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Teacher Professional Development–Current Practices in a Secondary School in Brunei Darussalam

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***Abstract*—**This research paper presents the current practices of teacher professional development, perceived as beneficial by teachers themselves, in a private secondary school in Brunei Darussalam. This is part of the findings of a larger qualitative study on teacher empowerment, using ethnographic methods for data collection, i.e. participant observation, interviews and document analysis. The field work was carried out over a period of six months in 2013. An analysis of the field data revealed multiple pathways of teacher professional development existing in the school. The results indicate that school leaders, the teacher community in the school, students, and the teachers themselves were the agents in a school that facilitated teacher empowerment. Besides contributing to the knowledge base on teacher professional development, the results of this study provide directions for educational policy makers in their efforts to enhance professional development in secondary schools of similar characteristics. For school leaders and the teacher community, these findings offer guidelines for maximizing the opportunities for these professional development practices, by strengthening collegiality and by using the existing structures optimally for the benefit of all concerned.

***Keywords*—**Colleagues and the wider teacher community, school leaders, self-driven professional development, teacher professional development.

I. Introduction

CAPABLE, motivated and effective teachers are the corner stone of any successful education programme. Educational research has time and again found teacher quality to be the single most important element affecting outcomes of schooling [1]-[3]. In the 21st century knowledge society [4], teaching has become more challenging than ever and there is an urgent need for seeking ways and means to optimize teacher performance. Educational research asserts that, improvement in teacher effectiveness is most likely achieved by high quality professional learning [5]-[7] Teacher professional development thus becomes a critical issue that demands the urgent attention of policy makers and practitioners alike. Also, it becomes imperative to understand what beneficial practices exist in schools now, as a first step in identifying the nature of effective professional development practices in schools.

This study was carried out in a private secondary school in Brunei Darussalam. Brunei Darussalam is a relatively newly independent Post-colonial nation-state in South East Asia, located on the north-west coast of the island of Borneo, facing the South China Sea, with a land area of about 5765 square kilometres. Brunei is a neighbouring country to Malaysia, Indonesia, The Philippines and Singapore. There are currently 87 private schools in Brunei now, out of which 8 are 'Chinese' schools, in the sense that they are run by the Chinese community in the locale and the majority of students are of ethnic Chinese origin. Nanyang School (pseudonym), where this study took place, is a Chinese school, and is currently one of the best schools in the country, in terms of student performance at the GCE O' level public examinations. The kindergarten, primary, and secondary sections are housed in different buildings, but this study was limited to the secondary section.

The purpose of this study was to identify and understand the current practices of teacher professional development in the secondary section of the school. Only the practices that were reported by teachers as being beneficial to them have been presented in this article.

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II. Literature Review

Teacher professional development refers to a long term, context-based process that involves opportunities and experiences for promoting the growth and development of teachers [1]. Desimone [2] noted that teacher professional development opportunities include discrete activities such as workshops and conferences, formal or informal learning communities among teachers, embedded professional development in the form of co-teaching, mentoring and reflecting on actual lessons, group discussions surrounding student work, book clubs, teacher study groups, educative curriculum materials, examination of own teaching practice by self or an observer, individual activities such as online learning or action research and involvement in a development process such as curriculum development.

Extant literature suggests three important agents that facilitate or initiate the individual teacher's professional development: 1) school leaders, 2) colleagues and the wider teacher community, and 3) the individual self of the teacher.

School leaders' involvement in teacher professional development is often considered as falling under the instructional leadership model [3], which has three fundamental dimensions: identifying and articulating the School's Mission, directing the Instructional Program, and creating as well as sustaining a positive learning climate at the school [4], [5]. This last dimension of instructional leadership, i.e. creating and sustaining a positive learning climate, is elaborated by other scholars as: (1) prioritizing teacher learning [6], (2) creating a school culture that is conducive to development [7], and (3) providing support mechanisms to

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staff such as staff development activities [8]. In the same vein, Xaymana and Valakone [9] suggest that school leaders should create and nurture an environment that encourages teachers to reflect on their teaching and practices, use specific behaviours to engage in reflective practice, and make it possible for teachers to translate to action, ideas and programs resulting from reflective practice.

