Exploration of Collaborative Culture through the Practices Of Professional Learning Community

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ABSTRACT: *Collaborative culture is an important medium for teachers to enhance their professionalism. Professional Learning Communities are established in schools to cultivate collaboration among teachers. However, there are still teachers who prefer to work alone rather than collaborate with their teammates. This study aims to explore the collaborative culture through the practices of the Professional Learning Community of Malay Language primary school teachers. This qualitative study involved four Malay Language teachers in the Jenderam Zone, Selangor, using semi-structured interview protocols as the research instrument. The findings indicate that the Malay Language teachers studied have established a collaborative culture by cooperating and sharing information in their schools. Furthermore, through data analysis and group discussions, it was found that teachers often collaborate to evaluate and improve teaching and learning activities. This study shows that professional development practices have a positive impact on the implementation of a collaborative culture in schools. In conclusion, every teacher can enhance the collaborative culture through professional learning community practices.*

I.   INTRODUCTION

Professional practices of teachers are the focus emphasized in the Malaysian Education Development Plan (PPPM 2013-2025). Continuous professional development is a crucial element to ensure the quality of teachers and the best delivery of education. Therefore, the concept of Professional Learning Communities (PLC) has been introduced to enhance teacher professionalism. PLC practices emphasize a collaborative culture among teachers, providing them opportunities to work in teams, hold discussions, gain knowledge, and exchange ideas and teaching materials. This collaborative culture is considered a tool to improve the academic performance of educational institutions. Teachers need to collaborate to form teaching routines, expand knowledge, and assess their professional levels (Hamzah & Abdullah, 2022).

The collaborative aspect in PLC practices has a positive impact on teaching and teachers' perspectives (Tam, 2014). Besides knowledge and reflection, collaboration can improve teaching practices (Forest et al., 2019). According to DuFour (2004), a professional learning community is formed when teachers collaborate, share teaching practices, and analyze student achievements to enhance teaching and learning. The BPG document (2013) states that teachers can perform their duties well when their professionalism is strengthened. Studies by Hussein Mahmood (2008), Rusmini Ku Ahmad (2005), Nor Hasnida Che Ghazali (2010), and Supovitz and Turner (2000) found that professional development is an effective step to improve teaching quality and school performance. Therefore, the practice of Professional Learning Communities (PLC) is an important innovative approach to enhance teacher professionalism.

Professional Learning Communities (PLC) are an important approach to improving teacher quality. However, its effectiveness depends on the collaborative culture among teachers. Studies have found that the culture of collaboration is still lacking in primary schools (Chong et al., 2018). Teachers often feel uncomfortable and threatened when monitored by colleagues during teaching sessions (Le Fevre, 2014). Additionally, Stegall (2011) found that teachers prefer to work individually rather than collaboratively. This poses a major problem among teachers who tend to work alone. Studies by Roberts & Pruitt (2009) and Zuraidah (2010) show that teachers rarely share experiences and teaching materials with colleagues. Roberts & Pruitt (2009) also stated that some teachers are reluctant to interact with colleagues and school administration to get feedback on their teaching. According to Tam (2014) and Kareem & Kin (2018), teachers often feel stressed and threatened due to a lack of experience and motivation to make changes.

The collaborative culture in PLC practices is not sufficiently emphasized (Dima Mazlina& Abdul Rashid, 2016; Aina Maryam Rusli et al., 2024), and studies show that many teachers do not enhance this culture in schools. Many teachers avoid engaging in a collaborative culture due to a lack of skills and knowledge (Siti Nafsiah et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2017), as well as feeling comfortable with their service quality. Previous studies have focused more on processes, roles, collaborative practices, and related theories (Zanaton H Iksan et al., 2021; Nur Asyikin Ab Latif et al., 2021; Fazleen Mohamad, 2019; Kamarudin Ismail et al., 2019). The reluctance of some teachers to share their knowledge and experiences hinders the continuous professional development recommended by the Ministry of Education. These teachers are less enthusiastic about interacting with colleagues and school administration to receive feedback (Roberts & Pruitt, 2009). Additionally, some schools do not provide sufficient support to encourage a collaborative culture (Teague, Ginger &Anfara, 2012). The study by Muhammad Faizal and colleagues (2012) shows that the absence of active professional sharing sessions can lead teachers to deviate from effective learning.

