The Impact of Teacher Development Groups on Omani EFL Teachers'
Classroom Practice

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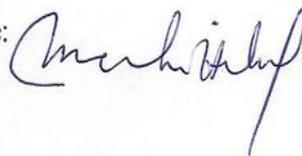   Signature:                              Date: 02/01/2011

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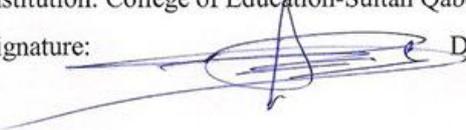   Institution: College of Education-Sultan Qaboos University

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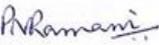   Institution: College of Education-Sultan Qaboos University

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Dedication

To my mother, my wife and my children, I dedicate this piece of work.

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I would like to take this opportunity to express my deepest thanks to the people who have supported me throughout the thesis stages. Without their great support, guidance, and encouragement, this study would not have been possible. All praise is for my God, Allah, for granting me patience and determination to complete this piece of work.

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Abstract

Teacher professional development (PD) has been receiving increasing attention from all concerned. This development has largely been targeted by what is called traditional professional development structures, such as workshops and seminars. Such structures seem to have little effect on teachers' classroom practice. Teacher groups are seen as an alternative effective structure for teacher professional development. This study focuses on a group of five Omani EFL teachers (called Teacher Development Group, TDG) who came together once every week for a whole semester. The study aims at investigating the impact of that group on the teachers' classroom practice as well as their perceptions of their experiences as members in the group. It also aims at finding out the difficulties that the teachers might face during the process of the group. The TDG focused on teaching phonics as a solution to remedy students' reading difficulties. The data was collected through observation of phonics sessions, teachers' journals, interviews with the teachers and the researcher's field notes. The findings reveal that there was some impact of the TDG on the practice of the teachers involved. The TDG members perceived the TDG as a great opportunity to share ideas and experiences with each other. They found the group as beneficial and gained a lot from it. They also realized the importance of cooperative work to achieve shared goals. They valued each other for their helpfulness, cooperativeness and support. As TDG members, the teachers seemed to face very little difficulties.

ملخص الدراسة

ما يزال الإنماء المهني للمعلمين (Teacher Professional Development) يلقى اهتماماً متزايداً من قبل كل المهتمين به في الحقل التربوي. كان يتم تنفيذ هذا الإنماء عن طريق ما يسمى ببرامج الإنماء المهني التقليدية كالمشاغل وورش العمل وغيرها، ويبدو أن لهذه البرامج تأثيراً ضئيلا على أداء المعلمين التدريسي داخل غرف الصف، لذلك ظهر نموذج مجموعات المعلمين ( Teacher Groups) كأحد البرامج البديلة لتلك البرامج التقليدية.

تتمحور هذه الدراسة حول مجموعة تسمى مجموعة الإنماء المهني للمعلمين (Teacher Development Group) مكونة من خمسة معلمين يدرسون اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. كان المعلمون يجتمعون مرة واحدة في الأسبوع على مدار فصل دراسي كامل. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى البحث في أثر هذه المجموعة على أداء المعلمين التدريسي داخل غرفة الصف، كما تهدف إلى التعرف إلى وجهات نظر المعلمين حول خبراتهم كأعضاء في المجموعة، وكذلك الصعوبات التي واجهتهم خلال المراحل التي مرت بها المجموعة. ولقد اتخذت المجموعة تدريس أساسيات القراءة (Phonics) كمحور اهتمامها من أجل معالجة الضعف القرائي الذي يعاني منه طلابهم. تم جمع بيانات هذه الدراسة من خلال الملاحظة الصفية والمقابلات مع المعلمين ومذكراتهم وملاحظات الباحث الميدانية. أظهرت النتائج أن هناك أثراً لمجموعة تطوير المعلمين على أداء المعلمين التدريسي داخل غرفة الصف، كما أجمع المعلمون على أن المجموعة كانت لهم بمثابة فرصة كبيرة لتبادل الأفكار والآراء والخبرات فيما بينهم, كما أدركوا أن المجموعة كانت ذات فائدة كبيرة جعلتهم يدركون أهمية العمل التعاوني من أجل تحقيق أهداف مشتركة. ثمَن المعلمون أعضاء المجموعة بعضهم لتعاونهم ودعمهم لبعضهم بعضاً. ولقد واجه المعلمون كأعضاء مجموعة إنماء مهني للمعلمين القليل من الصعوبات.

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

Teacher professional development (PD) seems to have been receiving increasing attention for more than two decades. Craft (1996: 5) argues that 'professional development and in-service training have attracted increasing attention in recent years'. Diaz-Maggioli (2003) defines PD as a continuous learning process in which teachers willingly engage to learn to modify their teaching to suit students' learning needs. From this definition, we can highlight two essential features of PD: (a) 'ongoing' process and (b) 'voluntary'. These two features distinguish PD from training. In contrast, training is often a one-off and compulsory event. In addition to that, 'making teachers attend some workshops or seminars from time to time does not really help much' (Ali, 2007: 117). 'Unfortunately, it seems that traditional forms of professional development popular today, such as workshops, in-service training, and conferences, have not increased levels of teacher growth and student learning' (Murray, 2008: 1). Although those forms can help, their helpfulness is inadequate, especially they do not offer a way to integrate materials presented into practice (Owston, 1998; Murray, 2008). One reason for this is that workshops and seminars lack coherence and continuity as well as they do not have clear objectives (Ali, 2007). Teachers are usually summoned to attend such programs, even if these programs do not satisfy their needs. Furthermore, another drawback of such PD forms, as Piedrahita (2007:94) claims, is that 'teachers are put into a passive role' because they do not usually choose the topic of focus. In a training session like a workshop, although they play an active role in the workshop activities, teachers often sit down listening to what is said by a presenter, who is considered to be an expert, and taking notes. When teachers get engaged in PD actions that are more meaningful to them,

they become more eager to engage in them and collaborate with other teachers (Piedrahita, ibid).

Consequently, there seems to be a need to have another form of PD which can have more effect on teachers' practice. The emergence of teacher development groups (TDGs) seems to be promising in this regard. Yeh (2005) claims that TDGs are getting growing attention as efficient tools for professional development at all educational levels. This means that such groups can lead to PD not only for teachers but also for other practitioners, such as administrators. Clair (1998) sees TDGs as an alternative to traditional PD models because they provide teachers, either from one school or from different schools, with chances to look collectively at their teaching and their students' learning.

## 1.1 Context of the problem

Teacher education in Oman takes two forms: (1) pre-service education and (2) in-service education. The latter usually takes the form of short-term courses or one-shot events, such as workshops or seminars. In-service education is usually referred to as training or professional development. Both terms are used interchangeably. In-service education is always conducted during school days, so teachers have to put their duties aside for some time in order to join the training sessions. Once the training is over, teachers go back to their schools and struggle to cope with the delay caused by being away to attend training sessions. In the case of longer training sessions (i.e. courses) they are usually conducted in a 'day release' basis, which requires teachers to have the classes of five working days in just four days.

Since the TDG model is a new format for professional development (PD) in the Omani context, and to the best knowledge of the researcher, this PD format has never been used in the Omani context before, at least for school teachers. Nobody has reported the use of such model in the Omani context. As mentioned above, teachers in

Oman are often exposed and used to traditional PD, namely one-shot workshops. This traditional PD format, as also mentioned above, was found to have little effect on teachers' performance. Al-Ghatrifi (2006) mentions that he noticed the workshops he used to conduct for his teachers seemed to have no 'real impact' on their classroom practice. For this study, the researcher communicated with some senior English teachers and teacher trainers and inferred that the impact of training on their teachers' classroom practice is relative. The impact was, however, clearly noticeable with only some teachers, who were enthusiastic and self-motivated.

## 1.2 Statement of the problem

A lot of professional development (PD), as the case in Oman, has been in-service training, usually in the form of workshops that aim at providing teachers with strategies and experiences to help them enhance the achievement of their students. Ganser (2000: 8) says, 'The history of staff development reveals a predominance of short-term workshops'. However, such training was found to have little influence in getting teachers implement what they have received several months after the training (Brody and Davidson, 1998). Hence, 'staff development that does not change classroom practices is like a parachute that opens after a second bounce' (Roy, 1998: 97). Accordingly, there seems to be an urgent need to have another professional development avenue that can have more effect on teachers' practice. TDGs could be one of the solutions. One reason for that could be the fact that TDGs are formed by teachers for themselves in order to develop their own practice.

## 1.3 Purpose of the study

This study aims at investigating the impact of a TDG model on Omani EFL teachers' classroom practice. It also aims at exploring the teachers' perceptions of their experiences as TDG participants.

*1.4 Research questions*

The study seeks answers to the following questions:

1. What is the impact of the TDG model on Omani EFL teachers' classroom practice?

2. What are the teachers' perceptions of their experiences using the TDG model?

3. What are the difficulties faced by the EFL teachers in using the TDG model?

*1.5 Significance of the study*

According to Brody and Davidson (1998), the PD approaches in the future could be teacher groups where they work in a collaborative manner to develop teaching and learning. As mentioned in 1.1 above, this study is the first to explore the TDG model as a professional development tool in the Omani context. Therefore, it intends to:

1. raise teachers and educators' awareness of the TDG model as a form of professional development.

2. create an interest in the educational community in Oman to adopt this model in the teacher professional development programs.

3. initiate research in this area.

*1.6 Limitations of the study*

This study is limited to a group of five EFL teachers in Dakhiliya Region in Oman, who focused on teaching phonics to their students. Only male Omani teachers were involved in the study because it is difficult for female teachers to attend group meetings in boys' schools for socio-cultural reasons.

*1.7 Definitions of key terms*

In this section, the key terms are defined operationally.

*Teacher development group (TDG)* is 'a group of teachers from a small number of schools who meet regularly to discuss and move forward their efforts at

engagement with and improvement of a particular area of classroom work' (Holloway and Long, 1998: 537).

*Traditional professional development* refers to any professional development structure other than TDGs which are based on the assumption that an outside-expert knows better than teachers do (Owston, 1998). This includes workshops, seminars and in-service courses.

### *1.8 Procedures*

To answer the first question (What is the impact of the TDG model on Omani EFL teachers' classroom practice?), the following steps were adopted:

a. In the first meeting of the TDG, the topic (focus) was decided by the group members.

c. The teachers got engaged in the TDG process (meeting, discussing, etc.)

d. The teachers were observed while teaching phonics sessions and notes were taken, using an observation form. This was to detect the kind of improvement or changes in their teaching. The observation took place throughout a whole semester.

e. The observations were analyzed and compared.

To answer the second and third questions (What are the teachers' perceptions of their experiences using TDG? What are the difficulties faced by the EFL teachers in using TDG model?), these steps were followed:

a. At the beginning of the study, the group members were asked to keep journals to record their feelings, worries or any other issues related to their experience as TDG members.

b. Field notes were taken during group meetings.

c. Teachers were interviewed at the end of the TDG sessions. The interview questions were categorized into groups. The categories were: introduction,

membership, meetings, gains, obstacles, support from school and other. The interviews were recorded and transcribed.

d. All the above data were analyzed.

# Chapter 2

## Literature Review

### 2.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature related to the TDG model. It is divided into three main sections. Section one gives a background that highlights the origins of the idea. Section two provides a definition, characteristics and the procedure of establishing a TDG. Section three summarizes some related studies.

### 2.1 Background

Peter Senge originated the idea of 'learning organizations' which he defines as organizations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning to see the whole together' (Senge, 1990 cited in Smith, 2001). Although Senge's ideas were based on business context, they are relevant to teacher development (Robin, 2008). Hord (1997) mentions that approximately a year after its publication, Senge's book, *The Fifth Discipline*, moved into the educational setting. Then, after the concept of 'learning organizations' was explored by educators and discussed in educational journals, it was given the term 'learning communities'.

Moreover, there seems to be a shift in teacher education from the product-oriented approach to the social constructivist, process-oriented approach (Padwad and Dixit, 2008). In other words, 'teachers are seen as active participants rather than passive reactors' (Marczely, 1996: 8). Consequently, professional learning communities (PLCs) of teachers emerged as a sign of that shift. Historically, PLCs were proposed by two researchers, Rosenholtz and Senge (Robin, 2008). Those PLCs are more and more considered to be an effective method for teacher learning and professional development (Padwad and Dixit, 2008).

While there is no consensus on particular definition of a PLC, it is considered to be a community of professionals who get together for the purpose of sharing, interaction, and joint support that lead to personal and professional growth (Padwad and Dixit, 2008). In this sense, a PLC is the same as a TDG. In the literature, there are various labels given to TDGs. For example, 'Study Groups' (Cooper & Boyd, 1998), 'Collegial Teaching Teams' (Johnson & Johnson, 1998), teaching 'Community' (Forest, 1998), 'Teacher Support Groups' (Richards & Farrell, 2005) and 'Work Discussion Groups' (Jackson, 2008) and many others. Whatever name is given to such groups, they are similar in nature, with 'collaboration' as a main feature. For the purpose of this study, the term 'teacher development group' (TDG) or 'the group' will be used.

In addition to the paradigm shift mentioned above, the emergence of TDGs may have also occurred as a result of the search for a more effective PD channel. Traditional PD structures are increasingly seen as deficient for enhancing school reform and facing teachers' challenges (Clair, 1998). Clair (1998: 466) elaborates, 'One-shot workshops and pre-packaged seminars … are insufficient for facilitating teacher collaboration and change'. Brody and Davidson (1998) argue that a lot of PD has been a kind of in-service training, usually in a form of workshops, which aims at providing teachers with strategies and experiences to help them enhance the achievement of students. This in-service training, Roy (1998: 96) emphasizes, 'assumes that teachers will be motivated and ready to learn. Sadly, that is a huge assumption'.

## 2.2 What are TDGs?

### 2.2.1 Definition

Richards and Farrell (2005: 51) define a teacher development group as

'two or more teachers collaborating to achieve either their individual or shared goals or both on the assumption that working with a group is usually more effective than working on one's own'.

Piedrahita (2007: 93) also defines it as 'an organization in which teachers, instead of an outside expert, negotiate and decide their own agenda, objectives and the activities to be carried out'. TDGs are seen as an alternative structure to traditional PD because they allow teachers opportunities to jointly investigate teaching and learning on their own initiative (Clair, 1998). From his experience, Allen (2005) considers TDGs as the most successful professional development structure for teachers.

It is a bottom-up approach to teacher professional development, therefore, as Clair (1998) suggests, both the group focus and process are planned and determined by the group members themselves without any intervention of an outsider. A TDG is an 'ongoing arrangement' (Head and Taylor, 1997) and this is an important characteristic that discriminates it from traditional PD formats.

*2.2.2 Characteristics*

TDGs have certain characteristics that make them unique PD formats. Farrell (2007) proposes the following characteristics:

- o Feeling safe. Teachers feel free and safe to do whatever they want with no fear of being judged or evaluated by an outsider. TDGs are safe places where members find support and trust (Johnson & Johnson, (1998; Harmer,2001; Keedy et. al., 2001; Yeh, 2005).

- o Feeling connected. The group gives the teachers the feeling of being connected with other teachers who have similar interests and challenges. Because 'teaching can be a very lonely profession' (Kaplan, 2008: 336), a TDG gets teachers together to remove the feeling of

isolation which most teachers have experienced for too long (Yeh, 2005).

- o Feeling passionate about the group. This makes teachers experience ownership and gain knowledge through it.

- o Being grateful for the group's existence.

Keedy et. al. (2001: 42) also mention some other characteristics of successful PD programs, including TDGs. They are:

- o Teachers assuming leadership roles through administrator encouragement.

- o Voluntary participation combined with professional norms fostering teacher involvement. 'Teachers join the group because they wish to, they are not 'sent' (Holloway and Long, 1998: 537).

- o Diverse, active learning and self-directed learning experiences connected with teacher work context and expertise;

- o Integration of efforts to improve classroom teaching and learning; professional development 'as a way of life'.

## 2.3 Establishment of TDGs

### 2.3.1 Group membership and size

Richards and Farrell (2005) identify two ways of enrolling teachers in a TDG: direct and indirect recruiting. Direct recruiting is done by the founder of the group or the facilitator of the group. Indirect recruiting means getting others, such as a supervisor, to advertise or identify possible teachers. However, this does not mean that teachers are forced to join a TDG, but rather that it is voluntary (Richards & Farrell, 2005; Cooper & Boyd, 1998; Jackson, 2008). 'Teachers join the group because they wish to, they are not *sent*' (Holloway & Long, 1998: 537).

In the literature there is no consensus on a certain group size, but there seems to be an agreement that the smaller the group is, the better. Head and Taylor (1997: 100) emphasize that a TDG 'does not have to have a large membership'. Richards & Farrell (2005), for example, suggest a group size of 5 to 8 teachers; however large groups can split into two subgroups. Cooper & Boyd (1998) argue that a group should not exceed six members. As mentioned above, TDGs need to have a small number of teachers. This is partly because their members need to know each other (Forest, 1998) in order to feel comfortable and in turn to collaborate to achieve the shared goals. How fast that happens may be partly dependent on the group size. In other words, the more teachers a group involves, the more time teachers need to familiarize themselves with each other.

## 2.3.2 Determining the group goals, rules and focus

Since TDGs are a bottom-up approach to teacher professional development, as mentioned in 2.2.1, the group members are the ones who determine the group goals and rules, as Richards & Farrell (2005) suggest. The group rules are considered to be a contract between the group members and help control the group (Head and Taylor, 1997). Piedrahita (2007), mentioned above, also emphasizes that the teachers themselves establish their group objectives.

In the initial meetings, teachers have to establish a focus for their group. Richards & Farrell (2005) mention that there should be a suitable group focus which the teachers feel the need to know more or learn about.

## 2.3.3 Meetings

There is an agreement among researchers (Such as Cooper & Boyd, 1998; Johnson & Johnson, 1998; Roy, 1998) that group members should meet regularly. Johnson & Johnson suggest weekly meetings, while Cooper & Boyd suggest monthly meetings. However, the meeting time and place should be decided by the group

members according their needs and circumstances (Richards & Farrell, 2005). They also suggest that the meeting place is chosen according to: privacy, size, comfort and distractions. Cooper & Boyd (1998) suggest 'rotating the meeting place' as a condition for the success of a TDG. In addition, there should be a facilitator who starts the meetings, focuses the discussions and summarizes the conclusions (Richards & Farrell, 2005).

### 2.3.4  Sustaining the group

Once a TDG has started, it needs to continue and flourish. In order to achieve that, Farrell (2007) proposes the following suggestions:

- o  Time commitment and task commitment. Group members need to commit themselves to the time as well as the task they agree upon.

- o  Negotiate ground rules. Teachers need to negotiate and set rules which would help them sustain their group.

- o  Assign roles. Each group member can have a role to play, such as coordinating group meetings, leading the meetings and contacting outsiders if they need to.

- o  Be a good listener. Do not judge. Teachers should respect each other's ideas and opinions, so they should listen to each other carefully and avoid giving judgments of others' opinions.

- o  Look at positives. Teachers should accept their differences and be positive towards them.

- o  Agree on confidentiality early on. Everything done within the group should not be spread outside.

Cooper & Boyd (1998) came up with another list of conditions to sustain a TDG. They are:

- o  Teachers should meet on a regular basis.

- o Rotate the meeting place. This could be to avoid routine which might cause boredom.

- o Rotate the co-facilitation of the meetings. Teachers can take turns in facilitating the meetings; this can make the group members committed to and responsible about the group.

- o Select a topic from a list generated in an initial meeting, when the teachers have agreed on the topics and their importance.

- o Record decisions. Keeping minutes help teachers remember what they have done, so they can follow them up.

- o Have each person bring something to share, so all leave with many ideas for their time. This means that the group does not only depend on the meetings, but also there should be a variety of activities.

- o Use both small and large groups during the meeting. Discussions can take place as a whole group or they can split into smaller groups if the number of teachers is big.

- o De-brief the meeting. Before leaving the meeting, the group facilitator can summarize what has been done, so all teachers are clear about what to do next.

- o Have refreshments.

Regarding all that has been mentioned above to sustain the group, disagreement might still be expected between group members. This seems to be natural, as Cooper & Boyd (1998: 57) argue, 'Whenever people work together, conflict eventually develops'. However, Cooper & Boyd elaborate claiming that conflict is normal as it shows that people care to share their honest opinions.

## 2.4 Previous Studies

Keedy et. al. (2001) reported a study that was conducted in the USA that aimed to (a) identify PD programs that led to teacher empowerment and the improvement of teaching and learning; (b) describe and compare the major characteristics of those programs. There were 15 nationally recognized professional development programs. The reputation technique was used by which experts were asked to nominate high-performing PD programs. Those programs resulted in teacher empowerment, instructional improvement and students' achievement. Among others, TDGs were found to be one of the most successful PD programs. This is because those programs provided teachers with an atmosphere of support and trust and they gave them the opportunity to be responsible for their own professional growth. This indicates the importance of the TDG model as a form for teacher PD. This makes the researcher more interested in this model and eager to see its effects on a group of Omani EFL teachers.

