

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

INTER-SCHOOL COLLABORATION FOR SCHOOL BASED
IMPROVEMENT IN THE ARAB WORLD:
THE CASE OF TAMAM PROJECT

by
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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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There is growing agreement that effective professional learning is enhanced when teachers connect and collaborate with colleagues (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Strahan, 2003). A new paradigm for school improvement based on developing collaborative school structures as a mean for building the school capacity for improvement is emerging (e.g., Di'az-Gibson et al., 2017). Within this paradigm, inter-school collaboration has become increasingly popular as a strategy towards building and sustaining school improvement (Ainscow, Mujis, & West, 2006; Muijs, 2008). The practice of collaboration between schools as part of a new paradigm of school improvement is almost non-existent in the Arab world. The TAMAM professional network is one of the rare educational initiatives in the Arab region to incorporate professional collaboration as a foundation for its vision for developing innovative schools and as a strategy to achieve sustainable school improvement. Currently, TAMAM has an expanding membership of Arab educators and educational institutions that share its vision and goals. This study explores the experience of the TAMAM Jordan Hub, a voluntary network that emerged within the larger TAMAM professional network among 8 private schools in Amman who are members of the TAMAM network. This study uses a qualitative case study research design to understand the participants' perceptions of professional collaboration and inter-school collaboration and explore the drivers that instigated this type of collaboration among these schools. It also examines the factors that shaped this initiative and the support received (especially from the university-based facilitators) during the initiation of inter-school collaboration as well as the impact of this initiative. The participants in this study were purposefully chosen from the Jordan Hub schools that initiated a joint improvement project (teaching and learning of Arabic language) following the TAMAM model for school-based improvement as the focal activity for their inter-school collaboration. The results mostly affirmed those reported in the literature yet made significant contributions through revealing contextually shaped drivers, as well as offering a framework that details the functions of external facilitators. A key contribution of the study is that university-based researchers and experts have a critical role in facilitating the initiation and the implementation of inter-school collaboration. Namely, they are needed to coach the school teams on how to successfully navigate the structural and cultural demands of implementing the newly adopted inter-school collaboration strategies and the content of their improvement project. Expertise in leading change and the content area the collaborative improvement initiative is targeting are needed to achieve the goals of inter-school collaboration to effectively impact large scale sustainable school improvement.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Collaboration is rising globally as a strategy for educational change and improvement as well as for promoting teacher leadership and improving the teaching profession in general (Brown & Poortman, 2018). The COVID-19 pandemic intensified the feelings of urgency for improvement among educators in schools and strengthened their conviction of the necessity for collaboration to respond to the challenges and address the needs emerging after this worldwide crisis (Reimers et al., 2020). Starting in 2021, there were worldwide calls to reimagine education to help address common challenges and build sustainable futures (UNESCO, 2021). In this reimagining and transformation of education, teachers must have a key role as agents of change and are engaged in improving pedagogy, research, and policy for the future of education (UNESCO, 2021, 2022a, 2022b). Although the pandemic presented multiple challenges for the education sector, yet many of these challenges are long standing and have deep roots that must be addressed (UNESCO, 2022b). Interestingly, teachers have demonstrated the capacity to adapt to changing demands and continue teaching even in the most challenging contexts (UNESCO, 2022b). Teachers all around the world have shown examples of leadership as they rushed to face the escalating challenges and were the front-line personnel that allowed schools to diagnose and respond to students' learning and social emotional needs, finding innovative solutions to the emerging unprecedented challenges.

In fact, there is a wide agreement among scholars that teachers can play a major role in driving educational change and improvement (Fullan, 2007; Hargreaves &

Dawe, 1990). Moreover, an increasing number of initiatives are emerging to promote collaboration among teachers both within and between schools (Brown & Poortman, 2018; Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018). Many are advocating for it as a strategy to support educational improvement and change as well as to foster teacher development, learning, and wellbeing. Specifically, collaboration between schools, is considered a strategy to build collaborative cultures, and have become increasingly popular and part of a new paradigm of school improvement (Ainscow et al., 2006; Brown & Poortman, 2018; Muijs, 2008; Stoll, 2010). Different types of school collaborations ranging from loose voluntary forms to ones imposed and structured within formal organizational arrangements are being implemented in Europe and North America in addition to New Zealand (Armstrong, 201; Chapman & Muijs, 2014). However, in the Arab region, this approach has not yet gained momentum. Based on a search in the Arab Educational Information Network and Al Masdar, the Arab World Research [Shama], no research studies were found to address inter-school collaborations as a model to build school capacity for sustainable improvement in schools in the Arab region. On the other hand, the search identified the case of a voluntary professional network in the Arab world that emerged among participating schools within a research and development initiative TAMAM project (www.tamamproject.org), at the Education Department at the American University of Beirut [AUB]. The initiative fosters professional collaboration within schools and between schools and participating universities as part of the principles its members uphold to achieve its strategic goal and fulfil its vision for sustainable school improvement. For this reason, the researcher chose to focus on the case of the TAMAM project initiative and to examine in depth its emerging

professional network as a unique experience in the region to contribute to the growing international knowledge base on inter-school collaboration.

TAMAM Professional Network

The TAMAM professional network is an integral part of an initiative designed as a school university partnership to develop innovative self-renewing schools with broad based leadership capacity for change. This initiative is one of the few educational initiatives in the Arab region to incorporate professional collaboration as a central strategy for fulfilling its vision. TAMAM is an acronym that consists of the initials of “school-based reform” in Arabic (al-Tatweer Al-Mustanid ila Al-Madrasa). TAMAM started as a project at the Education Department in the American University of Beirut, Lebanon over the 16 years of operation since 2007, the number of participating schools increased to 72 schools from nine Arab countries forming the TAMAM professional network that include active educators of different positions within schools from nine different Arab countries (www.tamamproject.org). In addition, the project has partners who are researchers and coaches from higher education institutions, as well as representatives from ministries of education and the local community all working together toward enhancing the transformative role of schools to graduate the next generation that leads innovation and change in their society (Karami-Akkary & Rizk, 2012; Karami-Akkary et al., 2012). While the TAMAM project encourages and facilitates professional collaboration among participating schools, it has not yet designed strategies to induce inter-school collaboration and to support schools to purposefully seek collaboration opportunities while engaging in school-based improvement. Networking among TAMAM schools was not intentionally conceptualized in the project first phase (2007-2011). However, its capacity building

activities included limited networking activities that brought periodically members of all participating schools to participate in professional development sessions, regular reflective and interactive workshops with researchers, ministry representatives and community members (TAMAM Project Steering Team, 2018a). Throughout the years, the network comprising the participating schools started emerging as a professional community with common underlying principles and common language reflected in the TAMAM pillars, and with a well-designed roadmap to lead improvement, the TAMAM Improvement Journey, that was designed in phase two of TAMAM (2011-2015). Two large scale gatherings in 2014 and 2016 were major milestones in TAMAM history where the TAMAM professional network was conceptualized as leading an educational movement for school-based improvement and not only as resulting from limited support activities. Since 2016, mentoring was highlighted as a concept and practice to support professional collaboration to achieve TAMAM vision for sustainable school improvement toward enhancing student learning (TAMAM Project Steering Team, 2014; TAMAM Project Steering Team, 2016). In phase three (2015-2018), different voluntary attempts appeared within TAMAM professional network to form regional inter-school collaborations (Hubs). A formal Hub was initiated and established in 2016 in Jordan to manage and coordinate the collaborative work of the increasing number of TAMAM schools in the country. Under this self-sustained Hub, joint activities were conducted between the Hub schools in addition to the organization of the PST yearly visits and regional gatherings to Jordan (TAMAM Project Steering Team, 2018a). In response to these schools' driven initiatives among the TAMAM participating schools, the PST introduced a strategic goal in the fourth phase (2018-2020) aiming at examining the emerging collaboration activities in order to design strategies to initiate

and support inter-school collaborations as an added dimension to the TAMAM grounded model for school- based improvement (TAMAM Project Steering Team, 2018b).

In the beginning of 2019, eight private schools within the TAMAM Jordan Hub initiated independently a joint improvement project which targets improving the teaching and learning of Arabic language in the participating schools. Six out of the eight schools in TAMAM Jordan Hub, which is part of the larger TAMAM professional network, committed to following collaboratively the TAMAM Improvement Journey to address the complex concerns related to the Arabic language and design interventions that are grounded in the sociocultural context of the region (TAMAM Project Steering Team, 2019). The PST is currently monitoring the progress of the schools in the launching and implementing this improvement initiative while providing the needed capacity building supporting the schools engaged in the inter-school collaboration.

Statement of the Problem and Rationale of the Study

Educational change has become inevitable if schools are to address complex emerging concerns and global problems to serve diverse students and prepare them for the workforce demands of the 21st century (Brown & Poortman, 2018; Glickman et al., 2007; Stoll, 2010). Yet, successful change and school improvement remains to be a complex task where a lot of challenges could be encountered (Fullan, 1993; Senge, 1990). Within this context, there is wide agreement among scholars that schoolteachers have a major impact on student achievement and learning (Hattie, 2012) and as a result they must become key drivers of educational change and leaders of school-based innovation (Frost, 2012). However, teachers internationally raise many concerns including: their limited involvement in the design and implementation of change

(Prapaisit & Hardison, 2009); the constraints of workload and time allocated for designing and implementing the change; the insufficient material resources and the hardships of skills' acquisition and professional development (Prapaisit & Hardison, 2009; Murray, 1992); in addition to the lack of the moral support during the implementation of innovative practices. Fullan (2007) asserted as well that change is complex and that it is characterized by uncertainty and ambivalence, and he pointed out that all real change involves struggle, anxiety, and loss. In fact, teachers associate many of these challenges with their isolation within the existing organizational arrangements in schools that limit the opportunity for them to interact with peers within or across schools (Pawlas & Oliva, 2008). All these concerns are found to generate various negative feelings like anger, helplessness, burnout, discomfort, and fear (Murray, 1992), as well as skepticism and low teaching morale.

In the Arab region, teachers in the schools have similar concerns regarding educational change (Aziz, 2019). Challenges facing educational change are equally complex prompting Arab scholars to call for a new paradigm of educational reform to be adopted to reframe research and practice (Karami-Akkary, 2014; Karami- Akkary & Rizk, 2014).

There is sizable agreement in the international literature that a prerequisite to the effectiveness of any planned change and improvement is to foster teachers' collaboration to be able to generate innovative solutions to complex educational problems and to address the various needs of diverse students (Stoll & Louis, 2007). There is also a growing consensus that teacher professional learning is enhanced when teachers connect and collaborate with colleagues (Fullan, 2007; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Strahan, 2003).

Researchers reported the positive impact of professional collaboration on teacher effectiveness and well-being (Durksen et al., 2017), curriculum development (Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990), educational improvement and organizational development (Fullan, 2007), and consequently on student achievement and learning (Hargreaves & O Connor, 2018). In addition, research has found schools working together to coordinate their efforts and share their experiences to build organizational capacity for improvement and to increase their chances of achieving the goals of their improvement projects (Wohlstetter et al., 2003).

In response to the increased awareness of the limitations of change initiatives at the school level, collaboration among schools is advanced as one of the effective strategies to build the school capacity for improvement and enhance its ability to sustain school-based improvement (Díaz-Gibson et al., 2017; Wohlstetter et al., 2003). Since 2000, researchers indicate that there is an increase in this form of collaborative activity among schools, yet they point out that the knowledge base in this area “remains sparse” (Armstrong, 2015, p.3). Specifically, the results of Armstrong et al. (2021) configurative review of inter-school collaboration studies pointed at the necessity for more clarity in the conceptual terminology of this area. In addition, external support is found to be essential to facilitate this type of collaborative activity among schools (Sartory et al., 2017; Stoll, 2010). Many studies point out that more research is needed to explain who would be prepared to provide this kind of support and what role the facilitator should play (Sartory et al., 2017; Tung & Feldman, 2001).

In the Arab region, the practice of inter-school collaboration as part of a new paradigm of school improvement is almost non-existent. No studies could be found addressing inter-school collaboration as a strategy to build the school capacity for

sustainable improvement, and none that highlight the role of external support in this type of activity and the impact of this strategy on the school and practitioners.

The TAMAM project initiative of inter-school collaboration where six private schools in the TAMAM Jordan Hub chose a collaboration focus related to the teaching and learning of Arabic language constitute is an interesting case worthy of further examination. The collaborating schools worked on a joint improvement project following the TAMAM grounded model for school-based improvement (www.tamamproject.org). With enhancing collaboration designated as a strategic goal for TAMAM in phase five (2021-2025), there is a dire need for the Project Steering Team for developing a well-defined grounded model with strategies aimed at cultivating inter-school collaborations.

Purpose of the Study

This study explores the TAMAM school lead team members' experience with inter-school collaboration in the context of a school university partnership. The first purpose is to describe and understand the participants' (TAMAM school Lead Team members formed of teachers and principals, participating Arabic Leaders and members from the Arabic departments, TAMAM Jordan Hub coordinator, and project director) perceptions of professional collaboration and inter-school collaboration among the Jordan Hub schools. The second purpose is to identify the drivers that instigated this type of collaboration among schools. The third purpose is to examine the factors (challenges or enabling conditions) that shaped this collaboration among schools. The fourth purpose is to identify the impact of this collaboration on building the school's capacity for sustainable improvement.

Research Questions

This study will be conducted using an exploratory qualitative case study research design to answer the following research questions from the perspective of the participants:

- 1- How was TAMAM Jordan Hub formed? How was the Arabic Teaching Improvement project initiated among TAMAM Jordan Hub schools?
- 2- What does professional collaboration mean? What does inter-school collaboration mean and how is it manifested?
- 3- What are the drivers that led the participants to initiate inter-school collaboration as agents of change?
- 4- What are the factors (challenges or enabling conditions) shaping this collaboration among schools?
- 5- What is the impact of this collaboration on building the school's capacity for sustainable improvement?

Significance of the Study

This study has significance to theory and practice. As for theory, it could add to the scarce international knowledge base about inter-school collaboration and the challenges faced in this type of collaboration while filling a major gap in educational research literature in the Arab world. Specifically, it adds to the literature on the role of external facilitators in supporting the collaboration activity and decreasing the challenges faced by schools engaged in this type of activity. Additionally, this study could serve as a reference point for western scholars interested in comparing what is done in their countries to the Arab countries.

Additionally, this study is critical to TAMAM project since its findings could lay the foundation of exploring the inter-school collaboration phenomena within its professional network. Future research in TAMAM could build on this study and target developing more understanding of: (1) the sustainability of this type of collaboration and its nature after the schools finalize the work on the selected improvement project, (2) the contribution of this type of collaboration to sharing good practices and raising standards in schools, (3) the extent to which the drivers and factors found in this study are similar to other inter-school collaborations that occurred or will occur between schools in TAMAM project.

As for practice, the findings will inform the TAMAM Project Steering Team while designing strategies for facilitating inter-school collaboration activities while building on success stories and managing the anticipated impediments that have emerged with the Jordan Hub experience. This will allow the PST to build its design (activities, roles and support provided) to enhance professional collaboration among the participating schools in the TAMAM professional network. Finally, the recommendations from this study can also be of added value for policy makers to design wide scale reform projects where inter-school collaborations is a strategy to build organizational capacity for school wide and systemic reform (Chapman & Fullan, 2007).

The study might also have social implications as well. Rincón-Gallardo and Fullan (2016) point out that the power of school networks as vehicles to dramatically improve schools and the entire educational systems is yet to be realized. This research study is an added value as it offers insights to enhance the effectiveness of networks and

collaborations among schools, and thus contributes to the realization of the yet unfulfilled promise of school networks.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Since the study aims at describing the perception of the participants about professional collaboration and inter-school collaboration, the drivers behind the involvement in inter-school collaboration, the factors (challenges or enabling conditions) that shaped this collaboration among schools as well as its impact, this chapter starts by giving an overview of professional collaboration in the context of school improvement. The chapter then focuses on inter-school collaboration and explores the literature on the different types of inter-school collaboration as a strategy for building school capacity for improvement. Next, the chapter presents the theoretical and empirical literature that identifies the main drivers and conditions that contribute to the success of inter-school collaborations as well as the challenges faced during this process. Afterwards, the chapter explores the impact of inter-school collaboration on teachers, schools, and the students. Then, the chapter describes the available inter-school collaboration experiences in the Arab world. Finally, the chapter concludes with a conceptual framework to guide the research work.

In order to find relevant theoretical and empirical evidence to position the study in the international and regional literature, the researcher searched the literature using several databases which are ERIC, Education Research Complete, Google scholar, Arab World Research Source- Al Masdar, and Shamaa, and the following sample descriptors were employed which are: “inter-school collaboration”, “school to school collaborations”, “school networks”, “school partnerships”, “school families”, “school clusters”, “partnerships in education”. Multiple sources (empirical, theoretical, eBooks

and books, reviews of literature...) of relevant international literature relying mostly on refereed journals and primary sources were consulted in order to provide a better understanding of the phenomena chosen for study. The researcher organized the consulted references in a grid on Microsoft Excel to facilitate identifying key themes and to synthesize the existing understanding of this phenomena (check Appendix A).

Professional Collaboration in the Context of School Improvement

Collaboration is defined by Gronski and Pigg (2000) as “an interactive process among individuals and organizations with diverse expertise and resources, joining together to devise and execute plans for common goals as well as to generate solutions for complex problems” (p. 783). Professional collaboration has risen globally as a strategy to promote educational change and improvement as well as to foster teacher learning and leadership (Brown & Poortman, 2018; Fullan, 2007; Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990). Besides its impact on teacher learning and leadership skills, Hudson (2006) explained as he concluded his study that collaboration promotes teacher agency against the controlling forces on teachers at different levels where teachers believe that they can reach the desired changes through their collective voice. In fact, Fullan (2010; 2012) pointed out that collaborative skills and building relationships are essential to be an agent for societal improvement.

In addition to the impact on teachers, professional collaboration is found to improve student learning as educators mobilize their knowledge and share expertise as well as tend to take more risks and try new ideas (Hargreaves & O’Connor, 2018). In specific, Hargreaves and O’Connor (2018) referred to studies by Nias et al. (1989), Rosenholtz (1989), Schleifer et al. (2017), Talbert and McLaughlin (1994) who found that professional collaboration led to higher results in student attainment. Hattie (2015)

advanced that in order to enhance the impact on student learning, capacity building should be geared towards developing collective rather than individual expertise and highlighted the importance of professional collaboration as means to bring expertise together and scaling up successful ideas.

Historically in the late 1989s and early 1990s, educational researchers and scholars began to give more attention to professional collaboration and its value on the improvement of the educational system especially for its impact on overcoming the impediments generated by teacher isolation and individualism on teachers' professional growth and learning (Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990; Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018; Sue Englert & Tarrant, 1995). Nowadays, there is wide agreement that professional collaboration fosters not only individual learning but also organizational learning. Senge (1990) emphasized that collaborative learning is key to successful organizational development and learning. Hargreaves and O'Connor (2018) stated that collaboration improves the ability to initiate improvement and implement change initiatives as various ideas circulate among collaborators and stay beyond individual minds. Fullan and Quinn (2016) advanced to talk about the power of deep collaborative work that contributes to the sustainability of the organization.

Accordingly, several scholars pointed out that promoting professional collaboration is the foundation for cultivating collaborative cultures as they increase the chance for teacher dialogue. Stoll (2010) highlighted the importance of dialogue and learning conversations as the core of collaborative work. Moreover, collaborative cultures promote social solidarity among colleagues which is essential to effective professional collaboration thus leading to sustainable improvement that will impact student learning (Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018). Building collaborative cultures where

teachers have a safe zone to discuss instructional effectiveness and reflect on their learning and students' learning offers the enabling conditions needed for the successful implementation of any planned educational change (Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990; Strahan, 2003). Fullan and Quinn (2016) explained that building collaborative cultures is about using relationships and cultivating expertise “to turn complexities and fragmentation into a focused coherent force for change” (p. 48). Accordingly, more initiatives to promote collaborative cultures are emerging in different forms as the means to foster teacher development and learning and support organizational development which in turns impact student learning (Brown & Poortman, 2018; Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990; Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018).

Collaboration can be found at different levels of the educational system (Stoll, 2010). Collaboration can be within the same school among groups of teachers to share their experiences, reflect on their learning and improve their practice and this is usually referred to as communities of practice. Sergiovanni (2000) talked about building communities of practice as an effective way to improve a school. It can be at the level of the whole school among all school staff, and this is usually referred to as professional learning communities. Moreover, collaboration can also be among different schools, or it can be established between schools and universities as well as with community partners. For the sake of this study, the researcher will explore the literature on collaboration among different schools. Different terms are used to reflect this form of collaboration. More will be explored and clarified in the below section including the drivers that help in initiating this collaboration, conditions for successful collaborations, challenges faced, and the impact found as well as the role of facilitators to support this type of collaboration.

Types and Forms of Inter-school Collaboration for School Improvement

Collaboration between schools have become increasingly popular as a new paradigm in school improvement, as the limitations of individual institutional approaches and external interventions become clearer (Ainscow et al., 2006; Muijs et al., 2010, Muijs, 2008, Stoll, 2010). Various definitions are available to clarify this type of collaboration. One of the definitions found in the literature describes inter-school collaboration as one where at least two schools work together for a period of time in order to achieve a shared goal (Muijs et al., 2010). Another more elaborative definition in the literature states that inter-school collaboration is when at least two schools choose to work together toward a shared goal by sharing knowledge and resources and through coordinating their efforts and activities (West, 2010). Schools can collaborate to achieve any of these broad goals: (1) school improvement (ex. sharing approaches to school improvement...), (2) broadening opportunities including collaborations with non-school parties, and (3) resource sharing (ex. peer coaching...) (Muijs et al., 2010). This collaboration can be along different timescales as well. It can be short term collaboration to address stressing issues of concern or long-term collaborations targeting deeper changes at the schools' level while others can be somewhere in between offering short term impact with longer term development (Muijs et al., 2010).

In the literature explored, different terminologies were used to describe inter-school collaboration between schools. For this research study, the researcher will use the term inter-school collaboration to describe the collaboration between different schools. This terminology is chosen to emphasize the core aim of this activity which is collaboration irrespective of the form and structure of the collaboration.

Thus, collaboration between schools can encompass various types and forms as well as structures with various goals and activities. In the following part of this section, the dimensions that are found in the literature which can be used to distinguish between the different types and forms of inter-school collaborations will be presented.

The literature review found different types and forms of inter-school collaborations that are implemented in North America and Europe in addition to New Zealand and Sweden (Chapman & Muijs, 2014). The most common terminologies encountered in the literature are “federations”, “collaboratives”, “networks”, “clusters”, “academies”, “chains”, “families” or “partnerships”. Some terminologies refer to the type and specifically the structure of the collaboration. Example, the term “federation” refers more to formal collaborations between schools in terms of structure while “collaboratives” refers to more loose collaborations in terms of structure. Another example is the term “academies” which refers to collaborations that are not maintained by a local authority as opposed to “federations” which refers to collaborations that are maintained by a local authority. Categorizing the different forms under each type of collaboration between schools is a difficult task (Atkinson et al., 2007; Armstrong, 2015; Chapman & Muijs, 2014) due to the rapid changes in these types in the last decade. Yet some researchers tried to map the different types of these collaborations in the last years and categorize them further under different forms.

The review of the literature on federations in England, which as clarified earlier involves structural changes in leadership, management, and governance, usually making use of the joint governance arrangements, found multiple attempts at categorizing this type of collaboration. Lindsay et al. (2007) categorized the 37 federations of the program in England into four stage continuum based on decreasing hardness of

structural arrangements as such: (1) Statutory with hard governance federations, (2) statutory with soft governance federations having joint strategic committees with delegated powers, (3) non-statutory soft federations having joint strategic committees with no delegated powers, and (4) non-statutory informal loose collaborations where schools meet informally on ad-hoc basis for common purposes. Another recent categorization appeared in the findings of a study by Chapman and Muijs (2014). The study explored the features and impact of federations, categorized the 122 federations of their study sample into six broad forms different from the previous mentioned continuums that were emphasizing the structural arrangements. The forms they listed are related to the school type, school size and school performance levels as follows: (1) cross- phase federations referring to schools from different cycles or phases collaborating together (ex. elementary and secondary), (2) performance federations referring to schools collaborating with different performance levels (ex. high and low performing schools), (3) size federations referring to schools collaborating with different school sizes (ex. small and medium sized schools), (4) mainstreaming federations referring to the collaborations between special needs schools and mainstreaming schools, (5) faith federations referring to schools with different dominations, and (6) academy federations referring to schools named academies with the same sponsor (similar to charter schools in America) collaborating with each other. Within these six forms, a wide range of arrangements exists in relation to how formal or informal the inter-school collaboration is in terms of structure.

On the other hand, Hill at al. (2012), offered a categorization of academies under two forms: as sponsored academy chains whereby, schools collaborate under the responsibility of an overarching sponsor and convertor chains which describes schools

collaborating formally but without an overarching sponsor. Hill et al. (2012) went further and identified three forms of convertor chains in their report which are: (1) multi-academy trusts (MATs) which refers to a single entity with academies within it bearing similar characteristics to federations, (2) umbrella trusts where a faith body or a group of schools sets up an overarching charitable trust which then establishes individual or multi-academy trusts to run the schools coming under the umbrella of the overarching trust, and (3) collaborative partnerships which are informal and loosely structured collaborations among schools.

A more recent attempt to categorize the different types of inter-school collaboration based their categorization on the existing structural arrangements. Woods and Simkins (2014) categorized inter-school collaborations in England under the following typologies: (1) national chains where there is a number of schools led by a nonprofit/ charitable entity, (2) school-led chains which are similar to national chains yet they are led by successful schools, (3) local federations which refers to schools with some reconfiguration of the schools' governance arrangements, and (4) collaboratives which refers to schools collaborating around a specific area of interest with changes in the governance or leadership. Armstrong (2015) offered different bases for the categorization of the existing types of inter-school collaborations in England, namely the level of formalization of these collaborations. He explained that some types are formal with a legal status and some sort of funding from the government (ex. federations, multi-academy trusts, sponsored academy chains) and others are informal i.e. schools are connected to one another unofficially and don't share leadership or any type of shared governance, or it can be a combination of both. He noted that different names are used to capture the level of formality. Similarly, Ainscow et al. (2006) and

Muijs et al. (2010) categorization differentiated the type of collaboration among schools according to the nature of relationship between these schools. They differentiated among collaborations of groups of schools who work on voluntarily basis, and other groups that collaborate in the context of incentives while others collaborate as a result of external pressure like a governments mandate to collaborate.

In addition to all the aforementioned variety of categorizations, some scholars used yet different bases to categorize the type of school collaborations. These included inter-school collaboration density (number and seniority of staff involved) and school density (number of schools involved), geographical spread, power relations (school relations built on equality or domination) and external involvement (Muijs et al., 2010); reasons for collaborations (school improvement, widening opportunities, or resource sharing); and varying timelines and impact (short term, long-term, or somehow in between collaborations) (Armstrong, 2015; Muijs et al., 2010).

Understanding inter-school collaboration under these various categorizations can help to develop collaborations among schools that fit the aspired goals and purposes, as well as provide researchers with the possibility of a certain level of prediction of likely inter-school collaboration success and impact (Muijs et al., 2010). While schools collaborate for many different reasons, over varying timelines and with results that differ concerning impact and sustainability, yet there are main drivers and reasons why schools might enter into inter-school collaborative arrangements. This will be discussed in the next section.

Building Inter-School Collaborations

To build inter-school collaborations, different factors are mentioned in the literature as contributing to the success of these partnerships. There are certain drivers

that initiate this collaboration as well as conditions that are found to be necessary for implementing and sustaining a successful and effective collaborations between schools. On the other hand, collaboration between schools is not free of challenges and problems. Exploring these challenges is critical to anticipate the upcoming obstacles and prepare strategies to address them. Besides, the literature explored the role of facilitators or supporters in facilitating the collaboration process on one hand and considered essential to address the challenges as well as give the support needed to have the impact aimed at on the other hand. The section below reports on the literature explored in these areas.

Main Drivers for Inter-School Collaboration

In the literature reviewed the word “drivers” is used to mean the main factors that initiated the collaboration between schools (Atkinson et al., 2007). Not all research explored distinguishes between the “drivers” and the “conditions” needed to sustain the collaboration between schools yet in many studies all are included under the conditions needed for the collaboration to be successful and effective and used interchangeably. Some research studies, though, differentiated between the two and specified that drivers are the factors that initiate the inter-school collaboration. Though sometimes it is difficult to draw the distinction between the two terms, the researcher found it important to include both concepts and report the available literature on each in different sections.

According to Ainscow et al. (2006) and Atkinson et al. (2007), three main drivers were identified that initiate collaboration which are: (1) a specific urgent need to address challenging circumstances and thus the schools initiate the collaboration voluntarily (e.g. lack of resources or funding), (2) the presence of incentives as a driver to initiate collaboration, (3) central government mandate to initiate the collaboration

formally (and especially the case is with poor performing schools partnering with a higher performing schools). Besides, schools might be driven to collaborate as a result of a combination of their own initiative and an incentive. On the other hand, Atkinson et al. (2007) listed additional drivers of inter-school collaborations, although less frequently cited in the literature than the previous ones, which are: (1) existing partnerships or a previous history of partnership working as a driver to instigate further collaboration between schools, (2) outside body/individual influence to initiate collaboration, (3) judged successful/status of some schools contributes to drive the collaboration with these successful schools, (4) ability to be proactive/innovative to drive collaboration, and (5) address local/target group needs as a driver of collaboration.

In brief, drivers can be related to inner school needs or external factors, and both could be triggers to initiate collaborations between schools. While it is critical to have drivers to trigger the initiation of inter-school collaboration, venturing into participating in these collaborations is not enough to sustain the collaboration. Additional conditions and factors are necessary to be in place to make this collaboration effective as well as sustainable. In the next section, the researcher will explore the main conditions and factors cited in the literature that are linked to effective and successful collaborations and to sustaining the collaboration between schools.

Conditions and Factors Needed for Effective Inter-School Collaboration

Initiating collaboration between schools is the first step in collaboration. For collaborative work between schools to yield the desired results, this necessitates certain conditions and factors to be in place to engage people in the process and to move them beyond their established patterns and comfort zones to fulfill the desired results behind this collaboration. Eventually, there are certain conditions and factors that are found to

be necessary to make collaboration between schools effective and successful.

Specifically, this refers to the conditions and factors that should be set while the schools are collaborating to keep the collaboration going and make it more effective. Several conditions and factors were explicitly mentioned in the explored body of literature, and others were extracted from the essential features of effective inter-school collaborations. Some conditions and factors were reported as results of empirical studies of specific type of school collaborations while others are derived from analysis of the explored literature on collaboration and can relate to any collaboration irrespective of the type of the collaboration between schools.

Contextual Factors. School collaborations differs from place to place given the different historical, geographical, and social contexts involved. Historical factors such as previous successful experiences of partnerships appear to be helpful in encouraging and sustaining further collaboration among schools while culture differences, lack of equality between schools, or a history of competitiveness can hinder this partnership (Ainscow et al., 2006; Atkinson et al., 2007). In fact, Aiston et al. (2002) in their research on the Specialist Schools network, mentioned the history of collaborations and good relations between schools as well as non-competitiveness as essential factors for the success of the collaboration. Geography also plays a role where sometimes, proximity can be helpful for collaboration. This immediate vicinity, however, may create barriers to progress this collaboration in some contexts given the schools are competitive schools (Ainscow et al., 2006; LGA educational research programme, & National foundation for educational research, 2004).

Presence of a Collaborative Culture. School's culture and values play an important role in determining a school's readiness to collaborate successfully (Chapman

& Allen, 2006; LGA educational research programme, & National foundation for educational research, 2004). The presence of a belief by those involved in the collaborative process that more will be achieved better by working together rather than by working alone is found to be important to frame and drive the interactions between collaborating schools (West, 2010).

In addition, the presence of a culture of collaboration in schools is necessary since it facilitates channeling back into schools' new knowledge and learning gained through collaborating with other schools and increase the likelihood of their impact on changing practice (Earl & Katz, 2006, as cited in Stoll, 2010).

Trust, Communication and Relationship Building. The willingness of individuals to communicate in a climate of mutual trust, openness, transparency, and respect is important in the success of collaboration (Chapman & Allen, 2006; LGA educational research programme, & National foundation for educational research, 2004). All these climate elements are the building blocks of social capital which is essential to build the group dynamics and support collaborative processes (Chapman & Allen, 2006). Trust among staff members was specified by scholars to be the strongest facilitator of building a professional community among schools (Katz & Earl, 2010; Stoll, 2010). Ainscow et al. (2006) have emphasized when reflecting on the evidence from six case studies of schools in challenging conditions and from previous evidence they collected, the importance of building trust between partners on the basis that inter-school relations and effective communication are unlikely to be maintained without it. Muijs (2015) also reported in the results of his nine case studies that mutual trust and goals are essential factors for effective collaborations between schools. Additionally, Rincón-Gallardo and Fullan (2016) stated that developing strong relationships is

essential for inter-school collaborations and this thrives in an environment of high trust. Trust is also crucial for group members to engage in deep and challenging conversations related to poor/inadequate performance and is fundamental to acknowledge what they do not know and to learn among the group which is essential for learning and growth (Rincón-Gallardo & Fullan, 2016). Frequent, authentic, and high levels of information sharing and transparency, in addition to joint problem-solving are all processes that will help collaborations to succeed (West, 2010).

Perceived Benefits of Collaboration by the Participants. At the heart of successful and sustainable collaborations, there needs to be direct benefit to participating stakeholders (West, 2010). The presence of the appropriate incentives is essential to encourage key stakeholders to explore the possibility that collaboration will be beneficial to them (West, 2010). Acknowledging individual contributions and sharing credit should be a goal of collaborations. Highlighting successes on the way throughout the collaboration could be one of the factors that might help participants identify and perceive the benefits of the collaborations. In this aspect, Muijs (2015) found based on the results of nine case studies of collaborations between low and high performing schools that the need to build quick wins was a factor for successful collaborations. These quick wins helped in identifying the benefits to stakeholders.

Presence of Credible Leadership in Key Positions. In general, the impact of the collaboration can be greater if school leaders are more involved in encouraging and motivating others to participate in the collaborative activities, setting and monitoring the collaboration agenda, and providing support to allow staff members to be active in the activities and drive things forward (Katz & Earl, 2010; Stoll, 2010; Muijs, 2015). In fact, placing credible leaders in key positions is important and likely to help develop

clarity of purpose and vision and ensure that clear communication channels are established so that the vision can be clearly articulated (Atkinson et al., 2007; Chapman & Allen, 2006). Similarly, Rincón-Gallardo and Fullan (2016) talked about the presence of formal leaders, who facilitate learning and leadership in others, and model giving importance to the collaboration as well as the participation of actors from different levels of the system as a factor that ensured that collaboration becomes embedded in the culture of the school system. In addition to key leaders in formal positions, distributed leadership may be a powerful lever for facilitating collaboration and spreading the impact among the schools (Katz & Earl, 2010).

Clear Structures, Processes, and Roles as Mediators. The establishment of agreed upon principles, clearly defined protocols and expectations is essential in successful inter-school collaborations (Ainscow et al., 2006). The focus of the collaboration within and between schools in a given context must be negotiated in order to determine the appropriate changes needed in the structures and processes to be followed (Chapman & Allen, 2006). Different social learning processes are involved in collaborations which necessitates the establishment of appropriate organizational arrangements to facilitate this type of learning among the different members. These new arrangements might demand additional workload, the investment of energy, and goodwill of all partners (Aiston et al., 2002).

Risk Taking Attitude by Participants. The risk-taking attitude among participants is found critical in effective collaborations keeping the venues open for innovations and creativity. Collaborations between organizations bring up levels of risk since they involve diverse partners who share some goals but differ regarding others. It may also involve new activities, processes, or technologies depending on the focus of

the collaboration. Thus, it is critical not to avoid risks, which will tend to restrict creativity and innovation among the collaborating partners (West, 2010). On the other hand, an important thing in setting collaborations is to seek to identify and understand risks early in the process, so that these can be managed throughout the collaboration process.

A Clear Focus for Collaboration. Identifying a clear, visible/ measurable, yet challenging focus is essential for bringing practitioners together around a common goal to reflect on and rethink their professional beliefs and practices (Katz & Earl, 2010). According to Lieberman and McLaughlin (1992), identifying a clear common focus gives the participants a sense of identity through the pursuit of activities relating to their common interests and objectives. Rincón-Gallardo and Fullan (2016) recommended that this collaboration focus revolves around improving teaching to reach deeper student learning and engagement as well as reduce the difference in student performance. Scholars agree that keeping the focus on teaching and learning or on creating the conditions for teaching and learning feeds the intrinsic motivation of teachers and encourages them to experiment with their own classroom practice to make a positive impact on their students (Chapman & Allen, 2006; Muijs, 2015; Rincón-Gallardo & Fullan, 2016; West, 2010). Besides, identifying improvement needs that are seen to be priority and relevant to a wide range of partners promotes the development of a sense of collective responsibility for bringing about improvements in all schools involved in this joint activity (Lieberman & McLaughlin, 1992; West, 2010). In brief, the teachers' perceptions that what they are doing together serve their own goals and not the goals imposed by an outside party, even a friendly funding source, makes the inter-school collaboration a successful process (Lieberman & McLaughlin, 1992).

Collaborative Inquiry as a Strategy for Collaboration. Engaging participants in ongoing cycles of collaborative inquiry which taps into the human inclination to learn by doing is found to facilitate collaboration (Rincón-Gallardo & Fullan, 2016).

Effective collaborations between schools that uses cycles of inquiry not only improve the practitioners' practices and schools internal work, but also help participants identify and strategize to continuously change the systems and structures that maintain the status quo and constrain the improvement work (Rincón-Gallardo & Fullan, 2016).

