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Towards teachers' empowerment through teacher professional development programs provided by an NGO development project: An exploratory study

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The American University in Cairo

Graduate School of Education

TOWARDS TACHER'S EMPOWERMENT THROUGH TACHER

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS provided BY AN NGO

DVELOPMENT PROJECT: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

A Thesis submitted to

The Department of International and Comparative Education

in partial fulfillment of the requirements of

the degree of Master of Arts in International and Comparative Education.

by Sara Kamel Girgis Aboelkhair

Under the Supervision of Dr. Malak Zaalouk

Spring/May 2018

Abstract

This qualitative study explores the empowering practices in teacher professional development programs held by an NGO development project for community school teachers. The literature review is divided into two main sections. The first section provided insights of the conceptual frameworks of professional development and empowerment along with international best practices. The second section focuses on the concept of community based learning, and the historical background on community schools in Egypt. Data was collected using semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and observations. The participant were 35 composed of facilitators/teachers, project manager, students, and mentors. The findings showed that while teachers where empowered in some dimensions, they are other aspects in which they were not fully empowered in yet. The paper concludes with practical implications, future recommendations, and limitations.

Keywords: Empowerment, Professional Development, Teacher

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I dedicate this work to my son Youssef, so one day he would grow up and be proud of me.

List of Acronyms

NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
PD	Professional Development
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation & Development
UNDP	United Nation for Development Programme
US	United States
PISA	Programme for International Students Assessment
CBE	Community Based Education
MOE	Ministry of Education
FOE	Faculty of Education
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
IRB	Institutional Review Board
CAPMAS	Central Agency of Population Mobilization and Statistics
AUC	American University in Cairo

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Clearly, meeting the expectation that all students will learn to high standards will require a transformation in the ways in which our education system attracts, prepares, supports, and develops expert teachers ... An aspect of this transformation is developing means to evaluate and recognize teacher effectiveness throughout the career, for the purposes of licensing, hiring, and granting tenure; for providing needed professional development ... (Darling-Hammond and Prince, 2007, p. 3)(as cited in Mukeredzi, 2013)

Education is a vital tool for nation development, and teachers are considered the pillars of any educational institution because their role is of a paramount importance in preparing young generations morally and intellectually (Schaefers & Terhart, 2006). Moreover, teachers' quality is very essential factor in determining students' academic achievement. This notion has been also emphasized by Feiman-Nemser (2001) when she stated that "what students learn, is directly related to what and how teachers teach; and how teachers teach depends on the knowledge, skills, and commitments they bring to their practice" (p.1013). In addition, she explained that "if we want good schools to produce more powerful learning opportunities on the part of students, we have to offer more powerful learning opportunities to teachers (in their training)" (p.1023-14).

Education in Egypt

By 2010, the Arab Spring emerged with a string of demonstrations in Tunisia, followed by protestations in Libya, Egypt, Syria, Yemen, and Bahrain. As a result of the success of protesters in Tunisia, Egyptian activists and opposition groups led demonstrations on the 25th of January, 2011 to call for their rights in having dignity and honor. One of the major demands they called for was to have a good quality of education (Abdelrahman & Irby, 2016).

In the post-Mubarak era, the education system is faced with pressing and numerous challenges. Primary public schools in Egypt are below "the basic school quality with grade retention, dropout rates, and absenteeism being significant issues in the school" (Abdelrahman & Irby, 2016, p. 27). Additionally, graduate students suffer from high rates of unemployment and no prospects to find a good job due to the mismatch between the job market requirements and the educational system's outputs. The high rates of unemployment pose a number of political, economic and social risks. The problem with education in the post Mubarak era does not solely lie in the unemployment issue, but it largely failed to allow for the dreams of the revolution such as dignity, democracy and freedom all of which are related to an empowerment approach to education. Other problems have been also highlighted, such as the lack of well qualified teachers, rigid authoritarian government control, overcrowded classroom, inadequacy of vocational training, gender inequality, absence of critical thinking, and low salaries for teachers. Shortage of skills is another constraint to attain growth opportunities. The UNDP's 2010 Egypt Human Development Report concluded, "the market is currently incapable of offering sufficient opportunities to all job seekers, particularly those with an education. It is therefore time to turn to the alternative solution, shaping youth to suit market needs" (UNDP, 2010).

Teacher education in Egypt. Preparing efficient classroom teachers have become very challenging and complex due to numerous reasons such as: the increasing number of language learners, accelerating number of mainstreaming education, and working with standard- based curriculum. In the same vein, a huge pressure and demand is put on the necessity of teaching students new skills as teamwork and advanced

technologies. Hence, schools are in demand for teachers who are able to deal effectively with different languages and backgrounds, teachers who are able to promote tolerance and are sensitive to cultural and gender issues, teachers who can respond effectively to students with behavioral and learning problems, teachers who can use technology and keep pace with rapid developing fields of knowledge, and teachers who are capable of preparing good citizens and self-directed learners to keep learning over a life-time (OECD, 2010). Simultaneously, the tightening policy controls and the shrinking public sector finances have been putting more pressure on teachers to work more for a limited reward. Underpaid and overworked teachers have had to adhere to detailed curriculum objectives and centrally imposed learning standards (Hughes, 2006).

As a result of this "new classroom environment", and educational needs, teachers have to be professionalized and empowered in ways that equip them with necessary tools to address these needs (Hughes, 2006). In addition, the above mentioned tendencies and pressures lead teachers to re-define their professionalism as well as making judgments over the model of professional development they aspire in order to enhance their performance (Hargreaves, 2000). Thus, teachers' professional development programs and their effect on the performance of educational systems has become one of the dominant themes in the quest for improving education quality, one of top priories on political and educational agenda, and many education leaders (administrators, teachers, curriculum coordinators) are highly concerned with it (Hargreaves, 2000) .

Teachers are in dire need to have better opportunities to enhance their education, so they can be equipped with adequate knowledge and skills to develop students' competencies. Thousands of student teachers graduate each year from faculties of

education and get hired, but not well trained to perform in the classrooms. Thus, high quality, extensive and ongoing teacher professional development programs turned to be such a critical requisite to improve teachers' competences and capacities in order to meet the students' needs and expectations (Galal, 2002).

According to the report of the World Bank (2010), the Professional Development (PD) in Egypt is described as "wide in content but narrow in sharing good practice throughout the system" (World Bank, 2010, p.9). In addition, it is characterized by fragmentation of theory and practice and irrelevance to the teachers' needs. Feriman-Nemser (2011) as cited in the OECD report, described the professional programs in Egypt as a combination of unrelated topics and courses, and the practical interventions are too weak to respond to teachers' needs. He added, that teacher professional development programs offer superficial knowledge which cannot foster deep understanding. This is supported by El-Bilawi and Nasser (2017) who aimed at exploring teachers' perceptions and reflections on the professional development programs offered by the Ministry of Education (MOE) in Egypt as part of the national reform plan to enhance teachers' conditions. Their findings showed the following:

- The professional development programs failed to update teachers of latest or new teaching methodologies.

- The workshops were too short to foster a transformational paradigm towards teachers' instructional practices. Teachers reported their inability to use or recall any of the information they got exposed to.

- The programs were of a low quality, and the content knowledge was shallow, superficial, and not based on scientific knowledge.

- The absence of practice and modeling.

Statement of the Problem

The previously mentioned results along with the OECD report assert that teachers in Egypt, are not usually empowered to take initiative towards their education and learning. They are not mostly trained in an empowering manner which can motivate and raise their sense of commitment and ownership to stand against the huge challenges as mentioned above. The revolution that took place in 2011 had a number of social and political demands amongst which better education, with dignity and a higher level of participation hence empowerment.