Padwad and Dixit (2008) investigated the impact of the participation of 11 teachers in a PLC called English Teachers Clubs (ETCs) on teachers' thinking about and attitudes towards classroom problems in a central Indian context. They found that the involvement in ETCs has led to better performance among the teachers in terms of contextualization of the problems, critical approach to problems, belief in self-agency and pragmatic approaches to finding solutions. This study also confirms the significance of the TDG model. It shows that it had an impact on teachers' performance in their contextualization of classroom problems.

Arbaugh (2003) examined the values that seven secondary geometry teachers placed on their participation in a school-based group. He also examined the organizational structure of the group, and the impact of that structure on teachers' continued participation in the study group. The researcher acted as a facilitator and

researcher. He was an active participant in all of the group discussions and asked probing questions and challenged the teachers to reflect on their teaching. The researcher used three data collection methods: final interview written preparation (answers to a set of questions), interviews and audio-taped accounts of group meetings. Results showed that the teachers were supported in four areas: building community and relationships, making connections across theory and practice, curriculum reform, and developing a sense of professionalism. Results also indicated that participation in the study group had an impact on teachers' self-efficacy. In summary, from being involved in the TDG, among other benefits, teachers reported that the group helped them think more deeply about their practice and to link it with theory.

Farrell (1999) investigated the ways a TDG promotes reflective teaching. He focused on a group of three experienced EFL Korean teachers who met on a weekly basis to reflect on their work. Although the group focus was reflection, the researcher also discussed the participants' perceptions about their TDG experience. He found out that two teachers perceived their group experience as rewarding in their teaching career. They appreciated the relationship among themselves, peer observation, journal writing and the group meetings. The other teacher was fascinated by the group members' attitudes and enthusiasm about teaching and that they accepted differences among themselves. In general, the teachers perceived that they benefited from their participation in the TDG. For example, they believed that they had developed personally and professionally. They also thought that they became more effective teachers.

Yisrael (2008) conducted a qualitative case study to determine if interdisciplinary teaming has a positive impact on teacher morale. This case study was conducted at a high school in Southwest Ohio in the USA. Interviews and

observations were used to collect data from a group of five teachers. The study showed a positive impact on teacher morale. For instance, the teachers became more comfortable and confident about their work. They had less feeling of isolation because they shared resources and ideas with their colleagues. Teachers also had increased self-esteem and became more reflective. Although the purpose of the study was not to find out the impact of the teaming on teachers' practice, one can argue that all the above mentioned advantages would likely help, to a certain extent, to improve the teachers' classroom practice.

Murray (2008) conducted a case study research in which she aimed at finding out the administrators and teachers' perceptions about the role of TDGs in meeting PD goals and the factors that the members considered important in a TDG. The study also aimed at identifying the teachers' perceptions of the effects of the TDGs on their teaching and their students' learning. The study included 25 teachers and three school principals forming three TDGs in three different schools from one district in the USA.

Results showed that the administrators found TDGs as important in accomplishing district-wide goals. The teachers perceived the TDGs as effective to improve their teaching practice as well as their students' learning. Some teachers provided evidence for such improvement. The teachers considered their choice to join the TDGs and to choose their focus topics as a major factor in the success of their groups. As a form of PD, the study concluded that the TDGs contributed to creating a supporting PD environment for teachers. They also helped the teachers to make informed decisions about what was best for them and their students.

All the studies mentioned above, regardless of their foci, show the importance of the TDGs on teachers' performance and attitudes. They also indicate that such groups are rewarding for teachers' PD, so they are worth investigation and exploration in order to see their impact on teachers in the Omani context.

*2.5 Conclusion*

The review shows how the idea of the TDG developed over the years. Although it started in business context, it became very popular in education. What discriminates this model from traditional PD structures is that it is a bottom-up approach by which teachers are responsible for their own PD. Unlike traditional PD structures, which are usually one-off events, the TDGs occur on an ongoing manner which may facilitate collaboration and change for teachers.

Research shows that the TDGs are effective PD channels that have great impact on various aspects of teaching and learning. For example, they enhance teachers' reflection, practical problem solving and self-esteem. However, there seems to be very little research carried out, if any, to investigate the impact of such model on teachers' classroom practice. Therefore, this study tries to explore this impact on a group of five EFL Omani teachers.

## Chapter 3

## Methodology

### 3.0 Introduction

This chapter explains the methodology of the study. First, it identifies the study design. Then it points out the sample of the study, and then it discusses the tools used to collect data. It also explains the data collection and group formation procedures. Finally, it defines the roles the researcher adopted during the study.

### 3.1 Study design

This study examines the impact of a TDG model of PD on a group of five (5) Omani EFL teachers. It also explores those teachers' perceptions of their experiences as members of the TDG. The researcher adopted a qualitative case study approach in order to 'develop an in-depth understanding' (Cresswell, 2002: 498) of the TDG. Merriam (1988: XIV) defines a qualitative case study as 'intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon such as a program, an institution, a person, a process, or a social unit'. This, in turn, required that the researcher gather as many types of data to develop his understanding of the situation (Cresswell, ibid.).

Triangulation of data collection methods helps reducing the subjectivity of the data (Rubert, 2005). For this study, data were collected through a variety of methods; they are observation, interviews, the researcher's field notes and the teachers' journals (See 3.3 below).

### 3.2 Participants

The sample comprised five male Omani EFL teachers. Only Omani teachers were targeted for this study for two reasons. First, they comprise the majority of EFL teachers in the Sultanate of Oman. Secondly, it was easier for them to move to the meeting places because they had their own means of transport. No female teachers were involved in the study. For social reasons, it would be difficult for female

teachers to attend meetings in boys' schools. They might not be able to attend meetings after school, too.

The researcher intentionally invited teachers who teach different grade levels in order for the group to have a variety of experiences as well as to enrich the group discussions. The teachers were aged between 24 and 42 years and came from four different schools. They taught different grade levels and they had different teaching experiences. Three teachers were in their first years of teaching, while the other two have been teaching for more than 16 years. Two of them were senior English teachers in their schools, so they had fewer teaching periods than the other three, whose teaching load ranged between 18 and 20 periods a week. All the teachers were holders of a BA in education. They all worked under similar teaching conditions and received almost similar in-service training. All five teachers were supervised by the same supervisor. The following table shows the demographic information about the study participants.

*Table 1:  Demographic information about the participants*

| Remarks | Experience (years) | No. of periods taught | Grades taught | Schools | Age | Teachers |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 20 | 6 & 7 | Sch. 1 | 27 | Nasir |
| | 2 | 20 | 11 & 9 | Sch. 3 | 24 | Ali |
| | 5 | 18 | 11 & 12 | Sch. 2 | 29 | Zahir |
| Senior teacher | 17 | 10 | 10 | Sch. 2 | 36 | Mahmood |
| Senior teacher | 22 | 15 | 10 | Sch. 4 | 42 | Saeed |
| Left the group because he was enrolled in a course | 6 | 12 | 11 post basic | Sch. 3 | 29 | Matar |
| Left the group because he was promoted to be supervisor. | 16 | 15 | 6 | Sch. 1 | 35 | Ahmed |

### 3.3 Data collection

The researcher used various data collection tools because 'triangulation helps to identify different realities' (Rubert, 2005: 454). The following tools were used to collect data for the present study.

### 3.3.1   Observation form of phonics sessions

The observation form was the main data collection tool. There were two observers: the researcher and the teacher's supervisor. Both the researcher and the supervisor were colleagues in the supervision department in their region. The researcher had been working as a supervisor for five years and the supervisor has been working in supervision for more than ten years. Cohen et. al. (2000) argue that using two or more observers independently can enhance the validity and reliability of the data. The observation form (See Appendix 1) was developed according to the following procedure:

1. The researcher searched for an observation form, which could be used to observe teaching phonics, in the literature, but he did not find a suitable one. Therefore, based on the general observation forms he came across, the researcher decided to develop his own observation form.

2. The researcher conducted two initial observations to two different TDG members in order to have a clear picture of the phonics sessions. The researcher took detailed notes of all that was going on in the two sessions.

3. The researcher designed the observation form and gave it to the thesis committee to review. Based on the committee's comments, the researcher adapted and finalized the observation form.

The observation form consisted of three parts. Part One was divided into three main themes and under each one, except the second, there were some sub-themes. The first theme included: students' previous knowledge, model and practice, monitoring, encouragement and attitudes. The second theme was 'assessment'. The third theme was 'classroom environment and materials' which included: classroom environment, activities, extra materials and follow up. The second part of the observation form contained a list of the stages the TDG members had decided to follow throughout the

semester. The observer ticked the stage that the observed teacher was employing. The stages, in sequence, were: the alphabet, single-letter sounds and two-letter sounds, simple words, longer words, words with silent letters and sentences. It also included a question which asked the observer to indicate whether the teacher was following the stages mentioned above. There was a space provided for any explanation, regarding the stages. Part Three comprised a space for any general comments the observer would like to add.

### 3.3.2 Semi-structured interviews with the teachers.

Interviews are common tools for collecting data for qualitative research. They are used to gather information in the study participants' own words, so a researcher can have a picture of how they view a certain bit of the world (Bodgan and Biklen, 1998). Through analyzing the teachers' initial journal entries (see 3.3.4 below), some important issues appeared in almost all the TDG members' writings. However, those issues were not clearly discussed by some of the teachers, while some others did not come across them at all. Therefore, it was essential to identify the teachers' views of those issues. Hence, the aim of the interviews was to explore and clarify the teachers' perceptions of the TDG which they had spelled out in their journals. The following procedure was used to develop the semi-structured interviews:

1. The researcher brainstormed questions that could be asked.

2. He categorized them into six groups; they are membership, meetings, gains, obstacles, support from school and others.

4. The interview questions were reviewed by the research committee and amended according the committee' comments.

### 3.3.3 Researcher's field notes

Field notes are often a common data collection tool in qualitative research. Many researchers use field notes in their research, such as Alati (2007), Farrell (1999) and Clair (1998). Field notes are defined as 'the written account of what the researcher hears, sees, experiences and thinks in the course of collecting and reflecting on the data in a qualitative study' (Bodgan and Biklen, 1998: 107). The researcher wanted to capture all that was going on in the TDG meetings in order to gather as much information as possible from those meetings. Therefore, the researcher briefly jotted down what he heard and noticed during the meetings. As soon as he could, the researcher put the notes on computer, adding details while they were still fresh in his mind.

### 3.3.4 Teachers' journals

They are the writings the TDG members produced as a kind of reflection as well as a record of what they had done and their feelings about the group. Like field notes, journals are also common in qualitative research. Many researchers employ participants' journals in their research, such as Farrell (1999) and Clair (1998). Worth mentioning that the participants in this study were not forced to write; one member wrote nothing. The researcher suggested them to write journals in order to reflect upon the TDG and its process, and the teachers agreed. The journal entries were meeting-wise. Some teachers titled their entries by the meeting numbers (Meeting 1, Meeting 2, etc.) and others just put the date of every meeting as headings.

When the researcher collected the first entries from the teachers, he found that they were no more than a kind of minutes of the group meetings. They just narrated the sequence of the discussions. Therefore, the researcher provided the teachers with

some points that they could use to help them to write. The table below shows the points the researcher suggested the teachers (sent to the members through email).

Table 2: Points suggested to the teachers for their journals

First of all, I'd like to thank you for sending me your journal entries that you have written so far. Your journal seems to me very interesting, however, it looks a bit like meeting summaries that we usually have after each meeting. I think you need to add more details to it because it is quite general and does not obviously reflect your perceptions about the group and its processes. You could talk about the following issues, for example:

- Your feelings about joining the group
- Your expectations about the group before we started and whether these expectations have been confirmed
- The group focus and the way it is dealt with
- The group meetings and the way they are conducted and organized.
- The group discussions and whether you have enough chance to express yourself
- Your relationship with the other group members and how it has developed over time
- What you have learned or gained from being a member of the group
- Any other issues you may feel you need to talk about

Make the journal very personal. Talk about your reflections, worries, confusions, etc. And please do not worry about revealing such things because I assure you that I would deal with all information anonymously and confidentially.

### 3.4 Procedure of group formation

This section presents the three-stage procedure the researcher used to form the TDG; they are Teacher Selection, Determination of Group Goals, Rules and Focus and Regular Meetings.

**Stage 1: Teacher Selection**

*1. Procedure of selection*

As mentioned above, the researcher selected five (5) Omani EFL teachers from four (4) different schools. However, initially, five teachers were selected from only three schools as was planned earlier. However, later on, two teachers left the group. One of them was enrolled in a training course and he was not able to attend the group meetings because he had to attend the course sessions in the same day of the

TDG meetings. The other teacher was promoted to be a supervisor (See Table 1). To replace those two teachers, the researcher invited a teacher, who was interested, from one of the three schools mentioned above. Since there were no other interested ones in the other two schools, the researcher had to find a teacher in a fourth school, although this school was about 20 kilometers distant from the other three schools. It was planned to have teachers from nearby schools, so the teachers could easily move from their schools to the meeting venue. It is worth mentioning here that the researcher consulted the group members about involving the other two members who joined later and they agreed. The idea was that the researcher did not want to force the group members to accept those members. In addition, the teachers need to feel that it is their group and they have the right to decide everything about it (Head and Taylor, 1997).

As the founder of the group, the researcher visited the schools from which the teachers came from and met the school principals. He explained the purpose of the study and gave them an idea about the TDG model, too. This model seemed to be a completely new concept for them. The researcher felt that the principals were, to a great extent, concerned about their staffs' professional development. Therefore, they welcomed the idea and showed a strong desire to cooperate with the researcher. Without any hesitation, they agreed to adapt their schools' lesson schedules so as to free the volunteering teachers in order to attend the group meetings, in case they decided to meet during the school day.

After getting the school principals' permission, the researcher met all the Omani teachers of English in all the targeted schools. He explained the idea of the TDG as a new form of professional development and clarified what would be required from them in case they agreed to participate in the TDG. The teachers were given time to think and decide, whether to participate or not. It was emphasized that their

decisions to participate are optional. Therefore, their decisions should be based on their will and desire, and not for any other considerations.

After about two or three days from meeting them, the teachers informed the researcher of their decisions by phone. Six teachers agreed to join the TDG and participate in the study. Because the study sample was determined to have only five participants, two teachers from one school were asked to discuss and decide which one of them would participate. The other teacher was the potential participant who was later invited to join the group in order to replace one of the group leavers.

*2. Raising awareness*

The researcher invited the interested teachers to the first meeting in one of the schools, after arranging with the school principal and the group members from that school. Some of the meeting time was devoted to familiarize the teachers with the concept of the TDG because it was totally new for them. What they knew was just working in groups in traditional PD programs. The researcher talked in more detail about that and focused on the following issues:

- o The definition of TDGs and their characteristics.

- o The importance of TDGs with reference to previous research.

- o What research says about traditional PD forms.

- o The procedures of establishing and sustaining TDGs.

The researcher gave the teachers the opportunity to ask questions about the concept of TDGs and the consequences of being a member of the group. This appeared to be very important in order to have the teachers continue with the group to the end.

**Stage 2: Determination of Group Goals, Rules and Focus**

In the first meeting, part of the time was devoted to brainstorming, discussing and agreeing on the group goals, rules and focus. The teachers were likely to be

committed to their professional development as well as their students' achievements. This may be the reason why they agreed to join the group. The researcher appreciated the teachers for their commitment and insisted that they needed to act according to that. In other words, their concern should only be how to develop as teachers, benefiting from being members of a TDG. They should also work collaboratively to assist their students' learning. At the very beginning, two teachers were concerned about the study itself; they asked about the kind of data the researcher was looking for and they gave some suggestions, like tape-recoding the group meetings and analyzing them. The researcher thanked the teachers for that, but explained that they should not worry about the study; rather they should focus on the group processes. Then the group goal was determined: developing students' reading abilities.

The group rules were also discussed and agreed on. Since it was their first time for teachers to experience such group, there was some silence when asked to brainstorm ground rules. They did not know what sort of rules they needed to establish for this kind of group. Therefore, the researcher suggested some rules, from the literature (See Table 3 below), that they could use or adapt to suit their group. The following grid shows the ground rules the teachers established for their group:

*Table 3: the TDG ground rules*

| |
|---|
| ✓ We listen carefully to each other. |
| ✓ We respect each other's ideas and values. |
| ✓ We take responsibility of ourselves. |
| ✓ It is OK to make mistakes. |
| ✓ We keep our arrangements. |
| ✓ We avoid hurting each other, verbally or physically. |
| ✓ Confidentiality is essential. |
| ✓ Commitment is essential. |
| ✓ We are all equal. |
| ✓ English is the only means of communication. |
| ✓ We work collaboratively. |
| ✓ Mobile phones should be put on the silent mode during discussion. |
| |
| * The first six rules in the list above were adapted from Head and Taylor (1997) and the rest were created by the teachers. |

It is mentioned in section 2.3.2 that the teachers are the ones who decide their group focus. Therefore, the TDG members had the chance to choose their group focus according to their needs. The researcher did not impose anything on the teachers. However, he had previously contacted some supervisors and senior teachers, who play supervisory roles as well, and asked them about what they thought their teachers needed support with. They came up with issues like: group-work, teaching reading, teaching grammar, assessment, time management, teaching writing and warm-up activities. Therefore, the researcher just suggested this list to the teachers.

First the group members brainstormed some topics that they could be working on during the semester and agreed on 'Reading' as a main focus for the group. There was a kind of consensus among the teachers that their students, regardless of their different grade levels, were struggling with reading. They divided this main topic into three themes: (a) phonics, (b) skimming and scanning, and (3) dictionary use. In the second meeting, the group members decided to focus on the first theme (i.e. phonics) because they believed it is the cornerstone in getting learners to read. They reported that their students were facing problems decoding letters and words. In the third meeting, they devised a procedure that they would follow throughout the semester. The procedure was as follows:

1. The alphabet/ the names of letters

2. Sounds of letters: a) Single sounds

                                        b) Sounds represented with 2 letters

3. Simple words (one or two syllables)

4. Longer words (more than 2 syllables)

5. Words with silent letters

6. Sentences

**Stage 3: Regular Meetings**

In the first meeting, the group members discussed issues related to regular meetings, such as meeting time, duration and place. They decided to rotate their meetings among their three schools. They also agreed that they would meet on Tuesdays, during the second half of the school day. They found that Tuesday would be the most suitable time for all of them as they did not have any school duties, on that day, other than teaching. Accordingly, the group members talked to their school principals in order to adjust their timetables. In fact, the researcher told the school principals that there would be a need for such adjustment if the teachers decided to meet during the school day. The principals showed their readiness to help. The group also decided to have a maximum of two-hour meeting every week. This time-duration agree with the researcher's review of literature as in most studies he reviewed, the time set ranged between 45 minutes and one and a half hours. However, groups usually exceeded the time they set for their meetings.

The group started to meet once a week until the eighth meeting when they decided to meet once every two weeks. They wanted to give themselves enough time to apply what they agreed on in the meetings, so they could come to the following meetings with more opinions and ideas to share with each other. The group members had a total of 12 meetings throughout one semester.

*3.5 Researcher's role*

In this study, the researcher played two roles: a facilitator and an observer (researcher). For the first four meetings, the researcher acted as the group facilitator so as to model the process of arranging for the meetings and leading the discussion. However, the other group members had the chance to be facilitators of the group starting from the fifth meeting onwards. For the second role, the researcher was there

just to observe and take notes of what was going on in the meetings. He did not intervene in the group discussions unless the teachers deviated from the main focus.

In addition, to enhance the reliability of the data, the teachers' supervisor was involved in the study. The researcher explained the whole process of data collection and clarified the group focus to him. After the observation form was designed and reviewed, both the researcher and the teachers' supervisor conducted two joint-observations on two different teachers. After the observations, they compared and discussed their observational notes. There was neither contradiction nor disagreement between the two observers. Therefore, they carried out their subsequent observations individually.

# Chapter 4

## Results and Discussion

### 4.0 Introduction

The present study aimed at investigating the impact of a TDG model on Omani EFL teachers' classroom practice. It also aimed at exploring the teachers' perceptions of their experiences as TDG participants and the difficulties they may have faced throughout the process of the TDG. This chapter presents the results and discussion. It is organized around the three research questions. In this chapter, pseudonyms, rather than the teachers' real names, are used in order to ensure confidentiality. The study participants are also sometimes referred to as 'the teachers', 'the members', 'the TDG members', or 'the group members'. These terms are used interchangeably

### 4.1 What is the impact of the TDG model on Omani EFL teachers' classroom practice?

The answer to this question was mainly obtained through observation. However, some data were also obtained through the teachers' journals as well as the interviews with the teachers. There were two observers: the researcher and the teachers' supervisor and there was no contradiction between their observations. With the exception of one member, who was observed three times only, it is worth mentioning that all the TDG members followed the procedure they agreed upon at the beginning of the TDG. In some cases, they were working on two stages at the same time as it was not always possible to isolate one stage from the other.