Reviewing previous studies on PLC practices reveals that much focus has been placed on readiness, motivation, practices, challenges, and the implementation of professional learning communities. These studies typically concentrate on cognitive aspects, readiness, motivation, and implementation alone. For example, the study by Zaleha binti Ismail and Nor Ashikin Binti Ab Rahman (2007) found that low teacher motivation and a lack of discussion to improve teaching skills together negatively affect teaching performance. This indicates that there are still weaknesses in teaching among school teachers. The effectiveness of PLC lies in the formation of a collaborative culture and a shared desire to improve teaching quality. Therefore, this collaborative culture is crucial in strengthening teacher professionalism continuously through cooperation among teachers.

1.1 Study Objective
The implementation of this study is based on the following objective:
1. To explore the collaborative culture through the practices of professional learning communities among Malay Language primary school teachers.

II.   LITERATURE REVIEW
The field of education now places great emphasis on a team learning culture among educators. This professional learning community brings various positive benefits. Through a team learning culture, teachers can share experiences and knowledge, enhancing their understanding of effective teaching practices and current learning strategies (Zanaton H Iksan et al., 2021; Nur Asyikin Ab Latif et al., 2021; Fazleen Mohamad, 2019; Kamarudin Ismail et al., 2019). This collaborative work culture encourages cooperation among teachers, making them supportive of one another, sharing teaching resources, and providing constructive feedback. This creates a positive working environment (Kamarudin Ismail et al., 2019).

In an active learning community, teachers are encouraged to constantly update their skills and knowledge. This encouragement in turn enhances the quality of education in Malaysia. A team learning culture facilitates the

dissemination of innovations in education. Creative ideas or new teaching approaches can be widely spread and adopted by members of the teaching community. Subsequently, a team learning culture will lead to improved teaching quality. This collaborative culture can help raise the overall education standards in a particular area or institution. Thus, a group or collaborative learning culture can create an environment that supports mutual development and success. According to Tai and Omar (2019), a professional learning community means a school community learning together to generate new knowledge and share information to improve student performance.

2.1   Collaborative Concept

The collaborative culture is an important aspect of the Professional Learning Community among teachers to support the continuous professional development recommended for the teaching profession. Collaborative culture is a process that occurs gradually over a long period. According to Robbin (1990), collaboration is a decision-making and resolution process to reach a consensus to solve an emerging problem. According to Kalaivani Karnan and Karuppiah Marimuthu (2021), a collaborative culture makes learning and communication sharing between two or more individuals effective. Good communication is needed in this collaborative culture to facilitate the process of discussion and sharing. Collaborative culture is not only aimed at finding solutions but also provides new knowledge and methods for resolving discussed issues.

In schools, a collaborative culture is highly recommended to enhance teacher excellence and school performance. Sparks (2013) found that cooperation among all school members positively impacts the performance of educational institutions. This collaborative culture improves teaching and learning performance, meets teachers' needs, and supports the smooth running of administrative tasks. The Malaysian Education Development Plan 2013-2025 also emphasizes the importance of a culture of teacher professionalism excellence that involves collaboration with colleagues. This encourages teachers to mentor each other and share best teaching practices. This recommendation meets the professional standards of teachers in improving teaching quality. Studies by Wan Idros Wan Sulaiman and MaizatulHaizanMahbob (2012) and Yusoff et al. (2018) support that a collaborative culture, involving close relationships between administration and staff, is crucial for organizational success.