According to a project presented through the media, there seems to be some innovative models of NGO development projects such as the Nile Valley which succeeded in empowering teachers, who work in community schools in Upper Egypt, through ongoing and intensive trainings and workshops.

Purpose of the Study

The primary aim of this study is to examine whether the teacher professional development provided by the Nile Valley NGO really empowers teachers, and the practices and activities followed by the Nile Valley development project to empower community schools' teachers. The secondary aim is to investigate the direct impact of the training sessions and workshops on teachers' performance.

Research Questions

1. How does the Nile Valley's teacher professional development program empower teachers?

2. What is the effect of the empowering practices of teacher professional development program on teachers' performance?

An assumption underlying the second research question is that if the training is empowering, it will have a positive impact on teachers' performance.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

This chapter is divided into two main sections. Each section is composed of a number of themes. The First section introduces the concept of teachers' empowerment and the theoretical framework which is adopted in this study. It also entails a conceptual framework for teacher professional development (PD), the principles of successful PD, the phases of PD, and some international professional development practices to empower teachers. The second section provides background information about the Community Based Learning (CBE), in terms of its concepts along with the international experiences in promoting community learning. It also sheds light on the historical background of community learning and community schools in Egypt. Finally, it provides background information on the development projects efforts in promoting community learning in Egypt.

Teacher's Empowerment

Teacher empowerment is increasingly gaining attention among practitioners and scholars due to its positive relationship with a number of teachers' work-related outcomes, such as: teachers' job satisfaction, leadership, teaching quality, professional commitment and organizational commitment, which impact on school effectiveness and classroom improvement (Lee & Nie, 2014).

Teacher empowerment is based on the premise that classroom teachers have the knowledge and skills to enhance their working conditions (Bogler & Somech, 2004). Another premise is that teachers are highly autonomous, eager to fulfill their jobs when

they are satisfied and motivated. In a study on empowering teacher leaders, Rinehart and Short (1991) concluded that reading recovery classroom teachers were less empowered than reading recovery teacher leaders. This conclusion was interpreted as that reading recovery teacher leaders gained more control over daily schedules, more chances to make decisions, more opportunities to grow professionally, and higher sense of teaching competency.

Teacher empowerment concept has been conceptualized differently. For example, Bolin (1989) defined empowerment as granting teachers the right in setting school policies and goals as well as to participate in making judgments over instructional practices. Empowerment, as perceived by Short, Greer and Melvin (1994) is defined as ''a process whereby school participants develop the competence to take charge of their own growth and resolve their own problems'' (p. 38). According to Maeroff (1988), teacher empowerment consists of decision-making, increased knowledge, and improved status. Sweetland and Hoy (2000) defined teacher empowerment in terms of "teachers' power to control critical decisions about teaching and learning conditions" (p. 703).

Theoretical framework. Teacher empowerment is viewed from two perspectives: either social structural perspective (considers the impact of the teachers' work environment on their decisions and practices) or psychological perspective (a teacher's individual work motivation) (Lee & Nie, 2014). Others use Short et al.'s (1994) single construct of teacher empowerment as a process of self-development and professional development. In addition, teacher empowerment literature, reviewed by Dierking and Fox (2012), implies that the perceptions of efficacy, autonomy, support and power are interlinked and intertwined. They suggest that teachers feel empowered when

they trust their abilities in influencing and shaping students' lives. They are empowered when they are engaged in making decisions which can have a direct impact on students' learning, teaching, and classrooms. It was pinpointed that the increased perceptions of self-worth and power change when teachers are engaged in an environment where knowledge was co-constructed.

In this study, Short and Rinehart's (1992) framework of teacher empowerment is used. The framework consists of six dimensions: decision-making, professional growth, status, self-efficacy, autonomy, and impact. Decision-making refers to teachers' participation in critical decisions that directly affect their work, involving issues related to budgets, teacher selection, scheduling, and curriculum. To be effective, teachers' participation in decision-making must be genuine, and the teachers need to be confident that their decisions actually impact real outcomes. Professional growth refers to the teachers' perception that the school provides them opportunities to grow and develop professionally, to continue to learn, and to expand their skills during their work in school. Status refers to the professional respect and admiration that the teachers perceive from colleagues. Respect is also granted for the knowledge and expertise that the teachers demonstrate, resulting in support of their actions from others. Self-efficacy refers to the teachers' perception that they are equipped with the skills and ability to help students learn, and are competent to develop curricula for students. The feeling of mastery, in knowledge and practice, resulting in accomplishing desired outcomes, is critical in the teachers' sense of self efficacy. Impact refers to the teachers' perception that they can affect and influence school life. (Bogler & Somech, 2004).
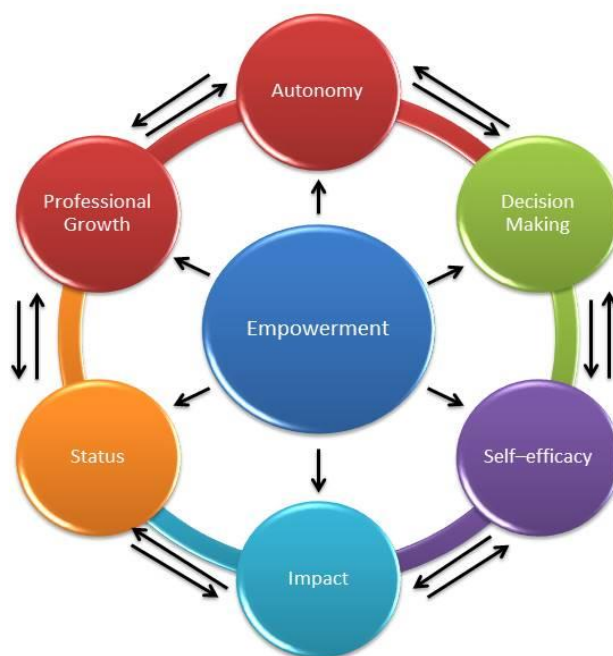
Figure 1: Framework of the 6 dimensions of Empowerment

Teacher Professional Development

Lieberman and Miller (2008) asserted that staff development programs had their genesis in the late 1950s and early 1960s in the United States (US) as part of the National Defense Education Act of 1958 passed by Congress in response to the Soviet launch of Sputnik. The staff development programs were composed of summer-institutes and lectures designed by professors to transmit materials, techniques, and subject-specific knowledge to teachers. Sparks and Loucks-Horsley (1989) as cited in (Grimmett, 2014) argued that the early research was only focusing on identifying general attitudes towards these programs which was characterized by the dissatisfaction on the teachers' part (Ainsworth, 1976; Dillon, 1979) as cited in (Grimmett , 2014). Therefore, since the

1990s, the literature on teachers' in-service training has reflected the general paradigm swing towards conceptualizations of learning as ongoing, social, situated and actively constructed (Putnam & Borko, 2000; Webster-Wright, 2009) as cited in (Grimmett, 2014).This has led to a change of focus from professional development – as something done to teachers by outside 'experts,' to professional learning – as something done with and/or by teachers in response to their own pedagogical needs and concerns (Sultana, 2005).

Conceptual framework. Professional development is viewed as a structured and facilitated opportunity for learning which is intended to increase teacher's competence, skills, and knowledge. However professional development research noted the lack of support or evidence to the efficiency of the professional development initiatives to develop teachers' instructional practices as well as students' learning (Tannehill & MacPhail, 2017).

According to Villegas-Remers (2003) effective teacher professional development is the one which contributes in collaborative learning and building community of learners, enables teachers to make choices over their learning, happens over a course of time, and focuses on teachers' real challenges. Ganser (2000) added that the professional development entails two types of experiences: formal experiences such as attending conferences, workshops, mentoring and professional meetings, and informal experiences such as watching television documentaries related to academic disciplines or reading professional publications. In this light, Glatthorn (1995) (as cited in Villegas-Reimers, 2003, p.120) asserted that professional development is broader than just career

development; it is the "growth that occurs as the teacher moves through the professional career cycle" (p.120).