The TDG members, who taught different grade levels, decided to devote at least 10 minutes of their class time to deal with phonics. Therefore, the time allocated for phonics sessions varied from one teacher to another. It is worth mentioning here

that the teachers were observed during the phonics sessions only, not in the entire lessons. Table 4 shows the grade levels and the average time allotted by each teacher.

*Table 4: Grade levels and average time allotted by teachers for phonics sessions*

| Comments | Range (minutes) | Average time devoted to phonics sessions (minutes) | Grade levels | Teachers |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| BE means Basic Education | 17-27 | 21 | 6 BE | Nasir |
| GE means General Education | 15-20 | 17.8 | 11 GE | Zahir |
| | 10-25 | 15.2 | 11 GE | Ali |
| Sometimes devoted whole lessons | 20-40 | 31.5 | 10 GE | Mahmood |
| Observed three times only. | 12-25 | 18 | 10 BE | Saeed |

The amount of time Mahmood assigned to teach phonics was the longest among all the group members. This is due to allocating a whole forty-minute period to phonics from time to time. Saeed was observed only three times and the researcher could not arrange for more observations because Saeed joined the group late. Saeed was also a senior teacher in his school which was participating in an international educational project. This required him to travel from time to time to attend meetings. The three observations were dated 14 December 2009, 28 December 2009 and 5 January 2010. The impact of the TDG on the teachers' classroom practice is discussed below.

*4.1.1 Teaching and learning*

*a. Activating students' previous knowledge*

All the teachers tended to activate their students' prior knowledge. They did that by revising what they taught in previous sessions. In all the sessions observed, Nasir activated his students' previous knowledge by either revising what he taught in the previous sessions or eliciting examples of some aspects of phonics that were previously taught. From Observation 3 onwards, Nasir started to link current sessions with previous ones in a clearer manner. For example, in the third observed session, he reminded the students with the rule: *c + e, i, y = /s/*, which was introduced before.

For Zahir, all the work was done orally at the beginning, but later on, as noticed in Observation 3 onwards, he started to provide his students with handouts. Those handouts contained summaries of what was covered in the sessions. Zahir tended to use those handouts for revision; he got his students to say the sounds and to read the letters or words written in the handouts. He usually asked his students to give additional examples as appropriate.

During the sessions, Ali was sometimes noticed linking current sessions with previous knowledge. There was no clear change noticed in his performance concerning this area. Through the observation, Mahmood was also noticed using the same procedure of revising previously taught elements. There was no noticeable change.

For Saeed, he was noticed in the first observation activating his students' prior knowledge of the alphabet. In the other two observations, he neither activated their prior knowledge nor revised what was taught in the previous sessions. This might be because Saeed got his students to work on activities that were familiar to them. Compared to the students of the other group members, Saeed's students seemed to be at a higher level of their phonics competence. They were able to read words and simple sentences. Saeed justified that as the school was running some remedial work and all teachers were required to tackle reading problems.

All the five teachers were found to activate their students' previous knowledge. For three of them, there was no change observed, but for the other two, there was some change occurred throughout the phonics sessions. Nasir was noticed linking the sessions with previous ones and Zahir moved from oral work to using handouts for the purpose of activating his students' previous knowledge.

*b. Modeling and practicing*

At the beginning, Nasir offered his students more modeling of letter formation and letter-sound correspondence. This modeling gradually decreased across the sessions. This may indicate that his students were improving. In addition, the students were offered less practice at the beginning, however, the practice increased gradually towards the end of the semester. The more practice seemed to have been offered to the students, the more progress they achieved. This progress was noticed by comparing the various observation forms. This might justify the teacher's rare use of 'Think Aloud' technique at the end of the semester as students were more able to read words.

Modeling seemed to be a central part of Zahir's phonics sessions. At the beginning of the phonics application, he modeled letter formation, especially the differences between some capital and small letters, which were confusing to students. In all the sessions observed, Zahir modeled some aspects of phonics. He gave his students sufficient opportunities to practice what he modeled, except in the fourth observed session, when he did not offer his students enough chance to practice. Generally, there was no clear development in Zahir's classroom practice in this area.

In the first three observations, Ali used to model the target elements of the sessions. He modeled letter formation, showing his students the difference between capital and small letters. He also modeled letter sounds. In Observation 2, for example, he modeled the two consonants: /b/ and /p/, showing and explaining how they are articulated differently. Later on, he was not observed using modeling in the subsequent sessions. This may indicate that the students had improved and they were more confident with letters and sounds.

Like Zahir, modeling seemed to be an integral part of Mahmood's phonics sessions. In all the observations conducted in his class, he was noticed modeling

different aspects of phonics. For instance, he modeled letter sounds and sound combinations. In the last observed session, he modeled one, two and three-syllable words, like 'moon', 'bee', 'computer' and 'centimeter'. He was also observed using 'Think Aloud' technique and giving his students enough opportunities to practice what he modeled. In the early sessions, he used to get his students just repeat what he modeled, but in the later sessions, he asked them to give examples of their own.

Saeed was only observed three times. In the three sessions observed, he provided his students with activities to work on. In those sessions, he just explained and demonstrated the activities and got his students work individually or in groups. In the three observed sessions, Saeed did not model any sounds or letters.

Modeling was a major part of almost all teachers' phonics sessions. More and more practice was noticed to be offered to the students, while modeling decreased. This may indicate that the teachers were adapting their teaching according to the achievements their students made. In other words, the more the students got confident with phonics, the more practice they were provided and the less modeling they were given. In addition to that, the teachers adopted a variety of correction techniques. The teachers shifted from using teacher-correction as the only error correction technique to adopting peer-correction and self-correction. This may point out that the students became more familiar with phonics and more aware of their errors.

*c. Monitoring phonics sessions*

At the beginning, it was not clear that Nasir was listening carefully to what the students said because he rarely moved away from the front of the class. However, from Observation 3 onwards, it was clear that he was listening carefully to his students' responses because he started to move around the classroom while the students were producing sounds or words. In Observation 6, he was observed going to individual students, bending to listen to what they said. At the beginning of phonics

sessions, Nasir seemed not to be giving sufficient support to his students. When he got them articulate certain sounds, he just waited for them to produce those particular sounds without any help. He mainly depended on error-correction as a way to support his students. Nevertheless, later on, he began to support his students by reminding them of previously covered phonics aspects. He also showed them how to articulate sounds and words. He may have adopted other teachers' techniques because they usually discussed their experiences of phonics teaching in the group meetings. Once, Nasir mentioned that his students were quite good at saying the alphabet, but not so with letter sounds. This triggered the group members to discuss the issue and they shared their experiences and ideas (FN. November, 3).

From the very beginning, Nasir adopted three correction techniques to deal with his students' errors. They were self-correction, peer correction and teacher correction. However, he started to indicate his students' errors by pausing for a while to get students realize that they have made an error. He sometimes asked direct questions like, 'Are you sure?' When he noticed common errors among the students, Nasir began to point them out to all students, explaining why they made such errors and how they could avoid them.

Zahir always listened to what his students said or produced. At the beginning, he used to correct the students' errors himself, as it was evident through Observations 1 and 2. However, later on, he started to encourage his students to correct themselves by making them aware of their errors. He sometimes used peer-correction. He also started to support his students by, for example, re-modeling sounds and giving more examples. Throughout the sessions, Zahir also reminded his students of specific items or examples they had come across during previous sessions and encouraged them to decode letters and words.

Ali listened to his students carefully during the sessions. When he was not sure about what they had said, he asked his students to repeat. He supported them when it was necessary; he sometimes gave his students more examples or reminded them of certain elements that were previously tackled. Ali was merely reliant on teacher-correction at the early sessions. Although he kept using this technique throughout the semester, he adopted other techniques, like self and peer correction. However, he tended to use teacher-correction more frequently. He might have found it more effective or to save time as the time for the phonics sessions was deducted from the regular lessons. Whenever his students made an error, Ali often made them aware of it, by, for example, repeating the error with a questioning intonation. Ali encouraged his students to work out things for themselves; he encouraged them to decode letters and words, for instance.

Mahmood was always a good listener to what his students said and he provided them with appropriate support. At the early phonics sessions, he supported them by giving more examples or repeating what they had correctly said. Then he added two other supporting techniques: 'remodeling' and 'reminding' the students of previous knowledge. To correct his students' errors, Mahmood adopted three techniques: teacher-correction, peer correction and self-correction. However, peer correction technique was more frequent than the other two. In the seventh observed session, he indicated his students' errors in order to make them aware of them. He did so by, for example, using facial expressions, like frowning or pausing for a few seconds.

In the three observed sessions, Saeed monitored his class quite well. He moved around checking and supporting. The kind of support Saeed provided could not be observed because it was offered to individual students. As mentioned above, he

got his students to work on certain activities, which were done individually or in groups. This aspect of his performance cannot be attributed to the TDG.

Except Saeed, all the other TDG members have developed in monitoring their phonics sessions. Rather than using one error-correction technique, they used other techniques. Interestingly, they encouraged their students to identify and correct their own errors by getting them notice the errors. They used a variety of ways to do that, such as pausing to indicate the error. The teachers also offered their students more support, such as giving examples and remodeling sounds and words.

d. *Encouraging students*

All the classes observed seemed that they had an encouraging learning atmosphere because the teachers were friendly and tolerated their students' weaknesses. The teachers were committed to help their students. In all the sessions observed, Nasir created a stress-free learning environment in his classroom in which there was a good degree of freedom experienced by the students. This atmosphere encouraged the students to ask for clarification and they were not afraid of making mistakes.

The students were free to express themselves. However, from the first four observations, Nasir seemed not to be praising his students verbally for their good efforts. Later on, he started to praise them. He started using expressions like 'very good' and 'well-done (in Arabic)'. He evidently began to encourage the students by expressing his satisfaction with their progress, offering them some suggestions and advice to do better. In Observation 5, he explained to his students, 'I know you can read, but you make mistakes because you read in a hurry'. Once, during one of the sessions, some students tended to tell their colleagues what to say whenever they were asked to read a word. The teacher stopped them and explained that this behavior did

not help their classmates, and that they needed a chance to work out things for themselves.

Zahir praised his students for their correct responses, mainly using the expression 'Excellent'. Towards the end of the TDG, he was noticed encouraging even the students who made mistakes and praised them for their 'Good try', as he said it. In some of the group meetings, he expressed his commitment to support and encourage his students. In Meeting 12, he said 'Students should continue learning; otherwise they will lose what they have learned so far' (FN. January, 12). Without encouragement, students would not be able to continue learning.

Ali's classroom atmosphere was likely to be encouraging because he was very friendly with his students. He did not use verbal encouragement or praise frequently. At the beginning, he occasionally used the expressions 'Excellent' and 'Good' to praise his students. However, he started to thank his students for their efforts.

Mahmood was the teacher who used a variety of expressions and techniques to encourage his students. He started with the expressions 'Good' or 'Very good', as it was evident in Observation 1. Then he kept adding more and more expressions, including: 'Excellent', 'Good to hear that', 'Well-done' and 'God bless you'. He sometimes used Arabic equivalents of those expressions. In addition to that, it was also noticed that he sometimes repeated the students' correct answers with a rising intonation. He created a stress-free atmosphere inside his classroom where students were free to express themselves. The increase of Mahmood's encouragement to his students may indicate his determination to help his students to do better.

Saeed praised his students for their correct answers and efforts. He used expressions like 'Excellent', 'Well-done' and 'Bravo'. In addition, the way he monitored his sessions seemed to be encouraging because the students were not afraid of making mistakes.

All teachers constructed an encouraging learning environment inside their classrooms. However, only three of them had clear development in this area of teaching. This development was clear through the amount and types of encouragement the teachers provided.

*e. Teachers and students' attitudes towards teaching and learning phonics*

All teachers seemed to be interested in teaching phonics. This is reasonable because they chose phonics as a focus for the TDG. Nasir was very interested in teaching phonics, even before he started applying the phonics approach. He started teaching about more than a month after the first TDG meeting. This was due to Ministry of Education's decision to delay the beginning of the semester because of the swine flu circumstances. In the early meetings of the TDG, he expressed his eagerness to start applying the phonics approach in his own classes. Therefore, he was always enthusiastic in the phonics sessions. The students were not very enthusiastic and active at the beginning. Their active participation was limited, but they gradually became more engaged in the sessions and more students participated. Towards the end of the semester, they started to shout out to get a chance to participate.

Zahir seemed to be very interested in teaching phonics and was active during the sessions. Few students were engaged in the early sessions and their level of engagement varied from one session to another. For example, through Observations 2 and 3, most students seemed to be engaged; that was clear from their participation in the sessions. However, in Observation 4, few students were active in the session. In Observation 5, the students were active and engaged to the extent they were calling to be given the chance to participate.

From one session to another, Ali's as well as his students' enthusiasm and engagement were relative. In other words, in some sessions, the teacher was active and enthusiastic, and in others, he did not look very enthusiastic. This attitude might

have been transmitted to his students. However, it is worth mentioning that Ali had flu for some time and then he suffered from cough for a longer period of time. This might have negatively affected his performance. In Observation 3, he was not feeling well because of cough. However, in the group meetings, Ali sometimes plainly expressed his commitment to teach phonics to his students. He was always active and engaged in the group discussions.

From the very beginning of teaching phonics to the end, Mahmood was always enthusiastic, active and confident. He reported in his journal (Journal Entry 2) that his students encouraged him because they liked the idea of learning phonics. He tried to engage his students in the sessions and he succeeded to a great extent, as was observed in Observation 8. However, Mahmood's students were sometimes not as active as their teacher. Saeed was always active, enthusiastic, and confident during the sessions. His students were mostly engaged and they were keen to participate, except in the second observed session when they were not very active.

Except one teacher, all the other teachers seemed to increase their praise and encouragement for their students. Teachers might have recognized the need to motivate their students and to maintain this motivation because teaching phonics takes time and effort from the students. The teachers' interest and enthusiasm were always high, however, for their students it appeared to be changing across the sessions. The teachers' continuous interest and enthusiasm may indicate their commitment to their students' progress. It can also mean that their students were making progress and this is why the teachers were always motivated.

### 4.1.2 Assessing students' progress

The TDG members always checked their students' understanding throughout the sessions. In Observation 1, Nasir plainly explained to his students that he was checking their understanding. He said, 'I'll give one more example to check your

understanding'. He also assessed their progress using a variety of techniques. In Observation 2, he revised with his students a test that he had administered in the previous session. Nasir also assessed his students' progress by asking them to give examples of letters or words and sometimes he asked them to read certain words or articulate specific sounds or sound combinations. In addition, he used direct questions, such as 'How do you say this?'. Through observing Nasir's sessions, there was always some progress noticed on the side of the students. Nasir also reported in his Journal Entry 8 that his students had improved in their ability to read. In the last observation, for example, most students were able to read single words, but not so fluent with sentences. They had just started the 'sentence' stage of the TDG procedure mentioned above (3.5, Stage 2). Regarding assessment, there was no clear change in Nasir's practice. He kept using the same techniques throughout the semester.

Zahir checked his students' understanding by eliciting examples of what was being practiced. In the second observation, which was done 21 days after the first one, he got his students to assess themselves by asking them the question 'Which is more difficult for you: vowels or consonants?'. In the sixth observed session, he asked his students about whether they found the session helpful. There was always some progress observed on the side of the students. In the last two observations, students were able to read single words with little difficulty.

Ali usually checked his students' understanding during the sessions by asking direct questions or asking for examples. He sometimes assessed his students' progress using short quizzes. His students were achieving progress. Such progress was obvious from the students' ability to respond to the questions that Ali asked them about what they had learned previously.

Mahmood checked his students' understanding by, for example, eliciting examples of sounds, letters or words. In the fourth observed session, he added the

technique of asking students direct questions, such as 'Can you pronounce this?' and 'Please read this word'. He also used quizzes from time to time. There was progress observed throughout Mahmood's sessions. In the third observed session, students seemed to have a better idea of consonants and in the seventh session, they were able to read single words correctly.

Like other teachers, Saeed checked his students' understanding. He assessed their progress by asking questions and eliciting words. In the last observed session, the students were evidently able to read words with some minor errors. They were also able to justify the silent 'e' at the end of some words and could explain why the 'c' is pronounced as /k/ or /s/.

Assessment was likely to be a major part of the phonics sessions and the teachers used a variety of methods to assess their students. In the interview, one of the TDG members mentioned that he learned to test his students to diagnose their difficulties, which he had never thought of before. For example, he tested his students in the alphabet in order to identify the letters and sounds that were still problematic to them. That test gave him a clearer picture of his students' specific difficulties. There was some improvement noticed throughout the sessions in the students' abilities to read. One reason for such improvement was due to the use of assessment data to inform the teaching of phonics, which is consistent with Murray's (2008) findings.

### 4.1.3 Classroom environment and materials

This aspect of the teachers' classroom practice seemed to be the least improved area. Most of the phonics work was carried out orally with the use of the board. However, the few printed materials the teachers used were suitable for their students' levels and they were of good quality in terms of font and layout.

Nasir occasionally used some printed materials, which were of good quality in terms of font and layout. Zahir's classroom walls remained free of any English print.

However, outside the classroom, in the corridor, there were some charts and displays in English. Although those were not intended for the purpose of teaching phonics, they could have been helpful, but they were not exploited. At the beginning, Zahir depended only on oral work, but soon he started to use some handouts. Through all the observations, the teacher did not provide his students with extra materials, except once when he used a worksheet.

Zahir always assigned some work for students to do on their own time. For instance, once he asked the students to search for words in their course book or magazines that include certain letter sounds practiced in that particular session. In another session, he asked students to read sentences from their course book and in the seventh observed session, he asked them to look up a dictionary and find more example words with certain phonetic symbols.

In Ali's classroom, there was only one display on the wall throughout the semester. This wall chart contained the alphabet in capital and small letters and the letter sounds in Arabic. The teacher used the chart during the early sessions while he was dealing with the letter names and single-letter sounds.

At the beginning, most of the work was done orally, but later Ali started to use printed activities. Most of these activities were the ones that the teachers shared in the TDG meetings. He rarely used extra activities. This might be due to the time limit. He sometimes assigned some homework. For example, in Observation 3, Ali asked his students to find words with the vowels /æ/ and /ɑ:/.

There were no displays in Mahmood's classroom. In the first two observed sessions, he used OHP transparencies that contained the alphabet with example words containing those letters. Although those transparencies were helpful for students, they were of small font that they were not clear enough from the back of the class. The teacher rarely used extra materials; he usually used one activity at a time. This may be

due to the limited time devoted to teach phonics. Starting from the fifth observed session, Mahmood started to assign his students some homework. In Saeed's classroom, there were no classroom displays.

In this area, all teachers were likely to be very similar. They moved from oral work to some printed activities. In addition to that, teachers started to give their students some homework, contrary to their approach at the beginning of the TDG. The teachers did not seem to be interested in using classroom displays, although they believed in their usefulness for students' learning as they discussed in Meeting 6. From their experiences, the teachers reported that students used to see classroom displays as decoration for the classroom. This view might have been implicitly conveyed by some school administrations that students should fill their classroom walls with charts, pictures and other displays in order to satisfy school visitors (FN. October, 27). This view might have made the students think that classroom displays had no value for their learning. In turn, some students might destroy such displays. Overall, classroom environment and materials seemed to be the least improved area of the teachers' classroom practice.

### 4.1.4 Commitment to the TDG procedure and focus

The teachers seemed to be committed to follow the procedure (See 3.5, Stage 2 above) they had agreed upon in the TDG's early meetings. Nevertheless, in some cases, they integrated more than one stage at a time. It was likely to be difficult to separate the stages. Although the teachers' focus was on a certain stage of the procedure in every session, they revisited the other stages as a kind of revision or as an immediate action to a specific difficulty students faced during the sessions. It was not clear whether Saeed had followed the procedure the TDG had agreed on because in the three observed sessions, he was dealing with words. This could be due to the

level of his students, which seemed to be better than the other teachers' students' levels.