2.2   Concept of Professional Learning Community

The practices of Professional Learning Communities (PLC) are development programs focused on school-level teachers. PLC encourages teacher teamwork with peer support as an approach to continuous professional development. Researchers believe that PLC can change teaching methods and improve student performance (Zubaidah, 2010; Doreen Ting Jia Chzin&Shahlan Surat, 2021; Ezwafahmey Ahmad Kusaini, 2018). The concept of PLC can be seen as a school community that practices a learning culture, which helps improve teaching, learning strategies, and school administration and leadership (Hipp& Huffman, 2003; Zuraidah Abdullah & Muhammad Faizal A. Ghani, 2014). PLC practices emphasize knowledge sharing among teachers. A study by Dima Mazlina @ Siti Aishah Bt. Abu Bakar (2016) found that there are weekly knowledge-sharing sessions where teachers act as mentors. This helps teachers gain knowledge about appropriate methods, techniques, and strategies for educational development. Cultivating PLC practices is crucial for training high-quality and proactive teachers in teaching.

III.   METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative case study design, chosen for its suitability in educational research and related topics, allowing for in-depth exploration (Charmaz, 2006; Creswell, 2005). The researcher used semi-structured interviews to investigate the collaborative culture among Malay Language teachers in primary schools through Professional Learning Community (PLC) practices. Participants were selected based on experience and knowledge of PLC, including Malay Language teachers at Sekolah Kebangsaan Sepang with at least five years

of teaching experience, a bachelor's degree recognized by the Ministry of Education Malaysia, and leadership roles in the Malay Language panel. Four participants, three female and one male, were chosen using purposive sampling (Patton, 2002) from four primary schools in Jenderam, Sepang. The interview protocol comprised opening, main, and closing questions, with additional questions as needed to explore teachers' readiness, teaching implementation, and practices. Data triangulation involved interviews with school administrators and students. To ensure validity and reliability, interview questions were reviewed by two senior lecturers from Universiti Putra Malaysia and Universiti Malaya before use. Interviews began with informal conversations to build rapport, allowing participants to freely provide comprehensive and accurate information, thereby facilitating the collection of qualitative data essential for understanding the collaborative culture in PLC practices.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Results

4.1 Demographics of Study Participants

According to Table 1, a total of four participants were involved in this study. The participants comprised three female teachers and one male teacher. Each participant was assigned a unique code label: P1, P2, P3, and P4. All participants are Malay Language teachers who hold the position of head of the Malay Language panel at their respective schools.

Table 1: Background of Study Participants

Participant Code	P1	P2	P3	P4
Gender	Male	Female	Female	Female
Age	53	43	39	34
Length of Service	28 years	18 years	15 years	10 years
School Location	Rural	Rural	Rural	Rural
Academic Qualification	Bachelor's Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Bachelor's Degree

4.2 Exploring Collaborative Culture Through the Practices of Professional Development Communities Among Malay Language Teachers in Primary Schools

4.2.1 Readiness of Malay Language Teachers in Implementing Collaborative Culture

The findings indicate that the study participants, as Malay Language teachers and heads of the Malay Language panel, have established a collaborative culture in their schools. Through these interviews, it is evident that Malay Language teachers are ready to implement a collaborative culture in schools. The interview transcripts were categorized according to appropriate themes and sub-themes.

Table 2: Readiness of Teachers

No	Theme	Sub-theme	P1	P2	P3	P4	Total
1	Teacher Understanding	Knowledge and understanding	/	/	/	/	4
2	Teacher Involvement	Active involvement	/	/	/	/	4
3	Teacher Motivation	Open-minded attitude	/	X	X	/	2
		Confident and aware	/	X	X	/	2

a. Teacher Understanding

Based on Table 2 above, the interview findings show that all four study participants agreed that Malay Language teachers know and understand the function of a collaborative culture in schools. This knowledge and understanding help in effectively practicing the collaborative culture in schools. The study participants, who are also heads of the Malay Language panel, function as drivers of the collaborative culture among Malay Language teachers.

