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## PEER COLLABORATION IN SCHOOL-BASED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: EFL TEACHERS' VOICES IN A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN BENIN

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### Résumé

Le présent article est le compte rendu d'une étude qui a pour but d'identifier l'impact des séances d'animation pédagogique sur les professeurs d'anglais d'un établissement secondaire au Bénin. En utilisant des instruments de recherche qualitative, l'étude a examiné les opinions de ces enseignants sur la culture de leur école, et sur la collaboration entre pairs, ainsi que l'influence de leurs opinions sur leurs attitudes au cours desdites séances. Les résultats révèlent que bien que les participants soient conscients de l'importance de la collaboration pour leur évolution, ils estiment ne pas en tirer suffisamment profit. L'étude suggère certaines solutions pratiques en vue d'offrir aux enseignants de cet établissement l'opportunité d'accroître effectivement leurs connaissances au cours desdites séances.

**Mots clés:** formation continue des enseignants, animation pédagogique, collaboration entre enseignants, culture scolaire, opinions des enseignants.

### Abstract

Using an open-ended questionnaire, observations, and structured interviews, this study investigates English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in a secondary school in Benin in order to identify the impact of school-based professional development activities on them. It examines these teachers' perceptions of their school culture and of peer collaboration, and the influence of their perceptions on their attitudes to collaborative teacher development activities within their school. The results reveal that though the participant EFL teachers showed awareness of the importance of peer collaboration in their professional development, they declared not to benefit much from it. Therefore, the study suggests solutions to enhance EFL teacher learning and development in the school investigated.

**Keywords:** in-service teacher education, school-based teacher development, teacher collaboration, school culture, teacher perception.

### Introduction

In an attempt to guarantee quality education in Benin, the government has put a special emphasis on teachers' pre-service training as well as on their professional development. Since 1999, the government's interest in teacher

preparation and development has increased with the reform brought to the educational system through the introduction of the competency-based programs. To get teachers ready for a good implementation of these competency-based programs, the government has financed a variety of annual in-service teacher training programs which often last a week and take place in all the provinces of the country on school sites selected for the purpose. Much of the content of these training programs has focused on the implementation of competency-based instruction. The programs have offered the participant teachers a great deal of opportunity for learning, reflecting, and sharing. They have also offered opportunities for a follow-up in the secondary schools through scheduled school visits of inspectors and pedagogical counsellors.

In addition, in order to improve the quality of teaching and to enhance learners' performance, mandatory weekly workshops are held by teachers in various subjects in all secondary schools nationwide. These weekly teachers' workshops have been scheduled by secondary school authorities to offer teachers opportunities for learning from each other, discussing issues of concern to them, sharing, thinking, and finding solutions to teaching/learning issues that arise in their classrooms. However, relatively little is known about (1) the impact of these professional development workshops commonly called in French "*séances d'animation pédagogique*", (2) the teachers' perceptions of such workshops, and of their school culture, and (3) the influence of their perceptions on their attitudes to these school-based teacher development initiatives.

Therefore, the aim of this study is to identify the impact of school-based teacher development activities on the participant EFL teachers taking into account the culture of the school investigated from their own perspectives. In order to do this, the study has sought to answer the following research questions:

- 1/ What is the nature of the culture of the school investigated?
- 2/ What are the teachers' attitudes to teacher development workshops?
- 3/ What are the teachers' perceptions of peer collaboration?
- 4/ What do the teachers learn from collaborative teacher development activities?

## **1. Understanding the concept of teacher development**

### **1.1. The concept of teacher development**

Educational researchers have made a variety of suggestions as to how teachers' on-going learning can be enhanced (e.g.: Clarke, 2001; Freeman, 1989; Richards, 1990; Schön, 1983; Wallace, 1991; to name a few). Among these suggestions, they have pointed to teacher development as an on-going process which involves raising teachers' own awareness of their classrooms experiences, encouraging them to reflect on and evaluate these experiences, to learn from them, and to improve. Unlike training which entails the acquisition of

knowledge and skills for short term purposes, teacher development serves long term purposes. It is research-driven, and it is more concerned with teachers' professional growth. It involves teachers' on-going learning (Freeman, 1989) through on-going critical reflection on practice. It views the teacher as a learner and researcher in the teaching context, and emphasises research and action on practice with a view to improving teaching and learning.

The concept of teacher development, as used in this study, has a similar approach as it considers teacher development as a process that is inquiry-based and discovery-oriented. In other words, this study considers a bottom-up approach to teacher development with the teacher reflecting on theory and practice, attempting to integrate both with a view to working out his/her own theory of teaching.