Blasé and Blasé [3] suggested the following leader behaviors for creating and sustaining a professional development culture in schools: 1) acknowledge and understand that learning involves risk-taking and resistance 2) respect teachers as professionals engaged in intellectual work 3) engage in open conversation with teachers about instruction 4) provide input in the form of suggestions, and give feedback on classroom instruction, 5) seek teachers' views about how to improve instruction 6) establish constructive relationships with the teachers 7) prioritize the study of teaching and learning 8) model instructional skills 9) ensure that there is time and opportunity for peer connections among teachers 10) ensure resources and support for redesign of programs and 11) encourage teamwork, collaboration and innovation.

School leaders often act as catalysts in self-driven professional development processes of staff members as they direct their own professional growth, setting annual goals for themselves in alignment with the vision of the school [10]. The principal helps in the process by providing the teacher with observations on his or her instructional assets, observed learning needs of the students and student assessment data.

Colleagues and the wider teacher community also exert an influence in the development of the individual teacher. Berkey and Dow [11] reported how professional learning communities of teachers operated in one of the elementary schools in Texas. In this school, teachers met every seventh day, for two hours, for shared learning and practice, which included analyzing student assessment data and the teachers learning new skills. Ideally, a professional learning community is capable of fostering and maintaining the learning of all professionals in the school community, in order to facilitate the development of student learning [12]. They enhance professional knowledge through the critical reflection of shared day to day experiences, besides promoting collaboration, teacher authority and continuous learning [13].

Dierking and Fox [14], in their examination of the effect of a National Writing Project development model on a group of middle school writing teachers, found that support from other teachers in the community was an important aspect of their social context that fostered their growth. This support from other teachers is often in the context of the teachers' involvement in professional associations and other learning and development processes [15]-[17]. These learning experiences may be through reflective teaching, keeping a teaching journal and sharing it with others, analyzing critical incidents, through peer mentoring and coaching, forming teacher support groups, joining a teacher support network or study circles, by attending workshops and conferences or joining local, national and international professional associations for teachers [16]. Action research is also one of the tools for staff development [18], [19]. Lesson study, an approach to professional development that originated in Japan, is a teacher–led, community form of professional development that can instill a sense of empowerment and professionalism in those who engage in it [20].

Mentoring relationships between experienced teachers and new teachers, a powerful tool of professional development, usually involve observation of class, coaching and feedback [21]. New teachers are empowered through the professional growth that happens in mentoring, and mentors themselves feel renewed through the collegial sharing of power [22]. In a study on mentoring of novice teachers in Japan, it was found that the major content of the mentor's comments to the novice teacher consisted of positive feedback, inspiring self-confidence, extending emotional support, and giving hints to improve her teaching [23].

A number of studies have documented the self-driven professional development efforts of teachers. Overton [15] reported from a study of early childhood teachers, how they empowered themselves through their own learning and professional development. Having knowledge, and being seen to have knowledge, gave the teacher power and confidence. The process of reading and learning contributed to their sense of being a valued staff member.

Reflective practice is reported to be another powerful tool of professional development. Msila [24] reports from a study in Africa, on how teachers benefitted professionally from writing journals about their daily instructional practice. Usually the teachers wrote these journal entries directly after teaching, and the entries included how the class was, the interest and behaviour of learners, how the teacher assessed himself or herself, what the problem areas were and what could be done differently in the future. These teachers then discussed these journal entries with a mentor or the principal, or used them for their own reflection. Schon [25] viewed Reflective practice as a critical process of giving considerable and deep thought to one's experiences in the course of the practice of the profession, and it could be a) reflection during the practice of teaching; b) reflection on the practice of teaching, that is done after the teaching itself, and (c) reflection for practice, or the thinking about future experience in the light of the past experience [26]. Critical reflection can empower teachers towards self-actualization – the fulfillment of all that is possible within individuals as teachers [27].