In their last meeting, all the group members (except Saeed who was not present) said they would continue teaching phonics. For example, Ali explicitly stated, 'I am going to continue what I have started with my students and complete it' (Journal Entry 13). By the end of the TDG, Ali reached the 'two-syllable word' stage and said he would continue with the other stages (i.e. longer words and sentences) for one more semester (FN. January, 12). Like Ali, Nasir expressed his commitment towards his students, although he did not put it explicitly. He wrote in his journal,

'We are trying to make a difference in our students. We want them to be able to read well. We want to improve their reading skills. Maybe it is a very difficult road to walk on. Yet, it is worth to try. Our students deserve the best from us. We have to look for better methods to teach them. Our English books are not enough for them. They are in need for more. The 5 or 10 minutes we spend in our [phonics] sessions with our students may not be enough to make big change. Still, they are very useful for them….' (Journal Entry 8)

Nasir said he could assign five minutes of class time, whenever possible, to improve his students' reading (FN. January, 12). Zahir said it was a great chance for his students to learn phonics. He mentioned, 'My students are eager to learn more. We should continue with this project' (FN. January, 12). Mahmood did not explicitly state his plan, but in the last TDG meeting, he said that he would continue with teaching phonics and would try to assign time for that' (FN. January, 12).

The commitment that the TDG members showed may be due to their choice to participate in the TDG as well as their choice of the focus of the group. In other words, this is similar to what Murray (2008) reported in her study that choice leads to commitment. Based on what the teachers said they intended to do after closing the

TDG, one can deduce that the TDG had an impact on the teachers' classroom practice. This matches with what Richards and Farrell (2005) mentioned that being members in a TDG can result in more effective and innovative changes in teaching. This study shows that the amount of change that occurred in the teachers' classroom practices seemed to be relative. In other words, while some teachers developed one area, others developed another. Table 5 below summarizes the changes that took place in the teachers' practices. It shows that the classroom practice of all teachers, except Saeed, have changed in one way or another. Although the teachers differ in the aspect and the degree of change that occurred in their classroom practice, it is noticeable that the TDG had an impact on their teaching.

*Table 5: A summary of the changes occurred in the teachers' classroom practices*

| End of TDG | Beginning of TDG | Teachers | Areas observed |
|---|---|---|---|
| More linking current sessions to previous ones | Revising previous sessions<br>Eliciting examples from previous sessions | Nasir | Activating students' knowledge |
| Oral and written work | Oral work only | Zahir | |
| No clear change | | Ali, Saeed, Mahmood | |
| More practicing and less modeling | More modeling and less practicing | Nasir | Modeling and practicing |
| No clear change | | Zahir | |
| Less modeling<br>No clear change in practicing | More modeling | Ali | |
| Same amount of modeling and more practicing | Less practicing | Mahmood | |
| No clear change | | Saeed | |
| Careful listening<br>Individual support | Not listening carefully to students<br>Whole-class support<br>Three correction techniques | Nasir | Monitoring phonics sessions |
| Added self and peer correction<br>More support | Teacher-correction technique<br>Less support | Zahir and Ali | |
| Supporting by modeling and reminding<br>Made students notice errors | Supporting through examples and repetition<br>More peer correction | Mahmood | |
| No clear change | | Saeed | |
| More praise (different expressions)<br>Expressing satisfaction of progress<br>Offering advice and suggestions | Rare praise | Nasir | Encouraging students |
| Also praised the students who made mistakes for trials | Praised using the expression 'excellent' | Zahir | |
| No obvious change | | Ali | |
| More praising expressions<br>Repeating correct answers with rising intonation | Less praising expressions | Mahmood | |
| Always praising and encouraging – no clear change | | Saeed | |
| More engagement/participation from students | Interested, but students were less interested/enthusiastic | Nasir | Attitudes towards phonics teaching and learning |
| More students engaged | A few students were engaged | Zahir | |
| No clear change | | Ali and Saeed | |
| More active students | Less active students | Mahmood | |
| No clear change – using the same techniques | | Nasir | Assessment |
| Self assessment | Checked understanding by eliciting examples | Zahir | |
| No clear change | | Ali | |
| Asking questions and quizzes | Eliciting examples | Mahmood | |
| No clear change | | Saeed | |
| No classroom displays, some printed materials, more encouraging learning environment | No classroom displays, no printed materials | Nasir | Classroom environment and materials |
| Provided students with handouts and assigned homework to them | No printed materials | Zahir | |
| One classroom display, used some printed materials some of which were shared by the TDG members | One classroom display, No printed materials | Ali | |
| No classroom displays, used some printed materials, assigned some homework | No classroom displays, used some OHTs, no homework assigned | Mahmood | |
| No clear change | | Saeed | |

*4.2 What are the teachers' perceptions of their experiences as TDG members?*

In order to identify the TDG members' perceptions of the TDG, data was obtained from their journals as well as the interviews. This analysis is also supported by the researcher's field notes (FN) which he jotted down during the TDG meetings.

*4.2.1 Teachers' expectations*

All the TDG members had good expectations about the group and its impact on them. The teachers' journals showed two kinds of expectations. They were expectations about the TDG meetings and expectations about the students' reaction to learning phonics and their level of knowledge.

Zahir thought that the TDG discussions would be constructive and would help him with enhancing his students' level. Nasir was also very positive about the TDG meetings. He explained with clear confidence, 'I am sure I will benefit from those meetings' (Journal Entry 1). He was likely to be sure that the meetings would be of good value for him. Ali was also optimistic that being one of the TDG members would help him increase his students' achievements in phonics. Mahmood articulated his eagerness to join the group and expected to benefit from the 'close discussions and mutual experiences' (Journal Entry 1). These positive expectations might have caused the discussions to be lively and interesting (FN. September, 29).

Despite Mahmood's positive expectations about the TDG, he speculated about the success of teaching phonics. He thought that students of grade 10 and above would not be interested because they might feel embarrassed to learn something that is usually taught to children in primary school. Interestingly, when he discussed the issue with his students, he came back with a completely different idea. He said that his students accepted the idea and were interested in it. He reported that one of his students said to him, 'Please Teacher, continue with this … topic because that may help us to read' (Journal Entry 2). Zahir, who was teaching grade 11, was also worried

about how his students would react to learning phonics. He asked himself, 'How can I convince them if they asked me why do we have to learn English [phonics] at this stage?' (Journal Entry 2).

*4.2.2 Group meetings and discussions*

As mentioned in 4.2.1 above, the teachers had positive expectations about the group and they anticipated to benefit from it. Those expectations seemed to have been realized. Ali, for instance, described the discussion of the second meeting (29 September 2009) as 'lively' and that they shared their 'experiences and stories' (Journal Entry 2). Zahir also described the discussions as being 'frank' and Mahmood said that they had constructive discussions. Nasir said, 'We had open discussion about teaching'. Regarding Meeting 8 (17 November 2009), Mahmood wrote, 'Multiple visions were raised and discussed…I was happy with the achievements we had in this meeting' (Journal Entry 3). After eight TDG meetings, Ali wrote, 'We had a lot of positive discussions which [we] benefited from and enjoyed as well' (Journal Entry 9).

The teachers seemed to have a positive impression about the TDG meetings and discussions. Mahmood for example said he was satisfied with the group meetings; however he did not like the absence of some members in some of the meetings. Zahir described the meetings as being very effective. He specifically liked the freedom to express ideas. He explained, 'We talked freely and the idea of freedom in conversation … was a very vital thing that made our meetings successful' (Interview 5: 91-94). Ali declared that the group meetings were 'helpful because in each meeting there was something new or a new solution for a problem' (Interview 3: 60-61).

What the teachers mentioned about the benefits of the TDG discussions is consistent with Murray's (2008) study as the teachers in her study gained information and support through such discussions. The TDG members were asked about whether the group discussions were different from the discussions that the teachers usually

have with their colleagues in their schools. They came up with an interesting comparison between the TDG discussions and school discussions. Table 6 below summarizes the differences that the teachers mentioned.

*Table 6: Comparison between TDG discussions and school discussions as perceived by the teachers*

| School discussions | TDG discussions |
|---|---|
| <ul><li>They are mostly in pairs.</li><li>There is no commitment to reach an agreement.</li><li>There is no clear purpose.</li><li>Teachers are less serious about the discussions.</li><li>They are not always about educational issues; sometimes administrative work is discussed.</li><li>They are not always in English.</li><li>No specific topics are discussed (unfocused).</li><li>They are unsystematic.</li><li>Usually there is no leader.</li><li>There is no specific time for discussion.</li></ul> | <ul><li>They are always in groups.</li><li>Teachers are committed to reach an agreement.</li><li>They have a clear purpose.</li><li>Teachers are serious about the discussions.</li><li>They are always about educational issues.</li><li>They are always carried out in English.</li><li>Specific topics are discussed (focused).</li><li>They are systematic.</li><li>They are led by one member at a time.</li><li>There is specific time for discussion.</li></ul> |

There was a consensus among the members that the TDG discussions were much better than school discussions and they were in favor of the TDG discussions. This comparison clearly summarizes the teachers' perceptions of the TDG meetings and discussions. All the teachers had a positive impression about the TDG meetings and they seemed to be pleased with them. From the beginning of the TDG, the members had positive expectations about the TDG meetings and discussions. Throughout the meetings, the teachers appeared to have confirmed those expectations. They perceived the meetings and discussions to be effective, helpful and beneficial. They also reported that the discussions were open and they were free to express and share their ideas.

*4.2.3 Membership and group members*

It was noticeable from the teachers' journals and interviews that the TDG members appreciated each other for being supportive. Mahmood explained that the group members were helpful and cooperative. Nasir perceived them as good teachers, friendly and open-minded. He elaborated, 'They all seem very good teachers and have more experience in teaching than me' (Journal Entry 2). As a teacher in his second year of teaching, Nasir was looking forward to benefiting from their experiences because he found them as very kind and generous of their ideas. Ali expressed his feelings about the TDG members in a different way; in Meeting 5 (20 October 2009), two members were absent because they had left the group. Although he understood their reasons to quit, he felt disappointed. He wished they would have continued.

Saeed thought the group was amazing and the members were keen to share ideas, to discuss and to develop. Mahmood mentioned that the TDG members tried to do their best and he felt satisfied with the group. Although the group members had different years of experience, Ali said that they were all equal and everyone had something to share. Zahir expressed his satisfaction with being a member of the TDG. He appreciated the other group members for listening to and accepting his ideas. Zahir said, 'Sometimes I listened and agreed with them, but sometimes I have different opinions … and really they listened to me and had a positive reaction' (Interview 4: 27-29).

All the group members stated that the work was done collaboratively and no one tried to impose anything on the group. Nasir, for instance, said, '… sometimes you don't feel we have a leader … because we feel that we are one group and we are working together' (Interview 2: 50-51). Mahmood mentioned that he found himself discussing a topic that he had not contributed to choose since he joined the group at a later stage of its development. Even though, Mahmood believed that the group focus

(phonics) was worth discussing. He said, ' I think the phonics issue was really one of the essential parts of the language, which deserves to be discussed and to be taken into consideration' (Interview 4: 12-15).

All the group members mentioned that they found each other as helpful and cooperative. They perceived the TDG as a place where they shared ideas and had free discussions with each other. They considered themselves as equal and no one imposed anything on the group. In other words, the TDG members felt safe to discuss whatever they liked and they had support from each other; this matches what Johnson & Johnson (1998), Farrell (2007) and Murray (2008) found through their studies. In addition, the group members seemed to have felt connected with each other which might have reduced the feeling of being isolated. Yeh (2005), and Richards and Farrell (2005) assert that when teachers get together, they remove the feeling of isolation. Interestingly, one of the group members clearly stated that he realized that he was not alone in this world. Another member also mentioned that before joining the group, he used to work individually. Surprisingly, the feeling of being connected and supported seemed not to be experienced within school community although the TDG members were part of a group of teachers in their schools. Once, in one of the TDG meetings, the members spontaneously deviated from the focus of discussion for a while and talked about some of the worries and frustrations they experienced in their profession. They talked about the syllabi they taught and the Ministry's ignorance of their opinion in this regard. They also spoke about their work burden such as the administrative work they were required to accomplish and their relationships with school administrations (FN. November, 3). This may demonstrate two issues; one is that the TDG members developed a close relationship with each other; and the other is the significance of the TDG in creating an atmosphere in which the teachers felt connected with and supported by others. Similarly, Murray (2008) also found that

TDGs provided teachers with a powerful sense of connection to each other. This is also aligned with Abraugh's (2003) results that the TDGs helped teachers in his study to build community and relationships.

Spelling out feelings, worries and frustrations with supportive friends may help teachers relax and in turn impact their teaching in an indirect way. Similar to what Head and Taylor (1997) claim, The TDG in this study was a safe environment for bringing those feelings to the surface and talking about them.

All the TDG members seemed to be passionate and thankful for the group existence. This is what Farrell (2007) calls the 'gratefulness for the group existence'. Through their journals, they expressed their sadness for ending the group. This may indicate the extent to which the TDG was important for them. One member suggested the group members to keep in touch and to meet whenever possible. He mentioned that he believed that there was a need to do that (FN, January, 12).

For all the above reasons and the experiences they went through for a whole semester, the TDG members were in favor of the TDG model, compared to the traditional PD structures. They also recommended the TDG model of PD for other teachers.

### 4.2.4 Gains from the group

All the group members claimed that they gained a lot from the group. One common benefit among the members was sharing ideas. However, the group members seemed to differ in their perceptions of the gains they got from the TDG. This may also indicate the purpose for which they joined the group. In the interview, Zahir claimed that he:

- knew some methods of teaching phonics.
- learned to be more helpful and more patient with his students.

- learned to be more systematic in his work. In his journal, he wrote, 'The TDG taught me the importance of diagnosing…problems [and coming up with] useful solutions which can help our students to improve' (Journal Entry 3).

- became loyal to teaching phonics.

- expressed his ideas frankly.

- learned to unlock his ideas and to share them with others.

- became aware of team-work. He explained, 'I know the importance of cooperation and working in groups … I worked individually myself but it was my first time … to work in an effective group about one topic' (Interview 5: 207-210).

In addition to all the gains Zahir mentioned, he seemed to be very interested in the discussion he had in the group. He justified, 'The idea of discussion was a very vital thing that stuck in our mind and we learned this vital issue from the TDG meetings' (Interview 5: 293-295).

Nasir looked at the group members as experienced teachers whom he discussed his ways of teaching with, and they gave him their opinions about them. He perceived the TDG as being a source of different experiences. He wrote, 'I gain new experiences…that I need in my work as a teacher' (Entry 4). Nasir perceived having 'more friends from the same field' (Journal Entry 8) as another important gain. Unexpectedly, the process of journal writing was an additional gain for Nasir. He wrote,

'Just to be clear and honest, I am not into writing journal myself. I guess I don't like writing a lot. Maybe that's why all my journals are very short and brief. Nevertheless, writing journals for our meetings gave me chance to express what I

have in mind. I think I better start taking this as a habit for me. It's good to release the thoughts locked in our minds from time to time.' (Journal Entry 8)

Ali gained the 'sharing' of ideas, reflections and materials as well as it gave him 'a great opportunity to meet new people with different experiences' (Journal Entry 13). In his journal, he stated, 'Now I really believe that collaborative work is better [than] individual [one] (Journal Entry 9). However, Ali said that the impact of the TDG 'can be seen more on the students; my teaching style hasn't changed really, but I got new ideas [and] new ways' (Interview 3: 104-105). He also mentioned that the TDG influenced his 'way of thinking'. For example, he learned to diagnose a problem, as a first step to solve it. He said, '… what I benefited from the TDG [is] to study the problem' (Interview 3: 129-130).

Mahmood acknowledged, 'Really I feel that I got benefit from the TDG meetings and also my students got benefit from it' (Interview 4: 133-134). He considered getting together with teachers from different schools and who teach different levels as one of the benefits he gained from the group. He pointed out 'I could see that I am not alone in the world' (Journal Entry 2). Saeed mentioned that one of the benefits he gained from the group was to make new friends who have the same pedagogical interests. He also said that focusing on the same topic, 'gave us a kind of strength to go forward and to build ideas together' (Interview 1: 94-95).

In the interview, the TDG members were asked about whether the group helped them to enhance their students' progress. All the teachers reported some improvement in their students' level as well as their students' attitudes towards phonics and reading in general. Mahmood, for instance, said, ' My students' progress was really obvious … because the focus on phonics was great for them … and they liked it' (Interview 4: 136-139). As evidence of progress, Mahmood mentioned that before the TDG, some of his low achievers were not able to read even a single word;

after the TDG, they started to read. They became familiar with the letter names and sounds and they started to read simple words.

Ali's students became, as he mentioned, motivated to read because they learned the alphabet and the sounds of the letters. They are now more confident, but they still need more practice. Ali stated, as an example, that one of his students, who was not able to read a single word, was unmotivated. Now whenever he asked him to read, although he was still suffering some difficulties, he tried reading. Ali said, 'Now he can pronounce the letters, even with mistakes, but now really it's clear that he has achieved something from the phonics we had taught them' (Interview 3: 145-147). Nasir also stated that he noticed some improvement with his students. He gave an example of a specific activity that was shared within the TDG. He tried the activity with his students and it helped them to read longer words. When he was asked to give an example of the impact of the TDG on him, Nasir also mentioned the idea of giving students an alphabet test. He said, '… before these meetings, I never thought to test our students with alphabet letters' (Interview 2: 23-24).

Saeed not only applied the phonics approach in his own classes, but also he encouraged his colleagues to do the same. He mentioned that he followed it up and he 'noticed some students started to [make] nice progress inside the classroom [and] the teachers themselves said that this idea was very helpful for their students' (Interview 1: 113-115). Zahir described raising his students' awareness of phonics as an important progress that was achieved and his students became more motivated to learn phonics.

In their journals and in the interviews, the teachers claimed that they gained many benefits from the TDG. Sharing and having new friends who have similar interests were common gains among the TDG members. The teachers' gains can be grouped into three categories:

- o Sharing. The teachers shared their ideas, experiences, materials and ways of teaching. Although this seems to be normal within any group of teachers in any school, in the TDG it was likely to be different. There was some kind of commitment and every member had something to share and left with various ideas from other members. This is what Cooper & Boyd (1998) suggest as one condition that helps to sustain a TDG.

- o Systematic and cooperative work. The members learned to be systematic in dealing with their students' problems as some members explicitly mentioned. They realized that to solve any problem, they need to diagnose it and then plan a procedure to tackle that problem. It is a practical approach to problem solving that Padwad and Dixit (2008) also found through their study. This is exactly what one teacher referred to as a change in his way of thinking. If this happened, then this way of thinking would probably influence the teachers' way of teaching.

- o Having empathetic friends. It was clear that the teachers were comfortable with being listened to by the other group members in a nonjudgmental atmosphere. This agrees with what Farrell (2007) mentioned as a condition for a TDG to continue.

However, when the teachers were asked in the interview about whether the TDG had an impact on their teaching, none of them mentioned explicitly that it had an impact on their teaching. Rather, the impact could clearly be seen on the students, as one of the teachers said. Such impact on students is attributed by Richards and Farrell (2005) to the group's focus on issues related to learners and learning. In this TDG's case, the focus was on 'phonics'. The other group members also indicated this in an

indirect way. Students' improvement, which the teachers claimed that their students achieved, can also be considered as a sign of development on teachers' practice. This is because students might not be able to achieve progress by themselves without their teachers' efforts. In other words, it can be claimed that good teaching can lead to students' progress. In addition, all the gains the teachers claimed to have obtained would have probably influenced their teaching in one way or another.

*4.2.5 TDG model or traditional PD?*

The TDG members were asked to compare their experiences with the TDG and their experiences with the other PD programs they have had before (See Table 7 below). All of them seemed to prefer the TDG model as a way of PD. Each member had his own reasons for that. Mahmood said that in the TDG model, the members are active participants. It also allows them to find people who are ready to listen to, have discussion with and consider their ideas. Here is how he put it:

> 'You can get your own opportunity not only just to be as an audience [but also] as participant; to get a great chance to get the others, whatever experience you have, … who are ready to listen [to] you or are ready to discuss you, who are ready to get your ideas into consideration. But … when you are going to attend a workshop or to attend a conference, of course sometimes you [do] not get that chance to be a participant; you are just a part of the audience' (Interview 4: 133-143).

Unlike the TDG model, Saeed said the traditional PD programs focus on theoretical issues and they are not directly connected to the classroom practice. He described the TDG as 'it is similar to a lab [where] we can manage everything directly' (Interview 1: 159-160). Ali opted for the TDG model because the members are considered to be equal and there is no one lecturing the members. He elaborated that in the traditional PD programs, 'they treat you [as] a student; … you don't have anything; you don't know anything' (Interview 3: 227-229). Nasir also preferred the TDG model and he looked at it from a different angle. He favored the TDG over the

traditional PD for the following reasons: a) there is sufficient time to tackle an issue; b) the TDG model has a close connection to classroom practice; c) there is a chance to reflect and modify what is being applied in the classroom; and d) the limited number of the TDG members allow for more opportunity to discuss and share ideas. Zahir preferred the TDG model because of the ample opportunities for 'free discussion', which the traditional PD programs, in contrast, do not provide, as he thought.