External Support and Facilitation. There is growing evidence that schools need to be supported by external coordination in order to successfully collaborate with each other (Sartory et al., 2017; Stoll, 2010; West, 2010). Emerging literature suggests that an external facilitator or critical friendship built into the design of inter-school collaboration is an essential factor in the development of successful collaborations especially in the case of schools in challenging conditions (Chapman & Allen, 2006). This external help from credible consultants and facilitators (from the local authority or elsewhere) who are willing to engage and support as well as learn together with their school partners is inevitable (West, 2010). Similarly, Rincón-Gallardo and Fullan (2016) stated that skilled facilitation is essential for successful collaboration. They viewed the facilitator as fundamental to help the participants navigate difficult conversations successfully.

Challenges Faced During Inter-School Collaboration

There are certain challenges and obstacles that get in the way of successful and effective inter-school collaborations. The most frequently found barriers to the effectiveness and sustainability of inter-school collaborations are explored in the below section.

Structural Constraints. Murphy (2015) in his narrative synthesis found that structural constraints are one of the major impediments to promoting a culture of professional collaboration. Though these impediments listed by Murphy (2015) does not speak directly about inter-school collaborations, however they offer insight on the challenges that inhibits the growth of a culture of professional collaboration which is at the core of inter-school collaborations. When talking about structural barriers, researchers concluded that existing schools' structural arrangements are still characterized by isolating work conditions where teachers are left on their own unassisted reducing any opportunity for collaboration and de-privatization of knowledge and experiences (Murphy, 2015). Specifically, Murphy (2015) presented five aspects of the structure of schools that prevent collaboration. These are: (1) existing organizational arrangements that benefit certain people who fail to support alternative arrangements, (2) easiness in keeping the existing organizational structures, (3) difficulty in absorbing the new ideas into the existing structures, (4) few opportunities for collaboration with the existing structures, and (5) centralization and hierarchical forms of schooling. Practically speaking about structural constraints, LGA educational research programme, & National foundation for educational research (2004) reported in the research findings on 12 Local Education Authorities in England and Wales on certain practical constraints that can be barriers to inter-school collaborations. These are: (1) allocating the necessary time for effective collaboration, (2) staff release times to address the additional demands for the collaborations and finding the alternative staff for these members highlighting that it was more of a concern for primary teachers (who usually have no-contact time as secondary teachers), and (3) organization mainly organizing the time and location of the meetings to be common among all partners.

Similarly, Aiston et al. (2002) in their research on the Specialist Schools network, they mentioned that time, resources, and the pressure to commit to collaborative activity were some of the challenges faced by the schools.

Cultural Impediments. Murphy (2015) analysis reveals cultural challenges that inhibits the growth of a culture of professional collaboration which is at the core of inter-school collaborations. These include the existing norms of working in isolation from peers or autonomy, avoiding conflict and its relation to civility, privatization, and non-interference (Murphy, 2015). Similarly, LGA educational research programme, & National foundation for educational research (2004) reported additional cultural characteristics that can be barriers to inter-school collaborations. These are the fear of the unknown, openness of one's practices to others and the requirements to be working in new ways and be open to the critical feedback from other schools. The lack of flexibility and the inability to make the necessary compromises in schools are two other values that were mentioned as impediments as well (LGA educational research programme, & National foundation for educational research, 2004). Moreover, Murphy (2015) pointed at more deeply rooted characteristics of the culture that generates impediments to effective collaboration. He named one of those characteristics the induced collaboration which refers to the existing actions that might reflect cooperation, yet it is still underlined by ingrained norms of isolation and privatization.

Power Imbalances between Schools. Researchers found that tensions caused by power imbalance can arise between schools engaged in a collaborative activity creating conflict that weakens the collaboration (Chapman et al., 2009a, as cited in Armstrong, 2015). Similarly, LGA educational research programme, & National foundation for educational research (2004) found that competitiveness might arise

between schools and become hindering to inter-school collaboration. This competitiveness can be triggered by schools attempting to protect or enhance their power or influence and acquire resources. The scholars found this to be more prevalent in informal collaborations among schools, such as soft federations, suggesting that formal collaborative arrangements may be more robust. Besides, Lindsay et al. (2007) reported in the findings of an evaluation study of the federations program in England on tensions arising from the power imbalances resulting from successful schools collaborating with weaker ones.

Lack of Capacity Building for Change. During inter-school collaborations, teachers are usually invited to play roles different than those they are familiar with or prepared for in their own schools. Stepping into these new roles engages participants in a process of change and thus requires a broad repertoire of skills. Acquiring the needed competencies and skills is critical to effectively perform in these roles and overcome the impediments to effective inter-school collaboration. Accordingly, researchers recommend building the capacity of the collaborating members for initiating, implementing, and sustaining change as part of the focus of inter-school collaborations (Lieberman & McLaughlin, 1992). In addition, Lieberman and McLaughlin (1992) pointed at the need to use political strategies, negotiation, and policy making, as well as conflict resolution skills as unavoidable elements of organizational change and that people involved in inter-school collaborations should have the capacity needed to manage these elements.

Lack of Monitoring and Feedback. Monitoring and appropriate feedback are needed to make sure the innovative ideas generated during the collaborative work are authentically acquired and appropriately transferred to participants' schools thus

increasing its impact and the possibility of its sustainability (Lieberman & McLaughlin, 1992). As they engage in inter-school collaboration, participants construct their own knowledge and come out with innovative ideas and experiment new practices to address their common needs. Without the proper monitoring and feedback, it is more likely that participants regress to their old habits in their school practices. Scholars reported that regression to the old habits and familiar practices as well as the misdirection of unchallenged professional beliefs are more likely to take place like what happens with any change that requires shifts in the predominant norms (Lieberman & McLaughlin, 1992; Murphy, 2015).

Low Commitment of Teachers to Transfer Acquired Knowledge to their Own Schools. One of the challenges that Lieberman and McLaughlin (1992) mentioned is the low commitment of teachers to transfer what they acquired and practiced in the collaborative activity into their own schools which impedes achieving the goal of the collaboration in impacting school practices. Failing to transfer the learning can happen for two main reasons. The first is when there are rigid structures in the individual school that are not ready to support new ideas coming from teachers after their diverse interactions and work within the collaborative activity (Lieberman & McLaughlin, 1992). The second reason is the lack of professional safety in the participants' schools. Professional safety refers to the extent to which teachers are allowed to take the learner stance, thus admitting uncertainty and incomplete knowledge, and becoming ready to give up old practices and acquire new ones without feeling hesitant or vulnerable. Often, there is imbalance in the professional safety. While it is sufficient for teachers in the inter-school collaboration activity, it can be completely lacking in their own school which impedes their readiness to take the learner stance and transfer their learning to

their school. These two reasons are found to foster teachers' sense of ownership to the collaborative activity especially those collaborations that are not part of official structures and don't have rigid organization (Lieberman & McLaughlin, 1992)

Use of Traditional Evaluation Models and Accountability. Traditional evaluation models that focus on student academic achievement and measure teachers' success by increasing this achievement make it difficult for teachers to be learners and willing to share their newly acquired knowledge. Standardized tests and other classical measures do not assess or take into consideration changes in adult and student attitudes and learning. Funders or governmental bodies supporting inter-school collaborations that rely on such traditional measures to reflect improvement inhibit the creativity as well as the risk-taking and problem-solving attitude that characterizes teachers in this collaborative activity (Lieberman & McLaughlin, 1992). As teachers become more involved and their professional identities continue to grow and change as a result of learning more and doing more in real schools and classrooms, evaluation based solely on student outcomes and classroom-focused goals fails to illuminate the total context within which teacher and student learning takes place. Models of accountability or evaluation need to reflect and support the nature of the collaboration occurring between schools.

The Sustainability Challenge. Inter-school collaborations are faced with the challenge of sustainability of resources and structures. Sustainability in terms of providing the resources for teachers whether these resources are access to researchers, consultants, and subject-matter specialists, or structures and or processes that were created for the purpose of the collaboration activity is considered essential as medium for learning and capacity building (Lieberman & McLaughlin, 1992; Stoll, 2015).

Funding is a central issue when talking about inter-school collaborations and the sustainability of its impact. While funds that are part of the government initiatives can support the inter-school collaboration initially, the risk that these funds stop can negatively affect the future and the sustainability of the inter-school collaboration activity (Lindsay et al., 2007; Woods et al., 2006, as cited in Armstrong, 2015). Similarly, LGA educational research programme, & National foundation for educational research (2004) noted the importance of continuous, long-term funding to support the activities of the inter-school collaborations and the necessary building capacity needed for this type of collaboration. Given the slow pace of change in general and in schools in specific, there must be some assurance that the necessary resources will be available for an extended period of time. This is an aspect that should be taken into consideration when planning for collaborations so that the schools reach the aspired results and the improvement planned behind these collaborations.

Role of Facilitators in Supporting Inter-School Collaborations

Literature suggests that an external facilitator or critical friendship built into the design of collaborations is an essential factor in the development of successful collaboration activities especially in the case of schools in challenging conditions (Chapman & Allen, 2006). Similarly, Stoll (2010) highlighted the significant role of facilitators for the success of networked learning communities in general. He noted that facilitation could be done by external agents with specialist expertise who can play the role of mediators of community dialogue or supporting collaboration inquiry activities. In some types of inter-school collaborations, especially those initiated by government initiatives, local authorities play the role of facilitators of this activity. Atkinson et al., 2007 stated that there are varied roles reported for these facilitators as follows: (1)

providing support and advice (LGA educational research programme, & National foundation for educational research, 2004), (2) establishing or initiating collaborations (LGA educational research programme, & National foundation for educational research, 2004), (3) dealing as a conduit for information exchange, (4) providing funding and resources (LGA educational research programme, & National foundation for educational research, 2004), (5) brokering collaborations (Armstrong et al., 2021), (6) facilitating collaborations (LGA educational research programme, & National foundation for educational research, 2004; Armstrong et al., 2021), and (7) providing leadership and management. These reported roles are not only restricted to local authority, but other external bodies have been involved in a support capacity for inter-school collaboration and they can play similar roles to those done by the local authorities.

On the other hand, Sartory et al. (2017) went into more details and proposed a theoretical framework to analyze the support provided by facilitators during inter-school collaborations along four dimensions of support which are: (1) autonomy support highlighting the importance of developing the school capacity for autonomous work, (2) support by establishing significance by widening the school vision to the wider significance of their work to the school and the community, (3) support for social relatedness by creating a team and group culture, and (4) support for competence development pointing out the support in developing the problem solving strategies for school improvement. Sartory et al. (2017) stated in their study that the empirical evidence showed that all four dimensions are considered important and relevant with a special emphasis on autonomy support and establishing significance as the most impactful dimensions.

Impact of Inter-School Collaboration

Generally, schools see the benefits of inter-school collaboration and are positive about engaging in such an activity (Armstrong, 2015). Inter-school collaboration might have various sorts of impact on teacher learning and development, student attainment and engagement, and on sustaining improvement and managing change. These categories of impacts will be elaborated in the below sections.

Strengthening Instructional and Leadership Capacity. Inter-school collaboration can strengthen both the instructional and leadership capacity of schools' staff (West, 2010; LGA educational research programme, & National foundation for educational research, 2004; Stoll, 2010; Chapman, 2015). The focus of improvements that are often chosen in collaborations include implementing strategies and processes designed to increase the capacity of schools and teachers to offer more effective teaching arrangements and a stronger and wider curriculum (Ainscow et al., 2006; LGA educational research programme, & National foundation for educational research, 2004). Additionally, the inter-school collaboration offers the medium for working with compatible, like-minded colleagues who share a common goal, thus providing the instructional and emotional support required for teachers to become optimally engaged in the learning process and take risks with increased confidence and creativity (Ciampa & Gallagher, 2016; LGA educational research programme, & National foundation for educational research, 2004). In brief, teacher engagement in this type of collaboration can lead to improved teaching and instructional practices (Vescio et al., 2008). This occurs since this activity meet the necessary criteria for successful professional development drawing on the expertise of each other to develop new approaches to teaching and learning (Brown & Poortman, 2018). Additionally, during inter-school

collaboration, leadership roles are usually distributed among increasing numbers of staff thus leading to building broad based leadership (Stoll, 2010; West, 2010). Niesz (2007), in addition, highlighted that when collaboration activities are designed and implemented in ways that aligns with the characteristics of communities of practice, these activities will support teacher learning and school improvement.

Responding Effectively to Crisis/ Problems. An additional impact of effective school to school collaboration that is reported in the literature is the increased capacity of staff involved in these collaborations to respond to crisis and develop solutions to problems. There is evidence from research that collaborating schools can help one another in responding to crisis, by sharing resources, working together to invent new responses and by offering mutual support. Ainsow et al. (2006) reported some examples, such as when schools move teachers around to fill gaps or when pupils who might be excluded find alternative places in other schools.

Managing Change Effectively. Social organizations undergoing significant transformation will often experience ambiguity and confusion (Fullan, 2007). West (2010) reported in the findings from a secondary analysis of case studies of collaborative practice in six urban authorities in different parts of England that the collaborative arrangements introduced by the leaders in the different collaborating schools helped to resolve problems of ambiguity and confusion. Collaborations facilitate transforming ambiguities from impediments to opportunities for organizations to learn about themselves and their environments, allowing them to emerge from their struggles as more purposeful learning communities (West, 2010).

Sustaining School Improvements. One of the key advantages of inter-school collaboration when compared to other forms of school improvement, is that it allows

schools to co-construct improvement around individual school needs, rather than buying into programs that may not be properly contextualized (Muijs, 2008). This is definitely key to sustaining this improvement. All participating schools feel that they have gained from the collaborative working arrangements that have been set up and will most likely seek ways to secure these arrangements in the longer term through changes in governance (West, 2010).

Creating Communities of Practice. It is suggested that collaboration between schools is a practice that can both transfer existing knowledge and, more importantly, generate context-specific “new” knowledge in ways that may be of particular benefit to schools facing difficult and challenging circumstances (Ainscow et al., 2006). This collaboration provides an opportunity for individuals to jointly plan together, share and use one another’s knowledge and work together on common goals (Katz & Earl, 2010; Stoll, 2010). In this sense, Stoll (2010) talked about knowledge animation and defined it as a way of making knowledge accessible to help people in different contexts make the necessary learning connections that enable them to put knowledge to their use. However, scholars warn that until there is a shared language between the partners, we cannot assume that learning can occur or that competencies can merely be transferred from one school to another. Competencies are both contextual and embedded, in the sense that they are ultimately located in people and culture. This means that ongoing intervention will be required before sharing is possible (Nooteboom, 2004, as cited in Muijs et al., 2011).

Raising Expectations for Students’ Learning. Researchers found a positive relationship between inter-school collaborations and student learning (Katz & Earl, 2010). However, Rincón-Gallardo and Fullan (2016) pointed out that when improving

student outcomes is targeted, it is not the existence or the creation of networks among schools that matters but how they function and what they actually do. West (2010) indicated that detailed analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of all the subject departments in all the schools collaborating together leads to planning interventions that draws on the best practices available to focus on areas of need and thus impacts student achievement. Spreading teaching specialists and appointing experienced teachers to act as consultants between schools is also correlated with improved student achievement. In addition, providing additional funding to attract new staff and encourage much wider participation across the schools is critical to impact student achievement (West, 2010). On the other hand, Ainscow et al. (2006) pointed out when discussing the impact of inter-school collaborations from six case studies of schools in challenging conditions in England that the continuous interactions, dialogue, and communication between staff and facilitators can challenge existing assumptions about what is possible with particular groups of learners and may lead staff within a school to re-think their expectations and, as a result, to think more creatively about new possibilities for supporting the learning of students who have been considered unteachable. This was found to positively impact student learning and achievement.

Preparing for Whole System Change. Whole system involves all schools in the system getting better, often choosing a focus that consists primarily of closing the gap between high and low performing schools (Fullan, 1994). Connecting learning communities provides a multifaceted approach of capacity building which is conceived to bring about systemic change (Fullan, 2006; Stoll, 2010). The multifaceted capacity building approach comprises of the following: (1) developing the necessary conditions, culture and structures and maintaining them, (2) facilitating learning and capacity

building opportunities, and (3) ensuring interrelationships and coherence between all the component parts (Stoll, 2010). System change can be conceived to be at different levels of the educational system.

Inter-School Collaboration in the Arab World

In the Arab region, there are very few studies that address inter-school collaboration as a model for improvement. No theoretical studies were found addressing inter-school collaboration as an approach to build the school capacity for sustainable improvement highlighting the role of external support in this type of action. However, there were instances in practice that were found reflecting a growing interest in this approach as a mean for teacher learning in specific and ultimately school improvement. Three models that include collaboration among schools were found. One in Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (Robinson, 2011; The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan: Ministry of Education: Development Coordination Unit [DCU], 2012), another in Palestine, Gaza-West Bank (USAID, 2016), and the last one is part of a project based in Lebanon (Karami-Akkary et al., 2012; Karami-Akkary & Rizk, 2012). The researcher found few research and narrative reports that described the first two models in Jordan and Palestine. In these models, the collaboration between the schools or as named “school networks” were used as strategies to deliver better professional development trainings as part of large-scale reform initiatives in the country. In specific, the school network strategy was part of a program initiated and developed by policy makers at the governmental level in collaboration with an external international funding agency toward improving instructional aspects in schools. The third model is the TAMAM project introduced earlier as a research and development initiative where a regional school network emerged voluntarily around a complex instructional focus with the

support and follow up from external facilitators. This project has theoretical and evaluation studies around its principles and its capacity building program but no research studies describing the model of collaboration between schools. In the below section, the researcher will present the three located aforementioned models.

School Networks for Instructional Improvement in Jordan

School networks were used in a reform initiative as a strategy that could be scaled up to provide professional development for group of teachers and principals in Jordanian schools. This reform initiative is named the Education Reform for Knowledge Economy (ERfKE) initiative to improve the quality of public education in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. The initiative funded by the Jordan Ministry of Planning and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and supported by the Ministry of Education (MoE) developed a long-term professional development program to support teachers as they implement the new ERfKE curriculum in the elementary and secondary Jordanian public schools. This partnership was initiated by the Queen Rania Teacher Academy (QRTA) and Teachers College of Columbia University (TC/CU) and facilitated by the Columbia University Middle East Research Center (CUMERC). The partnership was developed over two phases, ERfKE I and ERfKE II. The first phase lasted for five years and six months from 2003-2009 and the second phase lasted from 2009-2015. A research report was developed toward the end of phase one to describe the program activities, the obstacles faced, and the impact seen. In addition, a narrative report was developed to describe the components of phase two and the achievements fulfilled under each component in addition to the challenges faced.

Based on the research report developed for ERfKE I, the partnership developed networks of schools of 145 public schools in total as a strategy that could be scaled up to provide professional development for group of teachers in the core content areas as well as leadership training for principals and supervisors to be able to support teachers and facilitate the necessary changes in the classroom aligned with the new competencies acquired by teachers (Robinson, 2011).

The network activities reported in phase one research report were as follows: intensive professional development workshops, support and network meetings, school visits, and leadership institutes to build the capacity of leaders on instructional leadership. The QRTA staff, who are familiar with public schools in Jordan, supported the school networks by planning and delivering the workshops as well as leading the follow up visits. They designed monitoring routines to follow up on the quality and effectiveness of the professional development activities delivered (Robinson, 2011).

Teachers from the network of schools participating in phase one professional development activities reported obstacles related to the time, the cost of travel to the QRTA facilities, competing work demands and family responsibilities. In addition, they reported challenges related to the transfer of acquired knowledge to their classes due to many reasons as follows: (1) high number of students in their school classes, (2) classroom and student desks arrangements, (3) access to resources, (4) time available per class period, (5) pressure to cover a packed curriculum, (6) structural barriers at the level of the school that doesn't allow for sustaining new practices acquired in the network. Despite these challenges, the research report pointed out that there was a relatively high teacher participation from the schools and that the QRTA staff tried to decrease the aforementioned challenges. Other challenges were reported at the level of

the principals and their instructional ability, and the skills needed to support the teachers' new acquired learning (Robinson, 2011).

Moreover, teachers reported different forms of preliminary impact as follows: (1) improved instruction in the participating schools, (2) positive attitude toward collegial work and instructional improvement, (3) use of acquired concepts in one's own class, (4) new opportunities to interact with peers and discuss instruction (Robinson, 2011).

On the other hand, ERfKE II aimed mainly to build on the achievements under ERfKE I and institutionalize the changes and reforms introduced. Its focus as clarified in the narrative report aimed to strengthen the institutional capacity of MoE in policy making, strategic planning, monitoring and evaluation, as well as to improve teacher employment and professional development policies and implementation. The program in this phase aimed also to improve the quality of the teaching and learning elements and refine the curriculum and student assessment to ensure alignment with a knowledge-based economy (The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan: Ministry of Education: Development Coordination Unit [DCU], 2012). The challenges reported toward the end of the narrative report were related to the general goals of this phase of the program and not to the network of schools' strategy.

The Model Schools Network as a Teacher Training Program in Palestine -Gaza and West Bank

The Model Schools Network in West Bank and Gaza was one of the programs introduced in the basic education between 2007-2011 by the US Agency for International Development (USAID) in its attempt to support Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) efforts to improve education. The program was developed

based on a partnership between America-Mideast Educational and Training Services (AMIDEAST), Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE), and the National Institute for Educational Training (NIET).

The Model Schools Network program was designed as part of an in-service teacher training program with various training modules to build the capacity of teachers and school leaders. This program depended on working in clusters where teachers can share experiences and learn with peers. The program introduced models of best practice for teacher professional development, school-based management, and project-based as well as peer-learning. The participants from the network schools choose the modules based on their classroom needs and supported by their principals. One of the requirements of this program was for the participants to develop a work-practicum project at the end thus transferring the learning acquired to a real-world situation. In addition, toward the end of the school year, projects were submitted by the participants and experiences were shared as presentations or posters with other teachers, principals, district officials, and university professors in the end of year conferences. The presence of the teachers and the principals at the same time in this program reinforced and supported the changes required by the practicum projects at the school level (USAID, 2016). From 2007 to 2009, the Model Schools Network program worked in 17 private schools. From 2009 to 2012, it expanded its work to 40 public schools. This program was a building block for two later programs which are the Leadership Diploma Program and the Teacher Qualification Diploma Program that were institutionalized as core service offerings of the NIET (USAID, 2016).

In the report, USAID (2016) reported on the education programs introduced by USAID and the conditions that made this program and its following programs

successful. They explained that the programs were built on clear known teaching and learning principles that are adopted by MEHE as well, involved country partners to develop and implement the modules, and were related to the school and classroom needs thus considering the school as the focus of change. The report described the efforts done by USAID to close the gap between schools and the districts which led to institutionalizing these programs and its seen impact as well. No challenges were presented in the report.

The TAMAM Professional Network

The TAMAM professional network includes schools from nine Arab countries (Lebanon, Jordan, KSA, Oman, Qatar, Egypt, Sudan, Kuwait, and Palestine) in addition to partners who are responsible of supporting the schools in building their leadership capacity for change to improve their schools (www.tamamproject.org). These are researchers and coaches from universities, as well as community and ministry representatives (Karami-Akkary et al., 2012). Schools in TAMAM are supported to develop into professional learning communities populated with practitioners who are coached to be inquirers, reflective practitioners, and have the leadership capacity to collaboratively initiate and plan school-based initiatives that addresses the needs of the learners. Additionally, these practitioners are coached to collaboratively evaluate these initiatives and share it with their community (Karami-Akkary & Rizk, 2012). One of TAMAM strategic goals is to build and nurture collaborations among TAMAM schools and strengthen the TAMAM professional network as an approach to build the school capacity and to enhance and sustain the impact of the school-based initiatives that were implemented in the schools (TAMAM Project Steering Team, 2018b).

Since its initiation and till the end of the first phase of TAMAM (2007-2011), the TAMAM Steering Team organized regular reflective and interactive workshops where all participating schools during that phase were invited in addition to researchers, ministry representatives and community members. The aim of these workshops was as follows: (1) the Steering Team introduced new concepts, skills, as well as competencies or reinforces previously presented concepts, skills or competencies related to the TAMAM capacity building model and the relevant school based improvement concepts; (2) the lead teams presented their work on their improvement projects as per the guidelines sent by the Steering Team; (3) the lead teams shared experiences among each other and with the PST and discuss challenges; (4) the PST devise group work activities to enhance sharing detailed experiences about improvement and discuss challenges related to school based improvement (TAMAM Project Steering Team, 2018b). During that phase, TAMAM activities were not intentionally aimed at promoting networking and enhancing collaborations between schools (TAMAM Project Steering Team, 2007). This started to change in 2012 during phase two of TAMAM (2011-2015), where the TAMAM Steering Team decided to make enhancing the networking among the schools one of its strategic goals (TAMAM Project Steering Team, 2011). During that phase, the name of the activities where the schools met was changed from “workshops” to “gatherings” signaling the increased intentionality of the Project Steering Team to trigger and support emerging networking activities. In this phase of TAMAM and after the increase in the number of participating TAMAM schools, the TAMAM Steering Team started conducting two types of gatherings, small scale regional gatherings targeting newly participating schools and larger scale gatherings where all participating TAMAM schools were invited to TAMAM main home country, Lebanon whenever

possible (TAMAM Project Steering Team, 2018a). In addition to the gatherings, a WhatsApp group named “TAMAM Al Arab” "تمام العرب" was created including most of the participating members in TAMAM during that time. This became one of the platforms that was invested later to enhance professional collaboration among TAMAM schools. In 2016 in phase three of TAMAM (2015-2018), the TAMAM Steering Team organized another large scale gathering for all TAMAM schools which was another unique milestone in TAMAM history. In this gathering, the PST stated explicitly that enhancing collaborations between schools was one of the strategic goals of TAMAM. The gathering title was “TAMAM as an educational change movement: toward building professional learning communities to enhance student learning”. The concept of professional collaboration was further emphasized as an integral part of TAMAM vision and as a strategy to achieve this vision toward enhancing student learning. In this gathering, the TAMAM Steering Team designed one of the sessions to allow schools from different Arab countries to work collaboratively in groups and share experiences based on common educational themes related to their improvement initiatives. At the opening of that session, the TAMAM Steering Team presented the conceptual framework of networking and collaboration among schools to be adopted in TAMAM, its different types as well as its benefits. At the conclusion of this gathering, a world café session was conducted for all TAMAM participants to come up collaboratively with the TAMAM student profile which reflected the core work of TAMAM (TAMAM Project Steering Team, 2016).

During all the previous phases, the PST focus on inter-school collaboration was in terms of facilitation by invitation and encouragement rather than through interventions following a fully developed design. Within this enabling context, the

Jordan Hub emerged, and from it the inter-school collaboration started among its schools.

Conceptual Background

The researcher readings of different theoretical and empirical literature available on inter-school collaboration helped her to develop a conceptual understanding of inter-school collaboration; namely with regard to, conceptualizing the core activity of this type of collaboration which is professional collaboration, the effective processes that could be followed during collaboration and the conditions needed to achieve a successful collaboration as well as the nature of support provided by facilitators. The researcher observed that although there is considerable amount of empirical literature that exists on the various aspects of inter-school collaboration, there is a scarcity of theoretical models that can integrate and relate all these aspects to establish a comprehensive conceptual understanding. Inter-school collaboration is defined as taking place when “two or more organizations that may otherwise be natural competitors, choose to work together towards a common goal by sharing knowledge and resources and coordinating their activity and efforts” (West, 2010, p.96).

The researcher conceptual understanding is informed by the work of four scholars: (1) Stoll (2010) theoretical framework about the learning processes and activities in connecting learning communities as well as the supporting conditions to motivate and sustain them, (2) Hattie (2015) empirically based conception of the centrality of expert based collaboration, (3) Ciampa and Gallagher (2016) theoretical framework that is based on the collaborative inquiry cycle as a process to foster focused dialogue between teachers in different schools with the goal of improving their classroom practices and student achievement, and (4) Sartory et al. (2017) theoretical

framework to analyze the support provided by external facilitators of inter-school collaboration along four dimensions of support.

Stoll (2010) theory focuses on connecting learning communities for the sake of learning. He describes the processes and activities for connecting learning communities such as supported practice, collaborative inquiry, knowledge animation, joint planning and review, and meta-learning. At the heart of connecting learning communities are dialogue and learning conversations. According to Stoll (2010), the processes and activities that connecting learning communities engage in depend on providing the supportive conditions to motivate and sustain them. Stoll (2010) in his model focused on three key conditions – a common culture, trusting and respectful relationships and supportive structures – and a fourth overarching one, leadership and external facilitation. This study used this framework to guide the researcher data collection by providing probes on the following: the nature of the core activity of this type of collaboration, the processes and activities involved during inter-school collaboration and how these were manifested as well as on the enabling conditions and challenges faced. It also guided the researcher as she analyzed the findings to answer the research questions two and four.

Hattie (2015) highlights the importance of collaboration as means to bring expertise together and scaling up successful ideas. He advances that to enhance the impact on student learning, capacity building should be geared towards developing collective rather than individual expertise. According to Hattie (2015) this form of expertise requires a well-planned and coordinated efforts to establish professional collaboration among teachers that goes beyond their classroom and their schools. This framework guided the researcher while probing for enabling conditions and the

anticipated impact from inter-school collaboration as well as when analyzing the findings under research questions four and five.

Ciampa and Gallagher (2016), on the other hand, propose a theoretical framework based on the collaborative inquiry cycle that they have found to have a positive impact on teachers' practices. Accordingly, they recommended this strategy to be used as the basis for a job-embedded, and inquiry-based professional development programs. According to Ciampa and Gallagher (2016), teachers proceed through four stages in this inquiry cycle: (1) identifying the problem, (2) collecting evidence, (3) analyzing evidence, and (4) reflecting, sharing, and celebrating. This framework guided the researcher when discussing the findings from research questions two and four. Through comparison between the strategy described by this framework and the strategy adopted by the participants during inter-school collaboration, the researcher drew similarities and differences, specifically with the TAMAM Improvement Journey.

In addition, Sartory et al. (2017) theoretical framework presents the support provided by local facilitators along four dimensions which are: (1) autonomy support highlighting the importance of developing the school capacity for autonomous work, (2) support by establishing significance by widening the school vision to the wider significance of their work to the school and the community, (3) support for social relatedness by creating a team and group culture, and (4) support for competence development pointing out the support in developing the problem solving strategies for school development. The empirical evidence shows that all four dimensions are considered important and relevant with a special emphasis on autonomy support and establishing significance. This model guided the researcher while probing for the role and type of support provided by external facilitators (in the case of this study the PST

and the expert coach) and was consulted for comparison while analyzing the findings from research question four.

Table 1

Relatedness between the chosen conceptual frameworks and the aspects of the data to be examined by the researcher.

Conceptual Framework: Key Ideas	Aspects Guided by the Chosen Framework
	Stoll (2010)
Processes and activities for connecting learning communities	Guide the researcher data collection by providing the probes on the nature of the core activity of this type of collaboration in research question two The activities involved during inter-school collaboration and how these were manifested in research question two as well
Supporting conditions for connecting learning communities	Guide the researcher when probing on the enabling conditions and as she discusses the findings from research question four
	Hattie (2015)
Collaboration as means to bring expertise together and scaling up successful ideas	Guide the researcher when probing as well as when discussing the findings about the enabling conditions and the impact from inter-school collaboration under research questions four and five
Capacity building to develop collective expertise through a well-planned and coordinated efforts	Guide the researcher when probing as well as when discussing the findings about the enabling conditions for inter-school collaboration under research question four
	Ciampa and Gallagher (2016)
Collaborative inquiry cycle as the basis for a job-embedded, and inquiry-based professional development programs to have a positive impact on teachers' practices	Guide the researcher when discussing the findings from research question two and four in drawing similarities and differences between the strategy described by this framework and the strategy adopted by the participants during inter-school collaboration, specifically the TAMAM Improvement Journey
	Sartory et al. (2017)

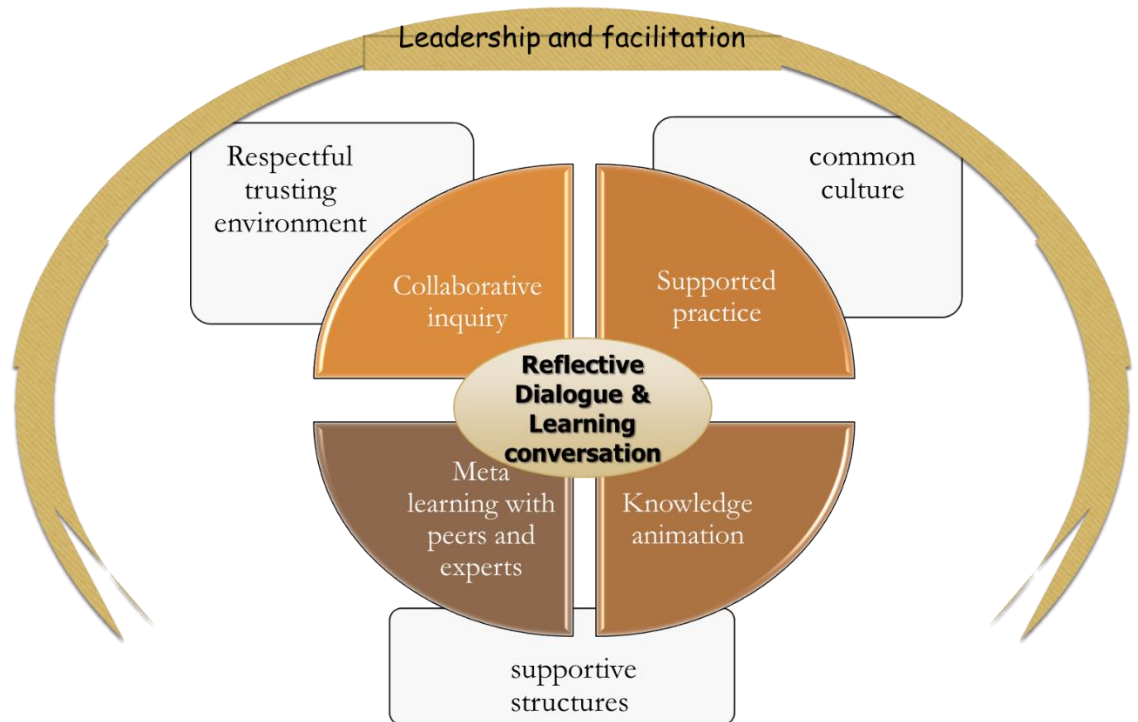
Four dimensions of support provided by local facilitators

Guide the researcher while probing for the role and type of support provided by external facilitators (in the case of this study the PST and the content Expert Coach) and will be revisited for comparison while analyzing the findings from research question four.

The theoretical framework of Stoll (2010) helped the researcher to develop her initial understanding of the components that informed her grounded design. This understanding was also informed by incorporating the additional aspects from the other three identified frameworks. The first component refers to the processes and activities involved during inter-school collaboration, and these are interconnected and listed as follows: described supported practice (Stoll, 2010), collaborative inquiry (Ciampa & Gallagher, 2016; Stoll, 2010), knowledge animation (Stoll, 2010), joint planning and review (Hattie, 2015; Stoll, 2010), and meta-learning (Hattie, 2015; Stoll, 2010). At the heart of all these activities are reflective dialogue and learning conversations (Stoll, 2010). The processes and activities that collaborating schools engage in depend on supportive conditions to motivate and sustain them which is the second component informing the researcher grounded design. The researcher chose three key conditions to focus on: (1) a common culture, (2) trusting and respectful relationships and (3) supportive structures. The third component which is an overarching one is leadership (Stoll, 2010), as well as external facilitation (Sartory et al., 2017; Stoll, 2010). The processes and activities oriented towards schools' collaborative learning are reflected in the below figure as well as the right conditions needed to sustain learning communities.

Figure 1

Researcher Theoretical Framework for Inter-School Collaboration



This initial conceptual understanding guided the researcher in data collection and in using probes whenever necessary in the interviews, yet it did not limit the researchers in her main attempt to explore all the emerging data collected from the different sources since the researcher always started with open ended questions allowing for the contextualized data to emerge from the interviewees. Following a qualitative research design and guided by the grounded theory design that explores a phenomenon within its field settings (Charmaz, 2011), the researcher seeks to develop a design for inter-school collaboration that is grounded in the Arab context.

Chapter Summary

To assist in placing this study in the broader fields of collaboration between organizations, a review of literature was provided, followed by a description of the

initial conceptual understanding that guided the researcher's work. Collaboration is a very broad term, and it can encompass various forms with various goals and activities. Educational collaboration specifically between schools was the focus of this literature review. A brief overview of inter-school collaboration and its types as well as the conditions that have contributed to the success of these collaborations were presented. Amongst the most cited conditions that foster effective inter-school collaboration are the following: (1) contextual and cultural factors; (2) strong leadership ready to take risks; (3) well-defined structures, roles, and processes; (4) clear communication; and (5) perceived value of involvement. Then the challenges facing this type of collaboration were identified and the role of facilitators in supporting this type of collaboration described. The impact of collaboration on teachers, schools, and the students was also explored. Three models of school networks in the Arab region were examined and described. One was among Jordan public schools, another in West Bank and Gaza schools, and the third is a professional network focused on school-based improvement that includes private and public schools from nine Arab countries. At the conclusion of this chapter, the researcher presented her conceptual understanding and the framework chosen to inform her data collection and grounded design. This conceptual understanding includes three components: (1) the processes and activities involved during inter-school collaboration at the heart of which is reflective dialogue and learning conversations, (2) the supportive conditions to enable and sustain this collaborative activity, (3) and overarching component which is leadership as well as external facilitation.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative case study research design to develop an in-depth understanding of an inter-school collaboration initiative through the examination of the lived experiences of those participating in it. It explores the perceptions of those participants on the nature of this initiative, the drivers that instigated this inter-school collaboration among them as well as the factors that shaped this initiative. It also asks about the impact from engaging in this initiative. This chapter presents the research design and research questions as well as the study case and participants. It also details the data collection methods, sources of data, and procedures for data collection and analysis as well as the limitations of the study and the quality criteria.