As a professional development practice, self-monitoring is the process of the teacher collecting information objectively and systematically about his own or her own classes, through such means as lesson reports, audio or video recording, and using this information to decide if there should be changes made in the future [28]. Boon [27] pointed out that teachers often may not find time for self-monitoring, and that each teacher has to devise a quick and effective means of self-evaluation for his or her performance. Another self-driven learning tool of teachers is analyzing critical incidents. "A critical incident is an unplanned or unanticipated event that occurs during a lesson and that serves to trigger insights about some aspects of teaching and learning." [28] The

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documentation and analysis of critical incidents help improve instructional practice, and develops the teacher.

Extant literature also deals with characteristics of individual teachers that drive them towards engaging in professional development initiatives, and make them receptive to the professional development initiatives by schools leaders and colleagues. Motivation for professional development is important since the level of motivation is related to the level of benefit from the professional development effort [29]. Karabenick and Conely [30] argued that teachers who considered themselves as committed to student achievement and quality teaching were more motivated to be involved in professional development and be benefitted from professional development experiences. While there is evidence in education literature that motivation and affective or dispositional characteristics of teachers are important to whether and how they learn and develop, the link remains largely under-researched [31].

This review of literature highlights the professional development practices of teachers through the agencies of school leaders, colleagues and their own selves. These are generalizations of practices, which in individual schools acquire contextual nuances. To propel the field of enquiry into teacher professional development forward, it is necessary to understand such nuances of professional development in individual schools, so that patterns may be inferred from them, which may be of use to the wider teaching community [32]. Thus, this study has endeavoured to understand the professional development practices of secondary school teachers, as perceived by the teachers themselves, in a private school in Brunei Darussalam.

III. Methods

As stated at the beginning of this paper, the findings presented herein on teacher professional development are part of a wider study on teacher empowerment. The researcher used an ethnographic approach for this study, since studying current practices in teacher professional development needed contact with the participants in the natural setting of their daily lives, over an extended period of time [33].

This study was carried out over a period of six months at Nanyang School in one of the districts of Brunei Darussalam. The study site and participants were chosen by purpose sampling. Nanyang School was chosen because this researcher had been a teacher there. Some of this researcher's colleagues were still teaching there. It was believed that since this researcher was known to the Management of the school and to some of the teachers, getting access would be easy and data collected would be rich and trustworthy.

The methods of data collection were participant observation, open as well as semi-structured in-depth interviews, and scrutiny of documents such as memos. The study was carried out among secondary teachers; a group made up of 21 individuals of diverse nationalities - 7 Indian, 2 Filipino, 2 Iban (a tribe in Borneo), 6 ethnic Chinese, and 4 ethnic Malay teachers.

Observational data was rich and voluminous, since this researcher engaged in lengthy informal conversations with most of the teachers. Since the teachers were only 21, this researcher did not draw a sample again, and intended to interview all of them, so that a comprehensive picture could be gained. But this plan did not work since eight of them declined to be interviewed: Four said they were too conscious of their broken English, and the rest did not know English at all. The remaining 13 were interviewed, and the interviews were transcribed, and subjected to member checking. The field notes, interview transcriptions and documents were read a few times and subjected to coding, categorizing and finally formulation of themes. Due to limitations of space, only selected quotes of participants are given here, to demonstrate the main findings of the study. As far as possible, the researcher has retained the original words and sentences uttered by the interviewees and other participants. The ethnographic method necessitated very close interaction which led to the sharing of personal matters. Real names are disguised in order to ensure anonymity.

IV. Results

The results of the study indicate a rich plethora of information and insights relating to how teacher professional development is facilitated by *A.* school leaders, *B.* colleagues at the horizontal level, *C.* students, and *D.* the teachers themselves.

A. School Leaders as Facilitating Agents

School leaders, in the present context, and according to the participants of this study, refer to those individuals who occupy positions of power in the school, such as the Principal, Vice Principal, Section Supervisor, Dean of Studies and Department Heads. The results of this study reveal specific behaviours of school leaders that provide development opportunities for teachers.