What the teachers liked about the TDG seemed to be much more than what they did not like about it. Three members mentioned that they did not like the absence of some members in some of the TDG meetings. One member also mentioned that the only issue he did not like about the group was that the group lasted only for one semester. He wished the group would have lasted longer. In the interviews, the teachers were asked to compare their experiences with the TDG and their experiences with the traditional PD structures. They came up with a very interesting comparison. Table 7 below shows the teachers' ideas.

*Table 7: Comparison between TDG and PD structures as seen by the teachers*

| *Traditional PD structures* | *TDG model* |
|---|---|
| They are often passive participants. | Teachers are active participants. |
| Short-term in nature, no opportunity to find people who are ready to listen to you | There are people who are ready to listen to and have discussion with you. |
| Focus more on theoretical issues | Focus on practical issues. |
| There is someone who is considered to be an expert. | Members are equal. |
| There is no time for tackling, reflecting on and making modifications to different issues. | Sufficient time to tackle, reflect on and modify different issues. |
| Many people, less opportunity to share and discus | Limited number of teachers allow for more sharing and discussion. |
| There is a pre-determined agenda. | Teachers contribute in deciding agenda of discussion. |

All the members recommended the TDG model for teachers' PD because it is beneficial for teachers as well as their students, as Saeed justified. He also added that when students make progress, the teachers' job becomes easier. Mahmood recommended generalizing the idea. He said, ' It could be generalized for [all]

teachers [at] different levels, in different schools' (Interview 4: 171-172). Zahir had gone further and recommended the model even for the teachers of the other subjects. He said,

> 'I recommend the idea of TDG strongly and I hope … that this idea will be generalized for our teachers in the future and not just [for] English, but even in other subjects because it was very interesting and it was very fruitful … for us as teachers and also for our students' (Interview 5: 316-321).

Ali recommended the idea of the TDG for adapting the syllabus. He suggested that different parties, who are concerned with the syllabus, sit together, discuss and come to an agreement.

*4.2.6 School support*

The TDG members seemed to have received some support and encouragement from their school administrations; but they seemed to differ in the amount of support they received. Almost all the teachers perceived that allowing them to leave their schools to attend the TDG meetings as kind of support from their school administrations. Attending the TDG meetings required the administrations to adjust the school timetables and this was seen as a help for them, too. This is explicitly mentioned by some members like Saeed, who stated,

> 'Our head teacher gave us a green permission to go to different schools … he told the people to arrange my timetable in order to be free [so] I can go to the meetings without destroying my lessons' (Interview 1: 135-139).

Nasir mentioned that his school administration helped the TDG members by providing them with a place for the meetings. Ali did not mention any specific support because he was not in direct contact with his school administration. His senior teacher was doing the necessary arrangements for him. Zahir said that he convinced his school administration, which was not very cooperative at the beginning, of the importance of the TDG for him and his students. Therefore, the school administration

started to encourage him to attend the TDG; however there was no specific support he received from his school administration.

In addition to the support they received from their school administrations, some of the TDG members said their school principals occasionally asked them about the group. Nasir seemed to be the only TDG member who had been asked more regularly about what was going on. He stated,

> 'From time to time, the headmaster asked me how [it was] going with meetings, where [we] are now and what's going on with them and I feel that they are interested, and because it is beneficial [for] my students, they want to know what are we doing with our students [and if there is] any improvement with them' (Interview 2: 156-161).

Saeed said that his school principal was interested and asked him three times about the group. Interestingly, he also asked him to cascade what he learned to the teachers in the school. Ali's school principal asked him only once about the group. This might be because, as mentioned above, Ali was not in direct contact with him. However, Ali mentioned that his school principal seemed to be 'interested in everything related to teachers or students' development' (Interview 3: 206-206). Mahmood was the only teacher who had never been asked by his school administration about the group or its meetings.

The TDG members said they received some support and encouragement from their school administrations and they appreciated that. This support varied from one school to another. That is to say, some school administrations seemed to be more cooperative with their teachers (the TDG members) than others. It is likely to be difficult to say whether the school administrations were interested in the TDG model and whether they were fully aware of the idea itself. This might justify the reason behind the little amount of support they offered their teachers.

*4.2.7 Group closure*

The teachers enjoyed being members in the TDG, as it was obvious from their journals. Therefore, they expressed their sadness when the TDG reached the end. Ali described ending the TDG as 'a sad moment' and elaborated, 'I really liked it and I am going to miss it a lot' (Journal Entry 13). Nasir, who claimed to be 'the one who benefited more from the meetings', expressed his feelings about the end of the TDG, saying, 'I am sad that these meetings come to end' (Journal Entry 8). Mahmood, who was the leader of the last TDG meeting, also articulated his sadness, saying, '…it was sadly planned to be the closing ceremony of our meetings and discussions' (Journal Entry 7).

**4.3 What are the difficulties faced by the teachers using the TDG model?**

The answer to this research question was obtained through the teachers' journals, the interviews and the researcher's field notes.

*4.3.1 Lack of clear understanding*

Lack of clear understanding  was one of the difficulties the TDG members encountered in the beginning. Nasir came to the first meeting with some misunderstanding of the whole idea of the TDG, though the researcher explained it to all teachers at the very beginning when he met the teachers in their schools in order to find volunteers to join the TDG. Nasir mentioned that being a member of a group of teachers meeting once every week to discuss issues related to their teaching was the only thing that he was sure of. Mahmood was not clear about the agenda of the group. In other words, the purpose of the group was still vague in his mind. This vagueness may have been partly caused by joining the group at a later stage of its development; he joined in the sixth meeting. He wrote, 'When I first attended to the TDG, I was not clearly familiar with the agenda of the project' (Journal Entry 1). Therefore, he argued

about a variety of issues, including the group focus. The other three members did not express any sort of misunderstanding.

The teachers who came to the first meeting with some ambiguity, left with a clearer idea about the group. Nasir got clarification from the researcher who raised the teachers' awareness of the TDG and the requirements of being a member in this TDG. (See 3.5 in Chapter 3 above). Because Mahmood became a member at a later stage, he asked the group members for clarification about what he was not clear about. He wrote, '…I used to ask many questions to the members in order to clarify the aims, strategies, requirements and the outcomes we are searching for regarding this project' (Journal Entry 1). Most of the sixth meeting time was spent on familiarizing Mahmood with what had already been done and decided by the TDG (FN. October, 27).

Lack of clear understanding was likely to be normal because the idea of TDGs was totally new to the members. This aligns with Head and Taylor's (1997) view that most people come to a first meeting with a lot of queries and concerns. This was the case with the TDG members who came to the first meeting with some uncertainties about different issues. However, they left the first meeting with clear understanding of the TDG.

*4.3.2 Difficulties*

Except Nasir, all the TDG members reported that they faced no difficulties regarding the TDG membership. Saeed explained, ' There were no difficulties at all; everything went smoothly and very easy' (Interview 1: 41-42). Nasir mentioned that he was anxious and nervous at the beginning because he thought he would not be able to add anything to the group as he had only one-year experience in teaching. However, later his worries faded. He said,

'…but then I found that the members are very helpful and they encouraged me … and all of them working in one group as if we are in one family, then I started to be very calm and I participated a lot with them' (Interview 2: 62-66)

Regarding the group meetings, the majority of the members said they had no difficulties. Nasir justified that; he said, 'No difficulties that we can mention here since we have cooperation from everyone, from the members, from the facilitators and from the schools we [are] meeting at' (Interview 2: 96-99). However, Zahir mentioned what he called 'limitations'. They were 'deviating from the main topic of the discussion' and 'sometimes it was not possible to tell about the students' progress because it takes time to notice it'. Although Zahir mentioned that sometimes the TDG members did not reach an agreement on some issues, such as whether to teach the alphabet or the sounds of the letters first, he thought that it was reasonable as the group's aim was the same.

Mahmood mentioned that he faced some difficulties with his school administration. He claimed that the administration was reluctant to release him and to adjust the school timetable in order to attend the group meetings. Zahir, who was from the same school, confirmed this. He said,

'We should be frank; at the beginning they (school administration) didn't want us to attend with the group because we know they don't want us to go outside the school [because] we have other duties to achieve' (Interview 5: 240-243).

Ali mentioned two difficulties. One was a personal difficulty. It was journal writing. He stated:

'Personal difficulties like the journal. I'm not used to write journals. I didn't understand the idea at the beginning. I thought it was like giving a summary … I did my best ... but really I'm not used to it … it's [a] new thing for me' (Interview 3: 173-180).

The other difficulty the group faced, according to Ali, was that the members did not start teaching at the same time because of the semester delay (See 4.2.1, *e* for details).

Some members considered certain issues as difficulties, while others did not. For example, one member considered deviating from the main topic of discussions as a difficulty. It can also be regarded as an opportunity to spell out worries, as mentioned in 2.1 above. Although journal writing was a difficulty for one teacher, it was a benefit for another. Another example of a difficulty faced by one of the teachers was, as he reported, receiving little cooperation from his school administration. It can clearly be seen that those difficulties were teacher-specific; they might have been caused by particular reasons related to individual teachers, not as members in the TDG. Regarding the stages that the TDG went through, there were no considerable difficulties reported by the members.

### 4.3.3 Meeting venues

One of the logistical difficulties the TDG faced was finding an appropriate room to meet in. Richards and Farrell (2005) consider having an appropriate meeting place as an important factor for a TDG to function effectively. Although none of the members mentioned this, this difficulty was clearly noticeable. The TDG meetings were held either in Learning Resource centers or in one of the schools' administration offices. There were often some interruptions during the meetings as a result. Such interruptions distracted the flow of discussions and it somehow annoyed the group members (FN, 1, 6, 7, 10, and 11).

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**Chapter Five**

**Conclusion, Implications and Recommendations**

</div>

*5.0 Introduction*

This chapter presents the conclusion of the study that summarizes its main findings. It also presents the implications for teacher PD and recommendations.

*5.1 Conclusion*

The aim of this study was to investigate the impact of a TDG model on Omani EFL teachers' classroom practice. It also aimed at exploring the teachers' perceptions of their experiences as TDG participants as well as the difficulties they faced. A group of five Omani EFL teachers was formed on a voluntary participation basis. The teachers decided to join the group and to participate in this study according to their own free will and interest. The TDG lasted for one semester. The results of this study show that there was some evident development in the teachers' classroom practice regarding teaching phonics. The most noticeable development was on modeling, practice and error correction. The teachers were enthusiastic and committed to their students' achievements. They kept encouraging and praising their students. This was also an area which witnessed some development.

Assessing students was an integral part of the teachers' phonics sessions. They used their assessment data to adapt their methods and techniques of teaching phonics. One teacher had not thought of testing his students in the alphabet and sounds of the letters before the TDG. This clearly indicates an impact of the TDG on the teachers. However, there was very little improvement in the area of classroom environment and materials.

The participants of this study perceived the TDG as great opportunity to share ideas and experiences with teachers from other schools. They found the group as

beneficial and gained a lot from it. In addition to sharing ideas and experiences, the TDG members also realized the importance of cooperative work to achieve collective goals. They appreciated each other for their helpfulness, cooperativeness and for being good listeners to each other. The members had a chance to spell out their worries and frustrations which might have helped them feel more comfortable. The teachers did not face difficulties as TDG members, except being unclear about some issues at the beginning of the group. Finding suitable rooms for the group meetings was another difficulty. Other difficulties, that were not group-specific, include journal writing and less cooperation of school administrations.

## 5.2 Implications for future TDGs

The results of this study as well as research findings found in the literature show that the TDG model is a promising channel for teacher PD. Traditional PD structures are possibly efficient to create awareness and to build separate skills (Clair, 1998). The TDG model can be adopted by interested teachers in alignment with the traditional PD structures. TDGs can extend and support what has been presented in the traditional modes of professional development (Murray, 2008).

This model seemed to be attempted in the Omani school context for the first time as a focus of the present study. There is likely to be very little awareness about it among the EFL teachers in Oman and possibly among teacher educators and teacher trainers. Therefore, this model needs to be publicized in the Omani teaching community. As a start, a direct recruiting (Richards and Farrell, 2005) can be adopted to form groups. The founders of the groups are responsible for enrolling teachers in the groups, but that does not mean forcing the teachers to join; it is principally voluntary. This would probably create an awareness of the TDG model in the educational community in the country.

## 5.3 Recommendations for future research

Since it is believed that this study is the first in the Omani context to deal with the TDG model, it is imperative that research continues to investigate the impact of such groups on teachers and their students' performance. This study shows that the TDG had an impact on teachers' classroom practice and the teachers had positive attitudes towards it. Further research is needed to investigate the impact of such group on other aspects of teachers' profession. There is also a need to investigate its effects on teachers in the long term. This is to find out if it differs from the traditional PD structures which they were found to be of little effect after few months as Brody and Davidson (1998) argue.

This study investigated a group of five EFL teachers. It would also be interesting to investigate a group of teachers who belong to different subject areas in order to see its impact on the various subject teachers or the school as a whole. Experimental research could also be carried out where two groups of teachers are exposed to the same PD issues. One group uses the TDG model, while the other is exposed to traditional PD structures. This is to see which PD channel has more impact on teachers' classroom practice.

Since this study was confined to teaching phonics, it could also be replicated to investigate other areas, like reading and dictionary use.

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# Appendix 1

## Phonics-Session Observation Form

| Teacher: | Class: | Observer: | Date: |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Time started:** | **Time finished:** | | |

| AREAS OF OBSERVATION | OBSERVATION FOCUS | COMMENTS |
|---|---|---|
| **Teaching and learning** | **Students' previous knowledge:** Does the teacher activate students' previous knowledge of phonics? Does he revise what was taught in the previous session? Does he make links to it? Does he build upon previous knowledge? | |
| | **Model and Practice:** Does the teacher model letter combinations? Does he use 'Think Aloud' explicitly? Does he allow students to try out what he models? Does he give enough examples? | |
| | **Monitoring:** Does the teacher observe/listen carefully to students during the session? Does he provide them with appropriate and sufficient support? Are students aware of their errors? Does the teacher correct them? Does he encourage students to decode letters, words or read sentences on their own? Or does he do it for them? | |
| | **Encouragement:** How does the teacher encourage students? Does he praise/give incentives to students for their efforts? | |
| | **Attitudes:** Is the teacher active and enthusiastic? Is he confident? Are students interested and motivated to learn phonics? Are they engaged in the session? | |
| **Assessment** | Does the teacher check his students' understanding? Does he assess their progress? How does he do that? What evidence of learning or progress is there? | |
| **Classroom environment and Materials** | **Classroom environment:** Is the classroom a literate environment? Are there any displays on the walls that students can see and refer to? How clear and noticeable are they? Do they help students with phonics? Does the teacher use/refer to them? | |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | **Activities provided:**<br>Are the activities suitable to the students' level? Are they of good quality in terms of font and layout? | |
| | **Extra materials:**<br>Does the teacher provide additional materials, like worksheets and handouts? Are they of good quality in terms of their suitability to students, font and layout? | |
| | **Follow up:**<br>Does the teacher assign extra work to students to do on their own time? Does he check it regularly? | |

*Which of the following stages the teacher is doing? (Tick as appropriate)*

1. The alphabet ( )     4. Longer words (+2 syllables) ( )

2. Single-letter sounds ( )     5. Words with silent letters ( )

   Two-letter sounds ( )     6. Sentences ( )

3. Simple words (one/two syllables) ( )

- *Does the teacher follow the procedure the TDG has agreed?*

  **Yes (  )     No (  )**

*Explain.*_____
_____
_____
_____


**General Comments:**

_____
_____
_____
_____

**Appendix 2**

**Questions for the semi-structured interviews with teachers**

Apart from the researcher's purpose, what do you think was the purpose of the TDG?

Membership
   How do you evaluate your experience as a TDG member?
   ✓ How did you find the other group members?
   ✓ Has any group member or any of the group facilitators imposed anything on
      the group?
   ✓ Did you face any difficulties regarding this issue?
   ✓ What do you recommend to overcome such difficulties?

Meetings
   How did you find the group meetings?
   ✓ Were the discussions different from those you usually have with your
      colleagues at school?
   ✓ If yes, in what way are they different?
   ✓ Did you face any difficulties regarding this issue?
   ✓ What do you recommend to overcome such difficulties?


Gains
   What did you gain from the group?
   ✓ Do you think the TDG has an impact on your teaching? How? Give examples.
   ✓ Did the group help you enhance your students' progress and achievements?
   ✓  Please explain.
   ✓ Can you mention one specific example where the TDG helped you with your
      students' progress?
   ✓ Are there any other benefits you gained from being a member of the TDG?

Obstacles
   What obstacles did the group face?
   ✓ What difficulties did you face personally?
   ✓ What difficulties did the group face?
   ✓ What do you recommend to overcome such difficulties?

Support from school
   Did you get any kind of support from your school?
   ✓ Do you think your school administration was interested in the idea of the
      TDG?
   ✓ Did the school administration ask you about the group?
   ✓ How helpful was your school administration?
   ✓ Did you face any difficulties regarding this issue?
   ✓ What do you recommend to overcome such difficulties?

Other
- ✓ If you compare your experience as a TDG member and your experience with the other professional development programmes you have had, what do you prefer and why?
- ✓ What did you like best about the group?
- ✓ What did you like least about the group?
- ✓ What did you not like at all?
- ✓ Would you recommend this approach for professional development of teachers?

At the end of this interview, would you like to add anything else that we have not talked about?

|   | Researcher | Thank you mr (Ali) for accepting my invitation to have this interview |
|---|---|---|
|   | Ali | You're welcome |
| 5 | Researcher | Aa let me start by this question: apart from the researcher's purpose, what do you think was the purpose of the tdg? |
|   | Ali | Silence |
|   | Researcher | What was your perception? |
|   | Ali | As you explained it in I mean in our first meeting when you explained the purpose of the research and the tdg group that we are |
| 10 |   | going to I mean aa to have a group and then the group choose a focus and then they'll try to develop themselves in that in that aa area |
|   | Researcher | Aha |
|   | Ali | So I thought it was I mean a great thing because there there are |
| 15 |   | many difficulties we are facing here in schools so I hope that I mean it would help me in overcoming these problems |
|   | Researcher | We'll talk about difficulties before that let's talk about membership how do you evaluate your experience as a tdg member [pause] for example how did you find the other group members |
| 20 | Ali | Aa at the beginning aa I thought aa I mean because I was the youngest there with I mean only one year experience in teaching so I thought it will be difficult to cope with the others but then when we started I started to realize that I mean aa we are more or less we are similar in he same things although they have I mean |
| 25 |   | more experiences but almost our experience is the same |
|   | Researcher | I see |
|   | Ali | I mean they have nothing more until mr (saeed) came then I realized that he is really I mean great person with great experience and really benefited from mr (saeed) especially |
| 30 | Researcher | Ok has any group member or any group facilitators you know the group facilitation has been rotated among all the members |
|   | Ali | Yes |
|   | Researcher | Did it happen for example that any group member or any facilitator imposed anything on the group I mean forced the group |
| 35 |   | to do certain things or forced certain ideas |
|   | Ali | Not really because I mean the decisions we made aaa were I mean aa we aa we discussed them and we agreed on them I mean no one imposed his ideas on the group members |
|   | Researcher | I see |
| 40 | Ali | It was cooperative work |
|   | Researcher | Ahah ok if we think about difficulties regarding membership did you face any difficulties? |
|   | Ali | Actually I mean difficulties are only to mean difficulties first one is timing with our timetable here in the school and we need to |
| 45 |   | come back because I have the eighth period and the second one is going to bahla I didn't like the idea to go to bahla because it is far away I have the eighth period so I mean I had to drive with high speed from there to come back on time because I have promised |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 50 | | here the administration that I do my work and I'll be on time so I didn't like really to go to bahla |
| | Researcher | But luckily it was only once |
| | Ali | Yeah that's it and really I benefited form it that's it I mean to go with a high speed It was dangerous |
| | Researcher | So I understand that regarding membership there was no difficulties |
| 55 | Ali | No |
| | Researcher | Ok lets talk about the meetings |
| | Ali | Yeah |
| | Researcher | How did you find the meetings in general? What was your impression about the meetings |
| 60 | Ali | They were I mean helpful because in each meeting there was something new or I mean a new solution for a problem but sometimes I mean aa the thing which I didn't like really that sometimes we repeated the same things especially when I comer |
| | Researcher | Yes |
| 65 | Ali | For example when mr (mahmood ) joined us late he was late and (unclear) so we had to explain for them the purpose of the group how the group I mean works that's I mean so we repeated the same thing and we wasted a lot of time explaining that thing but then they understand I mean |
| 70 | Researcher | So the topics you had discussed in the group were not repeated only repeating |
| | Ali | No the explanations for the aa |
| | Researcher | For the new comers Ok emm if if you compare the discussions you had in the group and the discussion you usually have with you |
| 75 | | colleagues do you find differences between the two discussions |
| | Ali | (Silence thinking) |
| | Researcher | Or they are different |
| | Ali | Here when I mean whenever discuss things with our colleagues it will be in aa like in pairs not in groups and aa sometimes we there |
| 80 | | is side talk sometimes and we don't I mean your committed to that discussion but there we know that I mean we are investing out time on something new we are trying to to I mean to discover new solutions for the problems we are facing so we take it more seriously then the school discussions because the school |
| 85 | | discussions you know you have aa nine members for example here the situation in (his schools name) nine members so sometimes you hear for example discussions in the Indian language and in Arabic |
| | Researcher | So not always English is used |
| | Ali | No no |
| 90 | Researcher | Ahaha I also understand from what you have just said that aa I mean discussion in school is not focused |
| | Ali | No |
| | Researcher | But in the group it is more focused |
| | Ali | Sometimes it is not about educational things for example about |
| 95 | | administrative things for example we have to do that about something not related to English |
| | Researcher | Ok let me ask you again about difficulties did you face any |