Research Design

An exploratory qualitative design was chosen because it is best suited to examine an emerging area of practice where there is scarcity of research that is done exploring certain phenomena in a certain context (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Strauss & Corbin, 2008). The research around inter-school collaboration is still scarce in the international literature, and it is almost non-existent in the Arab region. Rooted in the interpretivist paradigm, qualitative research allows researchers to go beyond filling gaps that are blank spots to allowing them to identify blind spots (Hallinger & Heck, 1999). Case studies are convenient for in-depth understanding of phenomena within particular context and for understanding the perspective of participants and the meaning they construct (Merriam, 1998; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). They involve investigating a particular case in-depth over time by gathering and analyzing a variety of data from

multiple sources, with the goal of gaining a rich understanding of the context and complexity of the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2012).

The study follows the guidelines of the constant comparative method guided by Charmaz (2011) and Strauss & Corbin (2008) to analyze the data which allows for the comparison of data to identify similarities and differences within the case (Charmaz, 2011; Merriam, 2009; Strauss & Corbin, 2008).

The case that is examined for this study is the case of the inter-school collaboration among six private schools in Jordan Hub that are part of the TAMAM professional network. Jordan is the only country from the nine participating countries in the project where schools voluntarily formed in 2016 the TAMAM Jordan Hub with the support of the PST and the only schools in TAMAM who initiated in 2019 a joint improvement project following the TAMAM model for school-based improvement. They voluntarily coordinated their efforts and activities towards identifying a common improvement need to address a complex problem which is teaching Arabic language. The Jordan Hub includes a coordinator who acts like a liaison with a team of university researchers and content expert coach who facilitates and provide support to the schools' teams throughout their collaboration activity.

Research Questions

This study aims at answering the following research questions from the perspectives of the participants in the inter-school collaboration initiative:

1- How was TAMAM Jordan Hub formed? How was the Arabic Teaching Improvement project initiated among TAMAM Jordan Hub schools?

2- What does professional collaboration mean? What does inter-school collaboration mean and how is it manifested?

3- What are the drivers that led the participants to initiate inter-school collaboration as agents of change?

4- What are the factors (challenges or enabling conditions) shaping this collaboration among schools?

5- What is the impact of this collaboration on building the school's capacity for sustainable improvement?

Study Case and Participants

In this section a description of the study case chosen and the rationale behind choosing the case as well as the participants involved is presented.

Study Case

Purposeful sampling is adopted as the most appropriate method for the purpose of this study. Purposeful sampling involves “selecting information rich cases for study in depth” (Merriam, 1998, p.62; Merriam, 2002; Merriam & Grenier, 2019). The case of TAMAM Jordan Hub is purposefully selected. The TAMAM Jordan Hub is a network of private schools in Amman, Jordan that has evolved from a series of professional collaborations among and between the TAMAM participating schools, which are supported by the Project Steering Team (PST) as university-based facilitators. The researcher chose to study the inter-school collaboration occurring among six private schools in TAMAM Jordan Hub because this Hub is the only one among the other two TAMAM Hubs (the other two are in Oman and Lebanon) that initiated and

collaboratively established a network aimed at enhancing collaboration activities among all participating schools and sustained its activities.

In fact, in the beginning of 2019, eight participating schools in the TAMAM Jordan Hub expressed interest in holding joint activities which target the improvement of the teaching and learning of Arabic language in the participating schools. Six out of these eight schools pursued this collaborative work launching the joint Arabic Teaching Improvement (ATI) project while following the TAMAM model for leading school-based improvement. This inter-school collaboration activity passed through two main phases till now. The first phase is the initiation phase where the participating teams were formed, and the inter-school collaboration commenced and the second is the implementation phase of their innovative intervention which is still ongoing. This study case is bounded by the initiation phase of this inter-school collaboration initiative that revolved around the Arabic Teaching Improvement (ATI) project. This phase commenced in 2019 and culminated in a “boot camp” for the Jordan Hub's Arabic Leaders to formulate a shared vision and set the improvement goals before embarking on the actual implementation of the jointly planned innovative intervention in their respective schools. The six schools that are part of this case study are all private schools located in Amman, Jordan. Two out of these six schools are sister schools. Below is a general description of each school in addition to a brief about its participation in TAMAM.

- Al-Asriyya School is one of TAMAM’s pioneer schools having joined the project at its early launching in 2007. According to its website (<http://www.asriyya.edu.jo/pages/AboutAssryia>), the Al-Asriyya School is a K-12 school offering the national stream (Tawjihi) and the international stream

IGCSE which is the British International General Certificate of Secondary Education. The school educates more than 1600 students. The school seeks to develop students' talents and creativity through original curricula that are forward looking, combining the nation's noble heritage on one hand and the accelerated progress of civilization on the other. This school is the first among six schools to join this collaborative initiative since one of the Lead Team members is the coordinator of the Jordan Hub and considered a main catalyst for the initiation of this inter-school collaboration initiative.

- Amman Baccalaureate School [ABS] is one of TAMAM's pioneer schools having joined the project at its early launching in 2007. ABS is a K-12 school offering the four International Baccalaureate Programs across the different educational stages (primary, intermediate and secondary schools) with interest in the national curriculum and making use of it in accordance with the school requirements. The school educates more than 1100 students. According to its website (<https://abs.edu.jo/about-abs/#vision>), the school promotes international understanding, communication and awareness through embracing other cultures and works towards developing well rounded responsible world citizens. This school is from the first six schools that joined this collaboration initiative.
- The Ahliyyah School for Girls and Bishop's School Amman for Boys (Ahliyyah & Mutran) are sister schools, founded in 1926 and currently educate more than 800 students. According to their website (<https://ahliyyahmutran.edu.jo/school/school.html>), the schools aim to empower students through a holistic and inclusive model of education that allows them to achieve their full potential in a safe and rich environment. Both schools have

been functioning as IB World schools offering the four International Baccalaureate Programs across the different educational stages (K-12). One of the schools joined TAMAM in 2008, thus considered one of the pioneer schools and the other joined in 2014. In 2017, the schools made a strategic decision to merge both entities into one institution.

- Al Bayan school was established in 1983 and currently educates more than 600 students. The school is a K-12 and offers national and the IGSCSE programs. According to their website (<https://www.albayanschool.edu.jo/about-us/mission-vision>), the school envisions to develop a student who has critical thinking, logic and turns to be responsible and effective in society. Al Bayan joined TAMAM in 2013-2014.
- Amman Baptist school was established in 1974 and currently educates more than 600 students. The school offers the National Program, International Program (IGCSE) and the International Baccalaureate (IB) Program. According to their website (<https://www.baptist.edu.jo/home>), the school provides an environment for students to thrive in the development of their faith in God; explore all areas of learning and develop an eagerness and aptitude for academic discovery; and value the importance of service to community and one another. This school joined TAMAM in 2012.

Participants

Selection of participants for this study is also purposive. The researcher chose as many participants in this case study as possible to ensure that the sample reflects the diversity of participants involved in this inter-school collaboration to “gain rich data on collaborative practices” (Muijs, 2008, p. 65). The participants are of five categories (1)

TAMAM School Lead Team members from the participating schools (including teachers and members in leadership positions or principals), (2) Arabic Leaders from the Arabic departments in the participating schools, (3) TAMAM Jordan Hub coordinator; (4) the TAMAM project director, (5) and the TAMAM content Expert Coach in Arabic language.

Selection of participants from category one is based on the following criteria: (1) have been participating in TAMAM for a minimum of four years and actively leading its expansion (leading improvement initiatives) inside their schools, (2) have completed at least one cycle of TAMAM school-based Improvement Journey in their schools and has shown evidence that they have acquired the TAMAM competencies (including professional collaboration as one of the eleven targeted competencies in TAMAM), and (3) are active committed members in TAMAM professional network. In addition, these Lead Team members were part of the inception and initiation phase of the inter-school collaboration and have been actively involved in more than 70% of the inter-school collaboration activities (meetings and workshops) conducted among the schools since the commencement of this initiative in 2019 till the conclusion of the initiation phase as well as participated actively in preparing reports (data collection results related to the Arabic problem, data analysis reports, TAMAM journey related reports,...) submitted to the PST.

As for category two, these are the Arabic Leaders from the Arabic departments in the participating schools. These Arabic Leaders joined the inter-school collaboration activities as soon as the Lead Team members decided to focus on the Arabic Teaching Improvement (ATI) project as the focal activity of the inter-school collaboration activity. These members are either Arabic instructional supervisors (or maybe named in

some schools as the subject matter coordinators) or Arabic department heads. Most of these members are teachers as well. It should be noted here that among all the six participating schools, the Lead Team members in Amman Baccalaureate School are themselves the Arabic Leaders in the school.

As for category three, four and five, the participants are respectively, the TAMAM Jordan Hub coordinator as the member who had initiated the TAMAM Hub in Jordan and the collaboration among the participating schools, the TAMAM content Expert Coach specialized in Arabic language who supported the PST and the participants from the beginning of this inter-school collaboration initiative, and the TAMAM project director representing the perspective of the PST as university-based facilitators providing the support for the inter-school collaboration activities. The researcher is considered a participant observant since she is the member of the TAMAM PST assigned as the inter-school collaboration initiative coordinator, hence she has been actively involved in supporting the Hub school teams and facilitating the activities of the inter-school collaboration initiative.

Thus, twelve members from the six participating private schools constitute the participants from category one. Eleven Arabic Leaders from the Arabic departments from all six schools constitute the participants from category two. The other categories are individual participants.

Table 2

Study Participants

Categories/ Participants	Category one	Category two	Category three	Category four	Category five
	TAMAM Lead Team members	Arabic Leaders	Jordan Hub coordinator	Project director	Content Expert Coach

				1	1
Facilitators					
Asriyya School	3	4	1		
Amman Baccalaureate School	4				
Ahliyyah & Bishop schools	1	2			
Baptist school	1	3			
Al Bayan School	3	2			
Total Number	12	11	1	1	1

TAMAM Capacity Building Program

In 2012, the TAMAM Steering Team developed a research-based program aimed at developing leadership capacity of school teams through the acquisition of a set of competencies (one of them is professional collaboration) that the program also promotes as a set of professional norms named the TAMAM pillars. For TAMAM those pillars must shape the school culture to enable its members to lead school-based improvement. The ultimate aim of the capacity building program is to enable a school Lead Team to transform their school into innovative schools that adopt participative organizational arrangements based in professional collaboration (Karami-Akkary et al., 2018). The school Lead Team including teachers, instructional supervisors, and/ or the school principal undergoes a job-embedded professional learning experience designed around a school-based Improvement Journey. While in the first cycle of the Journey, Lead Team members learn how to collaboratively initiate, plan, implement, and

evaluate a school-based improvement project while at the same time acquiring competencies that build their capacity for leading change (Karami-Akkary et al., 2018). Specifically, the PST coach educational practitioners to be inquirers, reflective practitioners, and have the leadership capacity to collaboratively initiate and plan school-based innovative interventions that addresses the needs of the learners and are adaptive to the priorities of the school and its context. Additionally, these educators are coached to collaboratively evaluate these initiatives, institutionalize it into the system and then share it with the broader professional community (Karami-Akkary & Rizk, 2012). After finalizing the first cycle in TAMAM Improvement Journey, Lead Team members are expected to play the role of peer coaches in their schools to transform the learning they acquired to other members in the school and drive the expansion of TAMAM norms, skills and practices in the school with the support and supervision of the PST. A long-term partnership is developed between the school and the university-based PST and the members of the Lead Team from the participating schools become part of the TAMAM professional network.

Tools and Sources of Data Collection

Data was collected from the following sources and used two data collection tools: (1) focus group interviews with school teams, (2) individual interviews with selected Hub participants and facilitators, (3) reports and other relevant existing documents from the TAMAM project databank, (4) project coordinator coaching journal, and (5) researcher journal notes. The interview protocols for the individual and focus group interview were prepared following Spradley's (1979) suggestion. Namely, broad questions stemming from the research questions were used in the focus group and individual interviews protocols which were supported by probes informed by the researcher conceptual

framework that came out of the literature review in line with the research questions of the study to prompt for more answers from participants whenever needed (as cited in Kawulich, 2012, p.10)

Focus Group Interviews

The focus group interview is a qualitative research data collection tool-that allows the researcher to collect rich data from several participants at the same time; these are not only able to answer the questions of the interviewer but are able to build on the answers provided by others and recall important information to share (Gall et al., 2010; Merriam, 2002). The focus group interview does not only help the researcher to collect data on the collective views of the participants on their experiences but also allows her to capture the social constructions that resulted from the interactions. It is important to highlight that all questions in the focus group were translated to Arabic and conducted in the participants' native language to ensure accurate and authentic data collection.

A focus group interview was conducted with the members of the school Lead Teams from each of the six participating schools. The focus of the open-ended questions included: the participants definition of professional collaboration and inter-school collaboration, the drivers that were behind instigating this type of collaboration, the emerging impact that started to appear or aspired to be fulfilled, and the factors that shaped the inter-school collaboration (see appendix C). Thus, each Lead Team elaborated on the peculiarities of their experience within their school context. It is worth noting that two out of the six participating schools have only one Lead Team member selected to be part of category one, thus individual interviews were conducted with these members asking them the same questions of the focus group interviews used with

the Lead Teams of the other schools. All interviews were done as planned with all twelve Lead Team members.

The second set of focus group interviews was conducted with the Arabic Leaders from the Arabic departments of category two. The interview questions inquired about the participants definition of professional collaboration and inter-school collaboration, the emerging impact that started to appear or aspired to be fulfilled, the factors that shaped this inter-school collaboration initiative (see appendix D). Eight out of eleven Arabic Leaders joined the focus group interview. Three out of four from one of the schools were not able to join the interview.

Each focus group interview took on average of one hour and a half to two hours and were conducted virtually through zoom application.

Individual Interviews

Data collected for the study came from conducting semi structured individual interview with a number of participants. Individual interviews can generate rich data when it is not limited by preset structured questions (Merriam, 2002; Strauss & Corbin, 2008). Thus, the researcher used open ended questions followed up by probes as needed. It is worth noting that the interviews were conducted in the participants' native language to ensure accurate data collection.

Two individual interviews were conducted with each Lead Team member from the two participating schools which have only one participating member fulfilling the criteria of category one. The focus of the questions was the same as those of the Lead Team members focus group interviews. The second individual interview was conducted with the coordinator of the Jordan Hub. The interview questions included: the definition of professional collaboration and inter-school collaboration, her role as the initiator of

the Hub and the inter-school collaboration initiative, the emerging impact that started to appear or aspired to be fulfilled, the factors that shaped this initiative (see appendix B).

A third individual interview was conducted with the content Expert Coach. The interview questions included: her definition of professional collaboration and inter-school collaboration, the factors that shaped this type of collaboration, the emerging impact that started to appear or aspired to be fulfilled (see appendix E).

A fourth individual interview was conducted with the TAMAM project director. The interview questions included: the definition of professional collaboration and inter-school collaboration, the drivers behind the schools' involvement in this type of collaboration, the emerging impact that started to appear or aspired to be fulfilled, the factors that shaped this initiative (see appendix E).

Individual interviews took an average time of 45 to 60 minutes and were conducted virtually through zoom application.

Involving participants from all categories in this case study helped ensure that the data reflects the perspectives of the diverse actors involved in the inter-school collaboration initiative and enabled the researcher to gain rich data on the collaborative practices across the schools, and captured the diversity of perspectives that may result from various roles (e.g. TAMAM Lead Team members, Arabic Leaders, university-based facilitators, content Expert Coach...), context (e.g. individual schools, or differences between schools and university,..), and biography (e.g. history of participation in TAMAM,...) (Muijs, 2008). The researcher interviewed all these members and asked them almost similar general questions, but the probes used as well as the sequence of the interview questions varied based on the relevance to the flow of

the conversation with the interviewees and the needs of the interviewer to reach clarity from the data collected.

In addition to the data collected from the focus group and individual interviews, the researcher examined existing data in the form of reports, video and audio recordings and journals. Since TAMAM is a research and development project where extensive data is collected throughout the activities of the project and is saved in TAMAM databank, there was a wealth of existing, unsolicited data from multiple sources to triangulate the interview data.

Project Reports, Recordings and Relevant Documents

Documents are another source of data that was used. The strength of documents is “that it exists in the setting and doesn’t intrude” (Meriam, 2002, p.13). For this study, the documents that were examined are: (1) the school teams’ initial plan and implementation report of the inter-school collaboration initiative (2) recordings and minutes of the initiative’s meetings and workshops, (3) recording and minutes of meetings with the schools’ principals, (4) the emails related to the initiatives’ meetings and to the principals, (5) messages on the WhatsApp group created to follow up on the inter-school collaboration initiative (6) WhatsApp messages with individual members involved in the inter-school collaboration, (7) the Project Steering Team reports and reflections; 8) the PowerPoint presentations prepared and delivered by the PST (to the Lead Team members or the schools’ principals), (9) the PowerPoint presentations prepared and delivered by the content Expert Coach, (10) the reports prepared by the PST and submitted to the content Expert Coach, 11) the inter-school collaboration coordinator journal, and (12) the TAMAM website and Facebook page which documents the announcements of the different schools’ collaboration activities. These documents were

reviewed to recall the background and context of the Jordan Hub and were analyzed to identify and extract relevant information that answered the different research questions, namely any description of the inter-school collaboration activities among Jordan Hub schools and the factors associated with this initiative as well as the participants reflections and insights on the activities completed documented in the reports of these activities or recorded based on the interactions.

Journal Notes

Two types of journal notes prepared by the researcher were consulted as a source of data for this study: the project coordinator journal and the researcher journal.

The project coordinator journal is the journal that has been populated by the researcher in her capacity as a member of the Project Steering Team and as the assigned project coordinator and facilitator for this inter-school collaboration initiative. This journal included entries from the inception of the collaboration initiative and prior to the start of this study. This journal includes notes on the progress of the project and the steps taken by the coach; reflections on the learning; insights on the challenges faced, the emerging enablers and assets to invest in, notes from literature, impact and reflections and notes for next steps (Check appendix F).

The researcher research journal includes entries since the start of the study and was populated throughout the research study. The researcher recorded all observations made during interviews in this journal, which were then used as supplementary data to the information obtained from focus group and individual interviews to enhance the reliability of the data. Additionally, this journal documents all the steps taken during the data analysis process and the writing of the results. It also contained various insights gained during the research (Check appendix H).

Table 3

Table Showing the Study Research Questions, Data Collection Tools, and Sources of Data Used

<i>Research Questions (RQ)</i>	<i>Sources of Data</i>	<i>Data Collection Tools</i>
RQ1: How was TAMAM Jordan Hub formed? How was the Arabic Teaching Improvement project initiated among TAMAM Jordan Hub schools?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TAMAM Jordan Hub coordinator • The TAMAM project director • Presentations in meetings • Project Steering Team reports and notes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual Interviews
RQ2: What does professional collaboration mean? What does inter-school collaboration mean and how is it manifested?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TAMAM Jordan Hub coordinator • TAMAM School Lead Team members from the participating schools • Arabic Leaders from the Arabic departments in the participating schools • The TAMAM Project director • TAMAM content Expert Coach in Arabic language • Presentations in meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual interviews • Focus group interviews • Researcher journal / notes
RQ3: What are the drivers that led the participants to initiate inter-school collaboration as agents of change?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TAMAM Jordan Hub coordinator • TAMAM School Lead Team members from the participating schools • The TAMAM Project director • Recordings and minutes of the collaboration activity meetings. • WhatsApp messages with individual 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual interviews • Focus group interviews • Researcher journal / notes

RQ4: What are the factors (challenges or enabling conditions) that shaped this collaboration among schools?

members participating in this activity

- TAMAM Jordan Hub coordinator
- TAMAM School Lead Team members from the participating schools
- Arabic Leaders from the Arabic departments in the participating schools
- TAMAM content Expert Coach in Arabic language
- The TAMAM Project director
- PST notes as applicable
- Researcher journal
- Recordings and minutes of the collaboration meetings
- WhatsApp messages on the group created to follow up on the inter-school collaboration initiative

- Individual interviews
- Focus group interviews
- Researcher journal / notes

RQ5: What is the impact of this collaboration on building the school capacity for sustainable improvement?

- TAMAM Jordan Hub coordinator
- TAMAM School Lead Team members from the participating schools
- Arabic Leaders from the Arabic departments in the participating schools
- The TAMAM project director
- Recordings and minutes of the collaboration meetings.

- Individual interviews
- Focus group interviews
- Researcher journal / notes

- WhatsApp messages with individual members participating in this activity

The Researcher as Participant Observer

The researcher, as the project coordinator for the inter-school collaboration, performed many facilitation functions during this initiative while adopting the TAMAM mentoring approach. In her capacity as the Hub coordinator, the researcher acted as a mentor to the Hub members participating in the ATI project. She gave regular feedback to the members and acted as cheer leader for their little achievements. She also attended to power struggle issues/ personality clashes and solved any misunderstanding. This was done by clarifying points of view and bringing the focus to the inter-school collaboration explaining that success of this collaboration is equally important to achieving the outcomes of the Arabic innovative interventions. The mentoring approach was manifested through maintaining regular interactions with the members at different levels (TAMAM Lead Team members, Arabic Lead members and teachers) as well as giving continuous feedback on their work. It also included addressing the emerging concerns of the team members, especially regarding the work of the content Expert Coach often encouraging the Hub members to trust the process since it is innovative. This constant engagement with the teams ensured that the members' learning needs are always addressed. The researcher's contribution to the initiative consisted of the following: (1) coordinate and monitor the activities of this initiative, (2) build the team capacity for change; and (3) provide specialized technical support.

Coordinating and Monitoring the Activities of this Initiative. As part of coordinating and monitoring the activities of the initiative, in her capacity as the inter-school collaboration coordinator, the researcher created a WhatsApp group for the Hub

members from the different participants and facilitated communication among members and took the lead in setting a schedule for the Hub members meetings and called for emergency meetings in critical junctures. She also monitored the progress of the activities through attending all the meetings the Hub teams participated in. She also facilitated participation of the Hub team in the TAMAM network activities. As the coordinator of the inter-school collaboration, she also ensured that the motivation and commitment of all the participants in the initiative are sustained. This required frequent interactions with the Hub coordinator, the school principals, the Lead Team members, and the Arabic Leaders, as well as with the Content Expert coach. Ensured that communication is flowing smoothly among all participants in the initiative by sending regular updates through emails often followed up by WhatsApp voice messages. Additionally, she maintained regular documentation of the whole process and conducted regular member checks with all participants to ensure that the decisions made throughout the initiative represent their views and capture their experiences.

Building Leadership Capacity. As the coordinator of the inter-school collaboration initiative, the researcher played the role of the change leadership coach for all those participating in the initiative. She ensured that to facilitate the work of the Hub members while following the TAMAM Improvement Journey reminding them of the measures to be taken to ensure the success of their ATI project innovative intervention. She also ensured that the content Expert coach coaching approach align with that of TAMAM and is informed by the demands of the change process that the Jordan Hub members are undertaking.

Provided Specialized Technical Support. Prior to starting her study, and in her capacity as the inter-school collaboration initiative coordinator, the researcher surveyed

the literature on inter-school collaboration for lesson learned and reported some of the findings to the Hub members at different stages of the initiation phase. She also provided technical support to the teams while conducting their need assessment like designing their tools for data collection, analyzing the data they collected and organizing their findings in a format that facilitates information flow among the various schools. She also played a key role in facilitating the process of recruitment and signing of the agreement with the expert coach.

Data Collection Procedures

Focus group interviews were videotaped after obtaining consent from all participants and were transcribed. Participants' identities were kept anonymous; therefore, each member was given a number instead of his/her real name. The same was done with the semi structured interview with the Lead Team members, initiator of the collaboration and coordinator of the Hub, the content Expert Coach, and the project director. All interviews were videotaped and transcribed.

Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis is an iterative process that begins with data collection. Coding, categorizing, and abstracting data in terms of themes as outlined in research for conducting qualitative and interpretive research was followed by the researcher. The researcher moved in her analysis from raw data to codes to themes which is highest level of abstraction (Corbin & Strauss, 2012). The guidelines for the constant comparative method of data analysis (Charmaz, 2011; Strauss & Corbin, 2008) were followed to examine the relationships between these themes and develop an understanding and a grounded design detailing the design components needed to facilitate inter-school collaboration.

The analysis done for this study was both deductive and inductive (Miles & Huberman, 2019 as cited in Hernández et al., 2022). The researcher used initially deductive codes based on the researcher initial conceptual framework and the literature reviewed. Inductive emerging codes were created after reading and rereading of the interviews. The purpose of the combination of inductive and deductive analysis was to begin from a position informed by literature while allowing the richness of the participants' experience to unfold through the analysis, rather than trap it within an overly prescribed analytic structure.

The first step for the researcher in the analysis process involved becoming acquainted with the data and for general understanding by listening to the interview recordings and reading and re-reading each of the original transcripts of the data. The researcher exported the transcribed data to a Microsoft Excel sheet, guided by Bree and Gallagher (2016) for coding and extracting themes, to allow for line-by-line analysis of each interview. Each interview was then reread and coded to identify recurring categories and themes. Each theme and its relevant codes were assigned a color and the cells of data that represented that theme were color coded accordingly. The excel "sort" function was used frequently to sort data by theme or by code for easier read and comparison among all the interviews. This sorting was also done for all the relevant existing data in TAMAM databank. The researcher mapped all the existing data relevant to the initiation phase of this initiative and added the relevant data to a separate excel sheet then coded them according to the recurring categories and themes. The researcher created analytic memos to surface key patterns among the different parties interviewed. Within the case country, comparison was conducted among the schools to refine the emerging themes as per the constant comparative method guidelines.

The researcher moved between and across the interview data collected from school Lead Teams and the Hub initiator, content Expert Coach and project director, she noted the differences and similarities in their definition of inter-school collaboration, drivers for instigating this type of collaboration, impact as well as factors that shaped this initiative. As the analysis progressed, the researcher then organized the data codes from all interviews under the relevant themes in a separate excel sheet. In addition, a separate excel sheet compiled all the quotes used in the study for easier reference. The excel sheet thus served as a digital map, documenting each iteration (See Appendix G for examples of sorted data).

A subsequent step of data analysis was developing a detailed outline of the themes that served as blueprint of the grounded design of the components of effective inter-school collaboration among Jordan Hub schools based on the perceptions of school Lead Teams and the Hub initiator, Arabic Leaders, content Expert Coach and project director.

Limitations of the Study

Working with human participants makes educational research open to limitations (Ciampa & Gallagher, 2016). This study has some limitations that need to be noted. First, this study is a qualitative case study that attempts to understand in depth the lived experiences of a limited number of actors participating in the studied phenomenon. Indeed, the researcher collected data from different sources to capture diverse perspectives, however she was still limited in the scope of the data she was able to analyze in depth which might make the researcher miss some of the emerging interpretations especially within the limited time she has to complete the requirements of this master level thesis study. Second, given that this study follows the qualitative

case study design, and it is focused on a specific pool of participants who are members of the TAMAM professional network it might be difficult to generalize its findings into other contexts. Third, the participants being part of the schools in the Arab world context might be selective or hesitant in their responses (El Amine, 2009). The participants might feel in danger given the concept of research and data collection is coupled with inspection in the Arab world which might affect the quality and quantity of the data given (El Amine, 2009). This tendency might have increased in this study since the participants responses are not fully anonymous (Creswell, 2012, as cited in Ciampa & Gallagher, 2016). In addition, there is a risk of response bias of social desirability (Creswell, 2012, as cited in Ciampa & Gallagher, 2016). The researcher being a participant observant in this study, might push the participants to filter their responses and be conservative in reflecting their genuine views while being interviewed. Though the participants in the schools gave access to the PST members to work with them long time ago since they are part of TAMAM professional network, yet the participants might be selective in their views given the positive relationship built with the PST and they might show an exaggerated positive views about the emerging impact of such a collaborative activity while on the other hand they might be conservative and cautious in voicing their frustrations and challenges when asked about the challenges faced. Being aware of these limitations, the researcher made sure to follow certain quality criteria to address the issue of the trustworthiness of this research study. Lastly, although the researcher used most of the conceptual lenses outlined in the preliminary conceptual framework in the discussion chapter, due to the richness of the data obtained from this study, the researcher didn't incorporate them all. For instance, the discussion chapter did not explore the relationship between the findings and Hattie's

(2015) empirically based concept of the importance of expert-based collaboration which was also not referenced in the grounded design.

Quality Criteria

Quality criteria were adopted for this qualitative research study to ensure the trustworthiness of this study and accordingly different measures were taken to meet these criteria. Merriam and Grenier (2019) referred to three main quality criteria in qualitative research to ensure the trustworthiness of the study and its finding and these are: (1) credibility or internal validity, (2) transferability or external validity, and (3) reliability or dependability. The below is a description of these quality criteria and the strategies that were used to address each one.

Credibility or Internal Validity

It is the extent to which the content reflects reality (Internal validity). The two main measures that were taken in this study is member checks and triangulation. Member checks were used asking the members to check the detailed outline of the emerging themes and comment on the interpretation of the data to see if it is accurate and comprehensive or if they suggest any fine-tuning to capture their perspective in a better way (Merriam, 2002; Merriam & Grenier, 2019). A document was sent to five members representing the six participating schools and almost all the different categories of the participants (mainly Lead Team members, Arabic leaders, Jordan Hub coordinator, and project director).

Triangulation was also performed to enhance credibility of the findings through collecting data from different participants, different sources, and through using different data collection methods. The researcher collected data from each school Lead Team, the Arabic Leaders from the Arabic department in all the participating schools, the Jordan

Hub coordinator, content Expert Coach and the project director and all answered almost the same general questions. All this gave rich data to construct the researcher understanding of the inter-school collaboration. Credibility was also assured through different data collection methods that provided information on the same phenomena (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). In this case, data was collected via individual interviews, focus group interviews and document analysis.

Moreover, given that TAMAM as a research and development project follows since its initiation the collaborative action research approach where the school Lead Team members participate actively with the PST in developing TAMAM designs the existing data incorporate their experiences and perspectives and their views. In fact, collaborative action research is considered to be a social activity that is reflexive, and recursive. It is research that is done with others, not on others (McTaggart, 1991, as cited by Ciampa & Gallagher, 2016). Also, the researcher as a participant observer was interacting in many instances with the participants and was documenting all the interactions and the comments from the participants in a separate coaching journal (check Appendix F). This variety of data sources increases its credibility.

Transferability or External Validity

It is the extent to which the results of this study are transferable and generalizable to other situations (External validity). Though the purpose of this study is not to achieve generalizability, the researcher gave a thick description of the context and the participants so that comparisons could be made by practitioners (Merriam, 2002). The fact that the TAMAM project consistently maintains a rich database on all its activities, provided the researcher with a rich array of existing contextual data that help reveal the peculiarities of the data that are shaped by the Jordan Hub conditions and

thus increases the chances for generalizability. Learning from an in-depth interpretation of a particular situation and thinking how this can be transferred to a different situation can help make generalizability possible in qualitative research (Merriam & Grenier, 2019).

Dependability or Consistency

Dependability or consistency in qualitative research design is determined by observing whether the findings of the study were aligned with the data collected (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). In this study, the researcher kept an “audit trail” or a research journal throughout the study about how the data was collected and analyzed (Merriam, 2002; Merriam & Grenier, 2019, p. 28) (Check appendix H). In addition, and in an attempt to enhance the dependability of the analysis, a detailed outline summarizing the interpretations of the interviews was sent to representatives from each category of the participants and they were invited to comment. The participants responded agreed on what was sent.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS

This study sought to explore the participants' experience with inter-school collaboration in the context of a school-university partnership. The participants included Jordan Hub members (TAMAM school Lead Team members formed of teachers and principals, leaders from the schools' Arabic departments, TAMAM Jordan Hub coordinator), expert coach and TAMAM project director. This chapter consists of two parts. Part one sets the context for the inter-school collaboration and comprise two sections: (1) formation of TAMAM Jordan Hub, (2) initiation of the Arabic Teaching Improvement (ATI) project as the basis for the inter-school collaboration. Part two reports the findings under five main headings. The first gives background information about the formation of TAMAM Jordan Hub as a network among schools participating in TAMAM in Jordan, and of the actions that led to the initiation of the Arabic Teaching Improvement (ATI) project across the schools. The second reports how the participants understand professional collaboration, their perspective of the inter-school collaboration among the Jordan Hub schools and the drivers that instigated this type of voluntary initiative. It also includes a description of the factors shaping the inter-school collaboration. Part two concludes with a description of the impact that participants associated with the inter-school collaboration initiative.

In what follows, the term "Jordan Hub members" will refer to any of the members of the Hub, namely: TAMAM school Lead Team members formed of teachers and principals, leaders from the schools' Arabic departments, TAMAM Jordan Hub coordinator. The term "participants" comprises all Jordan Hub members, in addition to the content Expert Coach and TAMAM project director/ Project Steering Team.

Throughout the chapter, the researcher will use the qualifier "all" when all participants/members of the Jordan Hub provided the answer. If less than two participants/members of the Jordan Hub reported the answer, the researcher will use "few." In all other cases, the data will be reported simply as "participants/Jordan Hub members."

Formation of TAMAM Jordan Hub

TAMAM Jordan Hub is a network of schools in Amman, Jordan that emerged among the schools participating in TAMAM and was facilitated by its Project Steering Team (PST). The results reported in this section are mainly data collected from the PST systematic documentation and the Jordan Hub coordinator interview.

The data analyzed reveals that the formation of the TAMAM Jordan Hub passed through several stages. The first stage began with the emergence of an informal leader from among the three Jordanian pioneering private schools in TAMAM who had a heightened level of initiative and who was eager to implement and expand TAMAM beyond her school. She gradually took on the responsibilities of coordinating all the project activities among the participating schools in Jordan and was the one who made the first attempt at establishing a formal network among these schools. Due to her persistent efforts, the number of participating schools in Jordan grew from three to nine private schools. Encouraged by her initiative, the PST added the formation of TAMAM Hubs in the participating countries to its strategic goals and encouraged and supported Lead Team members from the participating Jordanian schools to develop a proposal to formally establish their Hub. Two years later, the TAMAM Jordan Hub was established with the active member designated as its coordinator. In addition, an executive committee was formed and consisted of the principals of the participating schools under

the leadership of the Hub coordinator, with the mandate of initiating the Hub activities and setting its governance. Accordingly, the committee developed the Hub bylaws that included a clause for securing funding through collecting fixed yearly subscriptions from the member schools to independently fund its activities. Members of the newly established Hub planned and implemented several joint capacity building activities including need-based workshops for members and workshops on TAMAM competencies for new schools to trigger their interest in joining TAMAM. They also organized the PST visits to Jordan introducing them to potential funders and collaborating universities in Amman. In parallel, the PST helped the members formulate the Hub vision and goals offering strategies to purposefully enhance inter-school collaborations among their schools and supporting them in developing long-term plans for collaboration instead of conducting scattered joint activities every now and then.

Initiation of the Arabic Teaching Improvement Project

The extended participation of the Jordan Hub schools in TAMAM exposed them to professional collaboration as a concept and a practice and immersed them in a culture that values collaboration within and across schools. As a result, and with the continuous support of the university team, members of the newly active Jordan Hub decided to collaborate on a joint improvement project. After a series of meetings where they engaged in reflective dialogue, a shared concern emerged pertaining to the quality of the teaching of Arabic at their schools. Consequently, they reached out to the PST seeking their advice in identifying an Arabic language teaching expert to offer a series of workshops that help them “solve the problem of lack of interest of the students in the Arabic language.”

In response to this request, the PST supported the decision of the school Lead Teams within Jordan Hub to follow the TAMAM School Improvement Journey and to

start with exploring in depth this problem of practice in preparation to articulating jointly common improvement goals. After a couple of meetings, the Lead Teams reached a consensus to engage in a joint school improvement project to improve Arabic teaching. Once the Lead Teams reached this consensus, the PST held a meeting and helped them frame this initiative as an inter-school collaboration aimed at improving Arabic language teaching. Based on the PST documents, this step was hailed as a major milestone for TAMAM as well as a strategy to strengthen the Jordan Hub inter-school collaboration. At this stage, each school invited its Arabic Leaders to join its TAMAM Lead Team in the inter-school collaboration initiative.

The PST documents also reveal that the PST sought the expertise of an experienced coach to support the Jordan Hub members in identifying their improvement need, develop their ideal scenario and then codesign a solution to address their improvement goals. The PST introduced the expert coach to the TAMAM approach and to the context of the Jordan Hub schools as well as to the inter-school collaboration initiative they have just launched. The PST prepared a report with the expert summarizing the data the schools collected through focus group interviews in their attempt to understand the nature of the problems they are facing with the teaching of Arabic. The PST prepared an executive summary asking the Lead Teams to provide feedback. Based on the teams' feedback, the PST collected additional data for further refinements and shared this report with the expert coach and then asked her to prepare a proposal outlining her planned contribution.

The Expert Coach proposal highlighted the need for building a unified desired profile of the learner around the characteristics of the learner and their level of linguistic skills across all schools. This profile serves as the anchor for co-designing innovative

strategies for Teaching of Arabic. According to the Expert Coach the solution does not prescribe a new curriculum but rather provides the framework within which any curriculum can fit and offers the building blocks for building the capacity of the Arabic teachers and increase their effectiveness. The proposal was shared with the Jordan Hub schools, and once approved, the activities were launched with a boot camp for the Jordan Hub Arabic Leaders to collaborate on the development of the learner profile and thus unify their vision and goal before moving on into any improvement interventions in their schools.

Understanding of Professional Collaboration

Since professional collaboration is a central activity in inter-school collaboration, the researcher collected data from all participants to construct their understanding of professional collaboration. Data was collected from focus group and individual interviews as well as exiting documents from the PST systemic documentation. Data collected is reported under three main titles: (1) definition of this concept, (2) its manifestations/ what does it comprise of, (3) what makes it effective, and (4) its benefits.