1. Sharing of Professional Knowledge

Both in formal and informal settings, school leaders share their knowledge of the profession with teachers, on a variety of areas relevant to the teacher. Teachers find it of immense use since it is contextual and relevant to the particular school, teacher and set of students. In the present study, one of the participants, Teacher Jason, spoke about the ex-Dean of Studies of the school who used to utilize every opportunity to share some of his knowledge about teaching, with the staff.

"If he called a staff meeting, he would spend some of the time on some presentation about a few useful things for us. Even in school assemblies, when he spoke he used to say things that are useful for both teachers and students. In monthly department meetings, he would come and talk to us about teaching."

2. Encouraging Innovative Ideas

School leaders help teachers grow when they encourage teachers to come up with new ideas, and when they create an atmosphere in the school that encourages new initiatives.

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When new ideas are welcome, and are demanded, teachers become creative and innovative, and look for resources. Teacher Katrina observed,

> "The principal from time to time says we need to develop our own strategy. Not only teaching strategies but also about how to handle the class…so I am trying out my ideas about teaching and class management."

Such challenging of the status quo often results, according to the teachers, in new learning, experiments, risk taking, and higher self-efficacy beliefs in them.

Teacher Abhay talked about how the earlier Dean of studies and the principal used to encourage innovative ideas from teachers for science projects, quizzes and competitions such as Earth Day and recycling activities.

> "I had great support for my ideas. I just had to tell the principal my ideas…she was ready for it. She used to tell me to go ahead. So we did a lot of innovative programs for students here, and it was a fulfilling time…When I did all these things at that time…we were growing, we were learning."

3. Professional Guidance

While principals share knowledge of the profession in general terms, Heads of departments are more specific in their guidance, as their sphere of influence is usually a single department. They are seen as bridges between the core leadership of the school and the teachers themselves, and translators of school policy and initiatives, for the teachers. They continuously guide teachers with regard to the content and styles of teaching, and suggest ideas to tide over instructional as well as managerial or discipline problems in the classroom. Annette, an English teacher who participated in the study said,

> "My Head of Department advises me about what content I should include in teaching year 7 and year 8. For example, the grammar book that we are using. He has instructed me to see that students do it in the class itself. So that it is more effective. He also gives direction about the way of instruction and the scheme of work, in the class and also the department activities."

4. Mentoring

Many teachers in the school recalled the time when they started off as teachers in Nanyang School. As novice teachers they had been personally advised and trained by the then Dean of Studies. It was the expatriate teachers who benefitted the most from this mentoring, as they had a lot of adjustment difficulties.

Teacher Adwaith, a teacher from India, spoke about the time when he joined Nanyang School and was mentored by the Dean of Studies.

> "He used to observe me every moment… It was a purification time. It did me a lot of good... He told me how I had to change. He gave me the confidence to change…When I started my teaching life, if I hadn't got a positive approach from the Dean or my HoD, I would surely have left. We all have drawbacks. There should be people who can help us to overcome such drawbacks. People to support us. I had such people. That is why I continued as a teacher."

Heads of departments also have a mentoring role. Teacher Abhay spoke about his Head of the Department.

> "If I have some problem, my HoD will help me. If I make some mistake, she will point it out to me. She will ask me if I can take up a particular task. She is very supportive."

B. Colleagues and the Wider Teacher Community as Facilitators

The community of teachers in the school has a major role in facilitating the professional growth of the individual teachers. This is mainly because a substantial range of learning takes place informally in the staffroom, in the teachers' refreshment room or in the corridors, just by talking to other teachers, or observing other teachers.

1. Learning through Observing

Observing another teacher in the act of teaching is an experience that has considerable potential as a professional development opportunity. At every stage in their career, teachers are seen to observe their peers, and adopt some of their behaviours. Teacher Lina, spoke about how she made positive changes in her own teaching, by observing her peers, learning from them and trying to emulate them.

> "I learnt by observing how the teachers do here. The principal and the teachers. Practical and teaching methods. I followed the system here and improved myself…..here in the laboratories, sometimes I overhear the other science teachers. Then I tell myself that I should be as slow as the chemistry teacher. I told you I am a bit fast in my teaching. There has been that complaint about me. So I try to learn from teacher Abhay. He can really explain slowly to the students."