"......Understand. **Cooperation and interaction** between individuals or groups to achieve a common goal." (P2/KG/T1/TB)

Additionally, the teachers understand the purpose and role of collaboration within an organization. P1, P2, and P4 stated that collaboration is a teamwork practice that encourages cooperation and interaction within a specific group. P3, on the other hand, believes that collaboration aims to discuss and reach a consensus on matters related to teaching and learning in schools.

"......understand. Collaboration is **working together** to accomplish something." (P4/KG/T1/TB)

b. Teacher Involvement

Based on Table 2 above, the interview findings indicate that all study participants stated that the Malay Language teachers at their schools are always actively involved during discussion activities. The teachers also provide support for the activities conducted by the Malay Language panel.

"......teachers always provide **support by participating in discussion and sharing sessions** conducted by the panel." (P4/KG/T2/TB)

c. Teacher Motivation

The third theme of readiness is teacher motivation. Teacher motivation consists of two sub-themes: open-mindedness and being confident and aware.

i. Open-Mindedness

Based on Table 2 above, the interview findings show that only P1 and P4 agreed that teachers are open to practicing a collaborative culture in schools because they are willing to follow instructions to discuss certain matters. In contrast, P2 and P3 stated that teachers are still reluctant to practice a collaborative culture unless directed to do so.

"......teachers are **willing to follow the given instructions**, such as the implementation of Professional Learning Community (PLC) practices in the Malay Language panel."(P1/KG/T3/TB)

"......teachers **do not like to engage in collaboration** without being directed." (P3/KG/T3/TB)

ii. Confidence and Awareness

Based on Table 2 above, the interview findings show that only P1 and P4 stated that teachers are always confident and aware in practicing a collaborative culture.

"......teachers are **always enthusiastic and confident in** doing something. They are also aware of current needs."

(P1/KG/TE/TB)

However, P2 and P4 had a different opinion, stating that some teachers, especially young teachers, are afraid to take the first step in conducting collaborative activities with their team. They seek guidance from more experienced teachers.

"......teachers, especially young teachers, **are afraid and lack confidence** to initiate collaborative activities within the team." (P2/KG/T3/TB)

4.2.2 Implementation of Collaborative Culture in Schools

The findings indicate that there are two main themes for the item on the implementation of collaborative culture in schools. Each theme is divided into several sub-themes.

Table 3: Implementation of Collaborative Culture

No	Theme	Sub-theme	P1	P2	P3	P4	Total
1	Learning Groups	Problem Solving	/	/	/	/	4
		Student Improvement Programs	/	/	/	/	4
		Teaching Techniques	/	X	/	/	3
		Resource Development	X	/	/	X	2
		Mentoring Guidance	/	/	/	/	4
2	Data Analysis	Teaching Effectiveness	/	/	/	/	4
		Achievement Improvement	/	/	/	/	4
		Action Research	X	/	X	/	2
		Teaching Quality	/	/	/	/	4

a. Learning Groups
i. Problem Solving

Based on Table 3 above, it can be concluded that all study participants, as heads of the panel in their schools, have practiced a collaborative culture informally. This is evident during discussion sessions, performance dialogue sharing on certain matters or emerging issues. Additionally, some teachers consistently refer to more experienced colleagues to discuss various matters and issues at school.

"......we hold **discussions through panel meetings, Ladap, and frequently interact** in the panel group via Telegram." (P1/PBK/T1/TB)

"......usually, teachers will **refer to more experienced colleagues** if any issues arise." (P3/PBK/T1/TB)

ii. Student Improvement Programs

Analysis of Table 3 shows that all four study participants indeed conduct discussion sessions among groups of teachers to implement student improvement programs. Teachers constantly discuss and sit together to reach a consensus on suitable student activities.

"......usually, student improvement activities are planned during panel meetings. We **will discuss and reach an agreement first**." (P3/PBK/T1/TB)

iii. Teaching Techniques

The findings show that only P2 does not conduct discussion sessions regarding teaching techniques among teachers at their school. For this participant, the teaching techniques used by teachers at their school are almost the same. Therefore, P2 mentioned that they rarely discuss teaching techniques.