Jordan Hub members defined professional collaboration as an act where a group of individuals with similar careers have common goals and outcomes, and they all work together to fulfill these goals and outcomes. They pointed out that professional collaboration comprises investing in the strengths of the members, supporting and helping each other's to overcome gaps and cover weaknesses, in addition to sharing experiences. Additionally, the Jordan Hub coordinator and the expert coach stressed that this act is an essential component for building a professional institution where ideas are sustainable beyond the individual presence. Based on the PST documentation, the

PST definition of professional collaboration included an additional nuance that professional collaboration varied along a continuum starting with weak collaboration and ending with strong collaboration exemplified in shared responsibility and joint efforts to analyze and solve significant problems of practice.

Jordan Hub members agreed that for collaboration to be effective, collaborating members should respect each other's opinions and professional principles. One of the Jordan Hub members added that individuals should possess effective communication skills, and another one pointed out that there should be "neutral sentiments/emotions with high awareness that the institutional benefit is the ultimate goal."

Meanwhile, Jordan Hub members and the expert coach talked about the benefits from professional collaboration where they reported that it enriches the work and broaden its scope beyond the individual perspective, helps in solving problems and saving time to fulfil the goals, enhances members motivation to work and ultimately lead to improvement and success. Both the Jordan Hub coordinator and the expert coach associated professional collaboration with sustainability of impact. The expert coach elaborated further linking professional collaboration to collective efficacy which she considered is essential for "organizational intelligence and for success" referring to Hattie frequently in support of her views.

Perceptions of Inter-school Collaboration

Data analyzed from all the interviews and the PST documents on the perceptions of inter-school collaborations among the participants are reported under four main titles: (1) definition, (2) goals, (3) activities and learning processes, and (4) format.

When the researcher asked the participants during the interviews about their perception of inter-school collaboration, all Jordan Hub members linked it to

professional collaboration highlighting that inter-school collaboration is mainly a form of collaboration that takes place among different schools. One of the Jordan Hub members described it as “learning communities that have common vision and goals and they interact and work together to fulfil these.” Another one described it as “a web that has many threads where the threads connect between different parties” another one added that this connection “combines expertise to reach a bigger outcome than what is originally planned.” A third member even stated that it is the path “towards building a broad knowledge base/ reservoir.” Additionally, one Jordan Hub member highlighted that inter-school collaboration is a trusted strategy noting that it is “an innovative idea that is supported by research literature.” PST documentation shows that the PST assisted the Jordan Hub members in framing their activities and offered during one of their visits to Jordan a view of inter-school collaboration that is informed by the international literature and that included connecting inter-school collaboration to school based improvement and change, the rationale behind inter-school collaboration to address acute problems of practice. What follows is a summary of what was presented by the PST:

Inter-school collaboration is a strategy to build professional learning communities through which schools coordinate their efforts to build organizational capacity to assist in improvement and increases opportunities to achieve the objectives of schools’ improvement projects and sustain its impact.

When asked about their understanding of inter-school collaboration, the Jordan Hub members and the expert coach pointed out in their responses’ various broad goals in which schools collaborate on and these are: building relationships, supporting each other’s with needed resources, solving common problems or working on improvement.

When asked about the type of activities and learning processes used during inter-school collaborations, the Jordan Hub members pointed out that these are manifested in different forms. They could be regular meetings to communicate and share relevant experiences and ideas related to students, parents, or school-based improvement initiatives and approaches. They also noted that it could be in the form of discussions along specific subject matter areas or in the form of common activities and workshops conducted among the collaborating schools. When probed about the strategies used in the ATI project the Hub schools are engaged in as part of their inter-school collaboration, one of the Jordan Hub members and the expert coach specified following the TAMAM Improvement Journey as a collaborative strategy based on inquiry to find a solution to an improvement problem. In specific, the Hub members reported following the TAMAM Improvement Journey stations with embedded action research cycles where they first searched and collaboratively agreed on the problem of practice, its manifestations and causes. The PST progress reports reveal that the Hub members worked collaboratively to design data collection tools and they developed and implemented focus group interviews addressed to each schools' students and teachers to inquire about the problem and the possible solutions. Additionally, the Hub members reported that by following the TAMAM Improvement Journey they collectively generated their "ideal scenario" and "set a shared improvement goal" then identified "the improvement and operational objectives" as part of designing the "innovative intervention" to address the problem. The PST documentation also reveals that the Hub members worked on setting performance indicators of the goals as one of the steps in setting the "monitoring plan." The expert coach explained that these collaborative activities "were followed by a boot camp that included all Arabic Leaders working

collaboratively on constructing and codesigning the intervention to address the problem they identified.” One of the Hub members mentioned that this type of collaborative activities “necessitate long-term commitment where the learning acquired can be transferred/scalable to other areas thus leading to sustainability of the impact.”

Data collected on the perception of inter-school collaboration also included responses that described the format of the inter-school collaboration the Jordan Hub members engaged in. During the focus group interview, one of the Hub members pointed out that the inter-school collaboration has an “administrative structure with assigned roles and responsibilities as well as follow-up mechanisms with facilitation by university-based members and support by the funder.” The Jordan Hub members also mentioned the coordination strategies offering the example of what the PST did to follow up on the work inside each individual school and among the schools. All Hub members asserted that this “structure” is characterized by a balance between using shared procedures and honoring individual school differences with the Jordan Hub coordinator asserting “though there is unified work mechanism among all collaborating schools, yet the privacy of each school and its independency is preserved.” There was also evidence from the responses that some schools initiated internal coordination structures to complement those introduced by the university facilitators to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of the implementation of the inter-school collaboration activities in their schools. Quoting one of the Lead Team members who is coordinating the project activities in the school:

There was one day assigned to sit with the Arabic Leaders and get feedback from them...sometimes we meet together and sometimes I meet individually with each one of the leaders...I would listen to what they have done and what they intend to do,

and what the next steps are...we created WhatsApp group and we used to send emails to each other. During the meetings, we would talk and encourage anyone who has an idea or a thought to share to send it to WhatsApp group.

Main Drivers for Engaging in Inter-school Collaboration

The data analyzed for this section is from the PST documents, the interviews with the content Expert Coach, and with all the Jordan Hub members except for the Arabic Leaders. The decision to exclude the Arabic Leaders from answering questions related to the drivers is that they joined at a later stage and did not participate in the initiation of the inter-school collaboration. Analysis of the data collected reveals five main drivers that instigated the inter-school collaboration among the TAMAM Jordan Hub schools and that culminated in collaborating on launching a joint improvement project to enhance the teaching of Arabic language. These drivers are: (1) Positive experiences with professional collaboration, (2) long-term involvement in TAMAM, (3) presence of an internal advocate willing to assume an activist stance, (4) centrality and urgency of the problem of practice, and (5) external university-based facilitators.

Positive Experiences with Professional Collaboration

The Jordan Hub members agreed that having prior positive experiences with collaboration served as a driver to engage in the inter-school collaboration activities. Hub members pointed out that the involvement of the Jordanian principals in the Private Schools Association in Amman prepared them for the inter-school collaboration within the Arabic Teaching Improvement (ATI) project. One of the Hub members explained that their participation in the yearly gatherings and activities of the association created a “fertile ground for this collaboration and this idea (referring to the inter-school collaboration) was not hard to crack within the culture of schools in Amman.” Another

Hub member asserted that the culture in Jordan values collaboration and referred to the “professional and cultural legacy in the schools.” In addition, the Hub members pointed out the personal and professional relationships that grew out of these interactions among the principals and key members in the different participating schools. They agreed that the participation in the inter-school collaboration ATI project was seen as an opportunity to preserve these relationships and build on the positive experiences associated with them.

Long-Term Involvement in TAMAM

All participants agreed that the schools’ long-term participation in TAMAM is one of the strong drivers behind their participation in the inter-school collaboration within the ATI project. Several Hub members spoke of their valuing of TAMAM’s vision, philosophy and approach and considered it a driver that motivated them to be involved in any improvement initiative. One of the Hub members explained that “the uniqueness of TAMAM as a uniting educational movement in the Arab world made us initiate this work and keep it going.” All participants considered the emphasis on collaboration as a pillar of effective school-based improvement and the frequent all schools meetings that the PST held since the start of the TAMAM are a positive experience that prepared them for the inter-school collaboration. Another Hub member explained “the team members love TAMAM because they acquired through their involvement in it skills and competencies, and this motivated them to open the door to any project related to TAMAM.” The Jordan coordinator and the expert coach explained that what makes the participation in TAMAM a driver is that it offered the TAMAM Lead Team knowledge of an effective school-based process for improvement and noted that their trust in the effectiveness of this process helped them to initiate the

inter-school collaboration within the ATI project. The Hub members added that the school administration trusted the quality of the PST work and its impact that they witnessed throughout the years which led them to believe that what the PST recommends will lead to improvement. This was affirmed by the Jordan Hub coordinator who explained that this trust stemmed from the fact that TAMAM “is a project at the American University of Beirut and their trust in it was gradually strengthened through the impact they experienced as a result of their school participation in TAMAM.”

A Strong Internal Advocate Willing to Assume an Activist Stance

The PST and the Hub members agreed that the activist stance that the Jordan Hub coordinator took while advocating for TAMAM and for the ATI project was a main driver of this inter-school collaboration. They described how the coordinator never shied away from expressing her beliefs in the urgency for school reform in the region and how she used her network especially her positive relationship with the school principals and her ability to convince them to bring them all on board. The Jordan Hub coordinator explained that since long time ago, even before TAMAM, she is eager “to keep positive professional relationship with the principals...which made principals trust her” and “to persevere and keep the regular connection with the schools through individual visits.” The PST notes also reveal that the coordinator’s agency, persistence and determination were major drivers not only for the initiation but also for keeping the momentum for engagement of all participants throughout this initiative.

Centrality and Urgency of the Problem of Practice

The Hub members pointed out the centrality and urgency of the chosen problem of practice and the role it played as a driver for the inter-school collaboration initiative.

The Jordan Hub coordinator stressed that everyone share a passion towards improving the Arabic language because they consider it “a reflection of the identity, ideology and culture” “هي قلب الهوية والفكر والثقافة” and that “all the participants are passionate about improving the Arabic language and eager to be serving their students.” Interviews with the Hub members also affirmed that they viewed improving Arabic teaching a common and urgent need and that they all agreed that the current practices in each school are not fulfilling their aspirations. Additionally, and based on the PST documentation, it was clear that the Jordan Hub coordinator and the PST built on the shared passion as they facilitated reaching shared goals among all the schools during the initiation phase.

External University-Based Facilitators

All participants talked about the role the external university-based facilitators played and considered it a driver for this activity. The data reveals a direct and indirect contribution for the PST in the initiation phase of the inter-school collaboration. The direct contribution consisted of the role they played in facilitating communication among the schools while they were exploring their engagement in the inter-school collaboration. The indirect contribution consisted of the role they played with the Hub coordinator, providing her with timely support so that she can play a more effective role as a main driver of this initiative.

The Jordan Hub coordinator noted that the PST played a role “to strengthen the common ground among the schools.” She pointed out the role of the TAMAM project director specifically describing her as “a passionate, enthusiastic, action researcher, activist” who knew how to encourage the members to be involved in this initiative. She added that her status as a university professor and her role as the project director, as well as the presence of her team (PST) were the “strong link and the key driver for the

initiation.” The Hub members agreed and added that the visits and long discussions with the TAMAM project director where she emphasized the added value of this initiative for the schools and for the Lead Team members professional development encouraged the members to engage in this initiative. They also noted the persistence of the PST in keeping the connection with the schools to sustain the engagement of their Lead Teams and keep their motivation as key driver for the project initiation.

The PST also played a role in strengthening the impact of the Jordan Hub coordinator while advocating for the initiation of the ATI project. Based on the PST progress notes, the PST sustained intense and continuous communication with the Hub coordinator strategizing with her the steps and the pitch to be delivered to the principals of the Hub schools to convince them to participate in the inter-school collaboration initiative. They also played a role in providing the Hub coordinator with all the information she needs to validate the plan proposed by the expert coach which helped the Hub coordinator convince the six schools Lead Team members with answers to all the concerns they raised. Additionally, the PST progress reports reveal that the PST constantly coordinated all their actions with the Hub coordinator seeking her input and securing her commitment on every step they were planning to undertake. The PST members asserted that the hub coordinator role was a critical driver to the inter-school collaboration especially during the initiation phase.

Factors Associated with Shaping Inter-School Collaboration

While it is critical to have drivers to trigger the initiation of inter-school collaboration, participants agreed that having these drivers is not enough to sustain the collaboration. Additional factors played a major role in supporting the process of initiating the inter-school collaboration and in laying the foundations for engaging in its

activities and for the sustainability of its momentum. When asked about the associated factors, all participants spoke about different factors that they associated with enhancing or hindering the inter-school collaboration. Analysis of the data collected reveals that the presence of these factors was considered as enabling while their absence was reported as a source of challenges throughout the initiation process. In what follows, five main factors will be presented and their impact on the initiation process will be delineated whether positive or negative: (1) structural factors, (2) cultural factors, (3) the critical role of the school leaders/ principals, (4) members motivation for engaging in collaboration beyond their own schools, and (5) the external support and facilitation received.

Structural Factors

Participants associated time, space, and the schools' policies and procedures as structural factors essential to be in place for engaging in this inter-school collaboration. They explained that existing school schedules and workload policies restricted the time allocated to engage in any collaborative work beyond the school. For example, all participants spoke about the additional time participation in the inter-school collaboration ATI project required and considered it a strain on an already demanding workload. One Hub member clarified that the collaborative meetings conducted among the schools "need a clear mind and my day is full so I had to miss attending some meetings." The Hub members elaborated that it became clear at many junctures in the initiation process that without formal allocation of scheduled time to complete the tasks associated with the initiative, it is challenging to be able to fulfill the responsibilities of the participating members towards achieving its goals. One of the Hub members explained:

Work pressure and high workload is a challenge with the length of time in our school and the requirements of the ATI project that needs follow ups especially that we are leaders and teachers as well. These are difficult requirements to fulfill.

Additionally, the PST reported about the challenges they faced to coordinate setting meetings given that the six schools don't follow the same schedule especially for vacations and examinations.

Space to bring people together is another structural factor that participants considered to influence the interaction among participants. While all participants preferred the face-to-face meetings, they considered virtual interaction to be sufficient as a communication mechanism if the physical medium to meet is hard to find especially that most of the initiation phase of this initiative was during the COVID-19 pandemic where it was difficult to meet physically. In this regard, few Hub members considered the availability of meeting space for frequent in-person or online interactions among the Jordan Hub schools and with the external facilitators who were in a different country as an enabling factor for inter-school collaboration. The fact that all participants agreed to record the zoom meetings was also viewed as an added value. The PST progress notes revealed making multiple attempts before the call for coordination meetings to find time agreeable for all potential attendees. They also reported that with the consent of the Hub members they recorded all the zoom meetings and ended up sending the recordings often to participants who have missed attending these meetings.

Yet the participants agreed that there is need for in-person meetings and restricting interactions to online medium can become a communication barrier

especially when deep discussions are needed around controversial issues that emerge during the project implementation. Based on the PST progress notes, the project director and the Hub coordinator relied on periodic in-person visits especially at junctures they considered critical for the project initiation and progress. The PST reported that they conducted in-person visits at the start of the initiation process when they needed to convince the Lead Team members of the added value of the inter-school collaboration and solicit their participation in it. Two in-person visits were conducted, where the project director met on one of them individually and, in a group, with all school principals. In both visits an all-day meeting was conducted with the school Lead Team members to share with them research-based evidence and best practices about the added value of inter-school collaboration.

Participants also talked about the influence of the institutional arrangements on the Jordan Hub members' ability to engage in the project. They emphasized the importance of introducing modifications in these arrangements to allow the school teams to conduct the activities needed for the initiations and implementation of the project. The PST progress notes, and the answers of the expert coach highlighted that the rigidity of the implementation and monitoring of the existing curriculum constituted a major barrier in convincing the Arabic teachers to join the project. One of the Hub members spoke about the difficulty of translating the new approach that the ATI project is bringing into instructional strategies that can be adopted while still implementing the existing curriculum. The expert coach also noted that the rigidity of the Arabic curriculum in the participating schools was a major barrier at the launching of the project stating that "the absence of arrangements conducive to change and experimentation led to lack of flexibility to incorporate the change into the school."

Cultural Factors

Participants in all interviews pointed at several professional norms and values as cultural factors that can affect substantially the initiation and implementation of successful inter-school collaboration. Namely, the Hub members agreed that familiarity with the change process as a result of the participation in TAMAM facilitated the engagement in the inter-school collaboration initiative. They pointed especially at the readiness among the Hub members for accepting that uncertainty prevails throughout the implementation of innovative initiatives and clarity of the road to follow emerges gradually during the implementation. However, Hub members and PST members highlighted collaboration as a key organizational cultural norm that must be present at the individual school level and shared among the schools to enable inter-school collaboration. While all participants from the schools were eager to report on their valuing and enacting of collaboration as a professional norm at their individual schools, analysis of their responses reveals a nuanced adoption of this same norm when it comes to inter-school collaboration.

Results show that members of the participating schools especially Lead Team members affirmed that their espousing of the professional collaboration norm that TAMAM promote and supported them to practice is a major factor that drove the six schools to engage in inter-school collaboration. On the other hand, there was evidence that enacting this declared valued norms within the context of the inter-school collaboration in its early stages constituted a major challenge that took intentional interventions from the PST to overcome.

First, data reveals that professional collaboration was indeed considered a valued norm at all participating schools. All participants agreed on the importance of

the professional collaboration norm to be shared by all those participating if the inter-school collaboration is to be effective. A member of the Hub asserted that collaborative relationships are well established at her school stating, “teachers at my school are accustomed to the exchange of knowledge which facilitated convincing them to participate in the inter-school collaboration initiative.” Another Hub member pointed out that “the schools valued having positive connections and good relations among each other” and considered it an enabling factor that facilitated the successful launching of this initiative. Hub members agreed that the common understanding of professional collaboration resulted from the “shared TAMAM culture between the schools” as one of the main factors that facilitated the initiation of the inter-school collaboration. In fact, a Hub member shared her determination to make collaboration work at her school despite the anticipated challenges: “professional collaboration might be challenging in real life as there are different perspectives.”

Additionally, the Hub members noted that all members that were involved in the initiation of the inter-school collaboration “have shared vision, common professional language as well as shared norms and values” as a result of their participation in TAMAM another added that “all participants were eager and enthusiastic to participate in this initiative following TAMAM approach, spirit, and principles.” They emphasized that the TAMAM principles gained additional value because they honor and respect the Arabic sociocultural foundations of their schools. One of the Hub members noted that “TAMAM leadership, ideology, initiative, and slogan is Arab which made it essential for progress.” Hub members also highlighted the importance of espousing the TAMAM professional norms noting that they created a “common language” among all Hub members which facilitated their collaboration. A Hub member mentioned that in

addition to this valuing of collaboration “a lot of the members have the skills, and knowledge developed from the involvement in TAMAM” to enact this valuing, something she considered essential for her involvement in the initiation of the inter-school collaboration. On the other hand, TAMAM Hub members, and PST attributed some of the challenges faced in the initiation stage to the fact that some of the Arabic Leaders did not share the “culture of valuing school-based improvement” found among the other Hub members since they were newcomers to the project.

However, analysis of the data collected reveals that the professional valuing of collaboration and willingness to participate in the inter-school collaboration initiative was not sufficient to avoid certain challenges emanating from the difficulties in manifesting professional collaboration as well as from what some participants called the “hidden competitiveness” among the schools. The Hub members talked about challenges related to accommodating and accepting the different learning styles among participants. The challenges emerged when some members described by the PST as being “natural critical reflective practitioners” demanded more time be allocated to diagnosing the problem of practice while others who are considered “more pragmatic and action oriented” started complaining about the excessive time taken without action. This created tension and required measures from the PST to navigate these differences among the Hub members.

On the other hand, the Hub members and the expert coach pointed out that a hidden competitiveness between the schools was behind their resistance to enacting some of the inter-school collaboration activities. They noted that this resistance emerged specifically when school vulnerabilities were at risk of being exposed. A Hub member pointed that “some schools were trying to hide the weaknesses in the school or

in its students, trying to preserve their prestige/ status by being selective in what to say and what to act.” The expert coach noted that “though we are a collective society in the Arab region yet as the circle of collaboration expands beyond the school, competitiveness was expected to be revealed.” Both the PST and the expert coach related that they had to be cautious in their introductory session with members participating from all schools and to walk a thin line between highlighting the common problems they have identified in order to build a shared goal for the team on one hand and acknowledging the uniqueness of the circumstances and identity of each school on the other. The PST also reported having to navigate differences among the schools when it comes to conducting collective activities by meeting separately with each school team to listen to their concerns and what they considered to be context sensitive objectives in preparation for the collective activity. Interestingly, all participants agreed that with the progress in the implementation of collective activities with the inter-school collaboration ATI project, the negative aspect of the competitiveness were fading, gradually turning into eagerness to perform and meet the expectations of the PST and the collective objectives set by the project.

The Critical Role of the School Leaders/ Principals

Participants spoke about the role of the school leaders or principals as a critical factor in initiating the inter-school collaboration and driving this initiative forward. According to them, school leaders’ belief in the added value of the initiative, their close follow up and involvement in the collaborative activities as well as their active support to overcome organizational barriers were central in facilitating the work and overcoming the challenges.

The Jordan Hub coordinator explained that the Hub school principals strongly believed in the importance and added value of improving teaching and learning of the Arabic language. She explained that this valuing stems from a combination of “a professional, educational national stance in relation to the Arabic language.” She affirmed that “if they didn’t adopt this project, the initiation wouldn’t have been successful.”

Additionally, participants agreed that the close follow-up and involvement of the school principals in the activities related to the project were essential for its successful initiation. A Hub member pointed out that the absence of administrative/leadership representation in the Lead Teams of some schools delayed their work. Another explained that the delay experienced by teams where all members were only teachers was because:

The team members can't take decisions on the spot during the meetings, and they needed to go and convince the administration for facilities and support, and this might have resulted in some schools to be lagging behind the others.

The expert coach noted that such an innovative project cannot progress if support from the school leadership is not translated into active support. She pointed out that “the leadership support was not enough in one of the schools which impacted the progress of work in this school.” One of the Hub members agreed with the expert coach and spoke about the importance of the support given from the school leadership specially to facilitate the logistics and the implementation of the activities required during the initiation. According to them only those in formal leadership positions like the principals can help in overcoming the organizational barriers that emerge during inter-school collaborations. While most participants provided evidence of their

principals' support, one of the Hub members pointed out that at her school, the lack of immediate involvement of the principal in the implementation of the inter-school collaboration activities resulted in difficulties to reach common expectations on what can be achieved within a certain period. She explained:

The school principal/ administration is concerned about the quick impact because the involvement in this project has many implications. However, there should be conversations and meetings to convince the principal/ administration to wait for the impact to become tangible. The participating members are trying to postpone a meeting with the administration and the administration is demanding results. The rationale for continuing in this initiative must be convincing to the principal.

Members Motivation for Engaging in Collaboration Beyond their Own Schools

All participants spoke about the members' level of motivation for engaging in collaboration beyond their own schools as an important factor affecting the inter-school collaboration. They reported that the level of engagement of members from the six schools in the initiative differed within and across schools based on their history of participation in TAMAM as well as their level of participation in the initial activities that the PST and expert coach prepared at the inception of the project. Participants' responses as well as PST progress reports show that most TAMAM Lead Team members who were actively involved since the inception of the idea acted as champions and advocates to the goals of the inter-school collaboration initiative. On the other hand, Arabic Leaders, and teachers' level of excitement about the project varied, with some remaining cautious and a few even hesitant to participate. This variation in the readiness of the potential participants was obvious to the PST and expert coach. Accordingly,

they reported planning specific (facilitation and buy-in) activities and meetings that aimed at ensuring the buy-in of the Hub members and reducing the potential for resistance especially among Arabic teachers who were invited to join the project later in the process.

The PST documentation shows that they included in their early meetings with the Lead Teams lots of clarifications about the process of inter-school collaboration as well as constant reminders of the potential added value of their collaboration, and of the common need they all identified and committed to address as schools. There is evidence both in the responses of the Hub members as well as in the PST progress report and the expert coach interview that most Lead Team members became strong advocates of the project almost immediately after its inception. A Hub member explained that the focus of the project on improving the Arabic language and the fact that it reflected a shared need that all agreed on led to their early commitment to participating in the inter-school collaboration. She stated:

Since Arabic language is a common need and there is a consensus among Arab countries that it is a concern, it was easy for us to commit and participate with other schools to work on this improvement project. Whereas if we had chosen another topic, we might have encountered difficulty in reaching an agreement on it. Another Lead Team member explained the rationale behind her enthusiasm for joining the inter-school collaboration initiative attributing her commitment to the fact that TAMAM aligns with her professional aspirations to be involved in a project that is led by scholars who are Arabs and are dedicated to serve the Arab region. Quoting this Hub member:

TAMAM is a one hundred percent Arabic initiative. For me this is huge. The dedication and passion of the PST to serve the region make them all role models

to us. Every initiative in TAMAM requires a lot of effort and is not without challenges. But when there is a will there is always a way. For me we must find the time, put the effort, and persevere till we see results. No educator should miss being part of this great and powerful project in the Arab world, especially in the midst of deterioration.

Moreover, the Hub members, the expert coach and the PST reported that the TAMAM Lead Teams members supported the progress of this initiative and supported those who joined later in acquiring the necessary skills for their work and acted as resource to them in each individual school. A Hub members said “TAMAM creates leaders who can convince others to be involved in the initiative even if they were not part of the initiation;” another one added:

If it wasn't my colleague [from the Lead Team] encouraging the teachers in her department, and if it weren't me being stubborn and encouraging teachers in my department, teachers wouldn't have felt included, and this initiative wouldn't have progressed much.

Additionally, based on the PST progress notes, in several meetings, some TAMAM Lead Teams members acted as mediators and catalysts to clarify divergent points of view, decrease the impact of some challenges on the participants and encourage others to venture into progressing to next steps. All participants agreed that these Lead Team members acted as guardians of TAMAM professional values and vision.

On the other hand, analysis of the data shows that some Hub members especially Arabic Leaders who joined after the project inception, did not have a high level of motivation and in some instances were themselves hindering the progress of the project

initiation. Both the PST and the expert coach elaborated that those who joined late and were not part of the creation of the idea nor attended the facilitation meetings and buy-in meetings conducted by the PST and the expert coach were the ones who showed resistance to engage in the implementation of the project and the project progressed the least in their school.

In the face of the above challenges, the expert coach and the PST reported that they took action to mitigate their effect and address the concerns of Hub members. In fact, the expert coach conducted six-day long boot camp introducing the Arabic Leaders and some teachers to the conceptual framework on which they will build their intervention and working with them to build the foundational design components of the intervention and writing together the characteristics of the learner and their level of linguistic skills which they called the “Arabic continuums.” In addition to setting the stage for co-designing the intervention with the participants, one of the goals of the boot camp was to address the concerns of the Arabic Leaders and build their ownership of the project. According to the PST and the expert coach, the Arabic Leaders who joined the boot camp became advocates of the project while their colleagues who missed it were less ready and remained cautious beyond the initiation of the project.

The External Facilitation Role and Support

All the participants talked about the key role played by the external facilitators differentiating between the role of the university-based facilitators and that of the expert coach specialized in the problem of practice they chose to work on.

The University-Based Facilitation Role. All Participants spoke about the facilitation role of the university-based Project Steering Team (PST) and highlighted it as a key factor in the inter-school collaboration. Participants responses depicted the

following aspects as manifestations of the facilitator's role: (1) setting goals and directions, (2) building a positive relationship among the schools, (3) providing relevant expert assistance, (4) coordinating activities among schools, (5) engaging the schools in TAMAM professional network wider activities, and (6) following a mentoring approach to give feedback.

Setting Goals and Directions. All respondents agreed that setting goals and maintaining a clear sense of direction is a key factor in initiating and sustaining inter-school collaboration. Jordan Hub members commended the PST ability to help them set goals and have a clear direction and considered this contribution essential to sustain the work on this initiative. The PST notes reveal that they actively engaged in probing the Hub members to reach clarity about their roles and to engage in building shared goals for the inter-school collaboration initiative. The PST supported the school Lead Team members when they chose to follow the TAMAM Improvement Journey as a guiding process for their inter-school collaboration improvement project. The TAMAM Journey calls for setting improvement goals early in the process and aligning the design and implementation of the intervention with these goals. As a result, the PST training sessions and follow-up visits at the inception of the inter-school collaboration included activities to assist the participants from the six schools to set shared improvement goals for their project. The PST documentation also includes evidence that in parallel to the goals pertaining to improving the Arabic teaching at the schools, the PST sessions always included reminders of inter-school collaboration as a goal that all the participants have committed to. One of the key challenges noted in the PST documentation is accommodating the differences among the participating schools pertaining to their readiness to commit to the emerging goals and strategies to be

followed. While some school Lead Teams were eager to move into actions and considered “spending time on certain discussions was not necessary and wasted time,” others saw that “more time” is needed in reflective dialogue to understand the root cause of the problem of practice and build “deeper” consensus among all. This challenge was apparent to the PST who shared during one of the follow-up meetings with the Hub members that the different learning styles among them impacted the progress of work in some instances. The PST explained that some members are comfortable with deep and critical reflection and enjoyed the extra time during the meetings to accommodate that while others are more pragmatic and expressed frustration from the “time being wasted” in unnecessary discussions. According to the PST, some members still prefer to be given the goals to follow rather than set them on their own through a process of reflection and learning. While the PST talked about the challenges they faced to balance between all these differences and satisfy the Hub members preferences and needs, one of the Hub members critically noted that the “PST in some instances pushed the work in specific direction which didn’t allow time for consensus to be built among all participants.”

Building a Positive Relationship among the Schools. All participants agreed that building a positive relationship among the schools participating in the inter-school collaboration initiative is a key facilitation role that is needed for the initiation and sustainability of this kind of collaboration. Participants noted that the role the PST played ensured that the teams progressed with this initiative. Based on the PST documents, the PST actively engaged in conflict resolution by attending to resolve any power struggle, personality clashes or misunderstandings. The PST reported that they often intervened and talked individually to individual Hub members to clarify points of

view and reminded them to be patient to accommodate other members' priorities and strive to reach a consensus. The PST reported that they often reminded the participants to focus on attaining their shared improvement goal while working collaboratively on the project they voluntarily felt the need to initiate it. Moreover, the several PowerPoint presentations prepared by the PST during the different visits and meetings clearly show that with every planned workshop there was a reminder of inter-school collaboration as a goal and of the rationale the teams agreed on for committing to it. Additionally, the Jordan Hub members commended the approach of PST as a neutral and unbiased party to any school and their "humanistic approach" and considered it essential to enhancing the collaboration among the schools and strengthening their relationships. One of the members elaborated noting that:

There was a need for someone who could facilitate and resolve small issues.

There were sensitivities among members and between schools. Without the PST, I am not sure if this initiative would have been successful.

This member even specified that the presence of the project director was essential to "bring a sense of reassurance to the participants during the sessions, particularly when disagreements arose." One of the Hub members specified that the PST members "passion, commitment and open-mindedness ...acted as a role model for us to resolve our differences." Another Hub member explained:

The PST played a crucial role in the success of the inter-school collaboration.

They were neutral despite our different ideas and perspectives. They gathered and synthesized our ideas into a cohesive viewpoint. At the end of each discussion, it was important that the PST summarize the main points so that we could fully understand the intended message. The PST provided us with precise

guidance regarding our exact needs. Without their support and preparation, we would not have been able to reach this stage of work.

Providing Relevant Expert Assistance. All participants agreed that the facilitators' expertise and its relevance to their needs played a major role in supporting their work and building their ability to engage in the inter-school collaboration and make notable progress on it. The PST notes reveal that they used every possible means to increase their research-based knowledge on inter-school collaboration, by reviewing international literature on best practices, attending webinars and conference sessions on this subject. It also revealed that the PST collected data on the Jordan Hub members earlier attempt at professional collaboration and their emerging views of it and used it to inform their strategies especially ensuring their relevance to the context of the participating schools. The role of this research-based expertise in facilitating the inter-school collaboration project was noted in the interviews with the Hub members.

A Hub member mentioned that the presence of the PST as “university experts” gave confidence in the inter-school collaboration project and the approach it followed. One of the Hub members said, “the presence of the PST as experts made this inter-school collaboration strong and sustainable.” Jordan Hub members argued in favor of the role of the PST expertise stating that they count on them to summarize best known practices and offer potential strategies that could be followed by the team to set goals and change their practice accordingly. A Hub member stated that “when things are not clear, the PST provided justification or clarified the situation in these meetings, making things easier for us to be able to proceed.” Hub members also pointed at the extensive data collection that the PST engage in and how by organizing and presenting this data to the members they helped them reach clarity, keep the bigger picture, and remain

focused on improving their schools as the ultimate goal of each activity. Quoting one of the Hub members:

You [PST] collect data and organize it to show the bigger picture that makes more sense to us. And just knowing there is somebody following up and guiding us to take the following steps is reassuring. The presence of such an entity to allow the work to progress, is physically and emotionally supportive.

Additionally, the Jordan Hub members attributed the success in choosing the expert Arabic coach to guide the school teams during the inter-school collaboration to the expertise of the PST. In fact, the PST reported that they recruited the expert coach not only because of her extensive pedagogical expertise, but also because of her willingness to follow the TAMAM approach and engage in experimentation and co-construction of the needed intervention with the Hub members. The expert coach affirmed that by saying that she was taking a “learner stance at that period. This was helpful to be able to facilitate later the construction of the project design” as she said. She added:

I enjoyed the period when you were explaining to me the TAMAM Journey as a systemic strategy because I love system thinking to see how I can incorporate my expertise into your design.... the work was more on the PST at that period. I was not a facilitator at that time, rather, I contributed to achieving the results.

Based on the PST meeting reports, it was evident the time and effort the PST invested in meetings to ensure the alignment of the expert coach approach with the goals and approach of the project as well as to guide the school teams on leading this initiative collaboratively while taking into consideration the variations in their organizational contexts and curricular arrangements. Similarly, the school teams

highlighted the importance of having the expertise of the expert coach to guide the school teams while understanding their improvement needs and designing the intervention to reach their improvement goals.

Coordinating Activities among Schools. Jordan Hub members spoke about the importance of the coordinating role the PST played as external facilitators in the inter-school collaboration. They stated that the PST “orchestrates the work” by conducting regular meetings and by following up and monitoring the implementation of the planned activities within the inter-school collaboration. During the interviews, Jordan Hub members pointed at the importance of the periodic PST-initiated follow-up meetings that brought participants from all six schools together regularly. One of the Hub members noted that the regular meetings conducted by the PST “were very beneficial as monitoring stops for both of us where they clarified the difference in points of view and explained unclear information.” They also highlighted the importance of the regular meetings the PST organized among the school principals. Moreover, the Hub members commended the PST “flexibility in accommodating the school schedules which at times required rescheduling certain meetings because of unexpected changes in one of the schools’ calendars.” The Jordan Hub members considered this facilitation role a game changer agreeing that they would have never thought that bringing all these schools with all their different calendars together is even possible. A Hub member stated that “this collaboration wouldn't have happened in the same way, depth, and stages without the PST.” They specifically commended the PST request from each school to assign a representative to act as a liaison between the school and the other members and saw this coordination strategy as an enabling factor for inter-school collaboration. The PST documents state as well that the WhatsApp group created at the onset of this initiative

and named “TAMAM Jordan Hub” was one of the means that was used for coordinating these activities. This group included all the Hub members participating in the inter-school collaboration.

Engaging the Schools in TAMAM Professional Network. Participants agreed that the engagement of the Jordan Hub schools in the broad TAMAM network facilitated and supported their inter-school collaboration initiative. The PST documents reveal that at the early inception of this inter-school collaboration, the PST gave the stage for the Hub members to present about this initiative and receive feedback from the TAMAM coaches network in one of the in-person meetings done for TAMAM coaches. At a later stage, according to the PST, they gave visibility to the inter-school collaboration project on the wider TAMAM network WhatsApp group, a platform that includes all TAMAM members from all participating countries. Hub members reported that they benefited from the PST efforts such as making announcements about their progress, sharing resources relevant to their work, and opening opportunities for the Hub members to receive encouragement, affirmation from Network members. The PST documents also reveal that they used different formats to present about this inter-school collaboration, one of them was through a zoom session where they presented about this initiative highlighting that it is one of TAMAM strategic goals and a unique experience in the Arab world. During the session, the PST gave the floor for the Hub members to talk about this initiative and celebrate their achievements among all the attending TAMAM network members. One of the Lead Teams noted after listening to this presentation that she was impressed by the work that was done, highlighting that all Hub members should be proud of what they have accomplished. The response of a Lead Team member affirms that engaging the Hub schools in the general activities of

TAMAM professional network enhanced the inter-school collaboration. She stated that “this network was a resource for us to get support on different fronts...it is relieving to feel that you are supported by a bigger network.”

While all Hub members considered having access to this network an asset to the inter-school collaboration, the frequency and richness of the interactions on the larger TAMAM network were not received positively by all Jordan Hub members. One of the participants mentioned that the presence of multiple on-line platforms in TAMAM, the frequency of interactions and the diversity of exchanges on the WhatsApp groups was distracting to her given her full workload and diverse responsibilities. Another respondent also noted that especially during pandemic, the dependence on virtual interaction was exhausting and expressed her longing to the initial in-person gatherings that offered all network members in-person interactions.