These perspectives are actually new to teaching. For many years, the only professional development offered to teachers was the staff development or in-service training which was basically short-term courses or workshops which may present new information on certain aspects related to teaching. Unfortunately, those pieces of information were distant from the challenges teachers experience in their daily classrooms' practices. However, in the past few years, perceptions on teacher learning dramatically shifted to a new paradigm of teacher education which is the life-long professional development (Walling & Lewis, 2000). Evidence on this includes: the huge literature which is available; including documents, research reports, and essays on practices and models of professional development (Villegas-Remers, 2003, p. 100); the national and international donor agencies which have acknowledged the necessity of teachers' professional development and have commissioned studies which aim at learning how to support such efforts effectively (Villegas-Remers, 2003, p. 100); many international and national organizations have supported the implementations of initiatives that improve the professional knowledge and skills of teachers. Asia Pacific Economic Cooperative (APEC) serves a good example in its efforts to improve teachers' professional development. This is because the 18 countries that border the Pacific Ocean have recognized teacher education as a vital tool in maintaining its economic development (Villegas-Remers, 2003, p. 100).

Principles of successful teacher professional development. Villegas-Remers (2003) suggested that the new perspective considers professional development as

underpinned by four characteristics. First, it is based on constructivism; teachers are viewed as active learners. In this process, teachers are required to take concrete tasks of assessing students, teaching, observing, and reflecting on their own work. Second, professional development is conceived as collaborative. Collaborative in this sense means meaningful interactions, not only among teachers, but also among teachers with other stakeholders (parents, administrators, community, etc.). This is because interaction usually provides opportunities to evaluate, criticize, discuss, and disagree. Third, professional development has to take place within a particular context and has to be connected to the daily activities of learners and teachers. Fourth, a teacher is perceived as a reflective professional who is expected to enter the profession with some prior knowledge and will gain new experiences and knowledge. Furthermore, several authors agreed on some consensus regarding the traits of effective professional learning, which are: empowering, by respecting educators as professionals with meaningful skills and knowledge to share; focused on enhancing children learning; based on current theory and research; collaborative to actively enable teachers to transform and construct their skills, beliefs, and; ongoing and relevant to the actual practice within the school context (Borko, Jacobs, & Koellner, 2010).

Moreover, Corcoran (1995) (as cited in Villegas-Reimer, 2003) presented seven principles for effective professional development programs which have to be considered by organizations and experts while implementing programs: support and stimulate schools', teachers, and districts' initiatives; model constructivist teaching; offer social, intellectual and emotional engagement with materials, ideas, and colleagues; respect

teachers as adult and professional learners;provide sufficient time, and follow up; be inclusive and accessible; and a solid ground in knowledge about teaching.

Phases of teacher professional development. The stages of professional development for teachers have been characterized as consisting of pre-service, induction, and in-service, all of which follow a period termed "apprenticeship of observation" – a stage when individuals are school students and before they enter a formal pre-service preparation program. Professional development and teacher education begins with pre-service and licensure requirements that affect teachers before they enter the teaching force. Induction and mentoring policies aim to support teachers in their transition into the workforce and during their first years of teaching. Ongoing professional development programs serve more experienced teachers. These programs can aid in the implementation of school reforms or simply help teachers improve their teaching in their current contexts.

Pre-service education. The pre-service training is the sector of educational training that encompasses development for student teachers before they undertake any teaching profession whether they encounter it in universities and/or colleges or teaching school institutions. In certain curriculum students are required to earn an academic degree in order to start into a pre-service education program. This stage is considered the preparation stage that determines the student's knowledge, skills and attitudes. Therefore, programs that will help in the educational assessment for the teacher students will be complied along with programs that will help in the development of the teacher (Kennedy, 1999).

In-service training. Leu and Ginsburg (2011) explained that in-service teacher professional development includes various programs designed to promote and support the professional learning of teachers who are already employed and working in classrooms. The aim of in-service professional development is to improve the skills, knowledge, and commitments of teachers so they become more efficient in designing lesson plans, teaching, assessing students' learning, and undertaking other responsibilities in the school community. In-service programs come in different forms, but most programs fall within the following two categories: First, "in-service" refers to an extended course of study which reflects the pre-service teacher education curriculum and lead to some level of formal qualification for "unqualified" teachers (Leu & Ginsburg, 2011). Second, "in-service" refers to professional development activities for teachers, ranging from continuous and comprehensive career-long programs of teacher learning to occasional workshops (Leu & Ginsburg, 2011).

According to Leu and Ginsburg (2011), there are ten key principles in developing effective in-service teacher professional development programs: 1. Consider in-service programs as part of a continuum of professional development. 2. Involve teachers in planning programs. 3. Emphasize pedagogical content knowledge in designing program content. 4. Use adult-oriented models of active learning as the pedagogical design for in-service programs. 5. Build reflective practice within teacher learning communities.6. Include all teachers in learning opportunities and base most of the in-service program at the school or school-cluster level. 7. Incorporate strong instructional leadership by school administrators and local supervisors. 8. Successful participation in in-service professional development programs should receive official recognition by the ministry or local

authority. This, coupled with demonstrated improved classroom practice, should lead to increased financial rewards and/or advancement on a structured career ladder. 9. Consider budget implications of building realistic and sustainable programs. 10. Link teacher in-service to a more holistic school improvement approach involving community members in planning for and monitoring of school quality.

International Experiences in Empowering Teachers through Teacher Professional Development

Teachers professional development in Japan. For several decades, teachers in Japan have been greatly involved in formal as well as informal teacher training programs. This was based on the premise that the teachers' practices and habits have lifelong outcomes on their profession. Thus, the Japanese educational leaders highly invest in extensive and ongoing trainings for the newly hired teachers during their initial years of teaching. Further, teachers used to effectively collaborate and collegially participate to improve their instructional practices (Lamie, 2006).

School organization, in Japan, encourages teachers to form communities of learners rather than operate in professional isolation. The new teachers are usually assigned to experienced teachers at the same grade level to provide them with adequate guidance and share experience and planning instructions. In addition, in 1988, the Ministry of Education, Science, Sports, and Culture (Monbusho) presented an innovative model plan for initial training. The model entails in-school training, which are a mentor-based training approximately 2 days a week and not less than 60 days during the year and an out-of-school training which is "once a week or 30 days per year." The out-of-school

training was held at Education Centre (Ken-Kyoiku-Senta) as cited in (Lamie, 2006) whose experienced teachers were selected by a prefectural board of education.

In-school initial training. All teachers are encouraged to engage in the in-school training. The assigned mentors are regular teachers, or the head of the 'school's academic instruction committee', or the head of either the 'grade level committee or the research committee. Further mentoring happen on weekly basis , and takes various formats: exchanging ideas, lecturing, reflections, individual coaching, interviews, participation in designing handouts and notes for students, and devising school activities as members of the school management committee (Lamie, 2006).

Out-of-school training. Adding to the 60 days training inside the school, new teachers had to be engaged in trainings outside the school, which usually took place in the prefectural education centers. Those trainings are designed to cover essential and special topics needed to increase teachers' knowledge and skills. For example, topics such as subject- content knowledge, teaching ethics and duties, students' counseling, integrating media and technology in education. The workshops were presented in various forms such as lecturing, seminars, hands-on activities, practicum, experiential learning, and retreats (Lamie, 2006).