"......the teaching techniques used by teachers are almost the same. So, we **rarely discuss teaching techniques** in class."

(P2/PBK/T1/TB)

iv. Development of Teaching and Learning Resources

Analysis of the interview transcripts shows that only P2 and P3 collaborate to develop teaching and learning resources (Pdpc). The teachers at the study school constantly discuss and share Pdpc materials with other colleagues.

"......our teachers always **share Pdpc materials**. We will exchange Pdpc materials when necessary."

(P2/PBK/T1/TB)

"......we once held a workshop to **create teaching aids together to make it easier for other teachers**. Therefore, we will use the same teaching aids when needed."   (P3/PBK/T1/TB)

v. Guidance and Mentoring

Analysis of the theme of guidance and mentoring shows that all four study participants practice a collaborative culture with other teachers. For example, they hold discussion sessions such as teacher-sharing sessions, peer-coaching, and performance dialogues with teachers.

"......I will ensure that panel members practice the learning community. This PLC practice is **conducted regularly.**"   (P1/PBK/T1/TB)

"......every month we will hold discussion sessions together, such as **teacher-sharing sessions, peer-coaching, and performance dialogues**."

(P3/PBK/T1/TB)

b. Data Analysis
i. Teaching Effectiveness

Based on the findings, all study participants conduct discussion sessions to assess the effectiveness of a teacher's teaching and learning sessions.

"......teachers involved during the **learning walk or microteaching activities will** provide feedback on the teaching activities. Then, we refer to the PLC data recorded."   (P2/PBK/T2/TB)

ii. Achievement Improvement

The analysis of findings shows that all four study participants engage in collaborative activities to discuss steps for improving student and teacher achievements.

"......Yes, we do it. At least twice a year to **discuss data in terms of student achievement** or programs we have conducted."   (P4/PBK/T2/TB)

iii. Action Research

The analysis of interview findings shows that only P2 and P4 conduct action research at their schools. These

participants stated that their schools conduct action research every year based on established guidelines. In contrast, P1 and P3 do not emphasize action research.

"......Yes, every panel must conduct at least **one action research each year**. Usually, we will discuss the topic to be researched."   (P4/PBK/T2/TB)

"......Our school **does not emphasize action research** like other schools."   (P1/PBK/T2/TB)

iv. Teaching Quality

The analysis of the sub-theme shows that all four study participants consistently ensure the quality of teaching improves over time. Teachers are said to be constantly seeking the latest knowledge through pedagogical workshops and refresher courses to continuously improve their teaching quality.

"......teachers will attend workshops on teaching, such as **pedagogical enhancement workshops**, to improve teaching quality."   (P2/PBK/T2/TB)

"......**Guidance and mentoring from senior teachers** help other teachers to improve their teaching techniques."

      (P3/PBK/T2/TB)

4.2.3 Practices of Malay Language Teachers in Schools

The findings indicate that there are four main themes for the item on the practices of Malay Language teachers in schools. Each theme is divided into several sub-themes.

Table 4: Teacher Practices

No	Theme	Sub-theme	P1	P2	P3	P4	Total
1	Planning	Knowledge and understanding	/	/	/	/	4
		Implementation	/	/	/	/	4
2	Reflection Sessions	Feedback	/	/	/	/	2
		Performance Dialogue	/	/	/	/	2
3	Mentoring	Administrators	/	/	/	/	4
		Colleagues	/	/	/	/	4
		Students	/	/	/	/	4
4	Evaluation	Teaching Effectiveness	X	/	/	X	2
		Panel Programs	/	/	/	/	4
		Student Achievement	/	/	/	/	4

a. Planning

i. Knowledge and Understanding

The analysis of interview findings above shows that all four study participants understand the true meaning and function of a collaborative culture in schools. The teachers also know and understand the planning and implementation processes of this collaborative culture.

"......Understand. Collaboration is a **group discussion technique**."   (P1/AG/T1/TB)

ii. Implementation

The analysis shows that all participants implement this collaborative culture in their schools through activities

such as Ladap, meetings, or performance dialogue sessions.