Following a Mentoring Approach to Give Feedback. Participants agreed that the mentoring approach followed by the PST as external facilitators was essential in facilitating the progress of the inter-school collaboration. The PST affirmed that this approach was rooted in their continuous attempts at increasing their knowledge about the Hub members as learners and professionals and staying abreast the contextual conditions, they are operating under. The PST documents highlight their role in synthesizing data collected from various focus group interviews conducted by the different teams to understand their improvement need and organizing the synthesized data in a report. The PST shared this report with the teams to provide feedback. On the other hand, Jordan Hub members spoke about the “support, appreciation of small achievements, encouragement and motivation” received from the PST. They mentioned that the PST mentoring approach of balancing support with challenge has built trust and

respect. They added that the PST offered feedback and guidance while giving the teams the space to enact their agency. One of the Hub members noted that “the PST appreciated all work done even small progress, there were no big expectations from members which gives them some relief.” Based on the PST progress reports, the PST described how they purposefully identified and celebrated small progress to sustain the team motivation while at the same time providing critical feedback on their work and challenging them to meet their goals. The PST explained that providing positive reinforcement with every sign of progress was a major role of their work and called themselves “the cheerleaders” for the teams.

On the other hand, the Hub members and the PST reported that regular constructive feedback especially on the inquiry process followed by the participants has been one of the key contributions to facilitating the inter-school collaboration. Based on the PST progress reports, it was clear that the PST supported the schools on the TAMAM Improvement Journey stations. The PST documents detail the different forms of feedback that they offer the teams. Some feedback was delivered in-person during visits or virtual workshops and meetings. Other forms of feedback were written and shared via email, while some were verbal and communicated through the Hub members' WhatsApp group or direct personal communication. On the other hand, the PST utilized various types of feedback to support the Lead Teams. Technical feedback was provided to help the teams collect and analyze data, including feedback on focus group questions and data analysis methods. The PST technical support included helping the teams in using TAMAM templates related to the Improvement Journey.

The PST progress reports also document the regular follow-ups done with the teams. The reports also show that the PST was committed to ensuring that everyone was

kept up to date with the project progress. Regular meetings were scheduled with various groups, including all Hub members, Lead Teams, and principals. Additionally, the PST reflective journal revealed a differentiated approach to communication, including careful consideration of who to communicate with, what message to convey, and the timing and delivery method for each communication. The TAMAM project director and the inter-school collaboration initiative coordinator worked closely with each other and with the Jordan Hub coordinator to coordinate communication efforts effectively. A Hub member stated that the PST was invaluable in providing us with precise guidance on our specific needs. We could not have reached this level of inter-school collaboration without your support.” Another one stated:

TAMAM provided independence, but with intelligence...The space was given without any problems No team in the inter-school collaboration experienced any frustration...there were no specific expectations from individuals... as I said before, we grow the snowball little by little, with each one rolling it on their own.

Despite the extended feedback offered, the needs of the school teams for additional feedback remained not perfectly met. One of the Hub members voiced her concern stating that they were in need of more specific feedback from the PST on the progress of the individual school on the TAMAM Improvement Journey stations.

The Expert Coach Specialized Support. All participants spoke about the positive role of the expert coach in providing specialized support to the participating team throughout the initiation process. They mentioned three main aspects in relation to this role which are the (1) trustworthy profile of the expert coach, (2) the innovative solution she proposed to address the problem of practice chosen, and (3) the strategy

and approach followed to set the stage and engage the participants in co-designing the innovative solution.

Trustworthy Profile of the Expert Coach. The Hub members noted the importance that the expert coach is a renowned expert in the region and is well-known in their country. They mentioned that they trust this coach and have attended previous workshops with her which were very impactful. One of the members stated:

The expert coach knowledge is very deep and wide because she is an expert in the field and well informed...I know that any project she leads will undoubtedly have a successful end. We entered with her with the same vision, and we continued, and hopefully, the results will be as we want even better.

The PST progress reports show that the expert coach's biography was shared with the schools early in the project and the innovativeness of her ideas given the complexity of the problem of practice were used as a rationale to convince the school principals to recruit her as their expert coach and consultants to guide them and build their capacity during the collaborative implementation of their Arabic improvement project.

The Innovative Solution Proposed to Address the Problem of Practice. Several participants agreed that the innovativeness of the solution proposed by the expert coach as well as her non-traditional coaching approach were assets for the projects and a good fit to achieve its improvement goals. A Hub member highlighted the uniqueness of the solution proposed by the expert coach to address the problem of practice and its promise to resolve a chronic problem. Another Hub member elaborated about the expert coach's coaching approach to say:

I find the expert coach's coaching approach exceptional. She provides clarity and ease in communication, and the concepts and vocabulary she presented though familiar to us as an IB school, yet she delved into specific details for each point with remarkable precision. Her analyses were extremely accurate, and she provided highly credible criteria.

The expert coach response resonated with that of the Hub member as she affirmed her non-traditional coaching style and explained that she worked with the Hub members by “providing information and gave them time to absorb it to be able to produce the desired outcome. As a result, the learning process became faster to achieve that outcome.” The PST reported that while the unconventional solution to addressing the problem of practice that the expert coach offered was welcomed and appreciated by some Hub members, it triggered initial resistance among many others and took extensive reflective dialogue and many side meetings with the Hub members and the school principals before consensus was reached to adopt it. In fact, one of the Hub members, in specific a Lead Team member and teacher who teaches other subjects in Arabic, didn't see this solution as sufficient and an added value, “especially that the ideal scenario was related to reaching a passionate learner and enhancing the identity and culture” as she communicated. Another Hub member noted that she only accepted to venture into experimenting with this solution because it was coming through TAMAM, and she trusts what TAMAM brings for them. The PST notes show that this solution was proposed by the expert coach after researching different available solutions and this research was shared with the Hub members to point out the rationale and potential effectiveness of the proposed solution.

The Strategy and Approach Followed to Set the Stage and Engage the Participants in Co-designing the Proposed Solution. Despite the varied initial response to the proposed solution, different participants agreed that the boot camp was a beneficial strategy to build consensus and to get buy-in for the ATI project especially among the Arabic Leaders. The approach used by the expert coach in this boot camp was instrumental to engage the Arabic Leaders in enhancing their ownership and driving this project forward. Based on the PST documentation and the expert coach responses, the boot camp consisted of a six-day intensive online program where the expert coach worked with the Arabic Leaders in Jordan Hub schools to develop collaboratively the learner profile and describe the stages of acquiring the Arabic language in specific the characteristics of the learners under each stage. The boot camp included many hands-on activities and depended on the students' models collected by the Arabic Leaders from each school. One of the Hub members and the expert coach explained that the boot camp was a very important strategy to include the Arabic Leaders/ newcomers in writing the learner profile and develop their ownership of the project and become advocates to it. The main goal behind this camp in addition to building ownership to the ATI project was to transform a theoretical framework to a practical solution that they actively participate in designing. The expert coach elaborated during the interview in describing the approach she used in the boot camp stating:

My approach was involvement and not training. It was a bottom-up approach where the Arabic Leaders contributed to the writing of the continuums. I was eager to convince the members that this work is unique and rare in the Arab world.

The expert coach explained what type of team building activities were done in the boot camp based on her awareness that these Arabic Leaders are from different schools engaged in an inter-school collaboration initiative. She was aware of the importance of building personal relationships with each of the Arabic Leaders and among them and made a genuine effort to connect with them on a personal level, even memorizing their names to demonstrate her commitment. She added that she used the “forming,” “storming” then “norming” and “performing” technique elaborating as follows:

I shared with the Arabic Leaders the protocols of the boot camp as a way for team building. First, I started with socializing and forming the team.... and I was always aware of their feelings and personalities. At this level, no substantial work was produced. The second level is storming which required revisiting the protocols to avoid conflict. The work inside the breakout rooms at this level was focused on the students' collected outcomes which helped the meetings move smoothly as it was not related to anyone personally. After that, the Arabic Leaders started to become acquainted with each other and used one language which we call norming and then moved to the final level of performing where they started collaboratively developing the continuums.

One of the Hub members elaborated to describe how the ownership of the Arabic Leaders at her school was boosted because of the boot camp:

The members in the Arabic department at my school started to feel that this was their project when they attended the boot camp. It was a successful strategy to be used. Though they started before the boot camp attending the general meetings of the inter-school collaboration initiative and following the set

procedures, yet everything changed after the boot camp, and their engagement was boosted because they felt that this ATI project was theirs. For me, it was great because our Arabic leader felt that the project was hers and she led the project on her own afterwards.

Another Hub member described how the expert coach approach in the boot camp changed the attitude of the Arabic Leaders at her school towards the project:

Initially, the Arabic Leaders expressed dissatisfaction with the language used by the expert coach, but after working with her during the boot camp, they were impressed and began to speak positively about her optimism, ideas, and the way she divided the work. Their interaction as a team also became much better.

Emerging Impact from Inter-school Collaboration

Although the researcher's question focused on the aspired impact, by the time of the interview, the participants felt ready to include in their responses some of the actual impact that they have begun to witness. The following results are reported as emerging impact and will incorporate the actual impact reported with their responses about their future aspirations. The results are presented under two main domains: impact at the school level and impact at the Jordan Hub level and beyond.

Impact at the School Level

The impact at the school level will be reported under the following titles: (1) impact on school members, which encompass building leadership capacity and strengthening instructional and pedagogical skills; (2) impact on the school as an organization which includes creating a common professional language, adopting new organizational arrangements, and enhancing organizational renewal; and lastly the (3) impact on students.

Impact on School Members. All participants spoke about the impact of the inter-school collaboration on the school members who participated in the initiative. Those include the TAMAM Lead Team members, the Arabic Leaders, and the Arabic teachers in each of the Jordan Hub schools. The impact spans the following aspects: (1) building leadership capacities, and (2) strengthening instructional and pedagogical skills.

Building Leadership Capacities. Jordan Hub members agreed that their participation in the inter-school collaboration was an opportunity for all involved to build their capacity to lead. The Hub members affirmed that the inter-school collaboration was not only an opportunity to practice leadership skills they acquired from their earlier participation in TAMAM but also to broaden the scope of these skills.

In fact, the PST reported that part of its facilitation role was to ensure that all “TAMAM old-timers” enacted their acquired leadership competencies and skills and that the new participants (mainly Arabic Leaders and some teachers who joined at the inception period) are exposed to the competencies that TAMAM consider essential to lead school-based improvement. These included reflective dialogue and practice, inquiry, evidence-based decisions, decisions, and actions driven by needs, de-privatization of practice, systematic documented practice, evolving design planning, professional collaboration, participative leadership for continuous improvement, mentoring approach and job-embedded experiential learning as well as the skills to initiate, implement and monitor as well as evaluate improvement projects. The PST documents reveal that the PST regularly introduced the participants to specific TAMAM competencies and skills in relation to the stage they were at while launching their inter-school collaboration improvement initiative. In this regard, a Lead Team

member who is also a principal expressed her happiness that the acquisition of TAMAM Competencies is not only confined to the school Lead Teams but is spreading among additional participating members from her school “the Arabic department members realized the significance of researching, experimenting, and then documentation and these are all new competencies.” Another Lead Team member shared her view of an aspired impact stating that the leadership competencies that will be acquired in the project will be easily transferrable among teachers. She elaborated on this noting that “any person who acquires these competencies will transfer this to other members in the school even if they are not involved in this inter-school collaboration initiative...this will continue to have a positive impact over time.”

Interestingly, the analysis of the responses shows that the aspired impact that the Hub members reported went beyond the TAMAM Competencies. A Lead Team member and an Arabic Leader noted that engaging in this inter-school collaboration is developing participants’ communication skills, giving feedback as critical friends, tolerance to others and decision-making skills. Another Lead Team member and an Arabic Leader agreed adding that “the interactions with others and the knowledge gained while engaging in this initiative enhanced their ability to analyze, synthesize, evaluate, create and generate new ideas.” A Lead Team member mentioned that participation in the inter-school collaboration is changing the way “Arabic Leaders in our school think, state, discuss, and address problems.” An Arabic Leader said:

...this participation is enriching our social interactions and thinking. We are developing a new way of thinking and a new language for dialogue. Each one of us is gaining confidence and pride. When we express our opinions in front of

others and receive approval and admiration, it means that we are gaining the skills to persuade.

The Jordan Hub coordinator confirmed that “the work in this initiative is increasing the expert power among the Arabic Leaders in the school” and she expressed with confidence her hopes for an increase in the agency among Arabic Leaders and teachers especially their eagerness to share knowledge with others and their efforts to sustain the learning and improvement at her school.

Strengthening Instructional and Pedagogical Skills. Jordan Hub members showed confidence in the potential impact of the ATI project on strengthening the Arabic Leaders and teachers’ instructional skills. They shared their future aspirations for this impact with ease highlighting the skills they are slowly acquiring to critically reflect on their instructional practices and their growing ability to engage in dialogue with others about the problems faced and the solutions that could be designed.

One of the Lead Team members assured that engaging in discussions and sharing experiences on what went right and what went wrong will enhance the instructional and pedagogical skills of those involved in these discussions and meetings. The Jordan Hub coordinator communicated her aspirations that the learning acquired will help in decreasing teachers mistakes since it will expose them to multiple solutions from the various Arabic teachers and Leaders in the participating schools. She noted that through implementing the solution co-constructed with the expert coach, she has high hopes that her Arabic teachers will accumulate a wide array of instructional strategies that will enhance their ability to implement differentiated instruction in their classroom.

Impact on the School as an Organization. Several Jordan Hub members spoke how engaging in the inter-school collaboration ATI project led to organizational learning at the individual school level. When asked about the impact they saw on the school as an organization, they highlighted several indicators that pointed at adopting a shared professional language and at some changes in the structural arrangements and the adapted procedures at the school as well as preliminary indicators for enhancing organizational renewal.

Adopting a Shared Professional Language within Schools. The Hub members communicated that engaging in this inter-school collaboration ATI project at their school created a common and clear vision about the student as a learner of the Arabic language. This was clearly affirmed by the PST documents which reveal that the Hub members in many instances were aware of this vision and how they constantly challenged any suggestion from the PST and the expert coach that they did not clearly see how it can allow them to reach their vision of the student as a “passionate learners who are capable of effective communication in formal and informal contexts using proper Arabic language.” Based on the PST documentation, this triggered reflective dialogue in the general meetings and in some individual meetings with some schools until consensus was reached. Specifically, the Hub members noted that engaging in this initiative created a “language,” “framework” among Arabic Leaders within their school which is facilitating collaboration among those leaders and the teachers across cycles and grade levels. They added that the solution they codesigned with the expert coach is providing them with the language to give detailed description of students’ performance. One Hub member explained that agreeing on the concepts to be used to describe the student performance level across schools “is a success by itself.” Another Arabic Leader

highlighted that the presence of a “unified professional language” among the Arabic Leaders of the different cycles in her school is enhancing communication and is decreasing the “vagueness and ambiguity.” The PST progress reports reflect the emerging impact through statements that the main goal of the experiential approach adopted by the expert coach is to “help participants develop a common language around the teaching of the Arabic language, between the teacher and the learner, and between one teacher and another in the same school, or across schools in the same country.”

Adopting New Organizational Arrangement. Hub members agreed that the inter-school collaboration initiative and the improvement project being implemented is triggering decisions pertaining to introducing new organizational arrangements at the school level. Indeed, the Hub members talked about the coordination processes that were introduced within their schools to facilitate the implementation of the project and to ensure the transfer of knowledge acquired to other members in the school as something impacting the school as a whole. According to them, these arrangements included coordination meetings assigned between the Arabic Leaders and the cycle head, between the Arabic Leaders of the different cycles, and between the Arabic Leaders and the representative from the school Lead Team to follow up on the project and coordinate its activities. A Lead Team member who is also a principal affirmed that one of the positive impacts from this project at her school is that the “internal collaboration between the Arabic leader and the cycle head increased in her school because they needed to follow up on the ATI project.”

Additionally, the Hub members agreed that the documentation that is expected as part of the TAMAM approach and has been practiced since the launching of the inter-school collaboration is providing building blocks towards institutionalization of

both the inter-school collaboration process and the ATI project activities it was driving. One of the Hub members noted that “the documentation we had to do, taking thorough notes of all steps taken and progress made and saving them in one place, will prepare us for the institutionalization of the intervention in our school.”

Enhancing Organizational Renewal. Participants responses included indicators that the acquired individual leadership skills will help transform the school into a learning organization with the ability to address solving problems of practice on a system level. One of the Hub members explained that building the capacity of individuals is definitely “key to building institutional capacity of the school since individuals are the building blocks of the institution and they are the agents of change in it.” She elaborated that while the ATI project focused on training Arabic Leaders and teachers on new instructional strategies, the inter-school collaboration, and the approach it followed to include the Arabic Leaders and teachers in co-designing the intervention and planning for its implementation in their school set the stage for a broader impact. A Hub member expressed confidence in the emerging enhancement of the school ability to address substantial problems of practice, citing as evidence the fact that they have learned how to engage experientially in addressing the improvement of Arabic teaching and learning. The PST documentation affirms this perspective stating in multiple progress reports the gradual engagement of the Hub members in the experientially driven TAMAM Improvement Journey and their growing enthusiasm while conducting inquiry cycle to collectively identify the need and collaboratively design an intervention to address their problem of practice. The PST documentation also emphasizes that their approach was driven by a genuine sense of urgency to address a problem that they have characterized as substantial and challenging to solve. The PST notes demonstrate their

consistency in explaining the process at each stage, drawing on literature to support their innovative instructional approaches, and ensuring consensus before moving forward. The PST notes reveal that they commended in several meetings the Hub members' commitment to organizational self-renewal and their growing ability to initiate and adopt innovative interventions.

Additionally, Hub members pointed out that the involvement of the school Lead Team in this inter-school collaboration enhanced the administration trust in their potential to lead improvement and expressed their hope that this will trigger further support to their future innovative initiatives. According to them, once the school administration realizes the potential impact of the improvement project they have initiated and they comprehend the scope of its impact as going beyond just the customary classroom, the administration will consider giving more support to teachers to lead more initiatives. One Hub member stated: "when the impact starts to be seen, the administration will give even more support." Another Hub member communicated the aspiration that the participation of her school in this initiative and the sense of ownership it triggered will establish a norm of practice in their school that generates the personal and collective motivation to progress and improve. Similarly, One of the Lead Teams members explained:

At first, I didn't think that this would have an impact on the entire school, and this was one of my fears about this initiative... It seemed that the initiative was only limited to the Arabic language department, but the Arabic language department leaders excelled ...they began to transfer their experiences to others... the impact began to spread from a successful educational practitioner to another ... and enthusiasm began to grow.

Impact on Students. The impact on students was the aspect that the participants talked about least. This is not surprising given that the implementation of the solution/ design of the intervention to address the problem of practice is still in early implementation stages. The PST documentation reveals that after the Jordan Hub members agreed that they are facing similar challenges and converged on a common need to improve the teaching of Arabic language, they developed together a shared improvement goal that focused on improving student learning. According to the PST progress reports, both the PST and the expert coach made significant efforts to facilitate the development of student-centered improvement goals among the schools. The PST and the expert coach requested each school to create an ideal scenario based on their data, outlining their aspirations for the ATI project impact on students. Subsequently, several working sessions were held with the schools to generate a collective ideal scenario, which included considerations for the desired student outcomes, curriculum, parent involvement, and school culture. The resulting comprehensive ideal scenario captures the aspired goal for students to become “passionate learners who are capable of effective communication in formal and informal contexts using proper Arabic language.” Hub members pointed out with confidence that by upholding this shared aspiration, “progressing in the ATI project for more years will start showing on students’ achievement.” One of the Hub members specified and spoke of her hope for a “significant and positive change in students’ care and interest in the Arabic language. We want to find students who can write, speak, and have the ability to discuss and communicate using proper Arabic.” Another Hub member said that being involved in this inter-school collaboration will enlarge the impact since more students are targeted

in this improvement project, “it is not the students of one school anymore, the circle of impact increased.”

Impact at the Level of the TAMAM Jordan Hub

All participants agreed that an initiative like this inter-school collaboration will have an impact beyond the individual school and its participating members. The responses of the participants regarding the impact they aspired for from this initiative pointed to emerging evidence that the initiative is contributing substantially to achieving the goals of establishing the TAMAM Jordan Hub. This included creating a community of self-renewing schools having the same vision and using common professional language and collectively following a unified process to identify common needs and generate innovative solutions to address the pressing challenges in their respective contexts. In addition, their responses highlighted the far-reaching aspired impact of this collaborative community which begins with sustaining the school-based improvement projects in the individual schools and culminate in contributing to the advancement of other Jordan schools and even to systemic change in Jordan and beyond.

Based on the Jordan Hub members responses, they agreed that one of the most important impacts at the level of the Jordan Hub schools is that this initiative allowed the different participating schools to work under one common “professional umbrella and all are serving the teaching and learning process.” Another Hub member said that one of the most important impacts during the inception period of this initiative is that:

all the schools agreed that they have a common problem that is facing the learners in their journey to learn the Arabic language and we collectively

developed a common improvement goal, and we are ready to move on and experiment to find the appropriate solutions to this problem.”

another one added that all schools “followed a unified process to address this need...and this is success.”

The participants also noted that they are developing a common professional language that will become ground for continuous collaborations for broader scale impact. The expert coach pointed out that “Arabic Leaders across schools used a unified language and this is rare in the region...the sense of familiarity and collaboration increased among them.” Furthermore, the Hub members aspire that their engagement with the inter-school collaboration will enable them to tackle future shared problems of practice that they have failed to overcome in their school. Quoting one of the Hub members:

Since we belong to the same geographic region, we share common concerns.

Our current inter-school collaboration is focused now on an improvement project related to the Arabic language, but in the future, we can collaborate on another problem that we want to solve. The inter-school collaboration helps sustain school-based improvement. We are constantly moving forward, and we will not only focus on the ATI project, but also other problems and concerns that might arise.

The Jordan Hub members stated that the impact of their participation is beginning to emerge in the form of reduction of the barriers that typically prevent inter-school collaborations as well as in a heightened level of motivation and trust in the effectiveness of these type of collaborations to generate impactful and sustainable solutions. One of the Hub members highlighted that that the Hub members are “no

longer afraid to speak up and openly express their challenges.” Others agreed that there was a decrease in the unspoken competitiveness between schools and they became more comfortable talking about their problems.

On the other hand, the participants aspired for a far-reaching impact of this initiative, highlighting the potential for expanding TAMAM and its approach to other schools in Jordan and the potential role of this activity in contributing to systemic change. The participants agreed that the success of the ATI project through inter-school collaboration will set the stage for continuous exchange of expertise among the schools where those with advanced expertise in certain areas can coach and help others. Quoting one of the Hub members:

We are committed to promoting sustainable improvement.... this commitment is within our school and extends beyond ... as a self-renewing well-known school, the engagement in this inter-school collaboration will encourage others inside and outside our school to grow and improve and will highlight the importance of sustainable school-based improvement.

One of the Hub members pointed out that the engagement of Jordan Hub schools that are renowned for their effectiveness in this initiative, is an opportunity for the other schools to follow their example in the area they excelled in. The Jordan hub coordinator expressed with excitement her intent to share the learning they got with other schools in Jordan, she stated:

If we organize a large seminar or conference to showcase our achievements, I believe it will attract many schools in Amman.... I am thinking that maybe once we complete cycle one of the ATI project, we request from the participating schools to present....this would be an opportunity to share what we did in the

inter-school collaboration initiative highlighting the value of the Arabic language and we will be expanding TAMAM among the attending schools and attracting more schools to join us.

Based on the PST progress reports, multiple discussions were held with the Hub coordinator around this idea, and a plan is in the making to hold such an event. PST notes elaborate that the event will be held once the schools are ready after progressing in the implementation of the ATI project, and that the goal is to present to other schools the experientially based design for teaching Arabic language. They emphasized the importance of the design being tested by multiple schools rather than just one school.

Lastly, The PST documents reveal the goal behind supporting the establishment of the TAMAM Jordan Hub and securing the appropriate funds to advocate for this inter-school collaboration. The PST narrative reports explain how the inter-school collaboration activity in TAMAM Jordan Hub is considered one of the activities towards fulfilling one of TAMAM strategic goals which is creating networks of self-renewing schools that work collaboratively to sustain their school-based improvement projects. The PST progress reports note the enthusiasm of the Hub members for the potential results that their Arabic Teaching designs and experience with inter-school collaboration can be shared with policymakers, and the participating schools can collectively advocate for the establishment of the necessary conditions to scale up their initiatives, ultimately leading to improved student achievement. All participants shared the belief that by fostering a shared vision of impactful school-based improvement and promoting inter-school collaborations, the TAMAM Jordan Hub has even the potential to facilitate systemic change not only in Jordan but also beyond its borders.

Chapter summary

This chapter presents the results that emerged from multiple sources of data including the focus group and individual interviews with the Jordan Hub members (TAMAM school Lead Team members formed of teachers and principals, leaders from the schools' Arabic departments, and TAMAM Jordan Hub coordinator), content Expert Coach and TAMAM project director, and the Project Steering Team extensive documentation. The results were presented in two main parts, the first answers research question one providing background information on the establishment of TAMAM Jordan Hub and leading to the initiation of the Arabic Teaching Improvement (ATI) project which constituted the focal activity for the inter-school collaboration initiative that took place among the Jordan Hub schools. The second part focuses on answering the other research questions in relation to the participants' views on professional collaboration, inter-school collaboration, the drivers behind the inter-school collaboration initiative, and the factors that contributed to its progress. The second part concludes with a presentation of the emerging impact that the participants attributed to their involvement in this initiative.

The findings of the study reveal that the inception of the inter-school collaboration within the TAMAM Jordan Hub passed through critical stages starting with the emergence of an informal leader from one of the pioneer Hub schools who acted as a main champion of rallying support for the Hub establishment and promoted the activities its members engaged in. While the initiation of the Hub activities can be traced to the schools jointly holding a series of professional development workshops, a critical marker in the Hub establishment was formally developing its governance structure to include an executive committee consisting of principals of the participating

Jordanian schools in TAMAM, securing a budget and setting yearly plans for its activities. Another critical moment was the decision of the participating members to collaborate on a joint improvement project addressing common challenges pertaining to the quality of teaching of Arabic at their schools. Six of the eight schools committed to engaging in this collaborative improvement project and decided to follow the TAMAM Improvement Journey as a strategy rooted in inquiry to launch the work on this project. The ATI project team was formed from representatives from six Hub schools consisting of Lead Team members, who are leaders of change trained on the TAMAM approach, and Arabic Leaders formally in charge of supervising the teaching and learning of Arabic at the participating schools. The continuing relationship of trust between the Hub members and the TAMAM PST shaped the role of the external facilitator that the PST assumed. As part of their role, the PST guided the team to bring on board a trustworthy expert coach in Arabic teaching to support the team in co-designing an innovative solution to address the shared concerns. With the help of the expert coach, the Hub team constructed a unified learner profile and an action plan outlining the design of their innovative intervention and strategies for its gradual implementation at their schools. Findings of the study reveal that the participants define professional collaboration as a collective effort by individuals in the same field who have common goals and work together to achieve them. This effort involves leveraging members' strengths, supporting each other's weaknesses, and sharing experiences.

According to the participants effective collaboration requires mutual respect, effective communication, and a focus on institutional benefits. The benefits of professional collaboration include broadening the work's scope, improving their

capacity for problem-solving, increasing motivation towards improving their work, and ultimately achieving success and sustainability.

As for inter-school collaboration, the results show that the participants highlighted the centrality of professional collaboration while explaining that it is professional collaboration yet one that takes place across schools. They noted that within inter-school collaboration, schools work together to build relationships, provide support, and solve common problems. Inter-school collaboration activities can take various forms as shown by the results, including regular meetings, discussions on specific subject areas, workshops, and inquiry-based strategies to find solutions to improvement problems. The results also show that the participants identified the Arabic Teaching Improvement project as a focal activity that manifested the inter-school collaboration among Jordan Hub schools. They characterized the initiative as long-term and pointed out that it follows a collaborative, inquiry-based strategy, the TAMAM Improvement Journey. The results also reveal that the participants identified as enabling factors the presence of an emerging and responsive governance structure that assigns roles and responsibilities among its participants, and adopt coordination mechanisms that ensure proper communication channels among the schools and between the schools and the university-based facilitators who are providing coaching support to the Hub members participating in the initiative.

Findings of the study also reveal several drivers for engaging in inter-school collaboration. They considered that having positive prior experiences with professional collaboration and their long-term involvement in the TAMAM professional network as well as the shared belief among the participants of the centrality and urgency of the problem of practice facilitated the inter-school collaboration around the Arabic

Teaching Improvement project. Additionally, evidence from the collected data shows that the presence of an advocate for the project from within the participating schools and her willingness to take an activist stance constituted a critical driver for the inter-school collaboration. Additionally, the findings show that another key driver for the initiation of the inter-school collaboration was the presence and continuous support of the external university-based facilitators during the inception period of the ATI project. While the drivers found were identified as critical to the initiation of the inter-school collaboration, the study found a number of factors that shaped this collaboration and influenced its strategies and activities. These factors include structural factors like time, space, and institutional policies; cultural factors such as professional norms and values and the members' intrinsic motivation for engaging in collaboration beyond their own schools; as well as the extent of direct support that the school leader provided to help the Hub members overcome existing organizational barriers. Furthermore, the results show that receiving coaching, especially on leading change, and coordination support from external university-based facilitators as well as having the specialized expertise of an Arabic Teaching content expert played a critical role in shaping this initiative and setting the stage for its success.

Finally, the results show that the participants in the inter-school collaboration initiative held high aspirations for its impact and were able to identify evidence of this impact that have begun to emerge during the initiation phase. Evidence of the impact was identified at the level of the individual schools, the TAMAM Jordan Hub a professional network, and even at the systemic levels. Most notably, findings point out that the inception of the inter-school collaboration around the Arabic Teaching Improvement project is moving the Hub toward becoming a community of self-

renewing schools with a shared vision, common professional norms capable of co-designing and implementing strategies that allow them to diagnose and address common needs using innovative solutions, while exchanging resources and supporting each other's to overcome the challenges to improvement in their respective contexts.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter presents an in-depth discussion of the research findings that address the research questions. The chapter discusses the participants' perceptions of both professional and inter-school collaboration, the drivers behind the initiation of inter-school collaboration, factors associated with inter-school collaboration, and its impact on schools and beyond in light of the reviewed literature. In the discussion, the researcher will identify similarities and differences between the findings and the reviewed literature, providing an explanation for the disparities. Finally, the chapter concludes by outlining the researcher's grounded design for inter-school collaboration in a context similar to the case study. The conclusion will also present the study implications for research as well as a summary of the study's key contributions to practice, specifically to the TAMAM project.

Perceptions of Inter-school Collaboration

This section will discuss the results pertaining to research question two which aimed to explore the participants' perception of professional collaboration and inter-school collaboration. The discussion will highlight the aspects where it affirms the literature reviewed and will point out the areas where it extends that literature, specifically filling the gap on how inter-school collaboration is conceived within the Arab context. In what follows, I will discuss the results pertaining to the perceptions of the participants on the definitions, the goals, the activities and benefits involved in professional collaboration and inter-school collaboration. Additionally, I will discuss the type and form of the Jordan Hub inter-school collaboration.

Professional Collaboration

When asked about their perception of professional collaboration, the participants responses included their definition of professional collaboration, the activities it involves, the necessary skills for effective collaboration, and its benefits. The participants' definition and views about the activities and benefits generally align with the literature reviewed while few ideas articulated by the participants were not found in that literature.

Participants defines professional collaboration as a group of individuals in the same field sharing a common vision, and who are working together to achieve their goals. According to them, professional collaboration entails capitalizing on each member's strengths, compensating for each other's weaknesses, and exchanging experiences. This view is in line with the definition put forth by Gronski and Pigg (2000) who define professional collaboration as “an interactive process among individuals and organizations with diverse expertise and resources, joining together to devise and execute plans for common goals as well as to generate solutions for complex problems” (p. 783). The findings also identify the benefits of professional collaboration, to encompass a broadened scope of work, enhanced problem-solving, heightened motivation, and ultimately, leading towards improvement and sustainability. This view resonates with the benefits mentioned in the literature reviewed.

However, two key ideas found in the literature as benefits, teacher leadership and teacher agency, are not in the findings. It is possible that these notions were not brought up naturally by the participants due the fact that all schools are part of TAMAM that promotes teacher leadership, and they might have associated their emerging teacher leadership with their earlier activities rather than with the inter-school collaboration per

se. Furthermore, there is no explicit reference in the findings to the influence of professional collaboration on student learning, although participants made a few clear association between teacher learning and student learning. This may be attributed to the fact that at the time of the interviews the inter-school collaboration within the Arabic Teaching Improvement (ATI) project was still in its early stages of implementation, and its impact on students was yet to be observed. Given the innovativeness of the intervention the members were tentative to elaborate about the nature of the impact of their intervention on the students and mostly mentioning it as an aspiration.

Inter-school Collaboration

The findings encompass a general definition of inter-school collaboration that includes its broad goals, the activities and learning processes involved specifying those related to the Arabic Teaching Improvement (ATI) project, as well as the type and format that it adopts. Based on the comparison with the reviewed literature on inter-school collaboration the participants' composite definition and ideas about the general goals behind inter-school collaboration mostly aligns with those in the literature. However, there are differences found that are mainly related to the activities and learning processes that took place within the inter-school collaboration initiative, as well as to its type and form. These differences reflect unique characteristics grounded in the context of the collaborating schools and the nature of the focal activity they collaborated on.

Similar to the literature's definition of inter-school collaboration, the findings highlight that inter-school collaboration is a form of professional collaboration that takes place across schools sharing common vision and goals. This definition aligns with Muijs et al.'s (2010) conceptualization of inter-school collaboration as a joint effort

between at least two schools to attain a shared goal over a certain period. Additionally, the views of the goals of inter-school collaboration generally align with those articulated in the reviewed literature namely that schools collaborate to provide and receive support and solve common problems. In fact, both West's (2010), and Muijs et al. (2010) descriptions of inter-school collaboration reflect that it aims at exchanging resources and knowledge and coordinating activities and efforts to broadening opportunities to solve problems and achieve school improvement. While the results indicate the significance of relationship building in the context of the Jordanian schools this aspect is not explicitly addressed as a goal in the reviewed literature. The fact that the participants singled it out as a crucial goal of inter-school collaboration suggests that this emphasis is shaped by the context. Particularly, the context of private schools in Jordan, where competition among schools is reported to be pronounced, establishing relationships is an important goal to develop a climate more conducive for initiating and sustaining inter-school collaboration. The emphasis of the participants on relationship building as a key aim of inter-school collaboration is also a reflection of the cultural context of the collectivist culture in the Arab region where relationship building is a highly valued norm, and an end by itself rather than a mean to valued ends.

Interestingly, relationship building also emerged as one of the drivers pointing out that the participants also see it as a means towards their aim as well. Hofstede (1986; 2001) work on the dominant cultural characteristics of certain region suggests that the Arab culture places a high value on collectivism and interpersonal relationships. This can explain identifying relationship building both as a foundational aim as well as a strategy that drives inter-school collaboration in the context of Jordan.

Comparison of the results pertaining to the collaborative activities and learning processes that the schools engaged in as part of their inter-school collaboration reveals both similarities and differences with those reported in the literature. Namely, there are similarities in terms of following a staged collaborative, inquiry-based process but differences in one of the stages that the participants completed in the Arabic Teaching Improvement (ATI) project. Specifically, Hub members reported that they followed the TAMAM Improvement Journey, a strategy that consists of a series of stations with embedded action research cycles. Adopting a collaborative inquiry cycle is considered in the literature reviewed (Ciampa & Gallagher, 2016; Rincón-Gallardo & Fullan, 2016; Stoll, 2010), an effective strategy to be used during inter-school collaboration. Stoll (2010) highlights collaborative inquiry as one of the main processes and activities for connecting learning communities whereby educators decide on a common issue as an inquiry focus and commit to exploring it together using common methodology. Similar to what Stoll (2010) outlines, the participants used the TAMAM Improvement Journey as a staged process that includes identifying a shared problem, its causes, and manifestations, followed by generating an "ideal scenario" and setting a shared improvement goal based on which they design an innovative intervention with improvement and operational objectives aimed at resolving the problem and achieving improvement. The latter stages of the Improvement Journey include setting a "monitoring and evaluation plans" with performance indicators and implementation of the set plans. Similarly, Rincón-Gallardo and Fullan (2016) also present collaborative inquiry as a process that involves four stages: identifying a problem of practice, designing and testing changes in practice, accumulating evidence of impact, and identifying the next problem of practice. Ciampa and Gallagher (2016) detail how

teachers proceed through four stages in this inquiry cycle guided by: (1) identifying the problem; (2) collecting evidence; (3) analyzing evidence; and (4) reflecting, sharing, and celebrating. Scholars agree that using cycles of inquiry improved the effectiveness of their collaboration (Coburn & Stein, 2010). Ciampa and Gallagher (2016) highlight that effective collaboration between schools uses cycles of inquiry not only to improve practice but to change systems and structures that maintain the status quo. Additionally, they recommend it as an effective strategy to increase teachers' self-efficacy and enhance learning.

Despite the noted similarities with the literature there are some differences in the inquiry cycle which the participants considered essential to the inter-school collaboration process. Distinctively, the TAMAM Improvement Journey has a separate station for the collective formation of an “ideal scenario” and improvement goals pertaining to the specific problem of practice the schools are working on. This “station” in the “TAMAM Improvement Journey” provides a chance for the school improvement teams to think and reflect on the ideal situation of the school once the identified improvement need is solved (Karami-Akkary et al., 2018). Based on the data analysis, this station plays a significant role in facilitating dialogue among the participants and helps to establish a shared vision of the desired learner. According to the designers of the Journey, setting an ideal scenario provides the school improvement team members with a sense of importance of the work they are doing and the function they are enacting which in turn yields a positive impact on their satisfaction, commitment, empowerment as well as efficiency (Karami-Akkary et al., 2018). Furthermore, this station is reported to be beneficial in supporting the PST during their facilitation activities, enabling them to effectively address any issues or differences that arose among the Hub members.