In-service teachers in Japan stays with students for 2 years and grades are rotated as a sort of appreciation to the challenges which face teachers and students as well as a n attempt to link between later and early learning (Lamie, 2006). Also, teachers rotate to other schools so they can teach students from diverse backgrounds. Moreover, teachers in Japan share leadership and management and leadership in addition to the teaching duties.

For example, they may serve as grade level or subject area head teacher. Teachers also participate as members of numerous committees, such as: guidance affairs, accounting, instruction, training, and curriculum (Le Tendre, 1999; Takakura& Murata, 1998) as cited in (Lamie, 2006).

Kenshu, which literally means hard study and mastery of a skill, is the official term for professional development or training. A report by the Council on Educational Personnel (1987) emphasized "providing and ensuring opportunities for teachers throughout their career; coordinating learning and training opportunities at the national, prefectural, and municipal levels; and offering learning and training opportunities corresponding to changes in society, with an emphasis on experiential learning out of school settings. Further to this 1987 report, articles 19 and 20 of the Special Law on Educational Personnel prescribed that Japanese teachers have the right and duty to pursue professional development and Monbusho promoted systematic professional development for teachers beyond the initial probationary year" (Lamie, 2006).

At the informal level, teachers participate in many activities, such as workshops and conferences during the summer (Shinbun, 2000) as cited in (Lamie, 2006). They are also encouraged to participate in professional organizations or in research study project. For example, the Japan Association for Language Teaching offer seminars, and produces a journal, offers for notive researchers to present their work (Lamie, 2006).

In 1998, the Teacher Education Council (1998) recommended the need for the faculties of education intervention in promoting and offering opportunities to school

teachers to expand their knowledge, and to provide accessible and affordable chances for obtaining good quality of professional development (Lamie, 2006).

School-based trainings were ongoing conducted in nearly all the schools.The themes of the training tend to be related to a subject area. Once a theme is selected, the school tackles the theme for 3 consecutive years, publishing research reports at the end of each school year (Tada, 1995) as cited in (Lamie, 2006).

The essence of the training lies in Jugyo-kenkyu, which is a cooperative research on learning process. Teacherswere grouped into small groups in order to study a learning unit, or develop a lesson plan. Formats may also include presentations by expert professors from universities or local board of education, orlecturing, or workshops. Sometimes, study meetings may involve watching practicumfollowed by feedback to raise responses and discussions around the lesson plan as well as the learning and teaching materials used (Lamie, 2006).

The Japanese trainings were characterized by a collaborative and collective culture of teaching that characterizes Japanese school-based in-service education. In such a collective culture, teachers tend to find common goals and values that govern them. They were tolerant to differences at the periphery. Further, within such a culture, mutual respect and appreciation to individual differences and opinions have extra meaning to the discussion. Each year, the prefectural government offers other opportunities for professional development such as long and short terms funds, and conferences (Lamie, 2006).

Teachers' professional development in Finland. Since Finland emerged as one of the top-scoring Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) nation on the Programme for International Students Assessment (PISA), scholars become very active to study the so-called "Finnish miracle." Researchers wondered how Finland were able to compete in just couple of decades (Sahlberg, 2011).

The transformation which the educational system in Finland witnessed was an outcome of its understanding to the value of educators in the learning process. Teacher education, in Finland, relies on intertwining meaning, reflection, practice, and research which is focused on cognitive skills and supported by scientific knowledge. Each teacher has to finalize a master's thesis on a topic which is relevant to educational practice. They also posses deep professional insights into education from several perspectives, including subject content knowledge, special needs education, assessment, theories, sociology, and psychology. Each of the eight faculties of education has its own curricula to ensure coherence well as locally formulated to make the best use of the particular university resources. Finland's commitment to research-based teacher education means that practices, research methodologies, and educational theories play strategic role in teacher preparation programs. Furthermore, the curricula are devised in a way which creates a logical and sequential pathway to a more developed and advanced sciences in education and on more advanced educational research methodologies. Each student is considered a pillar in the process and accountable in building and developing understanding of the educational practice nature (Sahlberg, 2011)

Teachers in Finland are highly autonomous, and expected to apply and adopt new strategies in their teaching according to their own understanding and taste. Teachers

collaborate to develop new techniques to support students academically, taking into account the social and peer relations, special needs, and previous record of achievement. Further, teachers participate in making decisions related to the school, and the pedagogical process. Teacher, in Finland, adopt various strategies in order to meet the demands of the 21st century skills and globalization; they can adopt reforms or ignore issues.

Teacher professional development in Turkey. The professional development program in Turkey was designed for the English language teachers who were teaching grades 1–5 at Turk Egitim Dernegi (TED) Ankara Koleji, a private primary and secondaryschool that has a total of about 6000 students and 422 teachers (Daloglu, 2004).

The in-service development program was established in response to feedback from students, parents, teachers, and administrators. The main concern is that, in English language courses,the curriculum was inconsistent across grades. Specifically, there were multiple repetitions of materials and objectives across grades. This lack of coherence resulted in an uncertainty about the language objectives which were attained by the students at the end of each grade and the instructional techniques and materials students had been exposed to (Dalouglu, 2004).

At the beginning of the academic year 2001–2002, the professional development program was initiated an external specialist was asked to lead the program as external guide to teachers in identifying the most significant problems they face as well as designing activities that may enable them to remedy the situation. Thus, the starting point was identifying the common needs for 45 teachers in lower primary and their expectationsfrom this in-service professional development program (Dalouglu, 2004).

The first step in the program was identifying teachers' expectations and needs. In the needs identification sessions, discussion groups were conducted, and many of the teachers responded actively to it. At the end of the discussions, four major needs were identified according to urgency and priority respectively: achieving coherence, coordination, and curriculum continuity across grades; establishing collaboration and communication among teachers; setting goals and standards to ensure competence of the instructional materials; establishing a valid system of sharing materials and experiences (Dalouglu, 2004).

As a result, establishing a materials bank system came as a response to identified need set by teachers for storage, classification, maintenance, and evaluation. The idea was welcomed and gained approval among teachers, believing that such a bank was an appropriate start which could lead to exceptional results within a short time frame of one academic year. The materials bank would ensure: better meeting of students' learning needs, continuity and coordination in the curriculum, systematic and on-going evaluation of materials, more awareness of the institutional issues, and enhanced communication channels among colleagues (Dalouglu, 2004).

The professional development program sought to provide teachers with proper input that would enable them to participate in gaining information about useful and practical materials as well as providing opportunities to transfer the cognitive knowledge acquired through the trainings into practice(Dalouglu, 2004).

Hence, the following plan was devised:

First: framing the characteristics of adequate teaching materials.

Second: Establishing a system of borrowing, classification, evaluation, and maintenance of the bank materials.

Third: Designing materials which align to the characteristics framed.

Fourth: Piloting the materials inside the classrooms and apply modifications according to the feedback received from students as well as teachers.

Fifth: Enabling the materials bank to be always available to teachers

Sixth: Evaluating the practicality of the materials bank.

Teachers' views on the usefulness of the professional development program cannot be overlooked while determining and evaluating its effectiveness. The results drawn from the interviews along with the questionnaire indicate teachers' appreciating of the professional development program. They perceived the program as relevant to their needs and the materials could be utilized for immediate application inside their classrooms. Moreover, the trainings addressed the need to enhance the communication channel with the school leaders as an essential quest for empowerment. The results showed positive correlation between the professional development activities andpractices and teachers' positive attitudes towards the success attained in fostering their teaching aids and materials (Dalouglu, 2004).

Another perception which was worth noting was related to the duration professional development program. The data collected demonstrated that almost all teachers found the length of one academic year to be highly appropriate for trial and error in experimentation because it paved the way for solid and proper feedback which was crucial during this stage (Dalouglu, 2004).