"......We **always talk and discuss certain issues**. Sometimes face-to-face, sometimes online." (P3/AG/T1/TB)

b. Reflection Sessions
i. Feedback

The findings show that all four study participants conduct feedback and reflection sessions, formally or informally, with other teachers.

"......During every Ladap activity, meeting, or performance dialogue, **we always ask for teacher feedback before the session ends**."   (P2/AG/T2/TB)

"......Before ending Pdpc, teachers are **trained to question students to check their understanding** of the day's topic."
          (P3/AG/T2/TB)

ii. Performance Dialogue

The analysis above shows that all four study participants conduct performance dialogues within the panel. Some Malay Language panels are required to hold performance dialogues at least once a month.

"......Before ending Pdpc, **teachers are trained to question students to check their understanding** of the day's topic."   (P3/AG/T2/TB)

"......We must hold **at least one performance dialogue a month**. The goal is to evaluate performance and achievement."   (P4/AG/T2/TB)

c. Mentoring
i. Administrators

The analysis shows that all four study participants agree that school administrators always encourage discussion sessions or PLC practices within their panels.

"......School administrators **always encourage teachers to conduct discussion sessions or PLC**.
                                                              (P1/AG/T3/TB)

ii. Colleagues

The analysis shows that all four study participants agree that their colleagues fully cooperate in discussion activities, Ladap, performance dialogues, or PLC practices.

"......Colleagues are **very helpful when discussion activities are needed for issues or matters** that need attention."   (P3/AG/T3/TB)

iii. Students

The analysis of the mentoring item for students shows that all participants agree that they conduct discussion sessions with other teachers.

"......Teachers will discuss to **identify the abilities and weaknesses of the students** they teach. Experienced teachers will provide guidance on suitable activities according to student abilities." (P1/AG/T3/TB)

d. Evaluation

i. Teaching Effectiveness

The analysis of the evaluation theme for the sub-theme of teaching effectiveness shows that only P2 and P3 conduct collaborative sessions to discuss each other's teaching performance. In contrast, P1 and P4 stated that teachers rarely discuss to evaluate each other's teaching performance.

"......We will spend time together, such as in **performance dialogue activities, to discuss each other's teaching** performance."   (P2/AG/T4/TB)

"......Our panel members **always talk and indirectly discuss each other's teaching after class**."
(P3/AG/T4/TB)

ii. Panel Programs

The analysis of the evaluation sub-theme for panel programs shows that all four study participants hold collaborative sessions to evaluate the panel programs conducted. Teachers will discuss to assess the effectiveness of the programs, identifying weaknesses and shortcomings.

"......Every panel at the school **must evaluate the planned programs**. The panel head must decide whether to continue the program or replace it with another."   (P4/AG/T4/TB)

iii. Student Achievement

The findings for the evaluation sub-theme of student achievement show that all four study participants hold collaborative sessions to assess student achievement based on the programs conducted.

"......Every student excellence program conducted **has a post-mortem and is evaluated by administrators**. Student achievement is analysed based on percentages and graphs."   (P1/AG/T4/TB)

V.   Discussion

This study explored the collaborative culture through the practices of professional development communities among Malay Language primary school teachers to identify the readiness, implementation methods, and practices of collaborative culture among Malay Language teachers in schools. A collaborative culture not only benefits teachers individually but also enhance the overall quality of education in schools. The collaborative culture among teachers has a significant impact, such as fostering positive thinking in the process of idea sharing, integrating new knowledge, increasing motivation, and building cooperation between teachers and students (Yusoff et al., 2018; Zanaton H Iksan, Rabiatul 'Aqilah Mohamad Ariffin, Sharifah Sebran Jamila Syed Imam, 2021; Victor, 2018; Bantwini, 2019). Therefore, this study aims to raise awareness among teachers about the importance of a collaborative culture in enhancing professional development in teaching.