## **1.2. Models of teacher development**

Research distinguishes between two models of teacher development depending on where it takes place: off-site teacher development and on-site or school-based teacher development (Cole, 1992; Craft, 1996; Edge, 1992; Hargreaves and Dawe, 1990; Sawyer, 2001). The off-site model involves training a group of professionals from different schools out of their respective school sites, on a site selected for the period of training. In the school-based model of teacher development, the training program involves a group of teachers working in the same school. While school-based teacher development offers opportunities for a follow-up, and the possibility to examine the impact of the activities on the teachers' pedagogical practices, off-site teacher development programs have some limitations in terms of follow-up in the teachers' schools though they give a lot of opportunities for learning and sharing. Therefore, it is difficult to determine the impact of such programs on the teachers' practices.

Moreover, while in the on-site model of teacher development it is much easier to address the needs and culture of a small group of teachers working in the same school context and to examine the effect on their practices, with the off-site model of teacher development, things are not so easy as this model involves a larger number of professionals from different schools who come with diverse needs and cultures. However, although school-based teacher development appears as the model that best meets teachers' needs, its effectiveness is to a great extent influenced by the school culture as a whole and by individual teachers' culture or characteristics, their perceptions of professional development activities, and the way they think such activities should be carried out (Craft, 1996).

### 1.3. Teacher development through collaboration

The concept of teacher development has often been associated with collaboration (e.g.: Rosenholtz, 1991; Sawyer, 2001; Smith, 1991; Williams, Prestage, and Bedward, 2001). Teacher collaboration has often been conceptualized as teachers' cooperation and relations in the framework of their professional activities. Though professional development can be initiated as a private activity and pursued in isolation by individual teachers, it can be carried out as a collaborative practice involving a community of teachers. Many researchers in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT) have advocated teacher development as a social practice with teachers working collaboratively to construct shared understanding of teaching/learning issues through communication, discussions, reflection seminars, cooperative action-research or collaborative teacher research, peer observation, peer coaching (e.g.: Garmston, 1989; Hoy, Hannum, and Moran; 1998; Hoy, Tarter, and Witkoskie, 1992; Joyce and Showers, 1980; Little, 1990).

The concept of teacher learning as a social practice is congruent with the idea of cooperative development as a tool for teacher development advocated by Smith (1991). He points out that teacher development viewed as a private or isolated practice is insufficient to support meaningful teacher learning as teachers' assumptions, perceptions of teaching/learning and of their students are brought to their own awareness through communication and interaction with others. He argues further that teachers' ability to reflect is achieved *"through the development of collaborative alliances that not only enrich their sense of what is feasible and possible, but transform as well their understanding of those realities"* (p.83).

Arguing in the same direction, Farell (2001) and Hoffman-kipp, Artilles, & Lopez-Torres, (2003) have pointed out that reflection as a social practice engages teachers to think and to reflect more critically on their practices than they can in individual reflective practices. Other researchers have given a broader scope to collaboration and have extended it to a collegial reflective practice involving teachers and administrators working in the same school setting. Within such a framework, teachers and school administrators develop not only through individual practice and reflection, but also through contact with the experiences and theories of others. In other words, growth is reached through reflection and open learning environments where people are critical friends (Goker, 2004).

However, taking into account the fact that in many school contexts teacher culture is often characterised by individualism and conservatism, with teachers who content themselves with doing their work individually as a routine, such a collaborative and critical approach to teacher learning and development is not easy to implement. Besides, some educational researchers have addressed a word of caution about systematic and mandatory collaboration which might

make teachers feel a lack of autonomy in their development process (Clement and Vanderberghe, 2000; Hargreaves and Dawe, 1990)

To solve the problem of mismatch between collaboration which often entails change and openness, and teacher culture which is often associated with conservatism, it is suggested that the school culture be supportive in fostering collaboration. Evidence of the influence of school culture on teacher thinking, practice, and development has been revealed by many research findings which have indicated that teachers' experiential knowledge is enhanced through successful collaborative efforts such as shared planning, peer observation, peer coaching taking place in a supportive school environment (Acker, 1990; Cole, 1992; McLaughlin, Talbert, and Bascia, 1990).

## **2. Methods**

This study is an exploratory research work which aims to determine and describe the impact of school-based or on-site teacher development activities on EFL teachers in a secondary school in Benin, with particular reference to the teachers' perceptions of peer collaboration in professional development and to the influence of school culture on their perceptions. It uses a qualitative research method based on an open-ended questionnaire, non-participant observation of teacher development workshops, and structured interviews.