Firstly, a great majority of teachers noted that they acquired new skills and gained knowledge regarding effective teaching materials. Secondly, they commented on their sense of confidence inside classrooms and awareness of the issues related to curriculum. Nearly all the teachers perceived the development program to be beneficial since it touched upon the topic which they needed and requested. Additionally, most teachers reported the direct affect on the quality of their performance (Dalouglu, 2004, p. 689).

Community –Based Education and Community Schools

Community-Based Education (CBE) usually goes beyond just cognitive capacities to encompass the emotional and social aspects of learning. The connections students create with adults and communities are the premise of the CBE. The social and emotional development of children is a result of the cooperative efforts of school, community and parents. Community, family and parent engagement in educational process positively correlates with school improvement and students' academic performance. When, parents, communities and families collaborate to support the school, students tend to receive higher grades and attend school regularly (Villani & Atkin, 2000).

The learning process of CBE extends the definition of "intelligence" to include "the learners' ability to gain understanding, use knowledge and solve problems, while developing a sense of self" (Villani & Atkin, 2000, p. 124). Further, success not solely based on excelling in the academic years, but also couples with personal willpower and creativity (Villani & Atkin, 2000).

CBE is, also, centered on students' abilities to support and recognize the needs of the community. Thus, children gain a sense of responsibility which stems from free expression and solving problems. This model makes "the educational process cyclical

and continuously propelled" (Villani & Atkin, 2000, p. 124). Moreover, in community based learning, students are assessed not only on tests, but also on innovative and creative measures. For example, students work with their colleagues and teachers to solve the problem of homelessness in their community. After discussion and research, students have to enlist the support and involvement of active community members who are willing to make real changes to solve this issue (Villani &Atkin, 2000).

In communities where large economic and societal factors disable students to receive proper education, community schools contribute in providing educational advantagesin favored and empowering contexts. Community schools tend to create strong programs which supportstudent development and learning. Additionally, they build a strong infrastructure of partnerships with community based organizations, educational institutions which can support development and well-rounded learning. Those partnerships equip families and children with resources and opportunities which can mitigate the harms of disease and poverty as well as build community strengths and resilience (Policy Brief, 2010).

Despite of the differences which may occur among some community schools globally, there are four common pillars among all of them, which are: student support, civic engagement, expanded learning opportunities and time, and collaborative practices and leadership. First, student support addresses the school barriers to education through collaboration partnerships with health and social services providers and agencies. Second, expanded learning opportunities and time includes weekends, afterschool and summer programs, which provide extra academic instructions and enrichment activities. Third, civic engagement considers community and parents as partners in students' achievement.

Fourth, collaborative practices and leadership creates a culture of trust, shared responsibility and professional learning (Policy Brief, 2010).
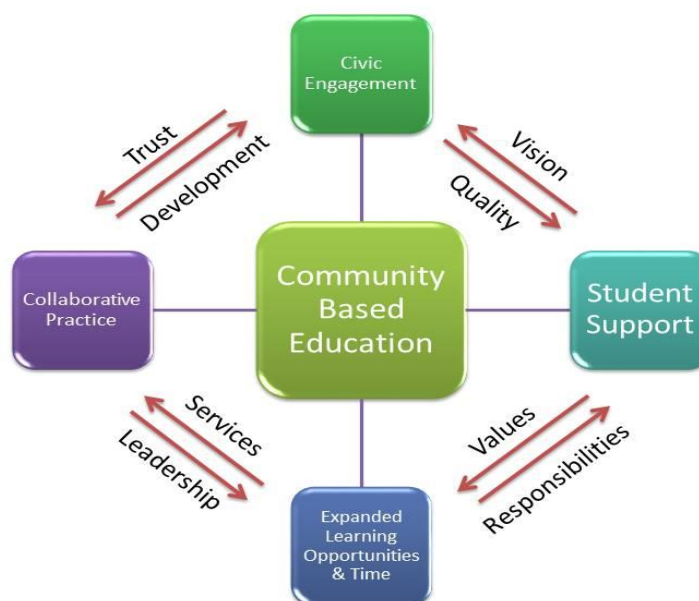
Figure 2: Four Pillars of Community-Based Education

The project of community schools in Redwood City, for example, was launched in 2003. It was originated to unite and connect the families, school, and communities to create a support system that can nurture students' development. Out of the 17schools located in the city, four schools were designed to be community schools; Taft community school, Fair Oaks community school, Kennedy middle school, and Hoover community school. Despite the uniqueness of each school, all of them share common features. The primary aim of each was to support students' learning and the quality of instructional practices. Community partnership was a crucial part to enhance students' learning, because community partnerships provide shared vision and leadership with various comprehensive services (Van Roekal, 2008).

Another example of good practice is the example of Cincinnati high school. Prior to launching the community schools, learners had almost no access to nutritious food or quality healthcare services, so many students used to suffer from malnutrition and severe illnesses. As part of the community school project in Cincinnati, the school created a robust health clinic, community garden, and a food pantry. As a result, students' grades and attendance increased.

In Philadelphia, community schools offer behavioral counseling, therapy, and family counseling as well as mental health services (Policy Brief).

Due to consistent low levels of parental engagement in Albuquerque, the city worked on facilitating additional communication chains between administrators and parents by hiring parent liaisons. Each parent liaison had strong connections with the community, which resulted in higher level parent engagement in students' learning. In addition, the Parent-Teacher Home Visits programs in Sacramento required teachers to schedule home visits twice a year. This practice is based on the premise that these visits would enable teachers to have better understanding to their students' backgrounds, needs and challenges. Also, it would strengthen the bond between parents and teachers which would have positive implications on the learning process. It was also a strategy to involve parents in suggesting strategies and additional activities (Policy Brief).

Community Schools in Egypt

The need. The current education system in Egypt paces many problems. These problems increased with globalization which resulted in barriers which hindered education from coping with developed world; such barriers are: the increase of population which increasedthe demand for education, the absence of quality education,

the ambiguity of objectives, the lack of education policy planning and incompatible outcome of education with work market requirements, which resulted in a high rate of unemployment among graduates of governmental education.Meanwhile the experiences of the developed countries have shown that the advancement in education is achieved by partnership between all involved parties, as the governments will not be able to handle the responsibility of education development solely. Back to the history of education in Egypt, receiving education was depended on civil efforts represented in people's donation and to open schools, and then it was turned to be the responsibility of the government.However, due to the increased burdens on it, the government could not meet all the requirements in offering quality education for everyone. Therefore, it is of a paramount importance to have full integration between the governmental and the societal efforts to provide quality education chances. Since poverty is usually related to deprivation of good education chances, community education has showed up (Nile Valley NGO documents).

Reasons behind the emergence of community education in Egypt (Nile Valley NGO documents). 1. The poor geographical distribution of elementary schools and it's limited number, which lead to increased number of students in class to 45 students in one class.

2. Some villages and hamlets do not have any schools.

3. The decreased income of the family that makes children work to increase the income, especially in the poor economic status in villages whose residents are farmers. The deterioration of farmers' conditions has obliged them to use their children to help them in these difficult living conditions to earn a living for the family.

4. Poor educational environments inside systematic schools in preparatory education, which makes schools a repugnant environment with increased dropouts. This environment includes the shortage of capacities and materials in schools, scarcity of qualified teachers, poor performance of the board of trustees of the school and not applying the compulsory act.

5. Far distance between schools and some villages with lack of safe transportation which makes students go once or twice a week until they stop going.

6. The negligence of the country, ministry of education, audio, visual and printed media to the unfair education condition in deprived and poor areas.

For decades, achieving access to primary education has been a priority to the international community and the Egyptian Ministry of Education (MOE). Since 1975, the MOE started to establish one-classroom schools to increase the enrollment rates among the vulnerable children in deprived and remote areas who skipped primary education. Internationally, the child's rights support is manifested by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, World Declaration on Education for All, and the Millennium Development Goals with an emphasis on educational equality, educational quality, poverty reduction, environmental sustainability, and gender parity (Megahed, 2011).