The study results show that the primary school Malay Language teachers involved have successfully created a learning community atmosphere in their schools. The study participants were selected based on the recommendations of school administrators, who are also the heads of the Malay Language panel, ensuring that a collaborative culture is practiced. The teachers demonstrated readiness in implementing a collaborative culture, understanding its function and purpose. This knowledge and understanding help them effectively practice a collaborative culture in their schools. A teacher needs to have in-depth knowledge of the subject taught to ensure the success of the Teaching and Learning (PdP) process. This is important for teachers who wish to implement effective PdP methods. Teachers with insufficient knowledge may not achieve job satisfaction because one of the factors contributing to satisfaction in teaching is the pedagogical knowledge they possess (Jain Chee et al., 2018; Nurul Ashikin Md Yatim, Chew Fong Peng &Zuraidah Abdullah, 2020; Padmavathi, 2017; Blackwell, Lauricella & Wartella, 2016).

The findings of this study revealed that two out of four teachers lacked motivation in practicing a collaborative culture in schools. Some teachers are afraid to initiate collaborative activities with colleagues and expect guidance from more experienced teachers. Teachers should have high motivation to perform their duties. Studies by Lubis et al. (2022), Lim Kong Teong, Nurul Shahidah binti Ahmad Nasir, Abdull Sukor bin Shaari (2023), and Saper et al. (2018) suggest that teachers need to be confident that they can perform their duties well and serve as good role models. Teachers with high self-confidence will show better performance. Therefore, it is crucial for teachers to have self-confidence and motivation so that the collaborative culture can be effectively practiced.

Furthermore, teachers are seen to implement a collaborative culture through two main themes: learning groups and data analysis practices. In line with the definition of collaboration, which means close cooperation between two parties, teachers collaborate in teaching and learning at school. They form learning groups to create a learning community in the school. This collaborative culture is evident in problem-solving activities, discussions on student improvement programs, and guidance and mentoring activities. Teachers constantly share information, ideas, and opinions on discussed issues. These findings are consistent with the studies by Rosnah, Muhammad Faizal, &Saedah (2013), Mohd Akmal Bin Madus (2013), and Siti Nafsiah Ismail, Zuraidah Abdullah, & Abdul Jalil Othman (2020), which state that a culture of mutual assistance in problem-solving, knowledge and experience sharing, and mutual respect are characteristics of excellent teamwork.

Additionally, a collaborative culture encourages teachers to work together to improve the quality of education. Teachers can evaluate their teaching methods, obtain feedback from colleagues, read reflections, and exchange knowledge about teaching techniques. Through reflection and discussion, teachers become wiser and can enhance their knowledge and skills. This also helps them choose the best strategies to address teaching and learning problems. According to studies by Siti Nafsiah et al. (2018), Siti Nafsiah Ismail, Zuraidah Abdullah, Abdul Jalil Othman (2020), Faridah Mydin Kutty (2022), and Azura Pun &Mahaliza Mansor (2022), teachers need to consistently share knowledge with colleagues to improve the quality of teaching in schools. This helps to improve their professionalism to keep up with educational changes in the challenging technological era.

The study findings also indicate that a collaborative culture in schools helps teachers assess and improve teaching and learning activities. Teachers frequently share with colleagues to create an effective teaching environment and enhance student achievement. According to Fakhri Abdul Khalil and Mohd Isha Awang (2016), cooperation among teachers results in higher-quality teaching. Quality teachers are essential assets for high-quality education. A study by Akram Safari, Bijan Abdollahi, and Fatemeh Sabouri (2019) found a positive and significant relationship between collaboration and teaching quality. Ronfeldt et al. (2015) and Goddard et al. (2007) also showed that effective collaboration among teachers positively impacts career achievement and student development. Ultimately, the practice of learning communities that prioritize a collaborative culture helps teachers enhance their professionalism and improve the quality of education.