The open-ended questionnaire aims to identify the nature of the school culture from the participant EFL teachers' perspectives, and to determine whether or not it fosters collaboration. It is suggested here that a supportive school culture is a crucial variable that plays an important role in fostering and maintaining teacher collaboration within schools. Therefore, an investigation into the teachers' perceptions of their school culture will help to gain a deeper insight into their thinking, practices and development. For the purpose of this research work, all the teachers who constitute the permanent EFL teaching staff in the school under consideration in the study have been surveyed. The group is composed of 11 permanent EFL teachers (8 males and 3 females) with ages between 30 and 54, having EFL teaching experiences ranging from 5 to 25 years, and 5 to 10 years of service in the school. All of them received the questionnaire and responded to it. The analysis procedure followed was to isolate each open-ended question in the questionnaire, and to analyse the teachers' answers comparatively across subjects in order to determine the major trends in their opinions about their school culture.

Next, non-participant observations of the mandatory weekly teacher development workshops are carried out in order to determine the participant EFL teachers' attitudes to these sessions. The workshops are scheduled for two hours from 05:00 pm to 07:00 pm every Tuesday. The teachers are observed four times over a period of one month in order to get enough observation data that will help to get an overall picture of their attitudes to these teacher development workshops. These data are analysed inductively in order to

determine the patterns of behaviour that emerge from them and that are representative of the teachers' overall attitudes to the workshops across sessions.

Finally, structured interview data are elicited from the participant EFL teachers in order to collect information on their perceptions of peer collaboration in teacher development, and on their learning in these workshops. These interview data are analysed comparatively and presented thematically following Seidman's (1998) guide to interviewing. This has helped to determine the impact of the school-based teacher development activities on them.

### 3. Data analysis and results

This section presents the findings related to each of the four questions directing the study.

#### 3.1. Research question # 1: What is the nature of the culture of the school investigated?

To answer the first research question, the data gathered from the participants' responses to the open-ended questionnaire have been used in order to identify the nature of the school culture from their perspectives, and to determine whether or not it fosters collaboration. For each open-ended question in the questionnaire, the participants' responses are analysed comparatively across subjects in order to determine the trends in their opinions about their school culture. This cross-individual analysis reveals the trends summarized in table 1.

**Table 1: Trends in the teachers' opinions about their school culture**

Questions in the questionnaire	Trends in the teachers' opinions
1) How would you define school culture?	Practices and beliefs in a school setting.
2) What does teacher development mean to you?	Initiatives, actions, and opportunities to improve one's teaching.
3) What do you think you can do for your professional development?	Carry out research in the field, share experiences with colleagues.
4) How would you describe school authorities' involvement in your professional development in your school?	An important element; school authorities should provide opportunities for teacher development.
5) What are their attitudes to teacher professional development activities?	Positive attitude, but little involvement.
6) What support do the school authorities make available for teacher development in your school?	The school library and the weekly teacher development workshops scheduled for all teachers.
7) How can your school contribute to your professional development?	By making support materials available, and by offering training opportunities.

8) What are your colleagues' attitudes to teacher development initiatives in your school?	Positive attitude, but poor participation of some teachers.
9) How are they involved in your professional development?	Through discussions and sharing their classroom experiences.
10) How would you describe your involvement in your colleagues' professional development?	Sharing teaching experiences with colleagues, finding solutions to classroom problems with them.

The comparative analysis of participants' responses, as illustrated through the information displayed in table 1, reveals that they view school culture as the practices and beliefs in a school. They believe that sharing experiences with colleagues is an important aspect of their professional development. The school, through its authorities, also holds the belief that teachers need to learn from each other's experiences. It has, therefore, established a framework for teachers to meet on a compulsory weekly basis to discuss issues related to teaching and learning, to think together, and to find solutions to issues of concern to them. From this, it can be concluded that the culture of the school investigated, as well as the individual teachers' cultures, is favourable to the concept of peer collaboration and sharing.

Nonetheless, it should be noticed that the school culture, though favourable to collaboration, does not offer adequate support to enhance it. For example, the school authorities have little idea about the content of the workshops due to their little involvement in the organisation and management of the events. In addition, they do not offer adequate facilities and materials for teacher learning in these workshops. Besides, the respondents pointed to some of their colleagues' poor participation during the workshops.