2. Informal Sharing of Professional Knowledge

Teachers grow in their profession, and enhance their knowledge, through interaction with colleagues, by sharing what they know about the profession and about their subject area. This happens continuously, even without the teachers being aware of it. Even in a formal teachers' meeting, more than the actual proceedings of the meeting, it is the interaction that teachers perceived as beneficial to them.

Teacher Sheena shared her experiences:

> "Within the department we do discuss doubts about the subject. Across departments usually we discuss the students. If a child is doing well in some other subject and not so well in my subject then I would ask the teacher of that subject how they manage that student. Now, because I am the only biology teacher here, there is nobody in the school I can ask doubts about biology. Only Combined Science I can discuss with others like the chemistry teacher. But when we go for meetings we do discuss our subject and others do help us. These are meetings with teachers from other schools. Then we can

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meet teachers teaching our subject and we can discuss our concerns."

3. Structured Sharing of Professional Knowledge

Teachers sharing their professional knowledge in a structured way, is empowering to the whole community of teachers in the schools. Usually it is one teacher sharing what he or she has learnt with the entire group of teachers in the department or the school, at a meeting or sharing session that has been arranged at the departmental level by the Head of the Department, or at the school level by the Principal. Teacher Jason talked about his experience of sharing what he learnt in a workshop, with the other teachers of the Mathematics department.

"Once I attended a workshop. It was called geometry sketch pad. How to draw graphs easily. You just give an equation. The graph will be drawn. That time Ms. Kate was the HoD and I was a teacher. We attended the workshop together. She told me to conduct that workshop for the Maths department. I had to obey. So I did. It was very useful for all of us. It is a free software. Teachers are using it also."

Similarly, teacher Adwaith spoke about his experience of sharing what he learnt about sbafl (a new system for assessment for learning) to the entire group of teachers in the school, after attending a 32 day workshop on the same.

"After the workshop whatever things are there about sbafl, they used to call me also and discuss with me. Because I was the only one who had attended at that time… Even the principal used to call me and ask me how is this etc. All that was very motivating to me."

4. Role Modelling

Teachers often have role models among their colleagues or superiors, who they try to emulate. These role models usually are perceived to be brilliant teachers. Nina, the Commerce teacher spoke about another teacher who seemed to be a perfect teacher to her.

"I like the way Mdm. Lin is actually. I like her way of everything. She is so perfect. I might miss recording of marks or something. I might push things to do later. But she is so perfect. I wish I could be all that she is. I like the way she teaches kids actually. She is quite strict. At the same time students like her. I wish I could have that."

5. Mentoring

In the case of novice teachers, experienced teachers often act like mentors, who model positive behaviours, are perceived as dependable, and are willing to guide. It is often a superior, such as the Head of the Department or the Dean of Studies, who is in this role of a mentor, but sometimes teachers who have many years of experience do assume that role. Benedict, the Physical Education teacher who was earlier working in the Oil and Gas sector, remarked that he had a lot of people to help him gain a foothold in the new environment of Nanyang School. The following is an excerpt from the interview with Teacher Benedict.

"The most important thing I am looking for is the working environment. My colleagues. They are all very helpful. Here my colleagues are very helpful. Compared to the oil and gas industry. There, you are you...your thing your thing…my thing my thing…don't cross the border. In the oil and gas company, you can only talk to your teammate. Here, everyone is my teammate. Everyone is a guideline. I am quite lucky because everyone here is experienced. I am not experienced as a teacher. Everyone is giving me a hand. They tell me advice. Everyone is telling me guidelines. Such as at this time you can use your sharp voice and that I am not allowed to lay my hand on a student. There is a guideline. That is what I like most. I love to be a teacher."

C. Students as Facilitators

Teachers perceive students to have an influence in their professional development, in terms of motivation for professional development.