Regarding the type of inter-school collaboration, the data indicate that the inter-school collaboration ATI project was initiated voluntarily among private schools and has been financially self-sustained by them, placing it under the “voluntary type” of inter-school collaboration proposed by Ainscow et al. (2006) and Muijs et al. (2010). Their categorization differentiates among the inter-school collaboration’s types based on the nature of their relationship stating that schools can engage in voluntary collaboration or collaborate in response to incentives or external pressures, such as a government mandate to collaborate. The Jordan Hub voluntary inter-school collaborations bare many characteristics of voluntary collaborations reported in the literature. These include: a lack of dominance of any school over the other, as they are typically similar in status (Muijs et al., 2011); goals that are shared and not subject to external mandates, where mutual benefits are a primary focus (Armstrong, 2015); external support that consists of actions aimed at accompanying and motivating network coordinators (Sartory et al., 2017); as well as funding that is not tied to external agencies. Worth noting that most of international and regional studies reviewed reported instances of inter-school collaboration that are driven by central government mandate initiating the collaboration formally, in several instances reporting on cases of poor performing schools partnering with higher performing schools, accompanied with the presence of incentives to initiate the collaboration (Ainscow et al., 2006 as cited by Armstrong, 2015; Atkinson et al., 2007). As such, the voluntary nature of the Jordan Hub inter-school collaboration offers a contribution especially to the existing knowledge base in the Arab region presenting a model that reflects broad based leadership driving this initiative. This approach to leadership is found to facilitate the scalability and sustainability of its impact (Lambert, 1998; 2003).

Additionally, the data reveal similarities in the governance form of the Jordan Hub inter-school collaboration with the reviewed literature while pointing at a few distinguishing characteristics. Like what is reported in the literature, the Jordan Hub inter-school collaboration has a well- defined governance structure with assigned roles and responsibilities among its participants, as well as coordination mechanisms that ensure proper communication channels among all participating members. According to the reviewed literature most inter-school collaborations involve the establishment of management structures and assigned roles that vary depending on the type and goals of the collaboration (Armstrong, 2015; Atkinson et al., 2007). Based on the literature, these governance structures can be placed on a continuum, with "hard federations" on one end where schools give up some degree of autonomy and decision-making power to a central governing body, and more "loosely structured" arrangements on the other end where decision-making power is decentralized (Armstrong, 2015; Chapman & Muijs, 2014; Hill et al., 2012; Lindsay et al., 2007). In this regard, it is clear that the governance structure followed by the Jordan Hub inter-school collaboration is loosely structured and decision making is shared both among the schools and between the Hub and the PST as their university-based facilitators. The data also reveal a participatory approach to decision making and a decentralized authority structure where no decision is taken without the consensus of all the participants. Additionally, the data show that the form of governance adopted by the Jordan Hub team is not pre-imposed or mandated at the initiations stage by an outside entity. Unlike what the mapping of the existing literature reveals, especially in the Arab region, this structure was gradually built, emerging in response to the stage and demands of the formation of the inter-school collaboration. Moreover, it was characterized by a balance between using shared

procedures and honoring individual school differences. The data also reveal a loosely structured governance that assigns specific roles and responsibilities to the participants and employs various coordination mechanisms and channels to facilitate communication among the schools and between the schools and the university-based facilitators who are providing coaching support to the Hub members. The structure also includes assigning a liaison role for a representative from each school to facilitate the coordination and communication between the school and the other members of the Hub and between the school and the university-based facilitators. Additionally, the data analysis shows that some schools voluntarily initiated internal coordination structures to complement the ones forming at the Hub level to maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of the implementation of the inter-school collaboration activities and the channeling of information in their schools. Unlike the models reviewed in the region and internationally that include a structure mandated by the formal authority initiating the inter-school collaboration, the Jordan Hub inter-school collaboration initiative's structure was gradually and voluntarily constructed over a period of time in response to emerging needs and challenges faced by its member. Adopting this emerging approach in building the governance of the inter-school collaboration might be attributed to the absence of established models to follow in the Jordanian school culture. Moreover, following this approach might reflect the member commitment to their role as innovators and change agents and to their self-declared abidance by the TAMAM model approach. In fact, the TAMAM model guides educators leading the implementation of innovative intervention to take on an experiential learning approach which involves using data to capture conditions and phenomena, reflecting on it, and conceptualizing it as a foundation for designing an action plan (Karami-Akkary et al., 2012). Decisions on

what structures to use, such as organizing the financing of the Hub activities or ensuring the coherence and solidity of the team, were made while following this experiential process.

Drivers of Inter-school Collaboration

This section will discuss the findings under the third research question which aimed to explore the participants' perception of the drivers that led them to initiate inter-school collaboration. Most scholars don't differentiate between the "drivers" and the "conditions" needed to sustain the collaboration between schools. However, the researcher opted to inquire about drivers as separate from the conditions. Notably, the participants' answers reinforced that decision showing a description of the drivers that clearly distinguishes them from the factors and conditions that influence this initiative. While there are similarities between the drivers for inter-school collaboration identified in this study and those reported in the literature reviewed (Atkinson et al., 2007), the findings substantially expand on those reported in the literature and fill in the existing knowledge gap especially in the context of the Arab region.

The drivers identified in this study echoes to a great extent what is reported in the reviewed literature (Atkinson et al., 2007). An urgent need to what is perceived as a complex and chronic problem constitute the initial drive for the voluntary initiation of the central collaborative activity of the Jordan Hub. The previous history of partnership among the Hub schools served as an incentive to instigate further collaboration among them. The Jordan Hub coordinator served as a catalyst and source of inspiration persuading the participating schools to embark on a collaborative Improvement Journey. The status and identity of the participating schools as successful innovative schools in their community encouraged the participants to transform their urge to

compete into a drive to learn together and from each other. The data also reveal that a sense of mission brought them together, and that they all consider finding solutions to a problem of practice that goes beyond their own schools and that is an acute need in the broader community a main drive for the inter-school collaboration.

In what follows, I will discuss the drivers that instigated the inter-school collaboration among the Jordan Hub schools under five titles that build on the themes from this study. These are: (1) history of positive experiences with professional collaboration, (2) long-term involvement in a professional community, (3) presence of an internal activist-advocate, (4) centrality and urgency of a shared problem of practice, and (5) support of external university-based facilitators. Interestingly the findings of the study reveal that these drivers influenced the initiation of the inter-school collaboration successively, one building on the previous, a notion that was clearly missing in the reviewed literature.

History of positive experiences with professional collaborations

In line with what is found in the reviewed literature, the Jordan Hub members reported that their prior positive experiences with collaboration was a driver for engaging in the inter-school collaboration initiative. Atkinson et al. (2007) report that experiences with existing partnerships or a previous history of partnership act as drivers to instigate further collaboration between schools. However, there is no mention in the reviewed literature of the specific aspect that makes the past experience a catalyst for experimenting with new forms of professional collaboration. Analysis of the data reveal that the Hub members viewed the participation in the inter-school collaboration ATI project as an opportunity to maintain the relationships they had among each other and build upon the positive experiences associated with them. Findings also portray

relationship building as a successful strategy that facilitated the initiation of this collaboration. As mentioned earlier this interest in relationship building reveal characteristics unique to the Arab context and can be considered an aspect that expand on the existing understanding of drivers of inter-school collaborations.

Long-term involvement in TAMAM professional community

All participants in the study affirmed that their long-term involvement in TAMAM professional community was one of the main drivers for their engagement in inter-school collaboration. There are no studies that considered membership in a professional community a driver for taking part in inter-school collaboration. However, the Jordan Hub members credited their long-term participation in TAMAM for driving their inter-school collaboration initiative explaining that TAMAM provides them with a shared vision, an approach to school improvement, and most importantly a valuing for professional collaboration.

According to the participants, TAMAM professional community became a platform through which they participate in meetings that involved colleagues from other schools offering them positive experiences that prepared them for the current inter-school collaboration. The findings also show that engagement in TAMAM allowed the participants to acquire certain skills and competencies which reduced their concerns about change and increased their readiness to initiate the inter-school collaboration. In fact, the long-term involvement in TAMAM exposed the Hub participants to the TAMAM's capacity-building program which prepared them to become change leaders and active inquirers to solve their problems (Karami-Akkary et al., 2018). The program design also provides participants with continuous support enabling them to actively seek out new opportunities for improvement. Thus, it comes as no surprise that the Hub

members identified this long-term participation as a driver to engage in the ATI innovative project especially that it came with the promised support from the TAMAM Project Steering Team. Additionally, this finding explains the scarcity of inter-school collaborations in the context of the Arab region where there is absence of professional associations, and where even opportunities for informal membership in a professional community are very rare. This reality renders the participating schools experience with TAMAM unique and suggests that upholding professional collaboration as a value and a strategy for learning and improvement can prepare educators to drive innovative inter-school collaboration initiatives. On the other hand, membership in a professional community as a driver for inter-school collaboration might not hold the same importance in the Western culture where engaging in professional associations and network is more common than in the Arab region. This might explain why participants in inter-school collaboration in the Western context are less likely to identify it as a driver and more likely to enlist it just as a factor associated with it.

Presence of an Internal Advocate -Activist

Data reveal that the Jordan Hub coordinator played a significant role in driving the inter-school collaboration, due to her activist stance while advocating for the transformational change brought forth by the inter-school collaboration initiative and the Arabic Teaching Improvement project. In the literature on drivers for inter-school collaboration, there is no mention of this role nor of its characteristics. In fact, studies reporting on Western inter-school collaboration initiatives mainly in England mostly focus on models of inter-school collaboration that are centrally driven by formal government mandates from districts or local educational authorities and on incentives presented by formal authorities (Armstrong et al., 2021). There is no mention for a role

similar to the informal leadership role played by the Hub coordinator, using her referent power, social capital, and relationship within and outside the Hub to encourage her colleagues to embark on this experiential inquiry- based collaboration. The participants described the Jordan Hub coordinator as being passionate about the need for school reform and forthcoming in expressing her innovative ideas among the school principals. Her activist stance allowed her to be resilient and engaging the Hub school principals in multiple discussions to convince them to commit to the collaboration initiative. Additionally, pushing for transformational change that challenges the status quo on many levels in these schools and requires long-term commitment and funding, necessitated an internal advocate who is familiar with the schools, understands the context, and has good relationships to convince the key decision makers in these schools to invest in this initiative.

Considering the above, the need for this informal/ activist role to drive the initiation of the inter-school collaboration in the context of Jordan is justifiable. In the absence of similar initiatives as models to follow, and of formal authorities mandating this form of collaboration like is the case in Western countries (Armstrong et al., 2021), it takes the brave and persistent effort of an activist to initiate innovative interventions.

Centrality and Urgency of a Shared Problem of Practice

Similar to what is reported in the reviewed literature, the fact that the participants selected a shared problem of practice they perceive as urgent, served as a driving force for initiating the inter-school collaboration. However, the data reveal an affective dimension to this driver for inter-school collaboration when participants justified the urgency of the problem of practice by linking it to enhancing the cultural identity of the schools.

The data confirm that all participants reached a shared sense of urgency for improving Arabic teaching after validating their long-held concerns with data they collected and analyzed from their schools. The reviewed literature indicates that addressing urgent challenges is a common driver for initiating inter-school collaboration (Ainscow et al, 2006 as cited in Armstrong, 2015; Atkinson et al, 2007), with student learning often selected as the focus of collaboration (Chapman & Allen, 2006; Muijs, 2015; Rincón-Gallardo & Fullan, 2016; West, 2010). In fact, the data highlight that all Hub members agreed on the inadequacy of current practices in their respective schools to meet their aspirations which acted as the root of their drive for enhancing the teaching of Arabic language.

On the other hand, documented data during their inquiry cycle to identify a need for improvement, revealed frequent references to the role of language proficiency in building the students cultural identity and culminated in the Hub teams including the socio-cultural dimension among the ATI project targeted outcomes. This concern for the “cultural” impact of the challenges with Arabic language acquisition reflects a growing sense of crisis within Arab societies for the declining quality of Arabic language (Ministry of Culture and Youth, 2018). The participants expressed passionate concern for the Arabic identity adds an affective dimension to their data driven decision to resolve this problem. The role of affect in enhancing the motivation and commitment for leading change is increasingly supported in the literature (Karami-Akkary et al., 2019), rendering this additional dimension identified for this driver significant to report.

Support of University-Based External Facilitators

The findings show that the external university-based facilitators played a key role in driving the inter-school collaboration. Similarly, the reviewed literature points

out that external agents often act as drivers for inter-school collaboration. However, there is no specific mention about the nature of this role of these external agents when they are university-based facilitators, making this finding an extension to the available literature.

The data show that the PST played a role in initiating the inter-school collaboration. The direct contribution included facilitating the communication among the schools' teams while they were exploring their engagement in the inter-school collaboration. The indirect contribution involved providing timely support to the Hub coordinator to enhance her effectiveness as a key driver of the initiative. While the examined literature talked about the influence of external agents in initiating the inter-school collaboration (Atkinson et al., 2007; Jopling & Hadfield, 2015) it doesn't specify the role of these external facilitators when they are university-based coaches and researchers. Additionally, the available literature on the role of university-based facilitators often focus on the role they can play beyond the inception phase considering it one of the factors associated with effective inter-school collaboration (Armstrong, 2015; Rincón-Gallardo & Fullan, 2016; Sartory et al., 2017; West, 2010).

The results of the study show that the reason that the university-based facilitators were identified as drivers of the inter-school collaboration is that they are perceived by the Hub participants to be a trusted source of expertise with a proven record of contributions that the participants witnessed firsthand throughout their participation in TAMAM. All participants attributed their trust in the external facilitators to their affiliation with a reputable university in the region. The data also show that an additional source of trust in the facilitators is related to personal characteristics beyond their observed expertise, namely, their passion and dedication

while facilitating the collaborative process. In fact, the reported effectiveness of the PST in earning the Hub members trust might have resulted from their ability to attend to the participant's affect as they were preparing to take their first steps in leading a change initiative. According to a study by Karami-Akkary et al. (2019), emotions play a critical role in determining how members receive and experience change initiatives leading scholars to recommend that they are attended to so that they don't turn into impediments.

Additionally, the findings highlight the coordination role played by the university-based facilitators considering it a driver for the initiation of the inter-school collaboration. In fact, studies have shown that coordinators can act as a 'bridging social capital' in strengthening networks and are successful when establishing their credibility and building positive relationships with the schools (Greany, 2015). This finding serves as another affirmation of the potential that trusting personal relationships hold as a strategy to support those driving change initiative. Positive relationships are found to address their concerns, mitigate their fear of change, and trigger their intrinsic motivation to convince them to drive such initiative forward.

Factors Associated with Shaping Inter-school Collaboration

This section will discuss the findings under research question four on the factors associated with engaging in effective inter-school collaboration. In line with the literature reviewed, there are key factors that need to be in place to engage people in inter-school collaboration to fulfill the desired results intended from it (Armstrong 2021, Atkinson et al., 2007; Rincón-Gallardo & Fullan, 2016; Stoll, 2010). The study associates the presence of these factors with successful initiation of collaboration, while pointing out that their absence posed challenges. The factors identified in this study

echoed to a great extent what was mentioned in the literature reviewed. However, the study identifies additional factors and others that give further details on the factors identified in the literature.

Data affirms that there are structural and cultural factors that are pivotal in driving purposeful collaboration between schools. It also points at the importance of the support provided by the school leadership expanding it to include the critical role that the TAMAM Lead Team played to motivate others to engage in collaboration beyond their own schools and offer assistance to overcome existing organizational barriers. Lastly, the presence of external university-based facilitators, along with the expertise of an Arabic Teaching content expert coach provided expertise, mentoring and coordination support, and was viewed to be pivotal in shaping the initiative and setting it up for success. The researcher will compare these factors with the existing literature on both the enabling factors and challenges to highlight the similarities and point out new insights that are unique to this innovative experience and reflective of its cultural context.

In what follows, the researcher will discuss the factors found to be associated with inter-school collaboration among Jordan Hub schools under the following titles: (1) structural factors, (2) cultural factors, (3) the critical role of school level leadership, (4) the external support and facilitation received.

Structural Factors

The findings highlight the significance of time, space, and the schools' institutional arrangements as structural factors that are necessary for effective engagement in inter-school collaboration among the Jordan Hub schools. This is consistent with the findings of the studies reviewed, which identify these structural factors either under facilitators or hindrances to the collaboration process. In line with

literature, the participants reported the time allocated to engage in the inter-school collaboration, the space to meet with the different schools as well as the institutional policies and procedures as crucial structural factors essential for effective inter-school collaboration. The participants also shared different examples showing that the inattention to these factors led to challenges at the level of the school. Similarly, the literature review indicates that time (Aiston et al., 2002; LGA Educational Research Programme & National Foundation for Educational Research, 2004), space (LGA Educational Research Programme & National Foundation for Educational Research, 2004), and institutional arrangements and procedures (Murphy, 2015) are structural factors that must be set favorably to facilitate inter-school collaboration. The literature also emphasizes that overlooking these factors could lead to significant challenges for those involved in the collaboration.

The findings mostly overlap with the factors reported in the literature about the importance of allocating time and space to facilitate the inter-school collaborative activities. Participants emphasized the importance of allocating the needed time to engage in inter-school collaboration pointing out the challenges they faced because existing school schedules and workload policies restricted the time available to engage in collaborative work beyond their school. In addition, and similar to the findings of the literature reviewed, participants highlight the importance of designating appropriate space to facilitate collaborative interactions. Physical and post COVID-19 virtual space were mentioned by participants including meetings held in the university, or hosted in one of the schools' auditoriums, as well as virtually on zoom. They expressed their preference for in-person meetings especially when deep discussions are needed around controversial issues that emerge during the project implementation. Participants

expressed their relief for the availability of on-line platforms that made frequent interactions feasible for the collaborative activities especially during the pandemic. However, they emphasized the importance of in-person meetings that the university as well as their schools were able to provide especially in the early stages of the initiation of the inter-school collaboration. As the data reveal, both types of spaces were made available for the Hub participants to conduct regular meetings where they brainstormed, negotiated their plans, discussed their results, and received orientation and training from the PST and the expert coaches. Similarly, Stoll (2010) reported that virtual space now allows “networks of users of the internet connect and communicate” and suggests to “rethink the meaning of location and space” (p. 480). Thus, the variation experienced in the spatial arrangements (physical or on-line) is an enrichment on the pre-COVID-19 pandemic literature that mainly reported on physical space as a structural factor for successful inter-school collaboration. It also offers additional strategies on how to make “space” for the inter-school collaboration available and turn it into an enabling factor (Stoll, 2010).

On the other hand, differences between the findings and the reviewed literature are more notable regarding the factor pertaining to introducing modifications in the school institutional arrangements to allow the school teams to conduct the activities needed for the initiations and implementation of the inter-school collaboration ATI project. While there is clear agreement between the findings and that of the literature reviewed on the importance of modifying the institutional arrangements to remove potential barriers and to ensure successful implementation (Murphy, 2015), there is a difference in the recommended timing for making the changes in these arrangements. The literature emphasizes the importance of building a governance structure to facilitate

collaborative activity between schools and added to the list of enabling factors. Scholars recommend that negotiating changes in structures, processes, roles, and expectations should be addressed at the inception of the inter-school collaboration initiative (Armstrong; 2021), which contrasts with the findings of this study where they were addressed in later stages of the process.

Based on the findings, attention to governance was gradual among the participants and requesting structural changes emerged at a later stage of the initiation of the inter-school collaboration activities rather than at its inception as recommended in the literature. Data reveal that participants were conservative in their demands for institutional arrangements, and even for pointing them out as a source of challenge at the start of the ATI project. However, as the project launching progressed concerns for structural challenges began to be voiced, triggering considerations for governance. In fact, the findings report that the roles and procedures for the inter-school collaboration emerged organically in response to these rising concerns especially when the time came to enlarge the membership of the participating school teams by calling on the Arabic teachers to join.

One reason for this difference could be attributed to the voluntary nature of this inter-school collaboration initiative, as opposed to many Western initiatives reported in the examined literature where top-down mandates by formal local authorities initiate collaboration among schools. Additionally, and given the reported scarcity of inter-school collaboration in the context of the Arab region, the Hub members had no existing schema of how it looks like and what kind of demands it can trigger. The Jordan Hub inter-school collaboration initiative was an innovative experiment even within the context of the TAMAM professional community. Therefore, the participants

could not rely on existing experiences to build a priori a full-fledged governance structure to facilitate collaborative activities. As a result, they gradually responded to the emerging challenges setting the governance structure that helps them overcome the barriers faced. Consequently, roles and responsibilities were clarified, coordination procedures established, and communication channels opened and formalized.

Another reason for the observed delay in setting the governance structure might be the awareness among the participants of the risks that might accompany their premature demands for structural changes and an attempt to proceed cautiously on this front. Being all trained in leading change, the university facilitators as well as the Hub participants are all aware of the dissonance that innovative ideas encapsulating major shifts in practices and theory in use can generate and of the resistance that this dissonance can trigger among their colleagues and within their schools (Sarafidou & Nikolaidis, 2009). Changes to roles or structures imposed from the outset may have triggered resistance among the Hub principals and may have affected their interest in supporting this daring endeavor. Actually, research on effective change advance that providing flexible governance structure that allows for experiential learning and evolving design planning is essential for the change success and sustainability (Berman & McLaughlin, 1974; McLaughlin 1990; Seashore Louis et al., 1999; Wilson & Daviss, 1994). While acknowledging that the actions of the participants in the inter-school collaboration are reflective of their context, and responsive to the nature of the improvement activity they are collaborating on, this finding challenges the current practice as well as the recommendations of scholars to start with a set governance. It also invites consideration to adopt a loosely coupled structure that distributes roles and specifies minimal coordination procedures while remaining responsive to the

experiential learning cycle and the emerging needs during the implementation of the inter-school collaboration. This requires a balance between setting the necessary governance structure and its gradual customization to remain flexibly accommodating to the emerging needs of the participants and the contextual demands of the schools participating in the collaborative initiative. Therefore, this finding of the study deserves consideration and further investigation.

Cultural Factors

In line with the literature, the findings reveal several cultural factors that are essential for the success of the inter-school collaboration. The reviewed literature identified cultural factors to be essential to effective inter-school collaboration (Chapman & Allen, 2006; LGA educational research programme, & National foundation for educational research, 2004). Similarly, the study highlights three factors affecting the initiation and implementation of successful collaboration: (1) familiarity with the change process and readiness to tolerate uncertainty, (2) collaboration as a professional norm among participating schools, and (3) collaboration as an organizational norm at the individual school level. These findings will be discussed considering the reviewed literature where they are reported either as essential factors for success or challenges if absent.

The findings reveal that the familiarity among most of the Hub participants with the change process and their readiness to tolerate uncertainty facilitated their role in initiating the inter-school collaboration initiative. The data show the Lead Teams' readiness to engage in change and experimentation because of their earlier participation in TAMAM and familiarity with the experiential process (Karami-Akkary et al., 2012). They pointed out that the skills acquired in TAMAM made them accept that uncertainty

prevails throughout the implementation of innovative initiatives. Many scholars consider these skills essential for giving participants the capacity to initiate, implement, and sustain change (Lieberman & McLaughlin, 1992). In affirmation to these results, the reviewed literature highlighted that risk taking is essential when delving into new activities, processes, or technologies in order to safeguard creativity and innovation among the collaborating partners (West, 2010).

Additionally, the findings emphasize the importance of collaboration as a fundamental professional norm that must be present not only at the individual school level but also shared among the participating schools to enable successful inter-school collaboration. The participants talked about several instances where they demonstrated adopting this professional norm linking it to the values of the TAMAM professional community and its “pillars.”

Despite the organizational diversity among the six schools participating in the inter-school collaboration, their membership in the TAMAM professional community provided them with a set of professional norms that they espoused and reported enacting. All Hub members associated their preparedness for the inter-school collaboration with their familiarity with professional collaboration as a competency and professional norm. TAMAM informally built a professional culture that values collaboration and provided the Hub members with a connecting thread that helped them to collaborate within and across the organizational boundaries of their schools. This finding is consistent with the literature, which has also highlighted the significance of a collaborative culture within the individual schools to expand the impact of the learning (Earl & Katz, 2006, as cited in Stoll, 2010) and among schools (West, 2010) as a prerequisite for effective inter-school collaboration.

The Critical Role of School Level Leadership

The findings of this study, as well as the reviewed literature (Atkinson et al., 2007; Chapman & Allen, 2006; Katz & Earl, 2010; Muijs, 2015; Rincón-Gallardo & Fullan, 2016; Stoll, 2010), emphasize the crucial role leaders at the school level play in promoting effective inter-school collaboration. However, the reviewed literature focus more on the role of leaders in formal positions rather than the role of members motivated to engage in collaboration beyond their own schools.

The findings indicate that the belief of school principals in the added value of the initiative, their close follow-up and involvement in collaborative activities, and their active support in overcoming organizational barriers were central in facilitating the work and addressing challenges. However, the focus in the literature on the formal role of school principals is not echoed in the findings. Two of the principals' roles mentioned in the literature to be facilitating the inter-school collaboration are exercised in this study through an informal leadership role by the TAMAM Lead Team members. The two roles are encouraging and motivating members to engage in inter-school collaboration and monitoring collaborative activities and agendas (Armstrong et al., 2021). This constitutes a promising addition to the existing literature limited mention of the type of roles played through distributed leadership (Katz & Earl, 2010). By repositioning facilitation of the inter-school collaboration within a more distributive conception of leadership (Lambert, 1998; 2003), it is more likely to yield effective and sustainable improvement (Lambert, 2007; Lovell, Topping & Bondy, 2021).

Based on the findings, TAMAM Lead Team members, who are not necessarily in formal leadership positions in their schools, contributed to facilitating the inter-school collaboration through exercising leadership acts beyond their formal roles as

teachers. Participants' responses as well as PST progress reports show that most TAMAM Lead Team members played different leadership roles to support the progress of this initiative. They acted as champions and advocates to the goals of the inter-school collaboration initiative and as catalysts motivating their colleagues, especially the Arabic Leaders and teachers, to engage in the ATI project. They also took charge of monitoring the implementation of its planned activities and provided responsive support to the Arabic Leaders and teachers who joined the project at later stages and acted as reference and resource in each school. Some TAMAM Lead Teams members even played the role of mediators to clarify divergent points of view, decrease the impact of some challenges on the participants and encourage others to venture into progressing to next steps. The unsolicited leadership acts of the Lead Team members can be explained by the leadership capacity they acquired through their long-term involvement in TAMAM. In fact, TAMAM capacity building model is designed to prepare school level practitioners regardless of their formal leadership roles for leading change at their school. This results in broadening the base of leadership practices especially among the Lead Team members who have undergone this training (Karami-Akkary et al., 2016). This acquired leadership also explains the variation in the level of engagement of members involved in the inter-school collaboration initiative based on their history with TAMAM.

Additionally, the TAMAM Lead Team members ownership for the inter-school collaboration is found to trigger their leadership acts to facilitate the launching and implementation of this innovative initiative. The presence of the TAMAM Lead Team members in each of the participating schools has alleviated the scope of responsibilities of the principals in terms of providing the needed support for the project

implementation. In fact, the findings of this study indicate that, despite the supportive role of school principals in promoting the inter-school collaboration initiative, they were not necessarily involved in the day-to-day operations of the collaborative activities.

In sum, the findings affirm that the school principals has a pivotal role in promoting and supporting the inter-school collaboration, yet it highlights that this leadership role was also distributed among members in the school especially those who have the leadership skills and the needed competencies to drive this innovative initiative and sustain its impact in the school, such as the TAMAM lead Team members in the case of this study. The extended leadership roles undertaken by the TAMAM Lead Team members as advocates for the inter-school collaboration as well as mediators were pivotal to facilitate the inter-school collaboration activities among all the participating schools.

The External Support and Facilitation Received

The findings highlight the key role played by the external facilitators describing the multifaceted supportive nature of the role they exercised. Similarly, the literature reviewed point out the role of external facilitators as essential to support the inter-school collaborations (Armstrong, 2015; Atkinson et al., 2017; Muijs et al., 2011; Sartory et al., 2017) and note the variety of roles those facilitators can take. However, in the literature consulted, the role of the external facilitators is mostly played by local authorities within a mandated inter-school collaboration form (Atkinson et al., 2007). As a result, there is no specific mention of the role of university-based facilitators acting as external agents. Additionally, expert assistance is only mentioned in the literature as one of the roles external facilitators can play (Sartory et al., 2017). On the other hand, the findings differentiate between the role of the university-based facilitators and that of

a designated content Expert Coach who has the specialized expertise needed to assist the schools in solving their problem of practice. This differentiation provides rich data on the nature of the contribution each of the types of coaches made while facilitating the inter-school collaboration. As such, this rich data constitutes a significant extension to the available literature.

The findings of the study show that university-based facilitators played a multifaceted role. They provided guidance on setting directions and goals for the collaboration, worked towards establishing positive relationships among the participating schools, offered relevant expert assistance, and coordinated activities between the schools. In addition, they encouraged the schools to participate in TAMAM's professional network's wider activities. Finally, the facilitators employed a mentoring approach, offering feedback and support to the schools in achieving their objectives. This multifaceted role of university-based facilitators identified in the study is consistent on many fronts with the broad categories of roles found in the literature for the external facilitators. Atkinson et al. (2007) identified various roles that can be played by external facilitators to support collaborations, including providing support and advice, serving as a conduit for information exchange, providing funding and resources, brokering collaborations, and providing leadership and management. As for the expert coaching, participants noted the importance of her trustworthy profile due to her knowledge and experience in the field. They reported that her expertise instilled a sense of confidence and trust in the participants which encouraged them to venture in adopting the innovative solutions proposed by the content expert coach. This aligns with the expert assistance function that the literature identifies as part of the role of

external facilitators in general (Atkinson et al., 2007); however, the detailed description of the content Expert Coach role expanded on this function.

The subsequent sections will discuss the distinct roles played by the university-based facilitators and the content expert coach, elucidating how these roles contributed to the advancement of the inter-school collaboration and its related activities.

University-Based Facilitators

Participants responses depicted the following manifestations of the university-based facilitators role: (1) setting goals and directions, (2) building a positive relationship among the schools, (3) providing relevant expert assistance, (4) coordinating activities, (5) engaging the schools in TAMAM professional network, and (6) following a mentoring approach. These facets broadly align with the roles of the external facilitators discussed in the examined literature. However, the findings provide additional details on the functions associated with these roles and the approach followed for their enactment. These details are a reflection of the design of the TAMAM capacity building model and the coaching approach it follows (Karami-Akkary et al., 2012; Karami-Akkary et al., 2013). The findings show that the university-based coaches followed the TAMAM School Improvement Journey and provided continuous support for the teams. These functions will be further examined and discussed in the subsequent sections.

Setting Goals and Directions. The findings reveal that establishing clear goals and maintaining a sense of direction are crucial roles played by the PST in initiating and sustaining the inter-school collaboration. The data reveal that the PST played a major role in continuously engaging the participants in setting shared improvement goals and establishing clear outcomes for the ATI innovative project that constitutes the focal

activity of the inter-school collaboration. These roles align with two dimensions in Sartory et al.'s (2017) theoretical framework that promises to build members' autonomy and establish ownership by connecting the goals of the inter-school collaboration to the school vision.

While playing these roles, the PST employed a variety of strategies to ensure that clear goals and directions were established and that differences among the participating schools were accommodated. The strategies used are similar to those in Sartory et al.'s (2017) study and include multiple meetings to ensure that all members of the Hub have a shared understanding of the goals and the relevance of the collaboration to their respective schools. In addition, individual meetings with schools were conducted to ensure that everyone was moving in the same direction. As Sartory et al. (2017) highlights, these meetings establish significance and build autonomy among the collaborating schools. In addition to meetings, the findings reveal that following a shared well delineated strategy for school improvement, the TAMAM Improvement Journey, is viewed to be an effective approach to set shared goals and provide direction and guidance for next steps. Thus, this finding contributes to the current literature, particularly when the schools' focus during the inter-school collaboration is to work on common improvement projects.

Building a Positive Relationship among the Schools. The findings emphasize the importance of building positive relationships among schools in order to facilitate successful inter-school collaboration. Similarly, this role resonates with the role played by external agents in the literature consulted with respect to being a “conduit for information exchange” and “brokering collaborations” (Atkinson et al., 2007; Stoll, 2010). In fact, the study participants reported that the PST actively engaged in conflict

resolution, attending to any power struggles, personality clashes, or misunderstandings that arose thus playing a critical role in ensuring the teams progressed with the inter-school collaborative initiative.

As for the strategies followed while performing this role, the findings show that the PST primarily relied on the frequency and consistency of the meetings and conducted both in-person and virtual meetings to respond to emerging needs. These constant and rich interactions enhanced the relationship of trust between the PST and the schools and their ability to facilitate the collaboration activities. The findings show that as external facilitators, the PST repeatedly reminded the participants to keep the focus on their shared improvement goals strengthening the common grounds among the participating schools. The PST's approach was described as being neutral and unbiased, with a "humanistic approach" that aimed to strengthen relationships among the schools. Additionally, the PST played a critical role in resolving conflict and mediating disagreements among the participants. This is apparent in the participants' responses that highlighted the role of the project director in providing reassurance to the participants during sessions, particularly when disagreements arose. Participants associated the effectiveness of the director in solving conflicts with her stance that is open-minded to the diversity of views, shows commitment to the goals of the initiative, and passionately assist all the participating members in the inter-school collaboration and serve them equitably and fairly. These findings resonate with effective supervision and with recommendations in the literature for attending to the relational aspect in the context of adopting a developmental approach conducive to school improvement (Glickman et al., 2011). Consequently, the descriptive details that the findings of the study offer on the strategies used by the PST contribute to the existing literature, which

is reported to have little “insight into the actualities of collaborative practice such as the brokering, development and nurturing of relationships and the organizational changes that materialize when schools collaborate” (Armstrong et al., 2021, p.345).

Providing Relevant Expert Assistance. Throughout the study, all participants agreed that the expertise of the facilitators has a crucial role in supporting their work and building their ability to engage in inter-school collaboration. Similarly, in the literature reviewed, this type of expert assistance is depicted to be in specific areas such as inquiry and data use and analysis (Stoll, 2010; Wohlstetter et al., 2003) or in arranging contacts with other expert facilitators (Sartory et al., 2017). In many other instances, the literature refers to this support as “support and guidance” and in few instances pointing out that it includes providing professional development to the participating schools (Atkinson et al., 2007). What is unique about the findings from this study is that while the university-based coaches played the expected expert role in being trainers and a resource to the participating school teams, their expertise as collaborative action researchers dominated their role. This is justified due to the innovativeness of the inter-school collaboration initiative among Jordan Hub schools in specific and the Arab region in general and the innovativeness of the ATI project the schools committed to collaborate on. This novelty necessitated that the PST engage in a process of discovery that relies heavily on literature and data collection for data driven decisions, hence co-constructing with participants the strategies to be followed especially at the inception of the inter-school collaboration initiative. This aspect is not echoed in the literature examined in the West given that it mostly reports on established inter-school collaboration models that are often pre-designed and mostly mandated by local authorities which leaves small room for research and experimentation during

implementation. In fact, to provide expert assistance, the PST enhanced their research-based knowledge on best practices, collected continuous data on the participants to inform their change management strategies during the inter-school collaboration initiative and to ensure their relevance to the participating teams and to the schools' context.

Coordinating Activities among Schools. The results of the study indicate that the university-based facilitators have a critical role in coordinating the activities of the inter-school collaboration among Jordan Hub members. This role is echoed in the literature examined as one of facilitating collaboration through conducting regular meetings (Atkinson et al., 2007). The findings reveal that the PST coordinated regular meetings to monitor the implementation of planned activities within the collaboration, as well as arranged periodic meetings among school principals. Notably, the study data highlight the PST's flexibility and willingness to reschedule meetings when necessary, accommodating the schools' needs and securing attendance of Hub members in all the collaborative activities. The appointment of a liaison representative from each school is also identified in the literature as a practical strategy to promote effective communication and collaboration among participating schools (Atkinson et al., 2007). The creation of a WhatsApp group named "TAMAM Jordan Hub" further facilitated communication and coordination among members. While the importance of the flexible nature of this coordination is emphasized in the study, it is not highlighted in the literature examined. What might explain this omission is the focus of the initiatives researched in the literature on including accountability as a factor to ensure the success of inter-school collaborations as reported by Muijs et al. (2011). It is very challenging to safeguard flexibility within established accountability systems. The literature examined

mostly report on external facilitators being local authorities supporting inter-school collaboration initiatives (Armstrong et al., 2021). These include prescribed rather than emerging procedures and include accountability measures that the schools and the facilitators must abide by. The voluntary nature of the Jordan Hub collaboration and the fact that schools were private institutions with external facilitators who had no official authority over them allowed for this flexibility to be enacted. Additionally, the collaborative action research approach followed by the PST considers schools as partners where the school members should be intrinsically motivated to drive change and achieve effectiveness and sustainability within the school and beyond.

Engaging the Schools in TAMAM Professional Network. The findings indicate that engaging the Jordan Hub members in the broader TAMAM professional network, a community of professionals, was crucial in supporting and facilitating their inter-school collaboration initiative. This role is echoed in the literature under “building social relatedness and group culture” and considered one of the role dimensions within Sartory et al.’s (2017) theoretical framework. In social relatedness, the external facilitators assist in creating a team culture and group identity that is reported to lead to a reciprocal, constructive working atmosphere. Measures mentioned in the literature include socializing and exchange events or mediation in case of conflicts between schools. Notably, the PST contributed to establishing this “social relatedness” (Sartory et al., 2017) by immersing the Jordan Hub inter-school collaboration team in the activities of the TAMAM professional community network. In fact, the PST helped the Hub team promote this collaboration among the broader TAMAM community through different methods, including presenting about this inter-school collaboration while highlighting that it is a unique experiment in the Arab region and disseminating within

the Network that it is fulfilling a strategic objective of the TAMAM network.