A collaborative culture among teachers has significant effects such as fostering positive thinking, integrating new knowledge, increasing motivation, and strengthening cooperation between teachers and students. Activities such as reflection sessions, mentoring, performance dialogues, and evaluations are crucial for building close cooperation between both parties. In the context of schools, mentoring is highly prioritized, especially among teachers. The main purpose of mentoring is to provide guidance to teachers, especially new ones, to enhance their quality as educators. This culture has a positive impact, particularly on new teachers who may lack experience. Additionally, reflection sessions, performance dialogues, and evaluations aid in discussions about the performance of students and teachers. According to Zanaton Ikhsan et al. (2021), Kalai Selvan Arumugham (2020), and Nur Amelia Adam (2019), these discussions encourage teachers to share ideas to solve emerging issues or problems.

Several implications have been identified based on the discussions conducted. This collaborative culture positively impacts the professional development of teachers, thereby enhancing the quality of education in schools. Every teacher has the opportunity to improve their professional development practices through this collaborative culture. As a dedicated and visionary teacher, one must continually improve their professional teaching practices to keep up with the times. This aligns with the recommendations in the studies by Mohd Aizat Abu Hassan and Kamarudin Musa (2020) and Saadiah Shuiba, Jamal @ Nordin Yunus, and Hamidah Yusof (2020), which state that teachers should be responsible for enhancing and improving all aspects of teacher professionalism.

Responsible parties such as the Ministry of Education (KPM), State Education Departments (JPN), District Education Offices (PPD), and school administrators need to be aware of teachers' needs to enhance their professionalism in line with current developments. Education authorities should also implement intervention plans to disseminate the importance of a collaborative culture among teachers and the school community. Studies by Sujirah Ibrahim &Zuraidah Abdullah (2014), Angela Lang & Mohamed Yusof Mohd Noor (2024), and Mat Zaid et al. (2022) indicate that administrators should implement new strategies to create a learning culture among teachers. For example, school administrators can provide mentoring programs for new teachers or teachers who need additional support to guide them in the teaching process and develop their professional skills. Additionally, administrators should provide and promote continuous professional development opportunities, such as workshops, seminars, and training courses, to enhance teachers' pedagogical skills and subject knowledge.

Teacher self-efficacy needs to be an essential component in teacher training and professional development programs by the Ministry of Education (KPM), as it is closely related to teachers' confidence in performing their duties effectively. Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to carry out tasks effectively. This confidence influences how teachers plan and implement teaching and how they face work challenges. A study by Azman Ismail et al. (2010) shows that a strong personality can enhance teacher self-efficacy, which in turn helps organizations achieve excellence. Therefore, developing self-efficacy among teachers is a strategic step to strengthen the education sector by improving teachers' skills and effectiveness in performing their duties.

In completing this study, several factors limited the researcher in obtaining comprehensive data. The main issue faced was the limited sample size and the lack of support and cooperation from study participants during the data collection process. When obtaining confirmation and permission from study participants for interviews, some teachers were unwilling to cooperate and cited their primary job constraints as reasons for not participating in this study. Consequently, the researcher had to reduce the number of study participants from six to only four. This reduction in sample size may result in interview findings that do not encompass a broader perspective.

Therefore, this study suggests several follow-up studies as extensions of this research. Among them, it is recommended that there should be further studies to comprehensively explore the effectiveness and impact of this collaborative culture among teachers in schools. Research on the challenges and factors influencing the holistic implementation of a collaborative culture should also be revisited to determine how to effectively implement this culture. Furthermore, it is suggested that future researchers expand the sample size by involving more teachers from various backgrounds to obtain more detailed and diverse data.

VI.   Conclusion

This study provides an overview that a collaborative culture is indeed practiced in schools. However, this culture may still be at a less impressive level compared to other countries. Therefore, it is hoped that this study will generate ideas for more in-depth research on the collaborative culture among teachers in schools. The

practice of professional development is important for enhancing the teaching profession's development in the country. The teaching profession is thus elevated, further strengthening the professionalism of teachers in schools. This study is also expected to help develop teacher professionalism in Malaysia to be on par with other countries.

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