1. Intellectual Stimulation from Students

When there are students who ask challenging questions, teachers are compelled to update themselves, which results in teacher development. The challenging questions asked by students are occasions for the knowledge development of teachers. This may be because it is ingrained in the teachers' cultural ethos that they should have all the answers for the students, even if it is 'out of syllabus'. So they do all they can, to update themselves so that the student can be given a satisfactory and correct answer. Teacher Katrina, a teacher of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), shared her experiences:

"If you do power point presentation, students feel… oh the same thing teacher click...they know already all about animation. If they can do better than you, then you feel incompetent. Sometimes I ask them to do a project. I give an idea…they do beyond my expectation. Oh my God do I need to study about this also? So then how am I going to discuss it? If I don't know what they have done. So we have to update our knowledge. Not confine to what we have now. It should be beyond what the students know. Because we are the teachers. Students ask me questions. That really makes me prepare."

D. Self-Driven Professional Development

Teachers initiate and sustain their own professional development in a variety of ways, which often involve reflection and introspection.

1. Learning from Experiences

Teachers learn from on-the-job experiences, which may have been particularly difficult or challenging. Teacher Leona talked about some of her experiences from which she learned some lessons for growth as a teacher.

"I had only one issue so far. It was an issue with a student called Ismail. In the last month of year 7, he disturbed my class and I scolded him in front of the class. That made him very bad. I learned from that experience.

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Never scold a student in the class too harshly. They feel bad and ashamed. After that I never scolded the students like that. So no more problems. Ismail complained against me. After Form 3 he transferred to another school. He didn't like me so he used to disturb my class. After he felt like that about me, it was difficult to change. He had such a bad impression about me. He made me unhappy in the class. I tried to ignore him so that it won't be worse. But couldn't. That was the only problem. In other classes also there are naughty students but they treat all the teachers the same. Not intentional to any one teacher…I faced the same situation this year in the class. But I handled in a better way. So now no problem. I talked to that student personally. Not in front of the whole class. So nobody knows that I talked to him. So finally he became better. He is also academically doing well…. I learned from my experience with Issac."

When teachers engage in extra-curricular activities such as training students for competitions, they themselves grow, and most teachers recognize that growth in themselves. Teacher Lina said that being in charge of students' competitions has made her grow personally.

"These competitions happen every year. It is an exposure for us. Now we know what to do. We get more information. We can meet other people in related areas. They recognize us when they see us. Because I take the students for these competitions, they know me. All science teachers interact with each other this way. They know I am from this school. We recognize each other. Share information. All that is good. We get exposure too. From the time I joined, I have grown a lot by taking part in all these competitions. When we join we just know the subject. If I just teach here, I won't know this much."

2. Self-Updating

Many teachers keep updating themselves in varying degrees, though they admit they have very little chance to apply what they learn.

"I know my subject and I keep updating also. I can say my knowledge of the subject at this O'level standard is very high." (Teacher Sheena, teaching Biology)

"I do read...for example Readers' Digest articles…I also go to TES- a teacher related site...I have subscribed to it so it comes automatically to me...I go there often. I look at the new updates…I always read and update but I apply only about 20% of what I read." (Teacher Abhay, teaching Chemistry)

"I do read the newspapers. Then, if I don't know something, I try to learn about it by reading more" (Teacher Jason, teaching Mathematics)

"I do special reading on my own. But not studying. I have a plan that in the future I will continue my Masters. So that to increase my proficiency in the subject. As of this moment...I am still adjusting here. Maybe in the future I can do it. Now I am reading on my own". (Teacher Katrina, teaching ICT)

"I do try to improve my subject competence. I read articles and surf the internet. To try to improve vocabulary. Also grammar and communication skills. But not such a dedicated effort. When I come across new terms and new structures I go and learn about that. Otherwise I don't try to learn the latest teaching approaches or the latest styles of teaching etc. but I try to improve my subject competence. I do that very often. Whenever I get time I do that. I read texts." (Teacher Adwaith, teaching English)

3. Self-Awareness through Feedback, and Resultant Improvement Efforts

Teachers try to learn about themselves in various ways, and one of them is to ask their students. What the students have to say about them, is a great learning point for the teachers. Teacher Abhay said,

"Even recently, I made my students write what they wanted from me. My positives and negatives, and what they wanted from me. They have written some good and some bad. Some have written that I give importance to the students in the science class and don't give importance to the students in the art class. So then I have to change some of my behaviour."