Since 1990s, CBE has been an integral part of Egypt's education plan, with the objective of educating children, especially girls, who live in disadvantaged remote communities. In 1992, the MOE and the UNICEF signed an agreement to initiate the community school project. The project aimed to promote access to 6-12 out-of-school

aged children as well as providing them quality education (Zaalouk, 2004). The objectives of the project were:

- Ensuring access to all children, particularly girls.
- Encouraging participation, self-help, and donated resources for buildings and maintenance.
- Introducing innovative and effective models of management and schooling.
- Emphasizing creativity, critical thinking, and problem solving abilities.
- Rendering relevant learning materials which can suit learners' needs and preferences.
- Fostering the skills which require life-long learning.

The roles and responsibilities were divided among partners. The MOE's role in the initiative was to pay teachers' salaries, provide textbooks, assist in the curriculum, participate in training teachers, and provide learners with school healthy meals. The UNICEF responsibility was to design a model of community-based education with high quality for the deprived and disadvantaged districts in Upper Egypt. It acted as a catalyst to the initiative and supervised the management system with the partnership on Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). Further, its role lied in providing trainings, equipping classroom with adequate furniture, learning materials, and stationery. Last the role of the communities with the support of NGOs was crucial in the initiative as they had to provide proper space for the schools as well as managing the schools through educational committee. Local donors and leaders made up committees' members of different social categories and socio-economic levels, including men, women and youth (Zaalouk, 2004).

Community schools hired teachers/facilitators from local communities to be trained on advanced pedagogical techniques, such as active learning to address multi-grade classrooms. It is important for the schools to coordinate with the communities in order to find a donated land and labor willing to provide facilities, services, and most importantly buildings to help operate the schools. Adding to that, a high emphasis is put on parental involvement and participation to support the learning process (Zaalouk, 2004; Langsten, 2014).

The classroom furniture and setting positions were designed to reinforce cooperative learning and teamwork. The teaching methodologies and instructional practices are meant to be girl-friendly and child-centered. Further, class hours and school day duration are meant to be as flexible as possible to accommodate children's work responsibilities and household chores. Learning experiences were relevant to students' culture, environment, and experiences. Adding to that, community and parents were involved and consulted to support students' education (Zaalouk, 2004).

Teacher professional development in community schools. The pedagogy of training facilitators/teachers was outlined with certain characteristics which are: active participation and teamwork, targeting diverse members of the educational system, activity based, and open to evolution. In addition,fourtypes of trainings were addressed to teachers: pre-service teacher training, in-service teacher training, and refresher training, and teacher apprenticeship, trainings for teaching styles and techniques, and innovation workshops.Besides, seven types of training were targeting supervisors, community members, and management systems. It is worthy to note that all forms of training were based on need assessment and identification. The workshops "represent a living

experiment that results in deep and sustainable transformation in conceptual mapping, self-concepts, behaviors and attitudes. The moments of fun were very much cherished and reinforced, and various forms of activities were taking place such as poetry, case studies, role playing, audio visuals, presentations, field visits, and songs (Zaalouk, 2004).

Pre-service teacher training. The pre-service training comprised of three workshops: orientation, active learning, and constructive learning. This training is based on an assessment to the teachers' needs and the evaluation forms in which facilitators fill by the end of each workshop. During the orientation sessions, facilitators learn about the principals and philosophy of community school. They, also, learn about child's right, their role inside the classrooms, and the multi grade approach. They acquire problem solving skills, confidence, planning, communication and presentation skills, and creativity. In short, they were introduced to essential characteristics of quality learning. During the active learning sessions, they got introduced to active based learning, lesson planning, authentic assessment, learning difficulties, teaching aids relevant to the learning, classroom management, and instructions. During the constructive learning stage, an opportunity is opened for observations, and facilitators were required to add meaning to their knowledge, and reflect on the areas of development (Zaalouk, 2004).

In-service teacher training. The in-service weekly trainings through micro-centers whereby teachers of the same regions and grades met. The aim of thein-service training was to strengthen the team spirit. Facilitators experience a rich atmosphere of sharing. During the training sessions, facilitators were grouped to design lesson plans with the help of their mentors. Professors from Faculty of Education (FOE) along with the MOE supervisors catered for the facilitators' needs in skills and subject matters. A

typical day of in-service training includes lesson planning, problem solving, sharing presentation on innovative ideas which successfully worked in classrooms, manufacturinglearning aids and learning new skills and knowledge. Most often the facilitators report topics of their own search by using the library database (Zaalouk, 2004).

Refresher training. The refresher training occurred once each year. It aimed to address facilitators who had previously trained. The topics of discussion were determined based on the needs identified during field observations and mentoring (Zaalouk, 2004).

Classroom based training. When facilitators got recruited, they were required to participate in classrooms observation of classrooms which display the best innovation and practices. This phase lasts for four months prior to the formal training. The benefit of this training was to give the project director abundant time to evaluate the newly selected interns (Zaalouk, 2004).

The Role of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) in Egypt

According to Vakil (1997) NGOs are defined as self-governing, private, non-profit, and formal organizations which are gearing to develop the quality of the disadvantaged's lives. The UnitedNations specifies that the resources of the NGO's should be granted from volunteers' contributions.

Globally, NGOs have been instrumental in developing both practices and policy. For example, studies showed that NGOs in Bangladesh, Kenya, and Tanzania served to advance the educational reform (Bray, 2001). Similarly, Ethiopia and Mali NGOs led an educational reform collaboratively (Miller-Grandvaux, Welmondv& Wolf, 2002). Also,

Makuwira reported that the NGOs in Malawi participated with local communities in decision-making and policy development processes (Makuwira, 2004).

The NGOs in Egypt are represented by 15,000, predominantly small community-based organizations which focus on social assistance and service delivery. Over the past three decades, NGOs succeeded in partnering with the Ministry of Education to intervene in public schools with activities and educational projects in basic education, particularly in primary schools at the most disadvantaged, isolated and remote areas in Upper Egypt. The number of NGOs in Egypt working in the field of education has increased and is estimated to be approximately 1310 (El Baradei, 2004), which represents 8.7% of the total number of NGOs.

The MOE established the department of nonprofit organizations in December, 1998 to coordinate the relations between nonprofit organizations and schools (MOE, 2006), and issued decree no. 30/2000 on the engagement of nonprofit organizations in the school Board of Trustees. From 1999 to 2005, "MOE started 1212 educational projects with 619 nonprofit organizations to serve 19,000 students in public schools, with a total fund of $17 million" (MOE, 2006).

Chapter 3

Methodology

This chapter introduces the research framework for this study. It provides information about the research questions, research context, participants, instruments, procedure, validity, ethical consideration, and data analysis methodology.

Research Question

Based on the literature review presented in Chapter two, this paper attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. How does the teacher professional developments program provided by Nile Valley NGO empower teachers?
2. What is the impact of teachers' empowerment on teachers' performance?

Research Context

Nile Valley NGO in Egypt. In the domain of human development, Nile Valley Foundation is a 'non-profit development institution' constituted in 2007. The aim of Nile Valley is to pursue human development in terms of education, health, social solidarity, scientific Research, and other prospects of life. Their vision is to become an international pioneering organization for sustainable development, and their mission is to contribute to the individuals' development as well as eliminating illiteracy, disease, unemployment and poverty. Further, their goal is to participate in serving and building human beings through implementing development projects with transparency, excellence, respect, credibility, responsibility and quality. The Nile Valley projects for supporting community education

in Upper Egypt are developmental projects which intend to coordinate with the governmental sector targeting governorates in order to activate the role of local poor communities. Therefore, it can guarantee opportunities of quality education chances for children who never obtained an education or those who dropped out.