### **3.2. Research question # 2: What are the teachers' attitudes to teacher development workshops?**

The data gathered from the non-participant observation of the teachers' weekly meetings have been used to answer this research question. Overall the eleven participants have been observed during four consecutive workshops which were held in a classroom chosen by the teachers themselves. The observation data are analysed comparatively in order to identify the patterns of behaviour that emerge from them and that are representative of the teachers' attitudes to the teacher development activities in their school. These data are presented in table 2.

**Table 2: Data from the non-participant observations**

<b>Observation sessions</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Type of activity</b>	<b>Type of interaction</b>	<b>Materials</b>	<b>Other details</b>
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1	05:30 pm to 07:00pm	Discussion about the component parts of a lesson plan	Asking and answering questions, collaborative problem-solving	Board, chalk	Participants arrived late.
2	05:32 pm to 06:59 pm	Study of a sample lesson plan; Discussion	Holding discussion and making suggestions	Copies of the sample lesson plan	Participants arrived late; tiredness; little participation.
3	05:35 pm to 06:57 pm	Study of the revised lesson plan	Holding discussion and making suggestions	Copies of the revised lesson plan	Participants arrived late; Not enough copies of the revised lesson plan; tiredness.
4	05:54 pm to 07:05 pm	Microteaching (implementation of the lesson plan)	Peer feedback	Handouts for the lesson	Participants arrived late; little involvement; Two of them grading their students' papers; not enough copies of the handouts.

The major attitude that warrants attention across all four observation sessions relates to the participants' late arrival and their starting the session later than scheduled. Another attitude that they manifested has to do with their tiredness and poor participation during the workshops especially during the second, third, and fourth sessions. Such tiredness might be justified by the fact that the teacher development workshops are scheduled for the last period of the day after the teachers have completed the day's teaching. Besides, the insufficiency of materials can also justify the poor involvement of some of them. It should be noticed that during the third and fourth sessions there were not enough copies of the materials being dealt with to get all the teachers involved. Therefore, those who did not get the materials resorted to doing some other things (grading their students' papers, for example).

Despite these shortcomings, it can be noticed that during all four sessions the activities were carried out in an atmosphere of collegiality, with the participants holding discussions about issues of concern to them, exchanging ideas, sharing experiences, working out solutions to some issues raised by their colleagues, making suggestions, and giving their feedback to their fellow teacher on his lesson plan. All this highlights the fact that the participant EFL teachers adhere to the principle of collaboration during the workshops, and are fully

aware of its importance in their professional development. Unfortunately all conditions are not met to enhance teachers' involvement in this collaboration.

### **3.3. Research question # 3: What are the teachers' perceptions of peer collaboration?**

To answer this research question, interview data were elicited from the participants in order to identify their perceptions of collaboration in their professional development. For this purpose, questions 1 through 7 and question 10 have been considered from the interview guide questions as they are the ones that elicited the informants' perceptions of collaboration. The interview data were recorded and transcribed. The analysis procedure followed was to isolate each individual interview question and to compare all eleven informants' answers to each question in order to be able to identify the major trends in their thinking. This comparative analysis reveals that in spite of a few particularities, the informants share a lot of common perceptions about collaboration in their professional development. The major trends in their perceptions fall into the following six categories:

- collaboration is a learning and sharing opportunity
- collaboration is a very important aspect of teacher development
- collaboration in the school is insufficient
- need for a program of activities to enhance collaboration
- extension of collaboration beyond the framework of the workshops
- school authorities' involvement to enhance collaboration

Overall the data from the interviews indicate that the informants perceive collaboration as an opportunity for them to discuss teaching and learning issues, to share experiences, to become aware of aspects of their teaching, and to learn from each other. They consider it as a necessity, an important element in their professional development that enables them to work toward the improvement of their pedagogical practices. Commenting on this aspect, some of them contended:

*"The fact that we meet every week to discuss about the way we have to teach helps each of us to know more about teaching and to share experiences."*

*"It is an opportunity to help teachers to improve their teaching behaviours."*

*"It is an opportunity for teachers to see if their understanding or perception of teaching is right or wrong."*

*"When we work together, we improve our teaching."*

*"It is very important because teachers exchange experiences. We learn a lot." "Peer collaboration is very important. Through my colleagues, I try to visualise the way I teach. I ask myself some questions about the way I teach."*

*“I think that it is important that we should really create opportunities for this kind of collaboration.”*

*“Such collaboration, to my mind, is very important. It is a must. We should really go through it to see if what we are doing is correct.”*