|     |            | difficulties with meetings other than what you have just mentioned about traveling to bahla. |
| --- | ---------- | --- |
| 100 | Ali | Yeah not really |
|     | Researcher | Ok lets talk about the benefits you gained from the group aaa let me ask you this question: do you think the tdg has an impact on your teaching on the way you taught your students |
|     | Ali | [Silence] the impact can be seen more on the students my teaching |
| 105 |            | style hasn't changed really but I got new ideas new ways but that didn't I mean change my style of teaching it is the same |
|     | Researcher | Ahah |
|     | Ali | But more the impact it can be seen more on the students themselves on their achievements which I mean aa facilitate things |
| 110 |            | for me as a teacher |
|     | Researcher | I see |
|     | Ali | So (silence) |
|     | Researcher | That does not necessarily mean that you change the style of teaching it means it affects in a way or another |
| 115 | Ali | Yeah it changed my way of thinking because first I thought that for example that the students are weak in reading so I should give them more tasks more texts to read but I didn't tackle the real I mean aa problem so now I mean whenever I face problems with my students my way of thinking is going to to the real problem |
| 120 |            | what's the real problem not trying to solve the problem without actually studying it for example if aa now I aa I mean the previous lesson I was teaching them the aa plural 's' now I asked the students to give me nouns they gave nouns some of them they gave names of people some of them gave me adverbs some of |
| 125 |            | them gave me verbs so I got angry actually because they are in grade nine and don't distinguish between names people even I asked them if they can for example aa give the plural for name for example ahmed - ahmeds so it seems that they do not distinguish between them so now I am trying I mean what I benefited from the |
| 130 |            | tdg that to study the problem so i'm thinking of teaching them the categories nouns verbs these thing in order to solve the problem not only give them examples that's an example of I mean tdg has changed my way of thinking |
|     | Researcher | You said also that aa the impact was was was clear in the students |
| 135 |            | side right? Ok so can you give an example? |
|     | Ali | Now for example aa one of aa my weakest students if I can say names |
|     | Researcher | You can say names |
|     | Ali | He is called (a students name) that student whenever I asked him |
| 140 |            | to read before the tdg work he'd say no I cannot read in English I don't know anything about English so leave me and go to another student now (the student's name) I mean whenever I ask him to read anything he will stand up he'll start to read although I mean his way of reading is not that good not fluent broken way of |
| 145 |            | speaking but now he can pronounce the letters even with mistakes but now I mean really its clear that (student's name) has achieved something from the phonics we had taught them |
|     | Researcher | I see so he is making progress |

|       | Ali        | Yeah and there are many other examples there I mean now you can see that they are I mean they have the motive thy have something they have the confidence that they know the the alphabet they can do something so now you can see they are trying to do something they are trying to read but because they have something  hey have the alphabet they have the sounds they can read but its I mean aaaa they need more practice |
| 150   |            | |
| 155   |            | |
|       | Researcher | Do you want to say that before the tdg they didn't have the base that they can build on now they have the base and they can build on that |
|       | Ali        | Yes that's it |
| 160   | Researcher | Ok are there any other benefits aaa you gained from the group that we have not talked about |
|       | Ali        | Yeah meeting new people like for example Saeed and aaa mahmood these people whom I didn't know before and it was great because these people have more experience than me especially I told you about saeed he is the person with great ideas so I mean now aaa I mean aa I really admire that person because he is doing many things and now I'm trying follow him I mean trying to give my students new activities new things |
| 165   |            | |
| 170   | Researcher | Ok lets talk about some obstacles you have mentioned some of them but if we think about the the the difficulties in two way I mean personal difficulties and difficulties as a group |
|       | Ali        | Personal difficulties like aa the journal I'm not used to write journals I didn't understand the idea at the beginning I though it was like giving a summary what I mean we did in the group then when I submitted the first draft to you you sent us I mean some remarks on that I I did my best I tried to I mean do it in the way you wanted to be but really I'm not used to it and now even I that course rpd course she asked us to write journals till now I'm not used to that idea so its new thing for me aa that's all to write these journals |
| 175   |            | |
| 180   |            | |
|       | Researcher | So are there any other difficulties as a group the group faced? |
|       | Ali        | Silence maybe because we didn't start at the same time for example those who are teaching grade 5 they started late so I mean we weren't going on the same aaa topics the same time those maybe the only problem and aa another thing that for example mr nasir because he is teaching grade 6 I think aa his students know the the alphabet so he has I mean he aaaa |
| 185   |            | |
|       | Researcher | He was a step ahead |
| 190   | Ali        | Yeah he was a step ahead I mean so I mean not matching the steps we are doing that's it |
|       | Researcher | I see lets talk about the role of the school aaa did you get any kind of support from the school you school |
|       | Ali        | Of course I mean from specially from mr (name) the senior teacher I didn't talk directly to the headmaster or the headmaster assistant but mr aaa (the senior teacher) did the whole work with the for the administrative things and they cooperated |
| 195   |            | |
|       | Researcher | Did did did any of I mean the headmaster or his assistant about what was going on? |
| 200   |            | |
|       | Ali        | I talked to him once about that because once wasn't here so I went |

|     |            | to the headmaster to take permission to go outside and aaa he asked me about the group and I told him about that |
|-----|------------|------|
|     | Researcher | Was he interested? |
| 205 | Ali | It seems that the headmaster is interested in everything related to teachers or students development he is really I mean a great person that he want develop and improve his teachers first and their students he I mean he keeps telling us to I mean to for example whenever we we are involved in aa group work or in workshop or something like that to tell the other teachers about it and to I mean to tell them about the new strategies or new things |
| 210 | | |
|     | Researcher | So did he ask you to tell your colleagues about your experience? |
|     | Ali | I didn't remembers if we have discussed that I told you it was only once I talked to him about it |
| 215 | Researcher | I see |
|     | Ali | But aa ( ) knows more about it because he is the senior teacher and he was one of the members and I think yes some of my colleagues they used some of my materials with their students |
|     | Researcher | I see aaa we moving towards the end of the interview if you compare your experience as a tdg member and your experience with other pd program like workshops which one do you prefer |
| 220 | | |
|     | Ali | [Silence] the tdg group because in the other course I have I mean joined its almost aa as lecturing I mean the style which I really I hate someone to stand in front of me and give me lectures on things but in the tdg we were discussing things and we were all equal so I mean it was really I feel more confident to in such I mean [unclear] because in lecturing they treat you're a student your are still you don't have anything you don't know anything in discussion it is different cooperative |
| 225 | | |
| 230 | Researcher | What did you like best about the group you mentioned many gains many benefits but what did you like best |
|     | Ali | The best thing is that [ ] I mean now really I mean I thought I did something really good for them and they are benefiting from it that's I mean my aaa only concern they are some other benefits I told you about and the last one is now I'm going to use the same topic in my research so personally I have benefited and my students have also benefited from that thing |
| 235 | | |
|     | Researcher | What didn't you like or you liked least? |
|     | Ali | I told you about the timing that you have to go on a certain and return on a certain time and aa the eighth period it was my only problem because I returned to the school two or three times late so students go outside and make troubles for other teachers than teachers even they don't say anything but you can see you can notice they are blaming you for that that's the only thing which I didn't like |
| 240 | | |
| 245 | | |
|     | Researcher | Is there anything that you didn't like at all |
|     | Ali | Didn't like at all [silence] nothing sometimes you don't feel comfortable but didn't like at all nothing |
|     | Researcher | Would you recommend this tdg model or approach of pd for teachers |
| 250 | | |
|     | Ali | I really believe that now after joining that aaa group I really believe that this approach could be used from the ministry from |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 255 | | the authorities or the people who have the authority in adapting or adopting or I mean in designing the syllabus they should I mean sit with others from teachers supervisors and discuss it study carefully then come with an agreement and then I mean publish or do it as they like but never to go lecturing or decide something imposing on others it should be cooperative the people who are facing the problems should sit together and discus it and study it not trying |
| 260 | | to give the solution from others even if they are native speakers or they are are for example with more qualification it doesn't matter what matters that the who are facing the problem themselves should find the solution for it so as approach I think its better |
| | Researcher | Ok would you like to add anything we haven't talked about? |
| 265 | Ali | i'd like to thank you because you accepted me in that work and also I hope that we are going to meet again as a group aa and aa [unclear] thank you very much |
| | Researcher | thank you for your time and your cooperation |

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
|  | Researcher | First of all thank you very much for accepting my invitation to have this interview my first question apart from the researcher's purpose of the tdg what do you think was the purpose of the group you were involved in? |
| 5 | Mahmood | First of all also I want to thank you mr salim for choosing me as a member in you project aa and I was glad to be one of the teachers who tried to be volunteers in your research aa for the first question I think the purpose of being a member in that group was to see how could the teachers from different schools and from different |
| 10 |  | levels I mean who are dealing or teaching different levels how could they come together and discuss a specific topic or issue that is related to the learning field or the teaching field and I think the phonics aa issue was really one of the essential parts of the language which deserves to be aa discussed and to be taken into |
| 15 |  | consideration and to be analyzed from different teachers that have different thoughts and ideas |
|  | Researcher | Ok now lets talks about aa group membership how do you evaluate aa your experience as a tdg member |
|  | Mahmood | Do you mean according to the meeting that we had together |
| 20 | Researcher | Yes you can say that |
|  | Mahmood | I think according to what we have done during that sessions was acceptable and I feel satisfied with what we have come out with |
|  | Researcher | Ok how did you find the other group members |
|  | Mahmood | Aa most of us really most of us were collaborative and there was a |
| 25 |  | great cooperation between us and I think they tried to do their best |
|  | Researcher | Has any group member or any group facilitator imposed anything on the group or forced the group to do certain things |
|  | Mahmood | Aa for me to be honest on this point aa I don't want to say that one or some of the members tried to force the group to do something |
| 30 |  | specific but for me I think the choosing of the topic itself was really made or the decision was made before I for example before I connected aa or before I joined the the the tdg |
|  | Researcher | I see do you want to say that if you were there from the very beginning of the group would have chosen different topic |
| 35 | Mahmood | I think yes I think yes because from the beginning it was in my mind to have another topic completely another topic which could be I mean discussed and aaa could be analyzed more effectively aa rather than phonics which I think aa from my point of view was reading |
| 40 | Researcher | I see. Ok regarding membership did you face any difficulties |
|  | Mahmood | Aaa yes there were many difficulties we faced aaa in order to be a member in this tdg aa first of all the cooperation of the schools I mean themselves at the beginning some of the teachers were suffering from aa there administrations because they they didn't |
| 45 |  | get them or give them the aaa I mean the the release to be a member or to be members in this group and also the the the problem of the organization and the arrangement of the timetables I mean I mean the school the schools timetables |

|     | Researcher | I see so if you are asked in future to join a group like this what do you recommend |
| 50  | Mahmood | [Silence] |
|     | Researcher | Regarding membership |
|     | Mahmood | Regarding the membership I aa I could say that the there are many recommendations for that aa but also I I I I don't whether these recommendations could be really considered and taken into I mean aaa into mind ok and to be aaa I mean aaa a rule I think aaa the the the time the time that is given for the group should be more than one or two hours of meeting and also the group should be provided with aaa I mean with with with that knowledge or many researches that talking or I mean in touch with with with the topic that is discussed or researched |
| 55  |  |  |
| 60  |  |  |
|     | Researcher | Ok now lets move to another issue which is meetings lets talk about the meetings specifically how did you find the group meeting in general how was the group in general where you satisfied with them for example |
| 65  |  |  |
|     | Mahmood | You the group of teachers |
|     | Researcher | No the meetings the meetings of the group |
|     | Mahmood | The meetings |
|     | Researcher | The weekly meetings |
| 70  | Mahmood | For me I I feel satisfied with what we have organized for the meetings but sometimes we were suffering from the absence of some teachers and that was not aaa aaa in their hands to attend or not because as you know teachers are related to their schools and of course they are there are many other obstacles that might hinder the the the teachers from joining the meetings weekly |
| 75  |  |  |
|     | Researcher | I see aa were the discussions different I mean the discussions of the group that had within the group were the discussion from those have with your colleagues in your school |
|     | Mahmood | Aaaa I think yes of course because aa when we meet in the the tdg we have in mind a specific topic that we need to go through and discuss but when we are in our schools of course we have other things or many things that we take in mind and we need to talk about in the meeting here we have something specific for the tdg meetings |
| 80  |  |  |
| 85  | Researcher | I see ok aa again let me ask you about the difficulties regarding meetings did you face any difficulties you have mentioned that arranging for meeting with the school was a little bit difficult for but when you came to the meetings did you face any difficulties throughout the meetings or during the meetings |
| 90  | Mahmood | Sometimes yes we feel when we when we go to different schools we may not able to get that quiet place aaa in which we we we need to meet in and also aaa the the the transferring from the our schools or we are from I mean aa different schools which might be far away from each other some of the teachers are from bahla some of them from al hamra and there is little bit distance I mean between these schools so so aa sometimes it takes around aaa twenty minutes or more than twenty minutes to go to the school which is I mean aaa aaa the meetings are held there or conducted there |
| 95  |  |  |

| 100 | Researcher | So what recommendations do you have in order to overcome such difficulties |
| | Mahmood | Aaa there are some recommendations aa in such research the teachers should be chosen from nearby schools emm the nearer I mean schools so that that could also get them the the time to be in |
| 105 | | the exact I mean in the exact time for the meeting and there is no need to to to go far away distance in order to attend the meeting and also the the the time should be also specified by the the the the schools and also places for the meetings should be also I mean prepared and arranged for the group |
| 110 | Researcher | Ok lets move to another issue the benefits or the gains of you get from the group aa what did you gain from the group? |
| | Mahmood | From the group |
| | Researcher | Yes |
| | Mahmood | Of these teachers I gained many things first it was a good |
| 115 | | opportunity for me to sit with with teachers I mean from different schools and to see their aa ambitions aaa about their about their students and to get an idea about the thoughts that they gained from the aaa from the aaa I mean course books from the aaa I mean aaa the different levels that they are teaching and the |
| 120 | | curriculum that they are also tackling with and also their experience I mean the experience of the teachers aaa from the teaching and learning fields |
| | Researcher | Ok emm do you think that the tdg has an impact on your teaching |
| | Mahmood | Of course yes aaa there was a great impact aa which I get from the |
| 125 | | from the aa meetings of the tdg first aa the idea of the the meetings here to go to the meetings and discuss specific idea or two or three ideas with the group and bring it back to the classroom and try to apply with your students yes of course it gave me something what you call it conveying specific ideas which can be shared in |
| 130 | | different schools and in different curriculums with different teachers and trying to apply it for my own students |
| | Researcher | I see |
| | Mahmood | So really I I feel I feel that I got benefit from the tdg meetings and also my students also they got benefit from it |
| 135 | Researcher | Ok could explain point about your students progress |
| | Mahmood | My students progress was really aaa obvious aaa through this or through this I mean research because the focus on phonics was great for them although they are in grade 10 but taking them back to this vital issue was great for them and they liked it how? Aaa |
| 140 | | when we started discussing the phonics issue we started from the beginning we started from analyzing this topic and know about these methods and then we tried to get models of tasks activities that we could apply or that we could give or I mean practice with the with the different levels or with the different classes or |
| 145 | | different students when I bring these tasks which were prepared by the other teachers the members I mean in the group or by me and I tried to practice them or get them to my students I found really my students liked these exercises and they told honestly teacher, we we hope to get such things from I mean from the previous years |
| 150 | | because really we like these basic things which can help us to get |

|  |  | aa more aaa strong in reading and writing |
|---|---|---|
|  | Researcher | Ok can can you give specific example of progress |
|  | Mahmood | A specific example of progress the I have for example emm some |
| 155 |  | slow learners I mean a slow readers particularly these slow readers were not able even to read a single word but with using with using the techniques that we have come up with in the meetings and the exercises that we aa I mean we aaa prepared in the in the meetings or within the group and come back to apply with the students that made some of the slow readers benefit in in reading skill |
| 160 | Researcher | Aha are there any other benefits you gained you gained as a teacher from being a member of the group |
|  | Mahmood | Aaa the most important thing that I gained was refreshing the idea of phonics in  my mind of course as I am a teacher in the high levels [higher classes] in my school so it I I didn't get a chance to |
| 165 |  | refer back to this issue I mean the phonics issue but really this time got I mean a benefit or I got aaa a chance opportunity to to refer back to this issue and try to get it also and give it my students so I I also got benefit from this tdg meetings |
|  | Researcher | Ok aa throughout the interview you mentioned some of the |
| 170 |  | obstacles you faced |
|  | Mahmood | Yes |
|  | Researcher | Aa let me ask you again aaa what difficulties did you faced personally |
|  | Mahmood | Difficulties I faced here was to get that educational thoughts for |
| 175 |  | the issue I mean for phonics of course as you know aaa in order to discuss aaa educational I mean methods you need to read about them before going to the meeting or going to the discussion so we were most of the teachers were lack of the I mean the aaa the knowledge the specific knowledge of the issue so it was good for |
| 180 |  | the teachers to be prepared before going to the meetings in order to have or to convey that knowledge to other members in the the group the other obstacle for me was I mean aaa the organizing or the organization of the aaa school timetable and also the aaa the release that I couldn't get from the beginning of the meetings I |
| 185 |  | mean the administration of the school really could not release me aaa from the beginning of the meetings |
|  | Researcher | Are there any difficulties you faced as a group |
|  | Mahmood | Aaa |
|  | Researcher | Other than what you have mentioned earlier you mentioned the |
| 190 |  | meetings and going to different schools are there any other difficulties you faced |
|  | Mahmood | I think when we were in the group there weren't that difficulties and also the the the method or the way of aa taking on the discussions we had different from time to time different I mean |
| 195 |  | aaaa methods of starting the discussions sometimes we started from aaa the member who had the meeting conducted in his school and then aaa sometimes also we started from the teachers or the members who had prepared something for the I mean classes even tasks or exercises so they stated the talk in order to express or |
| 100 |  | explain what they have done with their students aaa that's it |
|  | Researcher | You also mentioned some obstacles you faced in the school but |

|  |  | lets talk about support did you get any kind of support from your school regarding tdg or being a member of the tdg? |
| 105 | Mahmood | Unfortunately from the school itself no I didn't get any support only the support that I got was getting them getting me released after talking I mean sharp and hard with the administration |
|  | Researcher | Ok does this mean do you think that they were not interested in the idea |
| 110 | Mahmood | I don't know [laughing] I don't know really because maybe they are not they are not I mean aaa English teachers or English researchers and they might not get sense of the the the issue itself or I mean how to help a researcher who is really in need to get help from the different administrations and different teachers so aaa I hoped I hoped my school my administration to be better than what they have done with me and what they have done with the researcher himself |
| 115 |  |  |
|  | Researcher | So emm have they ever asked you about the group or what you have done in the group |
| 120 | Mahmood | Completely no they didn't ask me even a single question about I have done because maybe they don't have that knowledge about what we are doing whether it is sensible whether it is meaningful for the teachers and for the students who are responsible for |
| 125 | Researcher | If you compare your experience as a tdg member and your experience with other professional development programs like workshops seminars and so on aaa which one do you prefer |
|  | Mahmood | What do you mean exactly? |
| 130 | Researcher | Now you have two different types of experience right? One experience is the tdg model I mean tdg as a way to develop professionally and also the other aaaa experience with traditional professional developments programs like workshops seminars meetings aaa conferences maybe which experience do you prefer |
| 135 | Mahmood | Of course for me from my point of view I prefer the tdg meetings why? because here you get really the benefit as a single teacher as a single member you can get your own opportunity not only just to be as an audience I mean just to but to be a participant to be a participant to get a great chance to get the others whatever experience you have have in the field in the teaching field and you'll get members or people who are ready to listen from you or are ready to discuss you who are ready to get your ideas into consideration but when you are a member or just when you are going to attend a workshop or to attend a conference of course sometimes you are not get that chance to be a participant you are just a part of the audience that's it |
| 140 |  |  |
|  | Researcher | Ok what did you like best about the group? In brief |
| 145 | Mahmood | I like about he group of course aaa coming on a specific time to sit together and immediately to come to the aaa discussion and to bring ideas and to bring exercises that they have done or they have tried with their school or with their classes so they were rally I mean aaa aaa generous with the the things that they have done with their classes and they were ready to photocopy them and to get the other teachers try them in their classes |
| 150 |  |  |
|  | Researcher | I see. What did you like least about the group? Or if there is |