In every Governorate, the Nile Valley NGO contracts with a local partner from the civil associations after investigating its eligibility to implement the project through passing institutional, financial and technical assessments. These assessments are done for applicant associations to choose an efficient local partner with proper qualifications and experience to manage the project efficiently and to achieve desired results. Procedures and activities of the project focus on:

1- Establishment and preparation of new community schools to include numbers of children who dropped out of education.

2- Develop the infrastructure and present technical support for the already established community schools.

3- Enable local communities to support schools from the community to provide high quality education.

4- Raise the quality of technicality of those responsible for education inside schools and active surveillance and follow up on those schools by those in charge.
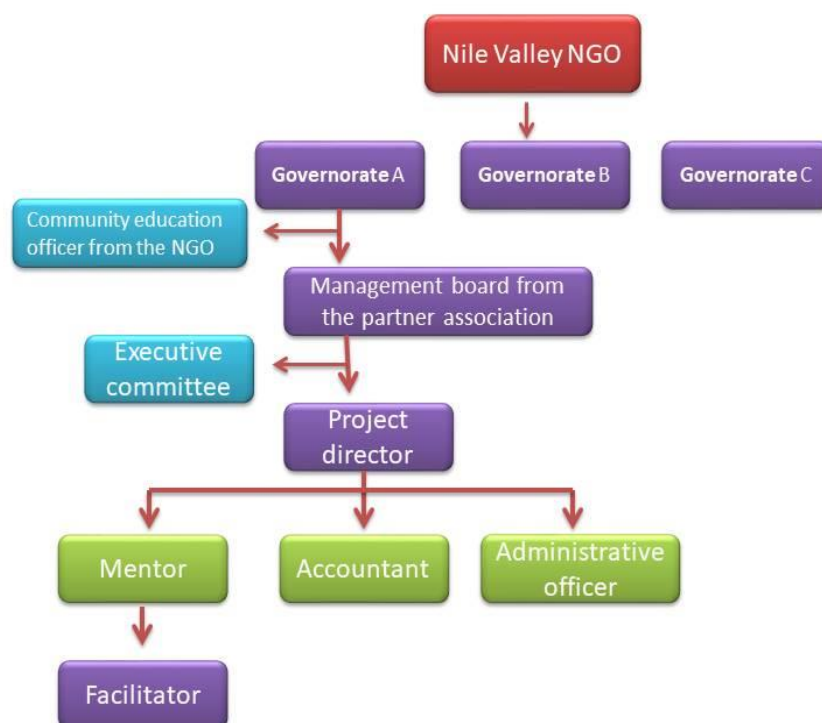
Figure 3: Model of the Nile Valley NGO

Community schools of the Nile Valley NGO. The development project of community schools was implemented by Nile Valley NGO as an expansion of the UNICEF's initiative of community schools. The project is based on the notion of approaching active learning in preparatory as well as primary schools. Furthermore, it was implemented in a number of governorates such as Assuit, Sohag, Aswan, Fayoum, Mersa Matrouh and Qena. Working jointly with the Ministry of Education (MOE), the project worked on offering opportunities for children who were not in schools to become educated. It mainly targets children in disadvantaged hamlets and slums in Upper Egypt.

Philosophy and objectives. The philosophy and objectives of community education according to the Nile Vally depends on 1. The effective participation of civil society reflected in assemblies, foundations and individuals in planning, implementing and following up for this type of education.

2. Community-based and meets the actual needs of education in the village.

3. Establishes a strong relationship between community representatives and official authorities in charge.

4. Consistent follow-up with parents on the level and quality of learning.

5. Requires simple and available capacities to be implemented.

6. Flexibility and emancipation of routine procedures and obstacles.

7. Related to girls real life, which is a privilege.

8. Includes young girls who were not included in educational service and still in compulsory school age.

9. Facilitates delivering education to those who dropped out from elementary schools.

10. Works on eliminating the most dangerous factors of illiteracy in a convenient way for the variable and different circumstances.

11. Relates school to the environment to encourage girls to continue learning.

12. Learners acquire age appropriate education.

13. Train learners on application for the information and concepts they study.

14. Liberates girls from the intellectual constrains and to raise their awareness of social issue.

The governorate of the study: El-Fayoum. The teacher trainings which were attended by the researcher, as well as the schools visited were located in El- Fayoum governorate. The numbers of community schools in Fayoum are 82 schools, in 82 villages, in 6 districts: Tamiahطامية, Sinorsسنورس, Itsahإطسا, Ibshayإبشاى, Sharq El Fayoumشرق الفيوم, Youssef El Sdeikيوسف الصديق. The number of facilitators are 144, and the number of students are 2344 student. The teacher trainings which took place during the summer was in El Moalmin club, while the trainings which took place during the academic year were in the association of supporting the community, and sometimes in schools.

The researcher attended four trainings. One of those trainings venue was El Moaalimen club. The hall of the training was large, air conditioned, equipped with technology, and the setting was designed to reinforce group work and active learning. The other three trainings where held in the association. The session hall was a small room, and uncomfortable to the facilitators. Sometimes the delivery of training was through practicums on the facilitator's part providing feedback to teach each other. While the delivery of other trainings was through lecturing for long hours providing, no space for the facilitator's participation was considered. The duration for the four trainings were from 9 a.m. till 2 p.m.

As for the schools, they were all the one-room schools. Classrooms were very clean and cheerful, and charts a well as students' artworks were displayed everywhere in

the class. The charts informed the researcher about the school ethics, and the expected learning outcomes. They tend to use the recycled materials for decorations and teaching aids. The furniture was designed and organized in a way to foster group work and active participation, so the class settings were in circles rather than rows. Meanwhile the trapezoid tables and chairs can be shaped into rows, U-shapes, small working groups, and rows. Additionally, in each class there is a notebook for students' assessment, a note book for the mentors to document their visits and recommendations which were provided to the facilitators, a note book for documenting the role of the active participants in the community and their contributions, and a note books for lesson preparation.

Research Design

The qualitative design was adopted for this study since the researcher aimed at understanding the participants' views of teacher empowerment in their natural setting. Polkinghorne (1994) contends that the qualitative methodology is beneficial in the 'generation of categories for understanding human phenomena and the investigation of the interpretation and meaning that people give events that they experience.' In addition, the qualitative approach allows the researcher to get the data directly from the participants themselves by sitting with them and listening to their perceptions, expectations, and views in detail. This strategy contends that the knowledge is ideographic and subjective, and the truth is usually context-dependent and can be obtained after entry into the respondents' reality (Polkinghorne, 1991).

Participants

Creswell and Clark (2007) contend that in order for the researcher to answer the researcher questions, he/she must decide on the sites and people who can provide the information needed for data collection. In this light, the participants in this study were identified through a process of purposeful sampling; in other words, participants who have experience with the phenomena being explored (Creswell & Clark, 2007). This was to ensure that those participants are a relevant sample providing data that offer a level of dependability. The sample size was 35 informants: (4) mentors, (24) facilitators, (1) director of the project, and (6) students.

For the mentors or supervisors; the first mentor has been working with Nile Valley NGO since 2014. She graduated from Ain Shams University, psychology department and received a diploma on community development. Prior to joining the Nile Valley, she worked in the Institution of Cultural Affairs (ICA). She, also, worked in the organization of family development in the local communities. She had 5 years experience with Training of Trainers (TOT). She, also, received a teacher training on methods of active learning, classroom management, teaching aids, and lesson plan. The second mentor had a bachelor of commerce. However, before joining Nile Valley she got educational training on active learning, strategies, teaching aids and classroom management, and currently is pursuing her Master degree in education. The third and forth mentors received education diploma, and had experience with development project especially in community learning. They had a 5 years experience in active learning, learning activities, teaching methodologies, and teaching aids.