Additionally, sharing progress and regular updates and resources among the TAMAM professional community members allowed for the Hub members to receive encouragement and affirmation from the wider network community.

Following a Mentoring Approach. The findings highlight the mentoring approach used by the PST as pivotal in supporting the Jordan Hub members during the inter-school collaboration initiative. In the reviewed literature, the approach used by external facilitators is not presented separately yet is implied through the various roles mentioned. In fact, this approach could constitute the process embedded within the four roles identified by Sartory et al. (2017) specifically in building the school members' autonomy, establishing significance, providing them with the needed competencies and building social relatedness and group culture. This finding deserves to be reported separately, because of the abundant data the study provided about the PST facilitation role.

Mentoring is upheld as a foundational norm and a strategy in TAMAM for building leadership capacity for school-based improvement (Karami-Akkary et al., 2018). This mentoring approach consists of helping all members to progress in their task to reach their full potential through a partnership that is held by a bond of trust and respect and provides guidance and encouragement (Karami-Akkary et al., 2018). As such this approach is modeled by the PST and well understood by the TAMAM Lead Team members who have participated in the TAMAM capacity building program. In fact, the findings underscore that the PST mentoring approach was manifested in their ongoing efforts to understand the members of the Hub as learners and professionals, as well as the contextual factors affecting them. The participants praised the PST for

providing them with support, encouragement, and motivation. They appreciated the PST's ability of striking a balance between support and challenge, which is founded on trust, respect, and recognition of small accomplishments. Additionally, the data reveal that the PST provided feedback and guidance while allowing teams to exercise their agency. The PST referred to themselves as "cheerleaders" for the teams, as they offered positive reinforcement for every indication of progress. Moreover, the PST provided regular constructive feedback, particularly on the inquiry process, which was instrumental in facilitating the inter-school collaboration. Finally, the PST employed a differentiated communication approach, carefully considering the target audience, message, timing, and delivery method for each communication. These practices are likely to result in building the school members' autonomy, establishing significance, providing them with the needed competencies and building social relatedness and group culture as Sartory et al. (2017) theorized.

The Content Expert Coach Specialized Support

The findings highlight the positive role of the content expert coach in providing specialized support to the participating team members throughout the initiation process of the inter-school collaboration. The findings outline a role that goes beyond the expert assistance mentioned in the literature reviewed, as part of the external facilitators' roles (Sartory et al., 2017). The main extension to the expert assistance role lies in the fact that the content expert coach brings along a specialized focus on the improvement project that the schools have chosen as the focal activity for their collaboration. While the literature highlights "generic" skills for the external facilitators' technical assistance such as data analysis, the specialized assistance that the content Expert Coach provided centered on co-constructing with the participants an innovative intervention and on

providing customized coaching that specifically attends to the skills needed to implement the improvement project. In fact, the participants in the study identified two key aspects in relation to the role of the Expert Coach: her expertise with respect to the innovative solution proposed, and the strategy she followed for engaging participants in co-designing the solution.

The data show that given the complexity of the selected problem of practice, and the acknowledged inadequacy of the schools' current practices to address its challenges, there was a wide agreement among the Hub members that an expert coach known for her innovativeness is needed to secure the success of the initiative. The study shows that the trustworthy profile of the content expert coach being a renowned expert in the region and well-known among Jordan Hub schools played to her advantage making the Hub members accepting and even eager for the potential contribution of this expert coach towards the success of their inter-school collaboration initiative.

Furthermore, data reveal that the content expert coach followed "a unique" strategy and approach when she engaged the participants in co-designing the innovative solution. The findings show the participants satisfaction with the boot camp she conducted and with its impact on building consensus among Arabic Leaders and enhancing their ownership of the ATI project.

Interestingly, the above characteristics and the approach of the expert coach extend further the role of external facilitators in the existing literature. Considering the findings, the need to recruit a content expert coach with trustworthy profile and strong expertise as well as willingness to propose and experiment with innovative ideas is key when working with innovative inter-school collaboration initiatives especially when the problem of practice chosen is found to be complex with several failing attempt to

address it. Karami-Akkary (2014) have identified the lack of providing such assistance as a chronic problem in the design of reform initiatives in the Arab region. Overreliance on teachers during the implementation phase of innovative projects, and the limited support they receive is well established in the international literature (McLaughlin, 1990; 1998). This makes the extension of the technical assistance role to include a full-fledged involvement of an expert coach a valuable addition to the existing literature.

Emerging Impact from Inter-school Collaboration

This section will discuss the findings under research question five on the emerging impact from the inter-school collaboration during the initiation stage. The findings report positive views about the impact of the inter-school collaboration, indicating that its impact is gradual with the potential to affect various levels extending beyond the individual school level to impact the TAMAM Jordan Hub as a whole. The reported impact includes both the actual impact that the participants have begun to witness at the time of the study and impact that they aspire to achieve after implementation.

Mostly, the participants' perceptions of the impact align with the literature reviewed, which also reports positive views on the impact of inter-school collaboration (Armstrong, 2015), its gradual nature (Armstrong et al., 2021; Atkinson et al., 2007; Muijs et al., 2011), and its potential impact on different levels within (Armstrong, 2015; Armstrong et al., 2021), and at the system level triggering broader educational change (Stoll, 2010). However, the findings bring additional insights that enrich the existing literature at the level of both the school and the team, the Jordan Hub members, who implemented the inter-school collaboration, particularly in the context of the Arab region.

The findings reveal that the perceived impact of the inter-school collaboration encompassed various manifestations. At the school level, it entails enhancing leadership capacity, improving instructional and pedagogical skills, adopting shared professional language, introducing new structural arrangements, and enabling organizational renewal towards addressing systemic problems. Furthermore, the impact also encompassed the aspirations of the participants for their students to attain the learner profile they collectively developed. At the level of the TAMAM Jordan Hub and beyond, the findings reveal how the collaboration contributed to establishing a community of self-renewing schools in Jordan, aligned with the goals of the TAMAM Network.

In the following sections, the researcher will discuss in detail the impact under two main levels: impact at the school level and impact at the level of TAMAM Jordan Hub as an improvement professional community.

Impact at the School Level

Similar to the impact of inter-school collaboration at the school level in the literature, the impact emerging from the findings can be categorized under impact on the school members (Ainscow et al., 2006; Armstrong et al., 2021; Atkinson et al., 2007), the organization (Ainscow et al., 2006; Atkinson et al., 2007; Stoll, 2010; West 2010), and students (Ainscow et al., 2006; Armstrong, 2015; Atkinson et al., 2007). At the level of the school members the impact manifested in the development of the capacity of the participating members to lead school-based improvement. At the school level, both structural and normative impact were noted towards achieving the shared vision of a self-renewing school. The impact at the level of the student consisted of attaining the shared Arabic learner profile that the participants collaboratively

developed. The data collected yield more descriptive details under each category that expand on the available literature and contextualize it in the Arab region.

This section will discuss the impact at the school level reported under the following titles: (1) Impact on the school team, (2) Impact on the school as an institution, and lastly the (3) impact on students.

Impact on the School Team. The findings affirm that the inter-school collaboration is having an incremental positive impact on the members of the school team who engaged in the inter-school collaboration. Participants mainly pointed to the acquisition of leadership competencies for leading change and the enhancement of instructional and pedagogical skills in relation to the ATI project. These impacts are in line with the literature reviewed which report that participation in inter-school collaboration can have a positive impact on the members through building their leadership capacity (Stoll, 2010; West, 2010) and through enhancing their instructional and pedagogical skills (Ainscow et al., 2006; Brown & Poortman, 2018; Ciampa & Gallagher, 2016; LGA educational research programme, & National foundation for educational research, 2004; Vescio et al., 2008).

In line with the examined literature, the findings reveal different leadership acts that are strengthened through engaging in inter-school collaboration activities. Participants talked about their improved ability to manage change (West, 2010), and to respond to crisis (Ainscow et al., 2006). They also pointed at their enhanced ability to plan jointly, share and use one another's knowledge and work together on common goals (Katz & Earl, 2010; Stoll, 2010), as well as to sustain improvement (West, 2010), and strengthen agency to lead whole system change (Stoll, 2010). Lastly, the findings point at an

increase in the numbers of members with leadership roles thus leading to broad based leadership (Stoll, 2010; West, 2010).

Interestingly, the data analysis shows that the impact the inter-school collaboration had on their leadership capacity to lead school improvement specified TAMAM leadership competencies (Karami-Akkary et al., 2012). Participants affirmed that through the inter-school collaboration, these skills were enhanced among Lead Team members and introduced to new participating members in the initiative. In specific, the Lead Team members affirmed that the inter-school collaboration was an opportunity to practice the leadership skills they acquired from their earlier participation in TAMAM capacity building program as well as to broaden the scope of practicing these skills. The participants report that an impact of the inter-school collaboration is that they acquired competencies and skills to initiate, lead, and sustain school-based improvement. These include enacting reflective dialogue and practice, inquiry, evidence-based decisions, decisions, and actions driven by needs, de-privatization of practice, systematic documented practice, evolving design planning, professional collaboration, participative leadership for continuous improvement, mentoring approach and job-embedded experiential learning as well as the skills to initiate, implement and monitor as well as evaluate improvement projects. Additionally, the participants affirmed that the inter-school collaboration was an opportunity to expose additional school members, namely the Arabic Leaders and teachers to these leadership competencies. Additionally, the findings report on additional leadership skills, mainly communication skills, giving feedback as critical friends, decision-making skills, as well as other creative thinking and discussion skills.

However, what is noteworthy is that the leadership competencies reported as emerging impact were purposefully crafted as learning outcomes by the university-based facilitators, and intentionally communicated to the participating members through a job-embedded professional development program. As confirmed by the findings, the participants opted to collectively follow the TAMAM Improvement Journey with the support of the university-based facilitators who acted as coaches and mentors to assist the Hub members to enact its leadership strategies while implementing their inter-school collaboration innovative initiative. This constitutes a clear difference with the reviewed literature. There are no instances reported in the literature of following such a program as a designed strategy for managing change during the implementation of inter-school collaboration activities that simultaneously facilitates building capacity for leading change and facilitating the implementation process. Continuous professional development to broaden the capacity to effectively lead improvement has been recommended by scholars (Frost, 2012; Stoll, 2009) and deemed necessary for the success and sustainability of change initiatives. The effectiveness of the TAMAM Improvement Journey to help school practitioners acquire the competencies that prepare them to lead change at their schools has been demonstrated to be specifically effective in the context of the Arab region (Karami-Akkary, 2019). Thus, it is not surprising that its targeted competencies were mentioned by the Hub members as part of the impact of their participation in the inter-school collaboration.

In addition to the leadership competencies and in line with the literature, the findings confirm that engaging in the inter-school collaboration initiative within the ATI project is having an impact on strengthening the participants' instructional and pedagogical skills. The data indicates that participating in dialogue with others about

problems and potential solutions on the teaching of Arabic allowed for critical reflection on instructional practices, and for a gradual accumulation of a wide array of instructional strategies that could improve differentiated instruction in the classroom. The literature also suggests that collaborating with like-minded colleagues can increase engagement in the learning process and encourage risk-taking creativity (Ciampa & Gallagher, 2016; LGA educational research programme, & National foundation for educational research, 2004), ultimately leading to improved instructional practices and approaches (Brown & Poortman, 2018; Vescio et al., 2008). However, participants did not associate engaging in inter-school collaboration with curriculum refinement, an impact that is often reported in the literature in association with inter-school collaboration initiatives (Ainscow et al., 2006; LGA educational research programme, & National foundation for educational research, 2004). One possible explanation for this discrepancy is twofold. First, it can be due to the fact that the initiative is still in its early stages of implementation, and changes to the curriculum may not have been fully realized yet. Another possible reason is that in the context of rigidly mandated national curriculum in the Arab context (Bashshur, 2005), and top-down reform practices that marginalize teachers (Karami-Akkary, 2014), school-based practitioners do not consider contributing to changes in the curriculum to be part of their roles. Curriculum reform and curriculum innovations are seen as outside the school-based educators' sphere of influence.

Impact on the School as an Institution

The findings report on another emerging impact of the inter-school collaboration that aligns with what is reported in the reviewed literature. Namely, the participants shared indicators that during the initiation stage, the inter-school collaboration is having

an impact in terms of creating a common professional language (Stoll, 2010), adopting new organizational arrangements, and enhancing organizational renewal (Ainscow et al., 2006; West, 2010). The hub participants adopted a shared professional language, which developed based on the common vision for the learner and the strategies co-designed by the participants and the expert coach for the ATI project. Additionally, changes in the structural arrangements were adopted to facilitate the coordination of the project activities within the school and changes were notable towards enhancing organizational renewal through improving problem-solving capabilities.

The participants affirmed the impact of inter-school collaboration on the development of a shared professional language among the Hub members. The data reveal that the common language is mainly related to adopting a shared profile of the learner and the framework co-designed with the expert coach for the ATI project. While in the literature the impact of inter-school collaboration is mainly on creating a common language across schools (Stoll, 2010), this study points that the inter-school collaboration triggered in addition the development of a shared professional language within each school. The language created both within and across schools is the professional language introduced as part of the ATI project. The emphasis the participants put on the common language developing within their school could be attributed to the novelty of the solution co-designed with the content expert coach. The solution advances an innovative approach for Arabic teaching that focuses the instructional strategies on the learner profile. What the participants referred to as a developing common professional language, is a reflection of the newly adopted activities they co-designed collaboratively to reach the shared learner profile. This

outcome enhanced communication and induced a sense of unity among Arabic teachers within every school.

On the other hand, the findings show that engaging in this inter-school collaboration within the ATI project triggered the introduction of new organizational arrangements at the school level. This is confirmed in the examined literature (Ainscow et al., 2006; West 2010). The new arrangements include internal coordination meetings between the Arabic Leaders and the cycle head, between the Arabic Leaders of the different cycles, and between the Arabic Leaders and the representative from the school Lead Team to follow up on the ATI project implementation and to monitor its activities. These coordination processes were introduced to also ensure the transfer of knowledge to other members within the school. Additionally, the findings reveal that Hub members in each school engaged in a thorough process of documentation that they consider to be providing the building blocks towards institutionalization of the strategies followed during the inter-school collaboration process and the ATI project activities. Scholars note that sustainability and institutionalization are most likely to occur when schools co-construct improvement around individual school needs, rather than buying into programs that may not be properly contextualized (Muijs, 2008). In sum, the structural arrangements introduced in response to the needs of the collaborative work in each of the Jordan Hub schools promise to set the stage for an enabling governance structure that facilitates learning and improvement (West, 2010).

In addition to the organizational arrangements, the findings reveal that inter-school collaboration is having an impact on enhancing organizational renewal through building the capacity to address problems of practice and motivate the members to find the appropriate innovative solutions for their collective pressing needs. This aligns with the

examined literature, which highlights the role of inter-school collaborations in facilitating organizational learning and transforming ambiguities into opportunities for learning (Ainscow et al., 2006; West, 2010). Data show that the TAMAM Improvement Journey allowed the participants to engage in multiple cycles of action research which is shown to build the capacity for continuous improvement (Ciampa & Gallager, 2016). Indeed, the data reveal that engaging in this initiative enhanced the participants' collective self-efficacy and promised to establish a norm of practice in their school that generates the personal and collective motivation to progress and improve.

Impact on Students

The findings indicate that the participants have a shared vision for the desired impact of the inter-school collaboration on their students. They aimed for "passionate learners who are capable of effective communication in formal and informal contexts using proper Arabic language while also improving their academic achievement." This aspiration is justified by the literature reviewed, which suggests that inter-school collaboration can have a positive effect on student outcomes, (Ainscow et al., 2006; Katz & Earl, 2010; West, 2010). This impact can span different aspects, for example student academic attainment, motivation, engagement, and acquisition of social skills (Atkinson et al., 2007; Katz & Earl, 2010). However, scholars caution that while it is a widely shared aspiration, measuring the impact of inter-school collaboration on student outcomes can be challenging and evidence of actual impact is still limited (Armstrong et al., 2021). Notably, the findings show that the impact on students is the aspect that the participants talked about least. This is not surprising given that the implementation of the solution/ design of the intervention to address the problem of practice is still in the early stages at the time of the study. The literature highlights the complex and multi-

layered nature of the impact of inter-school collaboration on participants, which evolves gradually and incrementally over various stages (Armstrong et al., 2021). Early emerging impact can be noted on teachers and teachers practices and indirectly impact students. Thus, it is premature to expect this kind of association to emerge from the data given the complexity of the process and the limited evidence that collaboration between schools might directly impact upon student outcomes.

In light of the above, the participants' aspiration for impact on their students can serve in the early stages of the collaboration as an opportunity to identify signals of small successes worthy of celebration, something the literature reports as a source of motivation for the participants to sustain their collaborative efforts (Armstrong et al., 2021).

Impact at the Level of the TAMAM Jordan Hub

The findings point to emerging evidence that the initiative is having an impact beyond the individual school and its participating members by enabling the TAMAM Jordan Hub to impact systemic change. First, the findings point at emerging evidence that the initiative is contributing substantially to achieving the goals of establishing the TAMAM Jordan Hub. This includes creating a community of self-renewing schools having the same vision and using common professional language and strategies to identify common needs and generate innovative solutions to address shared pressing challenges. In addition, the findings highlight a shared aspiration that the collective efforts will culminate in contributing to the advancement of other Jordan schools and even to systemic change in Jordan and beyond.

Scholars such as Rincon-Gallardo and Fullan (2016) and Stoll (2010) have highlighted the potential of inter-school collaborations to be vehicles for improving

entire educational systems while pointing out that there is limited evidence in the literature that this promise is being realized. The results of the study affirm the belief of the participants in this potential and offer indicators that their actions are laying the foundation to realize this systemic impact.

In fact, many of the factors associated with successful large-scale reform are being gradually established enabling the Jordan Hub to impact systemic change. In fact, the characteristics and strategies of the Jordan Hub inter-school collaboration bear the qualities of what Rincon-Gallardo (2019, p. 40) characterizes as a “movement” towards systemic reform. It has a sense of collective purpose, mastery through learning, autonomy through the freedom to determine what to do, how, and with whom to do it, and connectedness through collaborating with others. Namely, the Jordan Hub inter-school collaboration has a shared vision of the self-renewing schools needed to promote students learning. It also provides the conditions that allow educators to engage in dialogue and learn alongside each other’s about what works and what does not work. Its voluntary nature shifts the power from those in formal positions mandating reform to educational experts examining their practices and providing mutual support that empowers innovation and creativity and facilitates discovery. The collaborative initiative of the Jordan Hub promises to bring the attention of educators to a problem of practice that is student centered, and invite them to question their own teaching practices, adopt new teaching strategies and to make organizational adjustments in their schools to ensure an impactful implementation of improvement initiative.

Analysis of data reveal that the vision of the TAMAM professional network for self-renewing schools was adopted by the Hub participants as a driving force to go beyond impacting one’s own individual schools to contribute to the wider educational

community in the Arab world. According to Ricon-Gallardo (2019), the promise for successful systemic change requires a focus on student learning, and a creative approach to reform that adapts the educational system to the needs of students rather than attempts to fit these needs within the existing structures. He advances that developing network of schools focused on student learning “creates collective power which increases the chances of successfully negotiating with system administrators to secure political and administrative support” (p.37). The findings show that the Hub members are aware of their growing expert power and that the participating schools worked under a common "professional umbrella," collectively addressing a common need and developing a common improvement goal. Their collective expert power is strengthened by following an inquiry-based strategy (the TAMAM Improvement Journey) and developing a common professional language something that promises to become a basis for continuous collaborations for broader-scale impact. In addition, the participants are aware that the inter-school collaboration will allow them to exchange expertise among schools, where those with advanced expertise in certain areas can coach and help others and that this approach could lead to systemic change. Moreover, the focus of the inter-school collaboration on students learning their native language coupled with an understanding of the socio-cultural importance of this learning is empowering those educators to invest in this innovative intervention to make a large-scale impact that is much needed especially within the Arab context.

The findings of the study also note the intent of the Hub members to share the outcomes of the Arabic Teaching designs and their inter-school collaboration strategies with policymakers, and to advocate for the establishment of the necessary conditions to scale up their initiatives, ultimately leading to regional impact on student learning. All

participants shared the belief that by fostering a shared vision of impactful school-based improvement and promoting inter-school collaborations, the TAMAM Jordan Hub has the potential to facilitate systemic change not only in Jordan but also beyond its borders. This aspired impact especially stemming from a voluntary form of inter-school collaboration among private schools expand the findings in the literature especially in the context of the Arab region offering a unique experience to be explored further as a reform attempt adopting the “social movement” scholars are advocating for (Rincon-Gallardo, 2019).

Conclusion

In this section, I will draw conclusions and present them in a model that outlines the components essential to be taken into consideration when initiating inter-school collaboration. This model can serve as a grounded design to guide inter-school collaborations operating in a context similar to that of the case study school.

Inter-school collaboration is becoming increasingly popular as an effective strategy to promote collaborative cultures, empower teachers as leaders, and bring about impactful school-based improvement. The TAMAM Jordan Hub provides a rare case in the Arab world that demonstrates this type of collaboration. Six schools engaged in an inter-school collaboration initiative where the focal activity is around a unified improvement project related to the teaching of Arabic language. Several key drivers are identified as crucial to initiate this inter-school collaboration, including a shared pressing need related to the cultural identity of the schools, an internal catalyst and activist who helped drive the collaboration forward, and a sense of mission among the participating schools to address the identified need for the benefit of both individual schools and their broader professional community. The schools decided to use the

TAMAM Improvement Journey as a staged collaborative inquiry process to guide their work. A key finding is the quality of the extensive support from the university-based facilitators who supported the implementation of this process as a roadmap to exercise their multifaceted roles. The university-based facilitators, guided by their collaborative action research approach, were joined by a content expert coach specialized in Arabic language to support the schools in co-designing an innovative solution to address this complex problem of practice. The collaboration relies on a distributive model of school-level leadership in addition to other structural and cultural factors that are identified as crucial. Although the study focuses on the initiation stage, the emerging impact is evident and found to be affecting different levels.

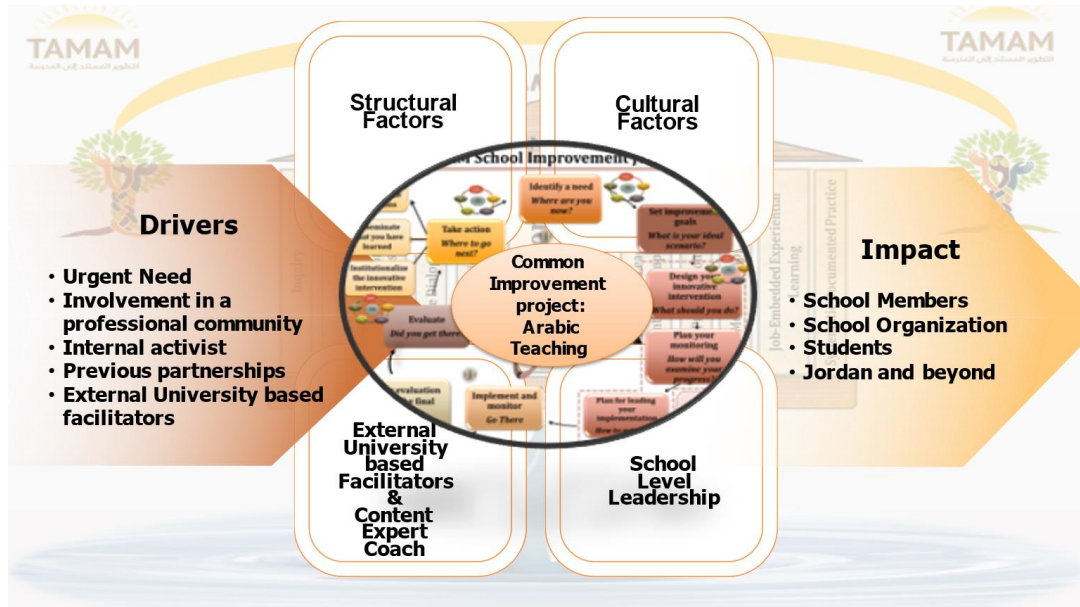
The following presents a design that can guide schools in similar contexts in initiating and engaging in inter-school collaboration. This design is grounded in the findings depicted in the Jordan Hub study reflecting the peculiarities of its context, informed by the available literature on inter-school collaboration.

The Grounded Model for Inter-school Collaboration

The following model represents a grounded design that captures the participants' lived experiences in this study. This design is not meant to give a sequential set of instructions but a set of fundamental components that can be used as a reference and guide. This model is intended to encourage reflection and offer contextually grounded insights to researchers as well as to others who seek to initiate or facilitate similar collaborative experiences. It can also serve as a basis for comparison with other initiatives across different sociocultural contexts.

Figure 2

Grounded Design Components for facilitating Inter-school Collaboration

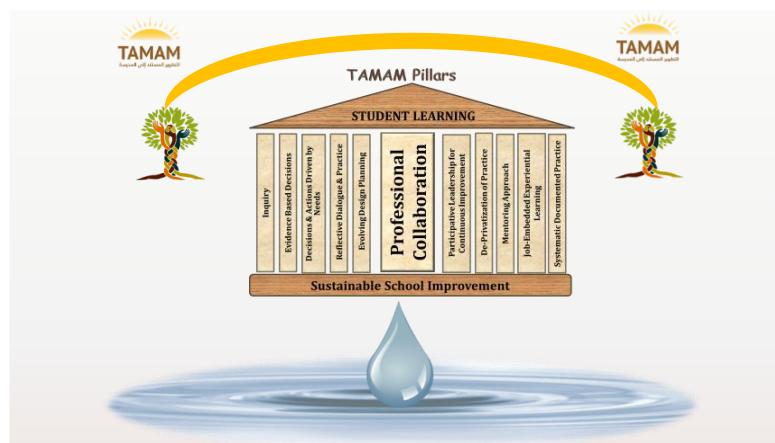


Stoll's (2010) theoretical framework for connecting learning communities informed a major portion of this model. The detailed components of this design are contextually tailored to the Arab region and the specific type of innovation proposed, while still drawing on Stoll's (2010) framework which emphasizes processes like collaborative inquiry and supportive conditions, with leadership and external facilitation as key factors. This grounded model underscores the significance of the emotional and social aspects throughout the whole work on this initiative. It also highlights the distinct role played by university-based facilitators, as collaborative action researchers, supporting the schools through a well-designed inquiry cycle, and providing customized expert assistance. This is especially important when tackling long-standing challenges and devising innovative solutions to meet urgent needs. Identifying internal advocates and champions is pivotal as well to drive this experience forward.

Active Membership in a Professional Community. The schools in this study are part of a research and development initiative aimed at enhancing broad based leadership for sustainable school-based improvement. These schools are members of a professional community comprising of educators from nine Arab countries who share common professional principles, known as "TAMAM pillars," and hold a collective vision of transforming schools into self-renewing institutions. To expand this vision in their own country, these schools formed a Hub, and six out of nine schools actively participated in an inter-school collaboration initiative to address collectively a pressing problem of practice related to the teaching of Arabic language.

Figure 3

TAMAM Professional Community in the Arab World



Key Drivers as Inputs. The study identifies several key drivers that led to the initiation of the inter-school collaboration in the TAMAM Jordan Hub as listed in figure 4.

Figure 4

Drivers of Inter-school Collaboration

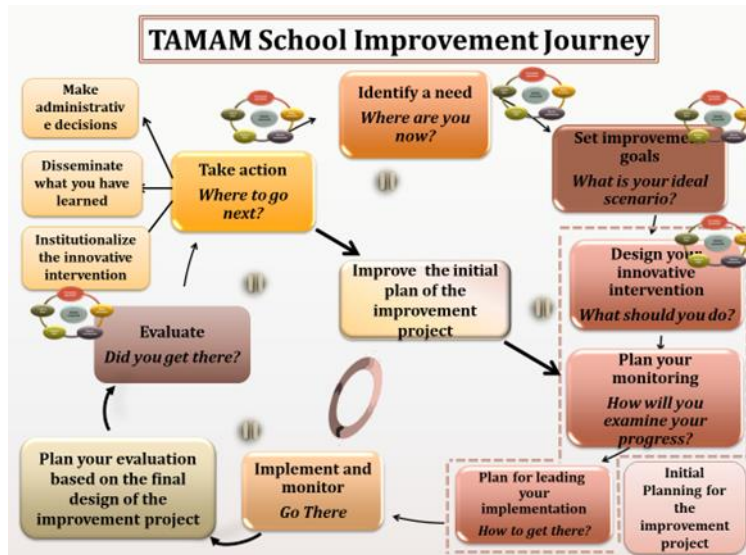


An urgent and pressing need was the initial motivation for the voluntary participation in the collaborative activity of the TAMAM Jordan Hub. The history of successful partnership and the good relationships among the Hub schools served as an incentive for further collaboration, while the Hub coordinator, a pioneering Lead Team member, played a pivotal role in inspiring and persuading the participating schools to embark on a collaborative Improvement Journey. Finally, the schools were driven by a sense of mission to find an innovative solution to a problem of practice whose impact will extend beyond their individual schools informing the school practices of the broader professional community.

The Adopted Strategies of Inter-school Collaboration. Launching the process of inter-school collaboration started with deciding on improving the Teaching of Arabic language as their focal activity of the inter-school collaboration. This was followed with the formation of an initial team consisting of representative teams from each school. The school team originally included the TAMAM Lead Team members, a team of educators trained on leading school-based improvement, and was expanded to include the Arabic Leaders, followed by the Arabic teachers. This inter-school collaboration team adopted the TAMAM Improvement Journey as their strategy to manage the change process triggered by the improvement initiative (Figure 5).

Figure 5

TAMAM Improvement Journey



The TAMAM Improvement Journey is a step-by-step process that involves identifying an improvement need and understanding its underlying causes and effects. This is followed by envisioning an "ideal scenario" and establishing a shared improvement goal, based on which the participants develop an innovative intervention with improvement and operational objectives to address the issue and achieve progress. In the later stages of the Improvement Journey, the participants establish monitoring and evaluation plans with performance indicators and implement the set plans to track progress. Institutional decisions are made based on the evaluation and recommendations identified.

The Factors Facilitating this Collaboration. The study identifies several crucial factors that need to be present for successful inter-school collaboration, including structural and cultural factors that enable purposeful collaboration between schools. Support from formal school leaders to overcome organizational barriers and the

involvement of a team of Lead members, who are acting as change agents leading the inter-school collaboration, are essential. The presence of external university-based facilitators who provide direction, coaching, mentoring, and coordination support, along with the expertise of an expert content coach, were also identified as crucial components for the initiative's success (see figure 6).

Figure 6

The University-Based Facilitators Role

University based Facilitators	Content Expert Coach
Setting goals and directions	Co-constructing with the participants an innovative intervention
Building a positive relationship among the schools	Providing customized coaching that specifically attends to the skills needed to implement the improvement project
Providing relevant expert assistance	
Coordinating activities	
Engaging the schools in TAMAM professional network	
Following a mentoring approach	

External University based Facilitators & Content Expert Coach

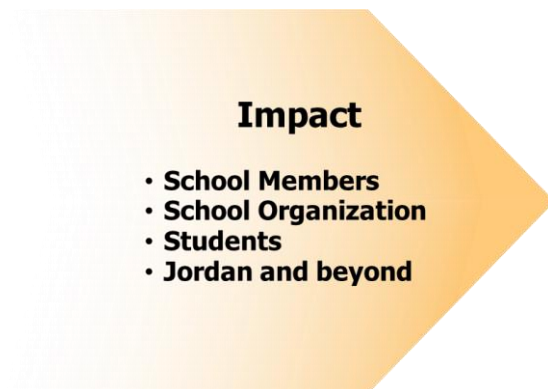
The key functions of the university-based facilitators include offering expert support to facilitate or build the capacity for the school teams to lead the improvement activities. They use the TAMAM Improvement Journey as a job embedded road map to guide the schools while engaging in this collaboration, making sure to highlight achievements and to address challenges whenever they arose. The absence of these factors was found to pose challenges in initiating successful collaboration.

Multilevel Impact as Preliminary Output. The findings reveal that the perceived impact of the inter-school collaboration encompassed various levels. At the

school level, it entails enhancing broad based leadership capacity, improving instructional and pedagogical skills, adopting shared professional language, introducing new coordination procedure, and enabling structural arrangements, thus enhancing organizational renewal.

Figure 7

Impact of Inter-school Collaboration



Furthermore, the impact mirrors the aspirations of the participants for their students and is based on the shared profile of the learner developed. At the level of the TAMAM Jordan Hub and beyond, the findings reveal how the collaboration contributed to TAMAM vision of establishing a community of self-renewing schools in Jordan and beyond.

Implications

The present study contributes to both research and practice by affirming the key components necessary for initiating effective inter-school collaboration and offering a proposed grounded design that can guide external facilitators on the strategies and approach to support launching inter-school collaboration. The grounded design components identify the drivers that can be purposefully enacted to instigate this type of collaboration among schools. It also alerts policy makers, schools and potential external

facilitators of the associated factors - both enablers and challenges – that must be considered to ensure its effectiveness and sustainability. Additionally, the findings underscore the importance of external university-based facilitators in initiating and guiding the collaborative process throughout the collaborative activities and advances that their role follows a research and development approach especially in the absence of well-established models in the Arab world.

Implications for research

The study conducted adds details to the conceptual terminology used to describe and examine inter-school collaboration, responding to calls to add to the scarce international knowledge base on this type of collaboration and the factors associated with it (Armstrong et al., 2021). One significant contribution of this study is highlighting the multifaceted role university-based facilitators can play in supporting collaboration and mitigating the challenges encountered by schools. This finding expands on the existing literature on who should be prepared to perform the external facilitator role, and, on the functions, these external facilitators must enact to ensure the success of inter-school collaboration (Sartory et al., 2017; Tung & Feldman, 2001). Moreover, the study fills a major gap in educational research literature in the Arab region by providing a conceptual understanding of inter-school collaboration that is grounded in the Arab schools' context.

The use of a qualitative case study design that focuses on a specific group of participants within the TAMAM professional network limits the generalizability of the findings of this study. Thus, further research could be done to generalize the findings to different socio-cultural contexts. This can start by repeating the study in other Arab countries in TAMAM where there is a critical mass of schools and potential for

diagnosing a shared problem of practice. Furthermore, using the proposed design to conceptually guide studies in other contexts will allow for further enrichment and refinement for the design especially of the enabling factors and the role of the university-based facilitators. Additionally, another natural follow up on this study is to continue with the data collection throughout the implementation phase. This will generate longitudinal data that can depict the remaining phases associated with improvement initiatives as change processes, namely the implementation and evaluation of the impact (Cummings & Worley, 2014). This would also solicit more data from the participants which would address the limitation related to selective responses from participants. This study can be conceptually guided by the TAMAM School Improvement Journey stations with a focus on studying in depth the role, strategies and coaching approach followed by the university-based team as external facilitators throughout the improvement process stages.

Lastly, this study lays the groundwork for further explorations of this phenomenon. Future research could be conducted to build on this study to target: (1) the actual impact of this initiative at the different identified levels, given that most of the impact reported in this study was based on the aspirations of study participants; (2) the sustainability of this type of collaboration and its nature after the schools finalize the work on the selected improvement project; (3) the extent to which the design components of this study hold explanatory power for other inter-school collaboration initiatives that are emerging among participating schools in TAMAM; (4) analyze the results using discourse analysis approach aiming to understand how language reflects and influences social structures and practices of these participants. Thus uncover underlying meanings, social norms, and power relations and contributing to a deeper understanding of social

phenomena and human interactions; (5) the examination of the results obtained through Hattie's (2015) conceptual framework to examine correlation between expert-based collaboration and its impact on student learning. This line of research is promising for providing information for scaling up the results and ultimately enhancing the impact on student learning.

Implications for practice

Although this study is based on a single case, its findings hold immediate relevance for TAMAM Project Steering Team and the schools in the TAMAM Network. First, the inter-school collaboration among the Jordan Hub schools is still ongoing in its implementation stage, then the TAMAM Project Steering Team will use the findings to inform their on-going contributions to the process. Specifically, by being aware of their role and its potential impact on the inter-school collaboration, and the actions that seem to resonate with the participants they can build on lessons learned to sustain the successes highlighted and manage the existing and emerging challenges that were voiced.

Additionally, and taking into consideration that enhancing inter-school collaborations is one of TAMAM strategic goals and a promised deliverable to TAMAM funder, the TAMAM Project Steering Team future plans will be informed by the components of the proposed grounded design to purposefully promote inter-school collaboration among other TAMAM participating schools. Notably, there are already ongoing voluntary Hub initiatives in TAMAM that could benefit from the insights provided by this study to expand the impact of these initiatives. In addition, this design includes actionable components that can guide the university-based facilitators working with TAMAM participating public schools in Oman Hub. It would be worthwhile to

investigate how the university-based coaches can be guided by the findings of this study to facilitate and enhance inter-school collaborations among these public schools.

Implementing the recommendations of this study in the context of Oman public schools while attending to the strengths of the voluntary nature of the Jordan Hub initiative, can inform policy makers in Oman planning large scale reform. The inter-school collaboration model could be used as a strategy to build organizational capacity for school wide and systemic reforms.

Lastly, as an internationally recognized research and development initiative for building leadership capacity among teachers in the Arab world, the impact of these findings have the potential to extend beyond the immediate TAMAM community and the Arab region. TAMAM stands to contribute to the rising interest around the world in transformative educational reform that is driven through inter-school collaboration. The model the study proposes for initiating inter-school collaboration maintains a balance between responsiveness to the needs of schools, respect for the role of school-based educators on one hand, and the need for collective concerted actions to develop shared vision and adopt common strategies that promise to attain large scale impact effectively and sustainably. This balance responds to calls around the international community to empower teachers, foster their agency and autonomy, promote their collaboration and ability to innovate, and secure their engagement in improving pedagogy, research, and the development of all policies that impact their profession (UNESCO, 2022a, 2022b).