Sometimes teachers realize their drawbacks when their superiors point it out. Lejina said,

"My problem is that I am very fast. The Dean of Studies used to say all the time that I am too fast. Always he used to tell me. But I go fast without myself realizing it. That is a big limitation of mine. I try to control it. In the beginning of the class itself I keep it in my mind. I know that that is my main problem. So I begin the class very slowly. But after some time, without me realizing I go fast. So I tell the students that if they feel I am too fast they have to tell me then and there. They do tell me also. They say 'teacher slow down, slow down'.

E. Key Determinants of Professional Development Behaviour of Individual Teachers

This study also brought to light two key determinants of the professional development behaviour of the individual teacher. These determinants decide whether or not professional development behaviour will be initiated and sustained by the individual teacher. They also influence the degree of receptivity of the individual teacher to the facilitating agents around them.

1. Compelling Beliefs

Student-oriented beliefs, and belief in the positive outcome of the intended professional development behaviour are seen as powerful influences on the initiation of or the participation in such behavior. The following quotes from participating teachers illustrate this:

"I always read books…at home also I read books for my teaching… because nowadays the students very challenging...always keep asking questions...so I have to read for them..."(Teacher Raimie, teacher of Religious knowledge)

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"Professional courses are very important. I am sure all the teachers in this school will be of the opinion that we need professional development courses. Because anyway we will be enriched. Enrichment will happen when there are some courses and when we get some new ideas. I feel motivated to attend such courses." (Teacher Adwaith, English HoD and teacher)

"In the teaching profession I think every day you have something new to learn. Students are new every year. There are so many things that are coming in new. So I try to update myself." (Teacher Nina, Commerce teacher)

2. Conducive Dispositions

Affinity to the intended professional development behaviour, affinity to the teaching profession, and the willingness to learn are dispositions that create conditions for the initiation and engagement in professional development behaviour. They also render the teacher receptive to the facilitating agents around him/her.

"I learned all this (extra knowledge related to his field) because of my interest and my own willingness to learn" (Teacher Benedict, the P.E. teacher).

"I search for ideas on the internet. Like how to start a lesson... There are many websites….To have fun teaching. Have fun teaching them. I enjoy it. Just like an experiment. Use this way and see how they react. Then find out maybe this is not the way... then change to another way." (Teacher Leona, Mathematics teacher)

V. Discussion

Considering the findings of this study in the light of extant educational scholarship in the area, certain key points emerge.