|     |            | anything that you didn't like at all |
|-----|------------|--------------------------------------|
| 155 | Mahmood    | Aaaa it's really a difficult question because I I liked most of the things sometimes aa I don't like the the the absence of the some members although I don't know whether they have I mean aaa serious circumstances or I mean obstacles I don't know but as we have aa agreed together to be in aa I mean group of the tdg meetings we supposed to be I mean arrange ourselves and to be always attendants in that meetings |
| 160 | Researcher | Would you recommend this approach I mean the tdg approach ok for professional development of teachers? |
| 165 | Mahmood    | I think it's a great idea it's a great idea aaa it could be applied it could be applied for the teachers particularly for the nearby schools aaa and also aaa from my point of view it could be also I mean aaa and opened gate for the the the the whole aaa teachers I mean different from different levels not only the teachers from the aa I mean aaa the second cycle level also the teachers from first cycle or cycle one should be also members particularly for some issues they are dealing most better than the teachers in the second cycle so it could be also it could be I mean generalized for the whole teachers in the different levels in different schools |
| 170 |            | |
|     | Researcher | Ok at the end of this interview would you like to add anything that we haven't talked about or we haven't mentioned? |
| 175 | Mahmood    | I just want to say again thanks for the researcher in order to choose me as a member in his research and I hope aaa that I tried with my I mean aaa colleagues to aa get this research I mean to succeed inshaa Allah |
| 180 | Researcher | Thank you very much for your time and really I appreciate your cooperation |
|     | Mahmood    | Thank you mr salim thank you thank you |

|   | Researcher | I'd like to thank you at the beginning for accepting my invitation to have this interview. Aa Apart from the researchers purpose of the tdg what do you think was the purpose of the tdg other than the researchers purpose |
|---|---|---|
| 5 | Nasir: | The purpose at the beginning aa I thought it'll be discussing aa the ideas of teaching inside the group and aa I thought before we had the clear idea that we are going to discuss with the aa supervisor or the observer aa I mean with you and you are going to have open discussion with us discussing the topics of teaching .. |
|   | Researcher | Yes |
| 10 | Nasir | Not the way we had or we discovered later that our work will be linked with our classes inside the.. |
|   | Researcher | I see |
|   | Nasir | So the idea I had before we started that we bring aa the ideas or the topics we had from previous knowledge and we just discuss |
| 15 |   | them in our meetings aa not to apply what we discuss inside the classes so it was the other way round |
|   | Researcher | Ah hah |
|   |   | But then we have this the idea that we discuss something inside our meetings then we try to apply it and see the results inside our |
| 20 |   | classes |
|   | Researcher | I see ok let me start with aa another issue which is membership how do you evaluate your experience as a tdg member? |
|   | Nasir | Aamm I can see that aa it was very useful for me aa and I noticed or I gained from these meetings or the tdg very much because we |
| 25 |   | had very experienced teachers in this group and aa I benefited a lot from these teachers we shared information and experiences and we had discussed things that we never talked about before aa new ideas discovering new techniques in our teaching so the experience I had it was very useful and very helpful for me as a |
| 30 |   | teacher and I noticed that I tried to apply what we discussed and what we know or what we talked about in these meetings in our classes |
|   | Researcher | Ok since we are talking about membership let me ask you this question how did you find the other group members? |
| 35 |   |   |
|   | Nasir | Aa very cooperative and helpful and aa sharing they shared everything they had open-minded and we can say also friendly and since we are all from the same field teaching the same subject we shared many ideas together and aaa also they were |
| 40 |   | very kind and generous in new ideas some members they brought some new ideas for us and we shared discussed them in aa in general they are very helpful for us |
|   | Researcher | I see ok you know that during the tdg process there were different facilitators they you took turn to facilitate meeting aa |
| 45 |   | has any group member or any group facilitator imposed anything on the group or forced the group to do something? |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Nasir | Aa not forcing but aa we had this idea that we take it in turn and it was it was very interesting for us but aa they didn't try to impose or impose something it was very smooth and natural and sometimes you don't feel we have a leader or something because we feel that we are one group and we are working together |
| 50 | | |
| | Researcher | Ah hah |
| | Nasir | Just to facilitate something just make it easier for us |
| | Researcher | I see ok did you face any difficulties regarding membership or being a member in the group? |
| 55 | | |
| | Nasir | Aa at the beginning may be I was aa I can say I was nervous at the beginning I wasn't sure that what to do in this group because when I noticed the members themselves I found that these members are very experienced with more that five some of them more that ten or twenty years teaching and I was only one experience that makes me a little bit anxious and nervous I had that feeling that maybe I cannot add something in this group but then when I found that these the members are very helpful and they encouraged me and the facilitator and the observer and all of them working in one group and as if we are in one family then I started to be very calm and aa I I participated a lot with them |
| 60 | | |
| 65 | | |
| | Researcher | So you mentioned that one difficulty is being anxious and nervous at the beginning of the group what do you recommend to aa I mean to overcome such difficulty? |
| 70 | Nasir | To participate in such things in meeting and researches aa in workshops because we need these experiences a lot to build our personalities and to build our confidence in ourselves and when we share and when we participate a lot with these things we try to overcome these problems |
| 75 | Researcher | I see now lets talk about meetings how did you find the group meetings I think at the beginning you gave some I mean an idea about the meetings but here let me ask you a specific question about the discussions were the discussions different from those you usually you have with your colleagues in the school |
| 80 | Nasir | Aa the difference here is that you have we have different members from different schools |
| | Researcher | Ah ah |
| | Nasir | And this gave us a chance to bring different ideas from different situations and specially different levels I mean some and since the teachers some of them teaching lower levels grades five and six and some of them are teaching grade twelve and eleven and this was very helpful for us to have this different levels and different ideas from different teachers coming from different schools may be that's the difference we have from other meetings |
| 85 | | |
| 90 | Researcher | Ok let me ask you again about difficulties did you face any difficulties regarding the meetings themselves? |
| | Nasir | Nothing that we can mention except that maybe the timing it was at the beginning we had to fix our timetables and it was difficult especially for our schools because of the circumstances we have lack of teachers and etcetera but at the end we try we managed and we overcome this problem and aa no difficulties that we can |
| 95 | | |

|     |            | mention here since we we have cooperation from everyone from the members from the facilitators and from the schools we meeting at |
| --- | ---------- | --- |
| 100 | Researcher | We'll talk about the role of the school but before that let talk about the gains or benefits you got from the group aa do you think the tdg has or had an impact on your teaching? |
|     | Nasir      | Aa yes and aa this is maybe the first time I participate in research and in  such kind of group teacher's group discussing an idea for |
| 105 |            | this long time I mean we usually when sometimes we meet only once or one workshop or something one day but this research we had for the whole semester so we had time to discuss many things and again we have since we have teachers from different schools this will add something for us also with very experienced |
| 110 |            | teachers with long years teaching aa also they gave us the knowledge they have I mean they you can say transfer the experience and the knowledge to each other so we share ideas and we gained something and also the every new idea we have oe we discuss inside the group or the meetings I tried to apply it |
| 115 |            | in my classes [unclear] |
|     | Researcher | I see |
|     | Nasir      | And I noticed that every time we had something new very interesting for me and for my students also |
|     | Researcher | Can you give an example about aaa the impact of the group on |
| 120 |            | you as a teacher? |
|     | Nasir      | Aa yeh for example one small example that teaching letters for example and the test we had a test for alphabetic letters at the before these meetings I never thought that to test our students with alphabet letters |
| 125 | Researcher | I see |
|     | Nasir      | But then we discussed the idea or the topic in our meetings and then we thought that lets try to test our students with that then we tried the teat in our classes and it was we had the results and the discussion of these results that one and also  some of the games |
| 130 |            | we discussed like these techniques of teaching and we had games like coding the letters and etcetera and we tried that it was very interesting for our students |
|     | Researcher | I see ok did the group help you enhance your students progress and achievements? |
| 135 | Nasir      | Yes I can say that because the ideas we get in our meetings we get it from all the group members so we applied these ideas in our classes and we can say that we noticed some improvement with our students regarding the topic itself which is reading |
|     | Researcher | Ah haa ok can you mention one more example about the tdg how |
| 140 |            | the tdg helped your student progress you mentioned they had improved can you mention specific example |
|     | Nasir      | I can say that reading words I teach grade 6 and I tried to teach them words and we get the idea from one member of the group that you give them aa the aa the letters we have coded numbers |
| 145 |            | each letter of the alphabet we have number for each letter and you give them just to write the numbers and they write the letters b y themselves and they pronounce or  read the letters and |

|     |            | they combine these letters together to build words and it was |
|-----|------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| 150 |            | very helpful for them to read short words then we improve it to bigger words and again they were every helpful for them to read bigger words difficult words |
|     | Researcher | Ok are there any other benefits you gained from being a member in this group? |
|     | Nasir      | Aa I can say that there are things in teaching that you miss I |
| 155 |            | mean in your classes and of course something that you need to work on in your teaching or the way you teach and from our meetings that we discuss something you get ideas how to solve or how to overcome these situations and sometimes we do something but we don't know if it's correct or there is something |
| 160 |            | you have to fix or to work on but when we share with others they can notice few things on your ways or something like that in these meetings or these groups we shared our ways of teaching the way we deal with our students and aa the members or the group itself they give you their observation their comments about |
| 165 |            | your teaching and reflection on you it very good for us |
|     | Researcher | I see I think you have mentioned in your journal it also it was a chance for you to write to starting or |
|     | Nasir      | For writing yes |
|     | Researcher | Can you tell more about this? |
| 170 | Nasir      | Yeah me myself  personally I [laughing] I'm not very good writer from the beginning I don may be I'm very careful or very [unclear] I don't write that much unless somebody force me to write and I have this habit since my study in the college but when I have a chance to write then I can write many pages with |
| 175 |            | them and this this aa the opportunities since we had to write journals and this idea of journal we had it in our college since we were studying there in college then when we start our work we stopped writing f we weren't that that much in writing but now in this group and for the work of the group we had to write |
| 180 |            | journals and it was very helpful for us again to come back and write something |
|     | Researcher: | Ahha ok lets move to another issue which is obstacles or difficulties what obstacles did the group face? |
|     | Nasir      | Emm we can say the obstacles aa one is that the timing for aa |
| 185 |            | applying what we had of the sessions we agreed on in our classes because we tried to have to deduct about 5 or 10 minutes from each lesson for aa our sessions but the obstacle here that we had or we have a very  or a huge curriculum in English |
|     | Researcher | Ah ha |
| 190 | Nasir      | And we already aa you cannot finish or complete the curriculum and now adding these 5 or deducting 5 or 10  minutes from each lesson it will be a heavy or burden in our planning for the lessons this was the main problem we had and aa maybe also the aa the aa the impact or the aa the way we apply it with our students at |
| 200 |            | the beginning I mean our students were not sure that if they need theses sessions or not and especially for higher grades or higher levels from my colleagues they are talking about grade 10 and 12 their students were not aa were not happy with idea at the |

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| 205 | | beginning that they need sessions with reading or phonetics so that was the problem at the beginning but then they overcome or they agreed or they they tried to convey or work on this the idea itself but the problem we couldn't solve and because we had to follow up with our curriculum and we trued to add something in these sessions so may be the main problem we had. |
| 210 | Researcher | Ok do you have any recommendations to overcome these difficulties for example timing? |
| | Nasir | May be we have the recommendations and we tried to discuss this in our group that we need more time in English classes for our students and we tried to cover this idea that one class every |
| 215 | | day is not enough for our students just 35 or to 40 minutes |
| | Researcher | Excuse me I |
| | Nasir | Regarding the aa timing of the sessions? |
| | Researcher | You said you said that one of the difficulties that the time I mean in order to deduct ten minute of your class may cause you some |
| 220 | | difficulties to finish the syllabus do you have anything to I mean solution to this problem if are involved in another group in the future |
| | Nasir | May be try to have theses sessions in free times I mean if they the students have free classes or what they call it aaa zero lesson |
| 225 | | or class zero may be you can add or have these sessions with them also you van have like when they have a break or something you collect the students and give them these sessions also one idea from the from one of the members said you just collect the weak students and you give these sessions you don't |
| 230 | | have to collect all the classes or even the good students but again we have an argument about that |
| | Researcher | So I understand from what have just said that the problem is with time or aa in your classroom I mean there is no problem with time of the group I mean to meet at a certain time there is no |
| 235 | | problem with that |
| | Nasir | The meetings? |
| | Researcher | Yes the meetings |
| | Nasir | No because we had to meet every week or every two weeks and we tried to manage our timetables to meet once every week or |
| 240 | | once every two weeks aa we had some problems with the timetables before or at the beginning but then we overcome this problem |
| | Researcher | Ahaha |
| | Nasir | And had to manage that thing otherwise we cannot meet we |
| 245 | | could have met in other ways but it will be very difficult maybe in other place or something that they meet online through the internet they have what they call phone conference or something like that but here it is very difficult we have to meet in person and we have to share these aa what we discuss in our classes and |
| 250 | | through our meetings |
| | Researcher | Ok now lets talk about the role of the school aa do you think the school administration or the school headmaster was interested in the idea of the tdg did they ask you about the tdg |
| | Nasir | Yeah here first of all they facilitate everything when we had |

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| 255 | | meetings in my school they tried to help us with the place and they give us comfortable place and from time to time the headmaster asked me how is it going with meetings where are you now and what's going on with them and I feel that they are interested and because it is the beneficial of of my of our |
| 260 | | students they want to know what are we doing with our students any improvement with them so yes they we had some attention from them |
| | Researcher | So you said that the school administration was cooperative with you |
| 265 | Nasir | Yeah |
| | Researcher | And they were asking you about the group from time to time |
| | Nasir | For me yes im talking about only my school from others I don't know |
| | Researcher | Again difficulties did you face any difficulties regarding this |
| 270 | Nasir | From administration? |
| | Researcher | Yes |
| | Nasir | Aa nothing to mention here almost every meeting we had we had very smoothly and they allowed me to attend all meeting and they helped me to managed or to fix the timetable in order to |
| 275 | | have these meetings every Tuesday so I cannot mention or cannot remember any difficulties from the administration |
| | Researcher | So you said they were interested in the idea and they asked you questions from time to time aa ok aa lets move to the last part of this interview I have some different questions I mean a variety of |
| 280 | | question to ask you if you compare your experience as a tdg member and your experience with other PD programs you have had in the past like workshops aa maybe conferences and so on which one do you prefer the tdg or the other programs and why |
| | Nasir | I would say tdg first because the timing or the length itself |
| 285 | | because we had the tdg we have the whole semester discussing the idea of reading so we had long time to talk about many things and aa second thing that we the the topics we discussed is very related and very close to our classes I mean immediately we apply everything we discussed in our meetings through our |
| 290 | | classes and again we discussed them the next time so it was very clear and very close to our class situations and aa also we had one thing is that it is small group I mean only five or six teachers discussing about a topic other meetings or workshops you have many members many teachers or big number which is difficult to |
| 295 | | concentrate or to hear ideas from everyone but in tdg you have a small group five or six teachers you can hear from everyone so there is time and aaa to everyone for everyone to speak or give his ideas |
| | Researcher | I see I see ok to sum up this interview what did you like best |
| 300 | | about the tdg you mentioned many benefits |
| | Nasir | The best thing I liked is that to meet very good teachers in my subject English and to aa you can say to dig up with very specific very critical topic which is reading and phonetics and which is very rare to have such discussions with teachers and also the |
| 305 | | reality of discussion we had we we discussed everything we had |

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| 310 | | in our classes in real situation in our classes and we everyone gave us his opinion and it was very we can say aa very helpful and very clear from everyone they gave us ideas and was very helpful for us and also the the experience we had from for with the teachers with the good teachers in this group this what I liked best in the group. |
| | Researcher | Ok what did you like least about the group? |
| 315 | Nasir | Aaa about the group or about the meetings in general that we only had it for one semester this is what I didn't like we finish up with them and also that after these meting it is difficult to arrange other meetings again for the aa at the same situations by themselves |
| | Researcher | I see |
| 320 | Nasir | Also maybe aa one thing that you can aa it will be maybe in my idea or in my mind that I didn't like that much also maybe we can add some more teachers I mean the research just we have five or six teachers and in my mind I was thinking why don't some more teachers I mean from different levels from different schools also so we have a larger experience with them and may |
| 325 | | be can have but since the aa situation or this research will be different but maybe in another group for meetings maybe they can have more than one supervisor because we need about many teachers and many supervisors maybe three of four supervisors and about maybe ten teachers to discuss the same topic it will be |
| 330 | | very useful for everyone |
| | Researcher | Ok is there anything that you didn't like at all? |
| | Nasir | Aa not really [laughing] because it was very healthy environment with very good teachers and facilitators and observer and it was very good and we didn't like that we are going to meet again as a |
| 335 | | group may we are going to meet individuals but in a group and discuss that maybe one that you cannot change it is very difficult for us |
| | Researcher | At the end of this interview would you like to add anything that you haven't mentioned or we haven't talked about? |
| 340 | Nasir | Aa I can say that these meetings and this group are very important for our students at the first step or the first stage and also for the teachers themselves the students need more attention from us for their especially for the reading and for teachers we nee to gather and to work on together with different topics we |
| 345 | | need to share ideas more because aa and I noticed that in its its true that we are teachers in one school we have colleagues five or six or seven colleagues in the same school I don't discuss these topics we just share ideas and that's it we dint discuss it that much but in these group with researching and we had theses |
| 350 | | discussions very long discussions we discussed every single point of it |
| | Researcher | Ok this is the end of the interview thank you very much for your time |

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| | Researcher | Thank you very much for accepting my invitation to have this interview. My first question is apart from the researcher's purpose what do you think was the purpose of the tdg? |
| 5 | Saeed | You are most welcome ustath (Mr) salim. The purpose of the tdg is to develop two part of teaching. The first one is teachers development by sharing ideas together and reflect this sharing with their students at school |
| | Researcher | Ah hah. Let's talk about the membership of the group. How |
| 10 | | do you evaluate your experience as a tdg member? |
| | Saeed | Well the group was amazing. All of them are keen to share the ideas together to learn from each other to discuss to evaluate to make progress between one week and another week |
| 15 | Researcher | I see |
| | Saeed | Really the group are very attractive and they are helping each other |
| | Researcher | Ah hah you mean the members of the group |
| | Saeed | Yes |
| 20 | Researcher | were helpful and cooperative. |
| | | Yes they are very cooperative |
| | Researcher | Ok has any group member or any of the group facilitators you know that the group has been facilitated by different people. |
| | Saeed | Ok |
| 25 | Researcher | Ok has any group member or any of the group facilitators imposed anything on the group? Forced the group to do certain things? |
| | Saeed | Yes sometimes they have got new ideas we usually share it together discuss it together and we take it as a part of our |
| 30 | | work for the coming days to try and keep it in the real life situations aaa so their suggestions towards the development we usually used it inside the classroom. |
| | Researcher | Ah hah but I mean any king of suggestion that came from different group members was I mean was aaa negotiated or |
| 35 | | discussed within the group |
| | Saeed | Yes |
| | Researcher | It was not imposed you want to say? |
| | Saeed | No no it was not forced |
| | Researcher | Ok regarding membership of the group did you face any |
| 40 | | difficulties? |
| | Saeed | Personally no there were no difficulties at all everything went smoothly and aaa very easy |
| | Researcher | A ha |
| | Saeed | There is no forcing there is no heavy load of work aa |
| 45 | | everyone liked the idea like the work so it is great |
| | Researcher | I see ok let's talk about the meeting specifically how did you find the group meeting in general |