However, they pointed out that this collaboration is not enough because of its limitation to activities implemented during the weekly teacher development workshops. They also denounced the non-existence of a well-structured program of activities that would help enhance collaborative work during the workshops, and school authorities’ little involvement in the teacher development activities. Regarding these issues, some of them declared what follows:

*“This collaboration is not enough; it is not sufficient.”*

*“Normally we should meet more than once a week. We need more of this collaboration.”*

*“Sometimes we spend our time doing something else because our head teachers don’t plan some activities. There is no prior planning. Sometimes we work in the vacuum.”*

*“This collaboration is not sufficient. Something must be done to enhance it. We need our authorities’ contribution to improve what is done”*

*“School authorities should also give their contribution. We need this kind of collaboration from the authorities from time to time.”*

Therefore, the participants suggested that collaboration be extended beyond the framework of the weekly teacher development workshops through other activities such as group visits to colleagues for peer observation of teaching/learning events followed by peer feedback sessions, holiday sharing seminars with teachers from other schools, trips to English speaking countries to learn more about ways of improving their teaching. Pointing to this aspect, some of them stated what follows:

*“Collaboration should not be only at these meetings. I can ask a fellow to come and see how I do things in my classroom. After that, he will give me feedback.”*

*“During holidays, teachers can meet. They can organise trips to neighbouring countries like Ghana or Nigeria to share experiences with other teachers and to learn about other ways of teaching English in order to improve their teaching.”*

Besides, they also pointed to the importance of school authorities’ involvement in the planning of the activities for the workshops, and to their interest in the organisation and implementation of these activities. Some of them alluded to the crucial need for the school support in the following words:

*“I would like school authorities to help us through their contribution to the organisation of the teachers’ meetings.”*

*“I think that our school authorities should help by facilitating the task and by making the resources available for us. Sometimes we don’t have appropriate materials to work. When we meet, we would like our authorities to provide us with the materials that we need.”*

*“School authorities have an important role to play in the organisation of the teacher development activities, and they should be aware of that aspect.”*

### **3.4. Research question # 4: What do the teachers learn from collaborative teacher development activities?**

To answer this research question, questions 8 and 9 have been considered from the interview guide questions because they are the ones which elicit from the informants data related to what they learn and gain from peer collaboration during the teacher development workshops. The major trend that emerged from the comparison of their responses to these two questions is that they learn about a lot of hints to improve their teaching. They pointed out that they gain a lot from this collaboration in terms of knowledge, experience, awareness, practical solutions to classroom problems, as well as hints to handle interpersonal relationships. Some of them commented on this aspect as follows:

*“I gain many things from it.”*

*“I gain many things through the exchange.”*

*“I learn a lot of things.”*

*“I gain experience in teaching.”*

*“I learn how to manage my relationship with my colleagues.”*

## **4. Discussion**

The findings reveal that culture in the school investigated, as well as individual teachers’ cultures, is favourable to the concept of teacher collaboration. The participants are aware of the importance of peer collaboration in their professional development. They think of it as a crucial variable in teacher development and as an invaluable learning and sharing opportunity. Such awareness is shared by school authorities who have shown support to this view by integrating weekly workshops into the teachers’ schedule within the school.

Despite the teachers and authorities’ shared awareness of the importance of collaboration, the findings show some discrepancies between their perceptions of teacher collaboration and their attitudes. The data reveal that there are some limitations to collaborative work during the teacher development workshops. One of such limitations relates to the lack of a planned program of

activities for the teachers' weekly meetings. Therefore, there is a need for extending teachers' collaborative work to a preliminary planning task before the beginning of the school year. This will enable them to work on the basis of a well-structured program of teacher development activities throughout the academic year. A program of activities from an external source might fail to meet the teachers' needs or to take into account issues of concern to them.

A second limitation to collaboration pertains to teachers' little involvement during the workshops. The findings indicate that some of them show a lack of interest in the activities during the weekly workshops. They show boredom. This poor involvement relates to the fact that the teachers often come to the workshops having no idea of the activities they will be involved in. A well-planned program of activities with tasks assigned to the teachers in preparation for each meeting could help to get them fully involved. This could also encourage them to arrive on time and to start the workshops on the scheduled time.

A third limitation to effective collaborative work during the teacher development workshops relates to the teachers' tiredness. This can be justified by the time chosen for the teachers' meetings. They are scheduled for the last period of the day. After carrying out the day's workload, the teachers are often tired and, therefore, show little participation in the teacher development events.