1. In this study, the influence of school leaders in teacher professional development is found to be in four ways: sharing of professional knowledge, encouraging innovative ideas, professional guidance, and mentoring. These behaviours, it may be noted, are mainly of an informal nature, not structured or formal, and reflects a person to person dynamics, more than organizational dynamics. It was also found that professional development of teachers was largely initiated and sustained by those school leaders other than the principal, such as the Dean of Studies and the Heads of departments. This suggests distributed leadership at the school, with the principal assuming more of a managerial role and the other leaders as mentioned above, assuming roles of instructional leaders. Hallinger [34] observes that in the 1980's, it was rare that there was any mention of any school leader other than the principal, being engaged in any instructional leadership, specifically professional development of teachers. However, with the concept of distributed leadership gaining currency over the past decades, there are more acceptances for the view that leadership is the function of a group, rather than an individual [35]. A closely related concept is that of 'teacher leadership'. According to Harris [36], there is a very close relationship between the empirical practice of teacher leadership and the theoretical base of distributed leadership. Four dimensions of teacher leadership has been suggested by Day and Harris [37]: 1) interpreting or deciphering the goals and principles of school improvement to actual classroom practice, 2) engaging in participative leadership in which all teachers feel a sense of ownership for the school's development, and work collaboratively, 3) being sources of expertise and information, and 4) establishing close relationships with individual teachers, which yields mutual learning opportunities. In the current study, it may be seen that distributed teacher leadership is operational in the professional development of teachers, in the sharing of professional knowledge, professional guidance and mentoring, while the principal as a leader encourages innovative ideas. In short, while teacher leaders who have positions such as Dean of studies and Heads of departments give hands-on leadership in professional development, the principal creates a climate or school culture, that is conducive to the professional development of teachers.
2. The influence of colleagues and the wider teacher community on the individual teacher's professional development is seen in this study in five ways: learning through observing, informal sharing of professional knowledge, structured sharing of professional knowledge, role modelling, and mentoring. These streams of professional development closely reflect the 'collaborative apprenticeship model' of teacher professional development proposed by Glazer and Hannafin [38]. This model includes four progressive phases of professional development – introduction, developmental, proficient and mastery. While the introduction phase sees a teacher-leader mentoring his or her peers, perhaps novice teachers, in the developmental phase there is more of collaboration. At the proficient phase, teachers who have hitherto been mentees start their own learning activities, and at the mastery phase, they begin to function as teacher-leaders capable of sustaining their own learning activities as well as mentoring new teachers. In the current study, participating teachers are found to be involved in activities that span all these four phases, given that they were at different stages of their career. However, any formal professional development structure such as collaborative action research, Professional Learning Community or Lesson Study group was conspicuously absent in the school under this study.
3. One of the findings of this study, which was unanticipated at the beginning, is the teachers' perception of students as a motivating factor for professional development, one that prods them to better themselves. The intellectual stimulation provided by students who display curiosity, ask challenging questions, and overtly exhibit an interest in learning, is found to be an important factor that spurs the teachers on to acquire new skills or update their knowledge. Thiessen [39] observed that pupils' role in teacher development is, though considerable, often

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underrated. This is an under-researched area on which extant educational scholarship has little to offer.

4. Self-driven professional development, the fourth player in the professional development dynamics in this study, includes the following, as perceived by the participating teachers: Learning from experiences, self-updating, and self-awareness through feedback leading to improvement efforts. These findings have resonances in Grangeat's [40] study of self-driven teacher professional development, which incorporates thinking about teaching experiences, adapting teaching styles to perceived demands, targeting a particular learning improvement, reading books or consulting websites, and improving year after year of teaching.
5. Teachers' beliefs and dispositions play a motivational role in self-initiated and sustained professional development efforts as well as in being receptive to the learning opportunities made available to them. Educational scholars have long recognized the importance of studying the link between teachers' beliefs and behaviour [41]. Vries, Grift and Jansen [42] found that student oriented beliefs of teachers were related positively to teachers' participation in professional development. Kwakman [43], studying the factors affecting teachers' participation in professional learning activities, concluded that teachers' personal factors were more significant in predicting their engagement in professional learning, than task and work environment. These findings from educational literature, which are congruent with the findings of this study, point towards the crucial role of the *self* of the teacher, in determining the initiation of and participation in professional development efforts, as well as their effectiveness.

VI. Conclusion

The learning and development activities that teachers found to be beneficial in this study, are largely of an informal, interpersonal nature, rather than formal or structural. These findings reveal the absence of any mention of common professional development activities such as workshops and seminars by outside experts. Why such external initiatives are *not seen as beneficial by teachers*, is an area worth exploring. Also, future research may find it worthwhile to understand what influence culture has, on teacher professional development initiation and participation. This warrants attention as there is increased focus in recent times on the differences between Western Socratic and East Asian Confucian educational traditions [44]. Another important avenue for future research could be the role of teacher beliefs, values, attitudes and dispositions in predicting teachers' engagement in professional development activities. Given the vital importance of teacher professional development for teacher performance and student achievement, it is imperative that more attention is directed to research in these areas.

Though this study suffers from the limitation of having been conducted in only one school, and thus of limited generalizability, it offers pointers to what actually works in individual school contexts, in terms of professional development of teachers. Research involving more schools, and varied methodological tools, may be undertaken in the future, to enrich educational scholarship on the praxis of teacher professional development.

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