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| | Saeed | Group meeting was were well organized and it is usually exchange between one meeting to another the meetings it selves gave us an opportunities to visit different schools which is I didn't visit them before |
| 50 | | |
| | Researcher | I see |
| | Saeed | So it is a new idea that we can route around the schools meet different people inside the schools so it is a good idea |
| 55 | Researcher | ok were the group discussions that was carried out inside the group different from those you usually have with your colleagues in the school? |
| | Saeed | yes in some part it is usually the discussion was well organized especially aa each meeting should be lead by one person the one who invited the group to the meeting it gives everyone an opportunity to say something during the meeting to evaluate his work during the previous days |
| 60 | | |
| | Researcher | do want to say that this does not usually happen within the discussion that is happening within colleagues? |
| 65 | Saeed | yes it was not taken aaa with that formality like this one so I like it very much people are strict on time strict on information on everything |
| | Researcher | I see do want to say that there were no difficulties regarding the meeting |
| 70 | Saeed | no difficulties at all especially that we arrange our timetables and we have got enough period of time to travel to each school to sit on a meeting and to discuss |
| | Researcher | ok do you have any kind of suggestions to make those meetings better? |
| 75 | Saeed | in the future? |
| | Researcher | in the future if there another group if you are involved in another group what do you want to add? |
| | Saeed | I hope if we've got a time to share ideas like this in the future I hope that we've got more time to sit together aa I mean when our sometimes is not enough to discuss certain topic or a certain issue together aa the other thing that sometimes we need to share practice or practical topics inside the field |
| 80 | | |
| | Researcher | I see |
| 85 | Saeed | Which we didn't do it before |
| | Researcher | I see ok now lets move to the gains or the benefits you get from the group what did you gain from the group? |
| | Saeed | Aa the first one is new aa friends we met them for the first time maybe we know their faces but we didn't sit together and discuss pedagogical issues together aa one more thing is that we are talking about one specific field in education so everyone is talking about the same area of education and that one gave us a kind of strength to go forward and to build ideas together |
| 90 | | |
| 95 | Researcher | I see ok do you think the tdg has an impact on you teaching? |
| | Saeed | Yes it is especially for weak learners especially for motivating students towards learning also the other things I |

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| 100 | | transferred this ideas to my colleagues inside the school and aaa a group of them started a tdg inside their classroom so it is a nice idea |
| | Researcher | Ok can you give me examples of certain points that you have developed as teacher? |
| 105 | Saeed | Right aa I developed on the teachers voca.. aaa what I mean aa phonetics I asked my grade 5 and grade 6 students because they are new in our school to concentrate on reading particularly in the sounds of the letters and the names of the letters I asked them to spend daily between 5 to 10 minutes on giving their students additional activities |
| 110 | | on how to help their students to start pronouncing the letters and then words short sentences and things like that aa personally I followed the teachers between one time and another and I noticed some students started to produce a nice progress inside the classroom the teachers themselves |
| 115 | | aa said that this idea was very helpful for their students |
| | Researcher | Ok so I I I understand from what you have just said that the group or the tdg has helped you enhance you students progress |
| | Saeed | Of course of course |
| 120 | Researcher | Ok are there any other benefits you gained from being a member I mean benefits that not necessarily related to teaching any other |
| | Saeed | Not related to teaching yes I can say aaa friendship with the group of the tdg aaa and aa visiting the schools themselves |
| 125 | Researcher | I see |
| | Saeed | That's it |
| | Researcher | Ok lets move to the obstacles you faced in the group were there any obstacles you faced either personally or as a group |
| 130 | Saeed | No myself I didn't face any obstacles or any difficulties I liked the idea very much and it is excellent |
| | Researcher | Did you get any kind of support from your school |
| | Saeed | Yes |
| | Researcher | Regarding tdg |
| 135 | Saeed | Our headteacher gave us a green permission to go to different schools also he issue he told the people to arrange my timetable in order to be free during that period of time that I can go to the meetings aa without aaa destroying my lessons |
| 140 | Researcher | Ahaa ok did the school administration or maybe the head-teacher ask you about the group |
| | Saeed | He asked me three times yes about the group and how its s going on and also he asked me did you reflect what you |
| 145 | | discussed in the meetings in your school and asked him yes and I am sharing the same idea with a group of teachers inside the school |
| | Researcher | Ok do you want to say that the school administration was interested in the idea of the tdg |
| 150 | Saeed | Yes they are interested they are interested |

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| | Researcher | If you compare your experience as a tdg member and your experience with the other pd programs you have had like workshops presentation conferences any thing else ok aaa what do prefer which one do you prefer and why |
| 155 | Saeed | I prefer the tdg because all the workshops or conferences which we attended was concentrated on theoretical part not in the field and not practically but here in the tdg our discussion was always reflected inside our classroom so we can evaluate the work between one day and another and it is |
| 160 | | similar to a lab so we can manage everything directly |
| | Researcher | I see emm what did you like best about the group you mentioned different gains ok but what did you like best about group |
| | Saeed | I liked the enthusiasm of the group and they are keen to |
| 165 | | work together to share the ideas to do things like that |
| | Researcher | What did you like least about the group |
| | Saeed | Nothing |
| | Researcher | Nothing? |
| | Saeed | Everything is perfect |
| 170 | Researcher | Ok emm so aa would you like this approach I mean the tdg approach for pd of teachers? |
| | Saeed | Yes I like |
| | Researcher | Could you again briefly say why or the reasons for that |
| | Saeed | Because it is beneficial not for the students themselves also |
| 175 | | for us because when we help our students to read smoothly also get comfortable teaching so we can also teach smoothly without any obstacles |
| | Researcher | Thank you very much thank you for your time and I appreciate this I mean accepting my invitation to have this |
| 180 | | interview |
| | Saeed | Than you very much ustath salim |

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| | Researcher | Thank you for the time you devote to this interview emm my first question to you apart from the researcher's purpose of the tdg what do you think was your purpose? |
| | Zahir | Aaa thank you first of all to give me a good chance to talk about [the group] first of all I think my role was to participate and cooperate with the tdg and then to apply some parts of phonics in my class then we come again to meet and to discuss what we have done in front of our students aaa through discussion we will get ideas in order to develop aaa what you call it the tdg in a specific part to choose phonics |
| 10 | Researcher | I see how do you evaluate your experience as a tdg member in general? |
| | Zahir | Generally I was very lucky to attend that group because I gained many useful advantages I can I can say first of all aa the cooperation with my colleagues were very interesting and I got many ideas and new things that I don't know before so also I learned how to deal with others in meetings also I knew some new teaching methods that can help me to teach a very vital point which is phonics |
| | Researcher | Ok how did you find the other group members? |
| 20 | Zahir | Really all of them were cooperative with me and I got aa too much information from them and we discussed freely in a free atmosphere and really really I enjoyed aa their fruitful discussion during that meeting or these meetings that we have done before |
| 25 | Researcher | Do you want to say that I mean I understand from what you have said that during the meetings you were equal you considered yourselves and everybody had a say in what was going on |
| | Zahir | Sometimes I listened and agreed with them but sometimes I have different opinions so I can show my opinions towards them and really they listened to me and had a positive reaction but generally aa these or those meetings were very very fruitful and I think all the participants got very useful ideas in the way of teaching phonics |
| | Researcher | Ok so regarding membership aaa did you face any difficulties? regarding being a member in this group |
| 35 | Zahir | Yes I think we faced some problems or obstacles or barriers for first of all the arrangement of our timetables we took too much time to arrange timetables for five members because we came from different levels and from different schools so first of all it was a very difficult idea to arrange suitable meetings for all also we suffered from another issue which was timing ok so we have a limited time we have a limited time as you know so in those meetings we had also limited times so we cant aa teach our pupils a very big issue which phonics just in one aaa in ten minutes or in twenty minutes we need too much time also another one the idea of preparation I have prepared for example different points in phonics other colleagues have different points we don't have what you call it a [unified] teaching some similar points because I have |

|     |            | my own curriculum or syllabus they have their own syllabus but at the end it was a good try to teach some points in phonics |
|-----|------------|---|
| 50  | Researcher | So do you regard that having different opinions different ideas to discuss in the meetings was an obstacle? |
|     | Zahir      | I don't think so because I bring ideas and they bring ideas and at the end we have an aim which was teaching phonics in our classes must be useful for our pupils I need to give my pupils a message and my other colleagues also they like to give their pupils a message so I don't think so that if we have different opinions different issues that we have obstacles because at the end all of us had a similar aim to achieve |
| 55  |            |   |
|     | Researcher | I see ok emm you mentioned some some of the obstacles what do you recommend to overcome these obstacles regarding timetables and meetings and these things? |
| 60  |            |   |
|     | Zahir      | I think first of all aa we should have same classes and same levels so we have to choose the tdg from this is my opinion from same classes and same levels in order to arrange a suitable syllabus for our students aa also we should have one lesson per week for phonics not just devoting one aa ten minutes or twenty minutes or a limited time because really really we are dealing with a big issue and phonics as you know is a very vital in the process of teaching and really really I think all my students agree with me they lack the idea of phonics and they don't have enough background about it so they need it they need this issue to be applied regularly |
| 65  |            |   |
| 70  |            |   |
|     | Researcher | Ok you mentioned syllabus you said that emm the teachers need to to devise a syllabus what do you mean by syllabus here can you explain this? |
|     | Zahir      | Yes I think we should have we should create same syllabus about phonics for teaching our pupils in this syllabus we should include this is my opinion we should include some important points about teaching phonics for example we should teach them how to say how to write letters of English how to pronounce letters of English also then we'll move to synthesis then we'll move what we call it the whole word recognition then at the end we should include some useful texts so our pupils will deal with the idea of phonics step by step or gradually so first of all as I mentioned they will learn some letters then they will move to we can call difficult letters ok for example vowels then they will move to words then sentences then texts so we should have what we call it general syllabus with general points that we think they are fruitful or useful for our pupils |
| 75  |            |   |
| 80  |            |   |
| 85  |            |   |
|     | Researcher | If we talk about the meetings of the group how did you find the group meetings? |
|     | Zahir      | In my point of view I think the group meetings were very effective because really really we have some experience and skillful teachers and we gained many new ideas from them and also we talked as I mentioned freely and the idea of freedom in aa conversation in talking I think was a very vital thing that made our meetings successful so sometimes I don't have an idea about aa what aa about the idea of phonics but I listened and I get information if I have something I have also reaction so he benefits |
| 90  |            |   |
| 95  |            |   |

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|---|---|---|
| 100 | | from me and I benefit from them so as I mentioned the idea of freedom in talking the idea of giving aa some points about what we have practiced during our classes and then discussing these aaa issues and analyzing them then giving solutions for many issues or obstacles that faced us during practicing the phonics ideas |
| | Researcher | Ok if we talk about the discussion that aa went on during the meetings were these discussions different from the discussions the discussions you usually have with your colleagues in the school? |
| 105 | Zahir | Yes aa because in tdg meetings our main focus was teaching one part of the syllabus which is which was phonics so our main concentration were on phonics also in those meetings we have different teachers in different levels and some of them were highly skillful and highly experien.. expert in English and I gained many |
| 110 | | new inform many new things from them and but in the school sometimes we talk about different issues for example we talk about educational issues we talk sometimes about aa issues that are related to our curriculum but there in our tdg meetings we talked about how to develop the idea of aa talking and |
| 115 | | conversation about a very main and specific ideas in phonics |
| | Researcher | Do you want to say that the discussions of the group were more systematic aa more focused? |
| | Zahir | Sometimes it were systematic but really really I can describe it as it is focused it was focused ok because we focused on one part |
| 120 | | which was phonics and sometimes we shifted to other issues but their issues were related to the main issue which was teaching phonics in our classes but really really they the discussions was focused and we followed in my opinion some steps for example we started with aa as you can remember we started with aa |
| 125 | | repeating what have done in our classes or previous classes then we start to have a new idea then we discuss this idea then we apply this idea in our classes then we have reflections on aa this idea so I think we have some systematic process that we followed |
| | Researcher | Ok aa did you face any difficulties regarding this issue the |
| 130 | | meetings? |
| | Zahir | Regarding to these issues aa I don't think so there were obstacles but we can say there are there were some limitations for example aa sometimes we have to aaa sometimes we have to aaa [silence] say something sometimes that aa was not related to our main topic |
| 135 | | and sometimes we apply some methods in our classes but when we came to discussion we cannot we cant aa tell exactly aa what our pupils gained from aa our practicing in our classes aa because as I mentioned teaching phonics needs too much time so I cant make judgment direct judgment about the level or the progress or the |
| 140 | | performance of aa my students in our classes so sometimes we give direct judgment that we say for example our pupils aa achieved little in what we talked to them or what we gave them but at the end we really think in our aa minds in ourselves that we did something that can help our students to achieve or to get some |
| 145 | | introduction about teaching phonics this idea |
| | Researcher | You mentioned the progress of the students and you said that it was difficult to make judgments on the spot about their progress |

|       |            | ok after all this time what do you say now what can you say about their progress? |
|-------|------------|---|
| 150   | Zahir      | Very important that we achieved we gave our pupils awareness about the idea of phonics this is very important we gave them something which is awareness we told them you have to be aware and we can thank our God that some of our students now they are aware about the idea of phonics and they want to know more information about this issue so this is a very important also as a |
| 155   |            | teacher I know some new methods of teaching phonics which I didn't know before aa so also I prepared some tasks and exercises which were useful for my students and useful for me also as a teacher I learned something that I should be aa very we can say aa I I should be very aa helpful for my pupils and I should be patient |
| 160   |            | in order to give them aa the i.. give them the importance of teaching phonics in our classes because really really in our all schools we lack the idea of understanding phonics my pupils know how to sometimes to write know how to listen how to speak using the four skills four English skills but they don't know how to |
| 165   |            | pronounce some words or some letters so when they are not able to pronounce some even little wo.. small I can say or short words so they will not be able to read not able to produce some sentences that's it |
| 170   | Researcher | You mentioned that you learned to be patient and to be committed to your students ok aa do you attribute this to the tdg or is this one of the impacts of the tdg on your on you as a teacher? |
| 175   | Zahir      | It was one of the impact of the tdg aa because all of them at the beginning suffered from aa our pupils level and some of them faced some obstacles such as the low motivation of some pupils or [neglect] of some pupils for this important aa topic or issue so but at the end in my opinion all of our pupils at least we can say have something in their minds about the importance of phonics and also |
| 180   |            | as members of the tdg aa we have also awareness about aaa the importance of teaching phonics and about also the importance of aa talking freely ok and talking with talking about focused points that aa are important for our students |
| 185   | Researcher | Ok so I understand from what you have said that the the tdg has an impact on you as a teacher and also on the students progress ok aa can you give me specific examples of this impact on you and on your students? |
| 190   | Zahir      | Aaa what I can remember that mr (saeed) gave us aa a specific process to teach the letters and aa the spelling and he explained this idea aa on the board and we took his method of teaching and we applied it in our classes and ver.. really really his method of teaching especially using cards and using aa handouts were very useful to convey the importance of aa teaching phonics in our classes and this is one of the examples that I can remember also sometimes we talked about some problems for example we talked about how can we teach vowels for example first we should start |
| 195   |            | with one vowel then the second we have to move to two vowels and so on so going step by step with our pupils aa we learned this idea from the tdg meetings so we should be we should aa not give |

our pupils a whole load on them but we should go step by step in order to convey our message

200 Researcher I see are there any other benefits from being a member of this group?

Zahir I think aa I gained the idea of loyalty so I should be loyal in teaching aa the idea of phonics also I should be I should talk frankly through my colleagues and also I should not keep some

205 ideas that I know in my mind I should express my ideas to others and also I should benefit from them so we had what we call it action and reaction so aa also I know the importance of aa cooperation and working in groups which I maybe I worked individually myself but it was my first time I think to work in an

210 effective group about one topic

Researcher Ok aaa lets talk about obstacles you have mentioned some of them but do you have any other difficulties you faced personally or the group you as a group faced?

Zahir In my point of view I think in that time aa sometimes we don't

215 agree we sorry we didn't agree with some points that they raised so I had another point but sometimes they think these aa or those points were a very effective some points that I thought in my mind were effective when I come to class and practice these points unfortunately I discovered that my students were not satisfied

220 about aa what I told them aa I can say for example aa I gave them aa an example about aa teaching vowels in class they some of them they found aa this this these vowels difficult so unfortunately I tried sometimes to force them to understand aa these points or those points but unfortunately they don't want to complete but

225 some of my colleagues we must teach our pupils aa the importance of vowels from the beginning also we talked about we discussed about another issue which is teaching sounds first or teaching graphemes first so we have opposite opinions I have my opinion different opinion and they have different opinions I think we

230 didn't get with anonymous [unified] decision about this issue but it was really their points of view and I have my point of view and as I told you at the end we have one aim to achieve to be achieved

Researcher I see emm lets talk about the role of the school did you get any support from your school? I mean any specific support aa I think

235 we have talked about timetable and arranging managing the timetables and these things was there any kind of support?

Zahir I cant remember now anything they gave me but as you mentioned they changed our timetables and they at the end they encouraged us to be aa members in that group first of all the administration

240 really we should be frank aa at the beginning they don't want they didn't want us to attend with the group because we know they don't want us to go outside the school and we have other duties to achieve or to do it in our schools but at the end in my opinion they were satisfied with what we are what we are what we have done

245 because we told us we are dealing with a very vital important issues which was related to our students curriculum even its not we are not doing something outside our curriculum we are not doing something that can harm our pupils we are dealing with

|     |            |                                                                                  |
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| 250 |            | something with aa we are dealing with something that we hope aa our pupils will get benefit and our aim was to improve our aa students students level and at the end they encouraged us I think |
|     | Researcher | Ok |
|     | Zahir      | But I cannot remember a specific support that they gave us |
|     | Researcher | I see for example did they ask you about the group? |
| 255 | Zahir      | Yes sometimes aa next day when we came they asked us how was the discussion of the group what do you get from we told them aa some points that happened in aa the those meetings and really really they were happy and grateful for our work that's it |
| 260 | Researcher | So aa regarding the support from the school or the role of the school did you face any specific difficulties? |
|     | Zahir      | I don't think so because from the beginning they encouraged us at the beginning yes they disagreed with this idea but aa at the end there were no problems at all |
| 265 | Researcher | Ok now if you compare your experience as a tdg member and your experience with other professional development programs like workshops conferences and all these things which one do you prefer? |
| 270 | Zahir      | (silence) because I attended the tdg meetings I have an I have a dream that we should apply the idea of phonics in our schools and we should also apply the idea of aa tdg aa meetings in aa a special research or a special course even it can be done by the training centre because really your idea was very useful we come to a specific meeting and we have a whole discussion as teachers unfortunately I think we lack the idea of aa discussing freely about specific points so if we have some ideas we can come together in a specific course and the whole course will be about discussion so we can aa decide for example ten points to discuss during for example one month or two months as a period for a course and we should apply the idea of discussion in as I told you in many courses so also we should apply the idea of discussion in aa the courses that are can be done by the training centre so we should not just be receivers we should be participant sometimes we attend some courses and the lecturer or that one the lecturer just explain some points and he was talking all the time but he didn't give us the idea to discuss some points freely also we can apply the idea of sitting in groups and discussing some main points for example I can give you an example we can discuss the idea of applying continuous assessment recording charts in groups so also we can come together and cooperate together in order to create and produce some aa projects such as writing project reading projects then we will apply these projects in our schools then we will come again to talk about them and to see the obstacles to see the advantages and disadvantages of applying these projects so the idea of discussion was a very vital thing that we stuck in our mind and we learned this point aaa this vital issue from the tdg meetings |
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| 290 |            | |
| 295 |            | |
|     | Researcher | So can I say that you prefer the tdg model more than the other traditional professional development programs? |
|     | Zahir      | Yes I prefer this model strongly |
|     | Researcher | Ok aa in brief what did you like best about the group? |

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| 300 | Zahir | I can give you one sentence I liked the idea of cooperation effectively in the tdg meetings we worked together we cooperated together we had one aim to achieve also we devoted part of aa our time in order to get something which aa was useful for us as teachers and for our pupils |
| 305 | Researcher | What did you like least? |
| | Zahir | (silence) I liked least sometimes the absence of some teachers we hoped in every meeting we should be together but unfortunately for some circumstances some teachers aaa didn't come or attend some meetings so next time we hoped that when we have some |
| 310 | | important issue like this we should try to come not to be absent we should attend these important meetings |
| | Researcher | Ok what did you not like at all? |
| | Zahir | I have no idea |
| | Researcher | Ok aa my last question would you recommend this approach the |
| 315 | | tdg approach for professional development of teachers? |
| | Zahir | Yes I recommended the idea of tdg strongly and I hope in the future we'll have similar ideas like this great idea and aa we hope that this idea will be generalized for aa for our teachers in the future and not just even in English but in even in other subjects |
| 320 | | because it was very interesting and it was very fruitful for you as a researcher and for us as teachers and also for our students |
| | Researcher | Ok would you like to add anything else we haven't talked about? |
| | Zahir | I'd like to thank you that you devoted part of your time to interview me and I hope that your research will be one of the best |
| 325 | | research in the sultanate of oman |
| | Researcher | I appreciate your cooperation thank you |