A fourth matter to be discussed here pertains to the school authorities' attitudes to the teacher development activities. Though they are aware of the importance of peer collaboration in the teachers' professional development, they do not provide adequate support. The findings show that the school authorities do not make facilities and needed materials available for the teachers. For example, teachers' workshops are held in classrooms instead of convenient places for teachers' meetings. This aspect should be taken into account by the school authorities because the degree of convenience or comfort that teachers feel during the workshops can determine the amount of communication taking place.

Besides, the data also indicate that these school authorities show no involvement in the events during the teachers' meetings. It is argued that school culture plays an important role in fostering and maintaining collaboration among teachers within a school setting (Little, 1990; Sawyer, 2001). This crucial role implies not only school authorities' positive attitude to the idea of teacher collaboration, but also and above all their readiness to offer sustained support. Such support should be manifested through their active involvement in the teacher development initiatives within their school, and through their promptness in making needed facilities and materials available for the teachers. The form and amount of support provided by a school are considered as crucial elements in fostering teacher collaboration.

Moreover, teachers' experiential knowledge (Wallace, 1991) develops through collaboration with peers, and successful collaborative work cannot develop without sustained support from schools. Therefore, school authorities

should pay more attention to events taking place during the workshops in order to make teachers more enthusiastic about collaborative teacher development activities within the school investigated.

## **5. Summary and recommendations**

The school culture, as illustrated in the research, is supportive of the idea of collaboration among teachers. The participant EFL teachers are aware of the important role of peer collaboration in their professional development and are enthusiastic about experiencing it in the framework of the weekly teacher development workshops organised in their school. However, in practice, the school authorities do not provide support for effective and sustained collaborative work among teachers. This situation impacts the teachers' attitudes as some of them show poor participation, boredom, and tiredness during the teacher development workshops.

To help enhance peer collaboration in the teacher development activities in the school investigated, the study makes some recommendations.

First, efforts need to be made by the school authorities to create an environment conducive to sustained collaboration among teachers. The achievement of such a goal requires their full and active involvement in the planning, organisation and management of the teacher development activities, the choice of an appropriate period of the day for the teacher development workshops, and the provision of convenient facilities and adequate materials for the teacher development activities.

Second, it is recommended that the teachers experience a variety of teacher development activities in the framework of a well-structured school-based teacher development program. In addition to their regular weekly workshops devoted to discussions on issues of concern to them, such a program should integrate other activities which involve a great deal of collaborative work. These activities include peer observation of classroom teaching and learning events, peer feedback sessions, cooperative action-research, shared planning or preparation, sharing and reflection seminars to which a few teachers from other schools could be invited.

Third, it is recommended that experts in the field of EFL teaching and learning be involved in the school-based professional development activities. This can help to maximize the teachers' learning, and to increase collaborative work in cases when teachers have little confidence in their knowledge and ability to handle some activities.

## **Conclusion**

Teachers' everyday lives and experiences within a school shape their beliefs and actions. The policies, traditions, and culture of the school environment shape their thinking and the way they go about their work in that

environment (Lortie, 1975; Rosenholtz, 1991). Therefore, the meaning that teachers make of work and their definitions of it are often modified through communication with teacher colleagues and observation of other teachers and school administrators. The findings of this study have shown that school culture plays a crucial role in the meaning teachers make of peer collaboration in their professional development. They have also helped to highlight the complex relation that exists between school culture and teachers' perceptions of the various activities that make up their professional lives. Therefore, a special attention needs to be paid to this variable in order to better understand the meaning teachers make of their work and of various aspects of their professional lives.

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## **Appendix**

### **Structured interview guide questions**

(This interview is used in the study to get data related to the participant EFL teachers' perceptions of peer collaboration in school-based teacher development and to what they learn from it)

1/ What meaning do you make of the weekly teacher development workshops in your school?

2/ What is your opinion about the activities carried out during the workshops?

3/ What does peer collaboration in teacher development mean to you?

4/ How would you describe peer collaboration in teacher development?

5/ What is your opinion about teachers' working collaboratively for their professional development?

6/ How much collaboration is involved in teacher development in your school?

7/ Apart from the weekly teacher development workshops, what else do you think teachers should do to enhance and maintain peer collaboration in their development process?

8/ What do you learn from the weekly teacher development workshops?

9/ What do you learn / gain from working collaboratively with colleagues during the workshops?

10/ If you were asked to make suggestions to maximize the effectiveness of these weekly teacher development workshops, what would you suggest?