Lastly, the findings of the study affirm that the impact of inter-school collaboration is not limited to the individual school level but extends beyond, contributing to broader systemic change. Rincón-Gallardo and Fullan (2016) point out that the power of school networks as vehicles to dramatically improve schools and the entire educational systems

is yet to be realized. It is hoped that this study will constitute an impactful installment that contributes to the realization of the unfulfilled promise of school networks to drive and guide effective and sustainable systemic change.

APPENDIX A

ORGANIZING GRID FOR THE EXAMINED LITERATURE

	Author(s)	Full Title	Title As saved	Journal	Year	Type of Study	Topic area/Category	Key themes/ ideas	Relevant quotes	Notes
6	Katia Ciampaa and Tiffany L. Gallagher	Teacher collaborative inquiry in the context of literacy education: examining the effects on teacher self-efficacy, instructional and assessment practices	Teacher Collaborative Inquiry- Ciampa & Gallagher 2016	Teachers and Teaching theory and practice	2016	Qualitative Case study-empirical research study	C1		<p>Theoretical framework</p> <p>1) "Traditionally, teaching has been an isolating profession, as individual teachers have often <u>prepared, implemented, and evaluated their lessons and their students' learning unassisted</u> (Hobson, 2001). Moreover, teachers' <u>reflections on their learning in relation to instructional decisions and student learning</u> are also quite habitually in isolation from peers or other professional supports (Little, Gearhart, Curry, & Kafka, 2003). However, <u>research has indicated that effective professional learning occurs in collaboration with others</u> (Blankstein, Houston, & Cole, 2007; Eaker, DuFour, & DuFour, 2002; Fullan, 2006; Huffman, Hipp, Pankake, & Moller, 2001; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006; Warren Little, 2003)" (p. 859)</p>	<p>This article has a theoretical framework similar to mine</p> <p>The limitations of the study used in this research could be helping in the future</p>

The above is a grid where the researcher organized all the consulted articles to facilitate identifying key themes and to synthesize the existing understanding of this phenomena.

APPENDIX B INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL WITH JORDAN HUB COORDINATOR

This interview protocol will be used to collect data for research questions one to five. The interview questions will use open ended questions, and these will be followed only when necessary by probes informed by the theoretical literature review to encourage and inspire the participant to provide her perspective. The researcher will make sure not to be using the second and third level probes unless absolutely necessary thus avoiding being directive and leading in questioning. The researcher will make sure to inform the participant to keep all information discussed confidential and not be disclosed to anyone and to refrain from mentioning the name of the school and from stating any sensitive information or any information that may identify specific incidents/individuals. The following is a list of questions and possible probes that will guide the interview:

From your perspective, what does professional collaboration mean? What does inter-school collaboration mean and how is it manifested?

Possible probes:

- a. What are the objectives of inter-school collaboration?
- b. How does inter-school collaboration look like? What processes and activities does it consist of?
- c. Do you consider the Jordan Hub Arabic project as inter-school collaboration/ in what ways?
- d. Can you elaborate with examples?

What are the drivers that led to the initiation of the TAMAM Jordan Hub, and the Arabic project as inter-school collaboration? What is your role in this initiation? what

impact do you anticipate from this collaboration on building the school capacity for sustainable improvement?

Possible probes:

- a. What was your role in motivating the participants to engage in the Jordan Hub and the Arabic project? What were the strategies that you used to facilitate the initiation of this collaboration?
- b. From your perspective, what is the anticipated impact of such a process on the school?
 1. strengthening the staff instructional skills? building the leadership capacity of the participants? Clarify
 2. on students' achievement? Clarify
 3. on the school ability to manage change? To address problems?
 4. on the school ability to sustain this improvement?

RQ 3: What are the factors (challenges or enabling conditions) associated with this collaboration among schools in the initiation or while engaging in this activity?

Possible probes:

- a. What are the challenges faced while initiating and engaging in collaboration among schools? Please describe the nature of these challenges and provide examples.
 1. Were there any challenges related to organizational structures inside the schools? Clarify and elaborate with examples
 - i. Teachers' allocated time specifically to be able to participate in the collaboration.

- ii. Allocated time for schools' meetings
 - 2. Were there challenges related to the clarity of your expected responsibilities and tasks in this collaboration?
 - 3. Were there challenges related to power struggles between members in the different schools? Describe these.
 - 4. Were there challenges related to the extent to which the members are prepared to implement the collaborative activity?
 - 5. Were there challenges related to receiving consistent feedback and relevant support while implementing the collaborative activity?
- b. What are the enabling external conditions that supported the initiation of the inter-school collaboration activities? Specifically, what is the role of external facilitators (the PST and the content Expert Coach in this case) in providing the necessary conditions, giving the needed support and as well as addressing the faced challenges?
- 1. What are the conditions related to participation in TAMAM that facilitated the implementation of this type of collaboration? In what manner? Elaborate and give examples
 - i. having shared vision, values and norms among schools participating in TAMAM in specific as part of TAMAM Jordan Hub?
 - ii. the presence of a collaborative climate of trust among schools participating in TAMAM in specific as part of TAMAM Jordan Hub that enhances relationships among individuals from different schools?

- iii. The presence of enabling organizational structures provided in TAMAM or by its PST distribution of roles, tasks distribution among the schools,...)?
- b. What is the nature of the support that you as a coordinator received from the PST and/or content Expert Coaches? What is the nature of the support the school teams received from the PST and/or content Expert Coaches? Elaborate and give examples
1. affirming the importance and significance of this inter-school collaboration project? of the Arabic project?
 2. building social cohesion and resolving conflicts?
 3. competence development and capacity building?
 4. Empowering school teams and enhancing their agency and protecting their autonomy?

APPENDIX C

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS WITH THE SCHOOL LEAD TEAM MEMBERS OF CATEGORY ONE

This interview protocol will be used to collect data for research questions two to five. The researcher will conduct this focus group interview with the Lead Team members. The interview questions will use open ended questions, and these will be guided only when necessary by probes informed by the theoretical literature review to encourage and inspire the participants to provide their perspectives. The researcher will make sure not to be using the second and third level probes unless absolutely necessary thus avoiding being directive and leading in questioning. The researcher will make sure to inform the participant to keep all information discussed confidential and not be disclosed to anyone and to refrain from mentioning the name of the school and from stating any sensitive information or any information that may identify specific incidents/individuals. The questions and the possible probes guiding this focus group interview are as follows:

What does professional collaboration mean? What does inter-school collaboration mean and how is it manifested? Elaborate with examples

Possible probes:

- a. What are the objectives of inter-school collaboration?
- b. How does inter-school collaboration look like? What processes and activities does it consist of?
- c. Do you consider the Jordan Hub Arabic project as inter-school collaboration/ in what ways?

What are the drivers that led to the initiation of the TAMAM Jordan Hub, and the Arabic project as inter-school collaborations? What impact do you anticipate from this collaboration on building the school capacity for sustainable improvement?

Possible probes:

- a. Do you anticipate or have you observed an impact of this collaboration on you as participants? If yes, what is it?
 1. strengthening instructional skills (you or your staff)? building leadership capacity? Clarify
 2. students' achievement? Clarify
 3. on the school ability to manage change? To address problems?
 4. on sustaining this improvement in the school?

What are the factors (challenges or enabling conditions) associated with this collaboration among schools in the initiation or while engaging in this activity?

Possible probes:

- a. What are the challenges faced while initiating and engaging in the Arabic project while collaborating with other schools? describe the nature of these challenges and provide examples.
 1. Were there any challenges related to organizational structures inside the schools? Clarify and elaborate with examples
 - i. Teachers' allocated time specifically to be able to participate in the collaboration.
 - ii. Allocated time for meetings

2. Were there challenges related to the clarity of your expected responsibilities and tasks in this collaboration?
 3. Were there challenges related to power struggles between individuals in the different schools? Describe these.
 4. Were there challenges related to the extent to which the teachers are prepared to implement the collaborative activity?
 5. Were there challenges related to receiving consistent feedback while implementing the collaborative activity?
- b. What are the enabling external conditions that supported the inter-school collaboration activities? Specifically, what is the role of external facilitators (the PST and the content Expert Coach in this case) in providing the necessary conditions, giving the needed support and as well as addressing the faced challenges
1. What are the conditions related to participation in TAMAM that facilitated the implementation of this type of collaboration? In what manner? Elaborate with examples
 - i. having shared vision, values and norms among schools participating in TAMAM in specific as part of TAMAM Jordan Hub?
 - ii. the presence of a collaborative climate of trust among schools participating in TAMAM in specific as part of TAMAM Jordan Hub that enhances relationships among individuals from different schools?

- iii. the presence of enabling organizational structures provided by TAMAM or its PST (distribution of roles, tasks distribution among the schools,...)?
 - iv. presence of veteran TAMAM lead team members as change agents?
- c. What is the nature of the support that you received from the PST and/ or content Expert Coach? Describe in what manner and give examples.
- 1. affirming the importance and significance of this inter-school collaboration project? of the Arabic project?
 - 2. building social cohesion and resolving conflicts?
 - 3. competence development and capacity building?
 - 4. Empowering school teams and enhancing their agency and protecting their autonomy?

APPENDIX D

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS WITH THE ARABIC LEADERS WHO ARE PART OF THE ARABIC DEPARTMENTS OF CATEGORY TWO

This interview protocol will be used to collect data for research questions two four and five. The researcher will conduct this focus group interview with the lead team members and the school members who are part of the Arabic departments. The interview questions will use open ended questions, and these will be guided only when necessary by probes informed by the theoretical literature review to encourage and inspire the participants to provide their perspectives. The researcher will make sure not to be using the second and third level probes unless absolutely necessary thus avoiding being directive and leading in questioning. The researcher will make sure to inform the participant to keep all information discussed confidential and not be disclosed to anyone and to refrain from mentioning the name of the school and from stating any sensitive information or any information that may identify specific incidents/individuals. The questions and the possible probes guiding this focus group interview are as follows:

What does professional collaboration mean? What does inter-school collaboration mean and how is it manifested? Elaborate with examples

Possible probes:

- a. What are the objectives of inter-school collaboration?
- b. How does inter-school collaboration look like? What processes and activities does it consist of?
- c. Do you consider the Jordan Hub Arabic project as inter-school collaboration/ in what ways?

What impact do you anticipate from this collaboration on building the school capacity for sustainable improvement?

Possible probes:

- b. Do you anticipate or have you observed an impact of this collaboration on you as participants? If yes, what is it?
 - 1. strengthening instructional skills (you or your staff)? building leadership capacity? Clarify
 - 2. students' achievement? Clarify
 - 3. on the school ability to manage change? To address problems?
 - 4. on sustaining this improvement in the school?

What are the factors (challenges or enabling conditions) associated with this collaboration among schools in the initiation or while engaging in this activity?

Possible probes:

- d. What are the challenges faced while initiating and engaging in the Arabic project while collaborating with other schools? describe the nature of these challenges and provide examples.
 - 1. Were there any challenges related to organizational structures inside the schools? Clarify and elaborate with examples
 - i. Teachers' allocated time specifically to be able to participate in the collaboration.
 - ii. Allocated time for meetings
 - 2. Were there challenges related to the clarity of your expected responsibilities and tasks in this collaboration?

3. Were there challenges related to power struggles between individuals in the different schools? Describe these.
 4. Were there challenges related to the extent to which the teachers are prepared to implement the collaborative activity?
 5. Were there challenges related to receiving consistent feedback while implementing the collaborative activity?
- e. What are the enabling external conditions that supported the inter-school collaboration activities? Specifically, what is the role of external facilitators (the PST and the content Expert Coach in this case) in providing the necessary conditions, giving the needed support and as well as addressing the faced challenges
1. What are the conditions related to participation in TAMAM that facilitated the implementation of this type of collaboration? In what manner? Elaborate with examples
 - i. having shared vision, values and norms among schools participating in TAMAM in specific as part of TAMAM Jordan Hub?
 - ii. the presence of a collaborative climate of trust among schools participating in TAMAM in specific as part of TAMAM Jordan Hub that enhances relationships among individuals from different schools?
 - iii. the presence of enabling organizational structures provided by TAMAM or its PST (distribution of roles, tasks distribution among the schools,...)?

- iv. presence of veteran TAMAM lead team members as change agents?
- f. What is the nature of the support that you received from the PST and/ or content Expert Coach? Describe in what manner and give examples.
- 1. affirming the importance and significance of this inter-school collaboration project? of the Arabic project?
 - 5. building social cohesion and resolving conflicts?
 - 6. competence development and capacity building?
 - 7. Empowering school teams and enhancing their agency and protecting their autonomy?

APPENDIX E

SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL WITH TAMAM PROJECT DIRECTOR AND THE CONTENT EXPERT COACH

This interview protocol will be used to collect data for research questions two to five.

The researcher will conduct semi structured interview with the project director to collect data for questions one to five and with the content Expert Coach to ask questions two, four and five. The interview questions will use open ended questions, and these will be guided only when necessary, by probes informed by the theoretical literature review to encourage and inspire the participant to provide her perspective. The researcher will make sure not to be using the second and third level probes unless absolutely necessary thus avoiding being directive and leading in questioning. The researcher will make sure to inform the participants to keep all information discussed confidential and not be disclosed to anyone and to refrain from stating any sensitive information or any information that may identify specific incidents/individuals. The following list of questions and possible probes that will guide the interview:

From your perspective, what does professional collaboration mean? What does inter-school collaboration mean? Elaborate with examples

Possible probes:

- a. What are the objectives of inter-school collaboration?
- b. How does inter-school collaboration look like? What processes and activities does it consist of?
- c. Do you consider the Jordan Hub Arabic project as inter-school collaboration/ in what ways?

What are the drivers that led to the initiation of the TAMAM Jordan Hub, and the Arabic project as inter-school collaborations? what impact you anticipate from this collaboration on building the school capacity for sustainable improvement?

Possible Probes:

- a. What was your role in engaging the participants in the Jordan Hub and the Arabic project? What were the strategies that you used to facilitate the initiation of this collaboration?
- b. From your perspective, what is the anticipated impact of such a collaboration on the participants?
 1. strengthening the staff instructional skills? building the leadership capacity of the participants? Clarify
 2. on students' achievement? Clarify
 3. on the school ability to manage change? To address problems?
 4. on the sustainability of this improvement

What are the factors (challenges or enabling conditions) associated with this collaboration among schools in the initiation or while engaging in this activity?

Possible probes:

- a. What are the challenges faced by the schools while initiating and engaging in this collaboration among schools? Please describe the nature of these challenges and provide examples?
 1. Were there any challenges related to organizational structures inside the schools? Clarify and elaborate with examples

- i. Teachers' allocated time specifically to be able to participate in the collaboration.
 - ii. Allocated time for schools' meetings
 - 2. Were there challenges related to the clarity of your expected responsibilities and tasks in this collaboration?
 - 3. Were there challenges related to power struggles between members in the different schools? Describe these.
 - 4. Were there challenges related to the extent to which the members are prepared to implement the collaborative activity?
 - b. Were there challenges related to receiving consistent feedback while implementing the collaborative activity?
- b. What are the enabling external conditions that supported the initiation of the inter-school collaboration activities? Specifically, what is your role as external facilitators in providing the necessary conditions, giving the needed support and as well as addressing the faced challenges?
 - a. What are the conditions that are related to the participation in TAMAM that facilitated the implementation of this type of collaboration? In what manner?
 - i. having shared vision, values and norms among schools participating in TAMAM in specific as part of TAMAM Jordan Hub?
 - ii. Presence of a collaborative climate of trust among schools participating in TAMAM in specific as part of TAMAM Jordan

Hub that enhances relationships among individuals from different schools?

iii. Presence of enabling organizational structures provided in TAMAM or by its PST (distribution of roles, tasks distribution among the schools,...)?

iv. presence of veteran TAMAM lead team members as change agents?

c. What is the nature of the support the schools received from you as PST/ content Expert Coach as external facilitators? Elaborate and give examples.

Possible probes

1. affirming the importance and significance of this inter-school collaboration project? of the Arabic project?
2. building social cohesion and resolving conflicts?
3. competence development and capacity building?
4. empowering school teams and enhancing their agency and protecting their autonomy?

APPENDIX F

PROJECT COORDINATOR COACHING JOURNAL

In her on going role as the project coordinator and the coach assigned to support the Jordan Hub Schools, the researcher has kept a journal since the inception of the inter-school collaboration initiative among Jordan Hub Schools. Systemic documentation is a major professional principle that all participants in the project including the coaches abides by. Thus, the researcher developed her own coaching journal that comprised entries covering the following: notes on the progress of the project and the steps taken by the coach; reflections on the learning; insights on the challenges faced, the emerging enablers and assets to invest in, notes from literature, impact and reflections and notes for next steps. This journal was initiated in November 2019 and is being constantly populated till this date documenting the ongoing implementation of the project including the continuous interaction with the school teams whether through the regular WhatsApp chats and messages with different members, workshops, or while preparing for any intervention with the schools. In what follows are excerpts from this journal presented under three themes derived from the research questions and concluding with excerpts from the coaches reflections and insights informing these research questions: 1) goals and description of the inter-school collaboration, 2) insights on drivers and enabling factors, 3) challenges faced, 4) general insight and reflections.

Goals and description of the inter-school collaboration

Several journal entries articulate goals behind the inter-school collaboration occurring among the TAMAM Jordan hub schools. Some of these goals are short term and a few are strategic long-term aspirations. What follows are some examples.

Hub Team goals:

- 1- To address a serious problem in Arabic language that the schools alone were not able to address. So, they wanted to collaborate to share expertise to be able to solve this complicated problem that all felt was pressing.
- 2- To share cost to get a consultant to help them in understanding the problem and designing its intervention.
- 3- To come up with a comprehensive design for teaching Arabic language that could be presented to other schools in the private schools' network in Jordan. They believe that since these diverse schools came up with this design then it will be more developed and solid than if it was designed for one school only.
- 4- To form a critical mass in the future to advocate for the implemented design at the level of country policy makers. Schools working collectively (having common language) on large-scale problems might have a better voice to push with policy makers and maybe with ministries.

Steps Schools Followed during Inter-school Collaboration:

The schools are working collaboratively to think about this problem, identify it, and think of strategies to solve it. The schools collaborated following an inquiry process to work on this common improvement project. While the schools are collaborating on the process, they worked collaboratively to design data collection tools (wrote the questions of the focus group interviews addressed to students and teachers) to be able to further understand the problem and find solutions to it. The members are gaining common language and creating common needs when they are discussing in detail their improvement need. The schools started planning for joint activities in the design of their innovative intervention.

Drivers and Enabling factors

The following entries delineate what the researcher noted as drivers and enabling factors for the inter-school collaboration.

It is clear that the members of the hub are familiar and accepting of collaboration due to an on going and successful experience of professional collaboration that they have engaged in through the “Amman Private Schools Association.” As members of this association they participated in yearly conferences that included workshops on various topics chosen by the conference organizers. Also, these schools seem to have common values and professional norms.

It is also clear that one of the main drivers and enabling factor for this initiative is that the schools are part of TAMAM community where they have developed common language between them which might be missing in many networks that get people together without giving the opportunities for these members to create a common language. In addition, the key players in this initiative are pioneer lead team members who acquired TAMAM skills and competencies to lead changes, so I think this is important to facilitate the initiation of the inter-school collaboration as a change initiative. Thus, because of being in TAMAM many challenges that might be faced related to having a common language were decreased.

It is clear to me that it is important to have members in the schools that act as internal facilitators, catalysts or buffers. The presence of these members was very helpful to make certain meetings move smoothly by supporting the answers of other schools related to the improvement objectives. For example, these members were active in assigning meetings and coordinating for it, acting as buffers to decrease tension

among members by clarifying points of view or being catalysts to drive things forward in spite of the challenges faced.

The role of the content Expert Coach is proving to be essential. The bootcamp designed by the content Expert Coach was a very good medium to build the team spirit and to listen to the ideas of the members and listen to their concerns. Also it was important for the members to get to know the content Expert Coach more. It was a very good strategy to let the Arabic leaders to buy In. The content Expert Coach played a role in forming a team from Arabic leaders (she used several team building strategies for that) and in supporting the PST in highlighting the ideas of the inter-school collaboration. This was also important since the proposed solution was new and was a paradigm shift.

Challenges Faced

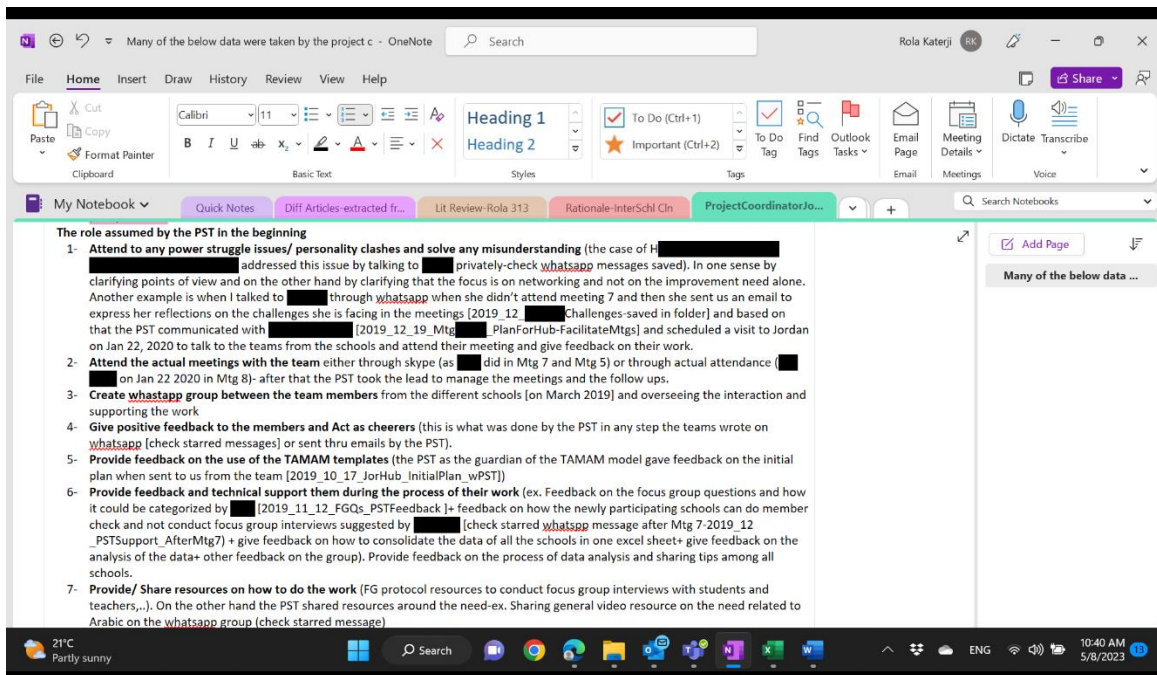
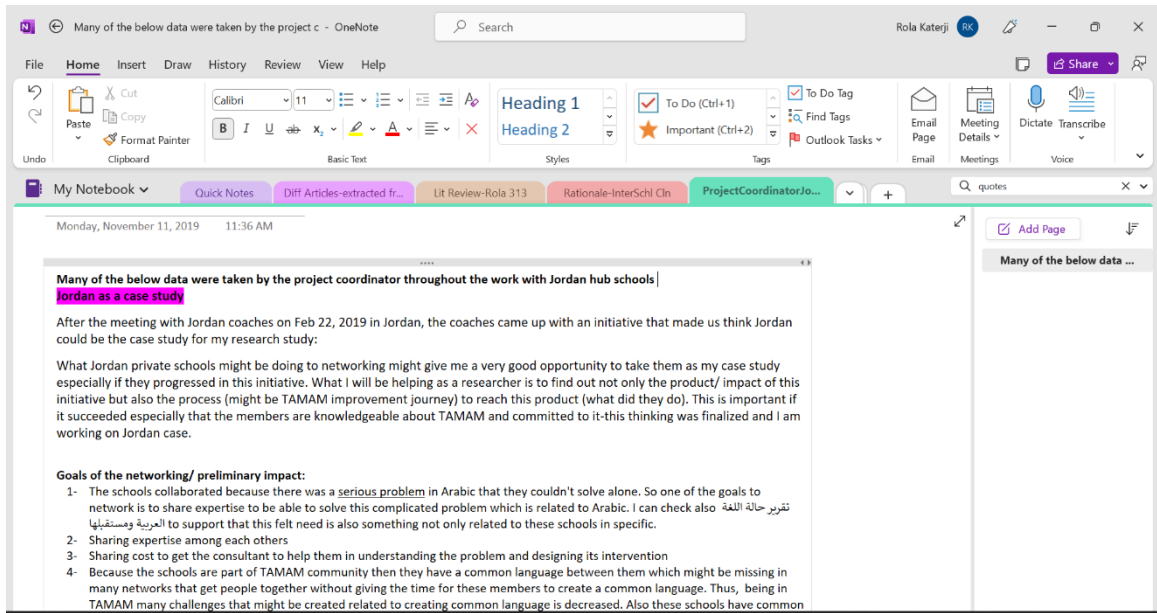
During the work, several challenges emerged. One of these is the tension that occurred between some of the participants where they feel that some members actions are targeted to them as a form of a personal attack. As part of the PST, we discussed these challenges and think that it is part of the process. The members need to know that they are different as learners and personalities, and this might be one of the reasons of some of these challenges. We think as well that the challenges are not coming from one source. The teams sometimes voice that most of the challenges are coming from the administrations and that they are not providing the enabling conditions for this initiative to progress. In the fact everyone is part of creating these challenges each from his or her position. For example, TAMAM has responsibility in some challenges and the participants have responsibility in creating some challenges because certain roles were not performed fully. First, the inter-school collaboration initiative in itself is something

innovative and this creates challenges. Second, the solution designed for the Arabic project itself is something innovative and creates challenges. We should be aware of this. Also framing the challenges under the school domains maybe good to understand them (in relation to human dimension; the organizational dimension, the political dimension, the symbolic dimension). For the PST, the challenge of being participatory and that everything should be in accordance with all (this takes time and effort to be done).

General insights and reflections

- 1- Our work with the content Expert Coach is very critical. We got an content Expert Coach who is working with us from the beginning of the improvement journey. Usually, we get the content Expert Coaches during implementation of the improvement project to make the necessary training. Starting with the coach from the beginning of the journey is unique (the case of Jordan) and we are both (TAMAM and the content Expert Coach) refining the strategies used to fit the needs of the initiative.
- 2- One of the insights I had when I was reading about the role of facilitators in the literature is that though the PST acts as an external facilitator yet they might be somehow internal since these schools are part of TAMAM community and we know them a lot and as TAMAM works we go into details of the schools and we collect a lot of data about the internal conditions of the school so we are dealing with them somehow as internal facilitators (maybe it is good here to explore the difference between internal and external facilitators)

- 3- This initiative is unique since the work is occurring at the level of the schools and not individuals-in one way we are facilitating institutionalization-we are facilitating support from the policy makers.
- 4- They need somebody to connect what the teams are doing to the literature as a criteria for them.
- 5- It was clear from the conversation with the different members that schools had internal monitoring and customization and this could be captured in further data collection.
- 6- It was clear that there is a critical role for TAMAM Jordan Hub coordinator [يوفق وينسق] to articulate the opinion and insights of the schools members to the PST and in turn articulate the messages we want to send through her own language (We need always to make sure she understands our rationale and she is backing us up within the schools and articulating what is needed).
- 7- It is important to have the coordinator role assigned to somebody from the university, somebody who is ready to collect data, analyze and find solutions. Also this representative is somebody who knows how to manage change. The second round, we can get delegates from the schools after they experienced this experience. Also these delegates are TAMAMese who know how to manage change. These delegates have this designated role (coordination role).



The above are screenshots from the project coordinator coaching journal

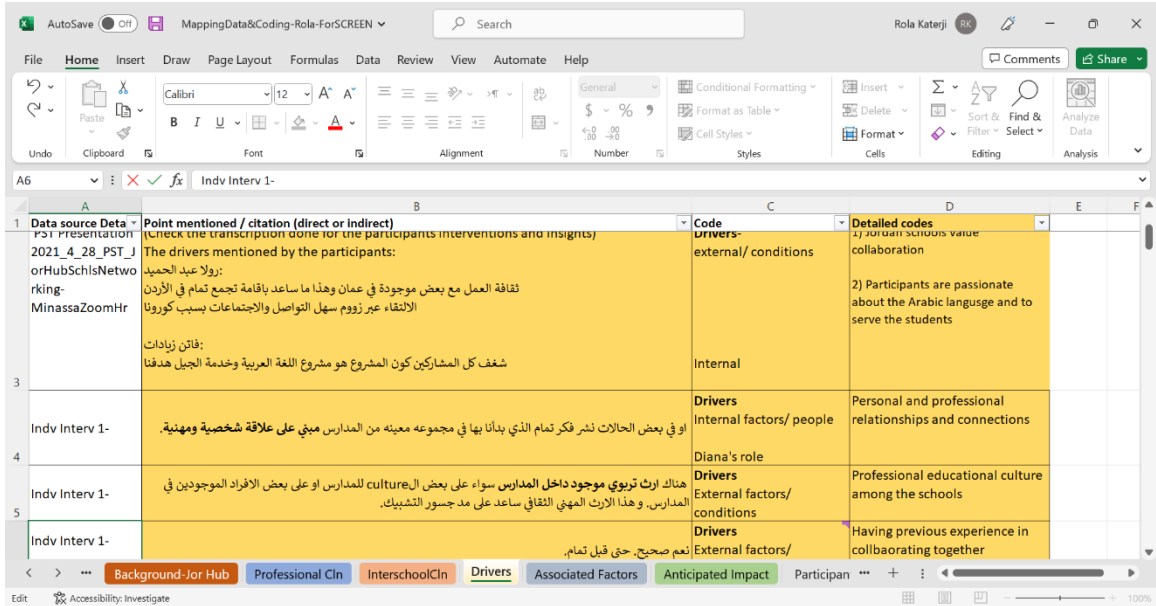
APPENDIX G EXCEL SHEET CODES

Research Questions	Themes	General codes	Codes	Detailed Codes	Definition
	Anticipated impact		External facilitators		
			Impact on Staff	Strengthen staff instructional skills	
				Build staff leadership capacity	
				Creating common language among staff	
				Enhanced staff trust in their school	
			Impact on students	Increase students' achievement	
			Impact on school	Enhance school ability to manage change & address problems	
				Enhance school ability to sustain this improvement	
				Organizational learning	

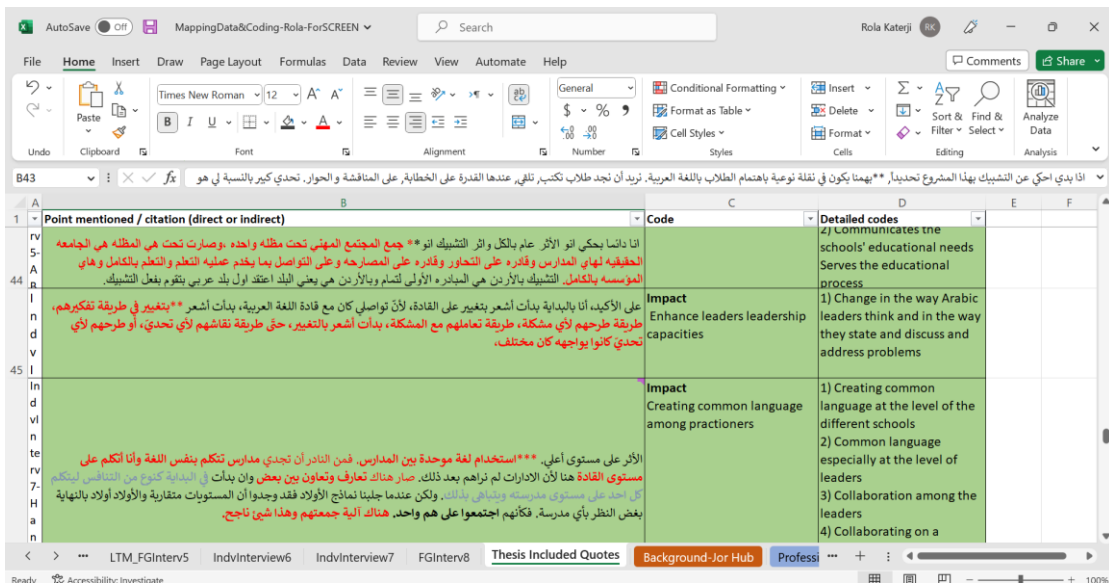
This above is the image of the codebook created for this study specifically showing research question 5. It identifies the color that matches each theme as well as the codes that come under each one.

Quotes	Codes	Detailed codes
<p>30 أه أيضاً، ال differentiation مع انو متحكى فيها، بس هلق عم يحسوها اكثر، التمايز ولما يعملو التقييم الفردي ، هلق احساسى بعد ما دخلت بالمعق بعد هلق ليخلصوا ال cycle كامل، حسيت انو بدهم يعرفو شو يعنى التمايز في عملية التعلم اكثر.</p>	Impact Strengthen staff instructional skills	Aspired: Strengthen the staff instructional skills with regard to differentiating instruction
<p>31 اوود، لا both both (الأثر على المهارات القيادية كما البيداغوجية) يعنى يطلع انا الدكتور محمد كويس، بتعرفيه بس هلق انا بحس صار يعنى... انا دائما يحكي المعرفة قوة، زادت المعرفة زادت قوتي مش شرط قوتي العظيمة، ولكن قوتي المهنية الفكرية. يعنى more knowledge and to master knowledge is a power.</p>	Impact Build Leadership capacity	The teachers and leaders acquired more knowledge thus more
<p>32 الأثر ليس فقط على المشفقين وعلى المعلمات أيضا، دليل على هذا الحكى انو ولو كان عنا شغل ممكن انو حريصين، شوقى اديش شكل اعباء عليهم يعنى نحنا نتحا للمعلمين. we didn't pay tanta للمعلمين. Exactly وحتى الوقت، انو بعد الظاهر مش من ضمن الدوام. اى يعنى جهد وتعب للمعلمين. لو ما في added value ، بقلك انا مش مجبور عندي ولادى. ساعدتهم yes ، يعنى نحنا بالمدرسة عنا المعلم قائد التغيير، يعنى انت قائد مش ضرورى تكون منسق. انت قائد في موقعك. كلهم لابسين هذا الثوب</p>	Impact Build Leadership capacity	The impact is on coordinators and teachers and the evidence that they were overloaded yet continued work on this initiative
<p>هلق هذا (توقع الأثر على الطلاب) ما بقدر اجابو مثل ما قلتي لتخلص السنة لاني انا بسنتا. انا اذا حسيت ما في الركدرسة عم يحكي مش كديانا، بدي اتطلع على ال action research اذا ما طلع عندي أثر فأتا يا ال program مش مفهوم او مش واضح، اوفى مشككة، فيخالي ارجع كمل حلقة البحث الاجرائى. يعنى المعلمين مديرين، بس اعتقد كموثر اوفى النوع عم يحسوا في اثر على الطلاب الضعاف بالمات. لنشوف هلق، يعنى خيليني احط برودو مدام</p>	Impact Increase students' achievement	Preliminary Impact detected by teachers mainly on weak students Aspired: the impact will be on students since the teachers will be

The above is an image of the data with each cell color coded according to a theme and given a particular identifying code within that theme.



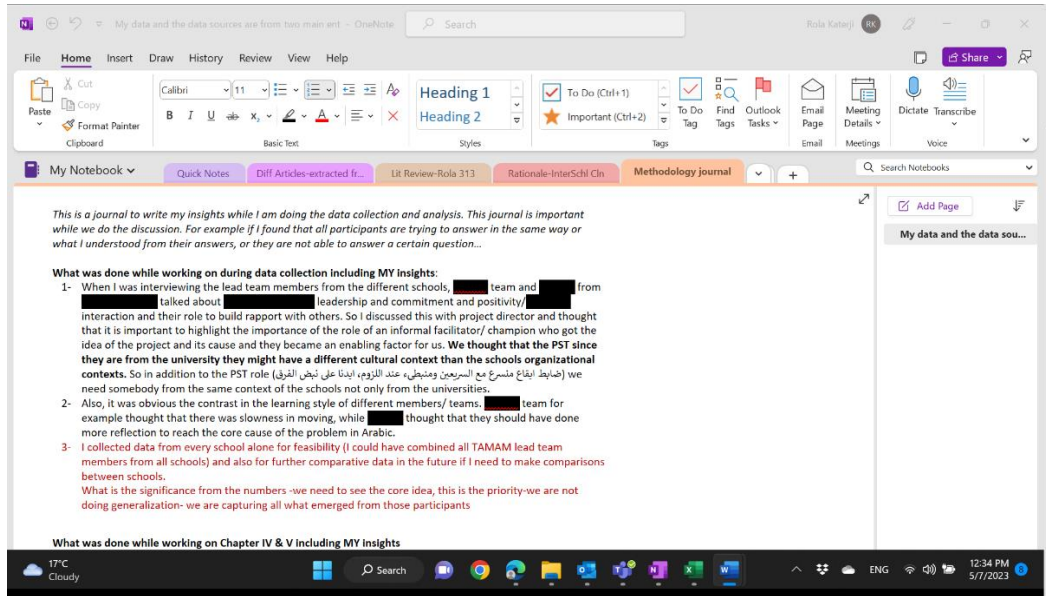
The above is an example of a theme that was copy/pasted to a new worksheet within the workbook after being sorted and filtered using Excel's sort functions. This theme can be further filtered to isolate each particular code within it.



The above is an image of the excel sheet compiling all the quotes used inside the results chapter

APPENDIX H

RESEARCHER RESEARCH JOURNAL



The above is a screenshot of the research journal used by the researcher as an audit trail including the insights and reflections during the data collection and analysis phases

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