this context, sometimes I plan one lesson for 2 or 3 hours, sometimes I'm amazed at myself, why am I spending so much time here, I don't have to do this, my office hours are over, I should be home; but because the professional context is such, that it's all about objectives. I don't want to get into the debate about whether they're serious about the SLO's or not, but I'm given an objective here, and by the end of the lesson my students are supposed to exhibit this competence; I take it like that, and this professional context makes me study things in a different way, it makes me create extra material, I have created a lot of extra material in the recent past, because the more I think about achieving the objective, the more imperfect the Headway book looks to me, not because it's imperfect but because of the context, the Saudi students. It is supposed to be Middle Eastern version but they didn't change anything, they just put hijabs on some women and they deleted the beach pictures, but academically the content is the same, I taught the Headway book 10 years ago, that was in my first teaching job, they haven't changed anything there. On the other hand, in the previous context, I wasn't motivated to do anything, because there was no incentive for me, I don't mean any monetary incentive but any kind of incentive, nobody cares, so just let it go. I think perhaps, and this idea hasn't really matured itself in my head, but speaking to you right now, this could be the single most important factor, not necessarily is, but could be, the most important factors in people's professional development.

I really focus a lot about student achievement. I always ask myself, what did they do here, they were here for 3 or 4 hours, then they left, but what they do, did they learn something or not? That is why I have devised a system where the last bit, the last activity, the last exercise which is really the proof of learning, that one I paste on the wall in my classroom, not only as a reminder for myself that I've taught them something, but this is also a kind of mechanism that I use to motivate the students, because sometimes you spend so much time creating a hand-out, so much precious work goes into it, and then when you hand it to the students they are just chewing gum, or looking at their cell phones or out of the window or looking at the clock; so when I tell them that I'm going to paste it on the wall, they become really serious and do it. Proof of learning is always there one way or the other for me, but it's just that perhaps I always demand so much from myself. I think that's the thing which really drives me nuts about myself. Sometimes one has to be able to just stand back and admire ones work and say, 'yeah, I did a great job here, not many people would have been able to tackle this situation as well as I did.’ But for me it's really hard to look at my own positive points, I'm mostly just looking at my negative points, and that prevents me from appreciating myself sometimes, even though I already have a very high opinion of myself, sorry to say that (laughs).
C. List of Initial Codes Generated from Ali’s Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Birth in humble circumstances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Childhood—two different lifestyles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Interest in encyclopedias</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>An average student but good at English</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>A turning point—a man with a mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Parents’ role in education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Self-image &amp; self-esteem—awareness of personal standing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Natural talent for English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Role of English in early life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Teachers’ role—not very influential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Dark years—The challenge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Accomplishment in school-English &amp; debates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Bad patch and pessimism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Graduation without much effort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Low standard of BA course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Determined about MA and teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>2nd masters and tough but fruitful life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Good learning in 2nd masters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Professional preparation in 2nd masters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>First job as a teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>Second job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>First really good job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>In-service training course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>Uncertainty and frustration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>Irrelevant degrees and pedagogical and contextual challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>Role of pre-service education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>Personal effort in success as a teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28.</td>
<td>Work in PDU—a great learning experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29.</td>
<td>Job motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30.</td>
<td>Realism vs Idealism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31.</td>
<td>Teacher frustration with supervision and PD measures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32.</td>
<td>Frustration due to below-standard job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33.</td>
<td>Poor motivation and irrelevance of course content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34.</td>
<td>Personal theory of bonding with students—Rapport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35.</td>
<td>Task perception—feeling of (dis)satisfaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36.</td>
<td>Task perception—professional excellence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37.</td>
<td>PD-self-learning and reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38.</td>
<td>Nature of reflection on practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39.</td>
<td>PD opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40.</td>
<td>PD in PK context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41.</td>
<td>PD due to high expectations from me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42.</td>
<td>Passion for CPD—Future perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43.</td>
<td>Awareness of weakness—a factor in PD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44.</td>
<td>Steady growth in professional career</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45.</td>
<td>Negative effect on PD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46.</td>
<td>Frustrated-keeping quiet on issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47.</td>
<td>Observing teachers—a transformative experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48.</td>
<td>Professional learning—developmental orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49.</td>
<td>Challenges on the way to PD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50.</td>
<td>Issues with PD activities organised by institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51.</td>
<td>Role of PLC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52.</td>
<td>Learning from colleagues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53.</td>
<td>Recommendations for the institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54.</td>
<td>Peer observation for PD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55.</td>
<td>Quality of in-service training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56.</td>
<td>Role of professional context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57.</td>
<td>Satisfaction in the Saudi context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58.</td>
<td>Element of universality in Human behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59.</td>
<td>Prior learning and professional prep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60.</td>
<td>Pivotal role of a teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61.</td>
<td>Teacher autonomy at ELI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62.</td>
<td>Policing of teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63.</td>
<td>Workshops, PD and supervision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64.</td>
<td>Effective PD sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65.</td>
<td>Massive PD at ELI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66.</td>
<td>Benefits and requirements—PLC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67.</td>
<td>PDU is in fact an Evaluation Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68.</td>
<td>Recommendations for PDU improvements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69.</td>
<td>Observation feedback issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70.</td>
<td>Secrets of success as a teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71.</td>
<td>Personal aims as a teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72.</td>
<td>Feelings about the profession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73.</td>
<td>Optimism and motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74.</td>
<td>Passion and flair for teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75.</td>
<td>Biographical &amp; Narrative learning</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
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