Regarding the facilitators, their years of experience with Nile Valley NGO range from three to six years. They attended all the types of trainings offered to them. While 14 facilitators have attended previous training with other institutions, the remaining 10 had never attended any previous training other than those provided by Nile Valley NGO. Five facilitators have graduated from faculties of education, while the remaining completed education diplomas before joining the community schools as per the recruitment policies and regulations of Nile Valley.

Figure 4: Demographics of the Facilitators' Sample

Demographics	Number
Years of Experience	
Since 2012 (6 years)	4
Since 2013 (5 years)	8
Since 2014 (4 years)	10
Since 2015 (3 years)	2
Graduates of faculties of education	5
Graduates of other faculties	19
Earned Educational Diplomas	20
Attended Training with other institutions	14
Never attended any trainings with other institutions	10

The director of the project is a graduate of faculty of Arts, Arabic department, Ain Shams University. He had experience with teaching for only one year as an Arabic teacher, and then he worked as a project manager for many developmental projects for 8 years. He joined the project of community learning since 2012.

The six students were females, with an age range from 13 to 14 years old. They attended all their academic years in the same schools. It is worth to note that the researcher's aim and research questions were not intended to examine the direct relation between the training program and students' performance. However, the rationale behind interviewing students is that students' perceptions helped the researcher understand more about the quality of teachers' performance and instructional practices.

Data Collection Tools

Since the research looked for detailed and rich information of a qualitative nature, the methods used to gather information were: document analysis, semi-structured interviews, and observation of some of the trainings and the classroom environment.

Document analysis. The document analysis is defined as "a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents" (Bowen, 2009, p.30). The researchers' rational behind using document analysis is to avoid relying on one source or method, thus triangulation. Another reason behind using document analysis tool is to provide secondary data that either validate or refute the results (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Documents, in this study, were obtained from the NGO. The document analysis, in this study, was carried to get insights into the scope and purpose of the program, structure of the program, the topics which are tackled in the professional development program, and

the assessment. In addition, I collected documents about: the job description of each member in the model, the actual number of the governorates and hamlets where the project is implemented as well as the number of supervisors and teachers in each governorate, information about Community-Based Education (CBE) in terms of definition, philosophy, goals, historical background, and reasons of existence, information about CBE according to the philosophy of the Nile Valley, teacher preparation in terms of definitions, stages, how teachers are prepared and trained, and topics, evaluation and assessment; the structure of the program, the evaluation sheets used by the supervisors to assess the facilitators performance. Finally, I used photos to document some of the results.

Interviews. The semi-structured interviews (see Appendix 2, 3, 4)were used in this study. Semi-structured interviews as well as in-depth interviews, according to Edwards and Holland (2013), are major forms of qualitative research. This is because it gives the interviewees a sense of freedom to respond to the questions rather than the structured interviews. Further, it allows flexibility to pursue a line of questioning and clarification. It is, also, powerful in terms of facilitating access to the interviews' perspectives and voice (Babbie, Moutan, Voster & Prozesky, 2001).

In this light, semi structured interviews, in this study, aimed to gauge facilitators', project managers', trainers', supervisors', and students' views on the teacher professional development program and its impact on teachers' performance, which is offered by the Nile Valley NGO in terms of the six dimensions of empowerment, listed above in the theoretical background. Further, interviews were designed to gather information about teachers' perceptions on how they become empowered as well as the

utility and relevance of the professional development program in relation to their classroom practices. Moreover, it includes questions about challenges they faced throughout the implementation of the program, and the major outcomes they reached. In summary, the interviews were designed to contribute to the understanding of the research questions. An interview guide was planned prior to data collection as part of the ethical considerations. The interviews started with an explanation of the purpose of the study, assurance that they can withdraw at any time, and a promise of confidentiality. I, also, reassured them that all the information obtained will remain confidential. All interviews conducted solely and audio recorded then transcribed. Names of institutions and professionals were kept anonymous and were given pseudonyms.

Observations. The rationale behind conducting observation is to help the researcher observe the reactions and interactions of individuals in their actual settings. It is worthy to note, that two main observation checklists and grids were used. The first grid was for the training sessions, while the second grid was for evaluating the reflection of the training on teachers' performance inside the classroom. Further, written field notes and anecdotal records were saved.

Prior to attending the training sessions, a checklist was prepared (see Appendix 6). The researcher aimed to observe: the mutual respect among facilitators during presentations, group work and open discussions; the mutual respect between facilitators and their mentors and vice versa; the methods of communication; the setting positions; the trainers ability to foster critical and analytical thinking; the relevance of materials to the real challenges which face teachers; the ability to bridge between theory and practice; creating an enthusiastic rich learning environment and experience; the degree of

facilitator's interest and participation; the trainers' teaching methodologies; the cooperative and collaborative group work; the degree of interest the trainers are showing towards teachers' work and assignments.

The observation grid prepared for classroom observation purposes (see Appendix 5) aimed at enabling the research to observe:classroom management as well as lesson planning, how students were empowered and engaged in their learning, teachers' enthusiasm and commitment to their jobs, classroom environment, values and skills fostered, relevance of materials, learning styles, fostering students' self-efficacy, learning approach whether student centered or teacher centered, developing higher order skills such as critical and creative thinking, honoring individual differences, teachers' verbal and non-verbal feedback.

Another source of information which was not prepared for, but appeared during the observations were the charts which were hanged in the training sessions as well as the charts which were hanged on the walls of the schools. Theses charts provided information about the ethics which were followed by the facilitators during the workshops. The charts which were hanged on the walls of the schools informed the research a lot about the values of the schools, the objectives of the learning activities, the outcomes which were expected from the students, the types of art works students do, the appreciation of community participations (see Appendix 7)

Validity of Instruments

In this study, data was collected through a triangulation of instruments: face-to-face semi-structured in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis. As Hoepfl (1997)

puts it, by triangulating data "the researcher attempts to provide a confluence of evidence that breeds credibility" (p.110). Also Patton (1990) stated that triangulation helps "the researcher guard against the accusation that a study's findings are simply an artifact of a single method, a single source, or a single investigators' bias." Another strategy used to ensure the credibility and validity was that the researcher shared the results with one of fellow colleagues who was doing her work on the same NGO but from the perspective of organizational culture and leadership. She used different tools, and administered a survey on a larger sample size of facilitators.

Ethical Consideration

This study was conducted during Fall 2017 and Spring 2018. Prior to the study, the approval of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the American University in Cairo (AUC), and the Central Agency for Population Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS) were obtained. In addition, during the data collection phase, the purpose of the study was explained to the participants. I used the written consent form as per the IRB regulations. The consent informed the participants that their participation is voluntary and they have the right to withdraw at any stage of the study with no penalties. In addition, the confidentiality of the participants was asserted through saving all the transcribed data in a personal saved password protected computer. The researcher also received an oral consent from the project director in order to use photos as a type of support. Also, a verbal consent was obtained in from the the Nile Valley NGO manger in El Fayoum in order to interview students. It is important to highlight that I do not have any personal agendas, and all I sought is the betterment of teachers' condition, because ethical

considerations goes beyond consent and confidentiality; it runs throughout the research study.

Data Analysis and Code Techniques

I used the thematic analysis approach when it came to analyzing the data. The thematic approach required the research to view the raw data, personal memos as well as the field notes as multiple times in order to extract themes that reflect my participants' responses. He rational behind using the thematic analysis is that it is a method of analyzing, identifying, and reporting patterns (themes) within data (Braun &Clark, 2006).

   Braun and Clark Theory (2006). Braun and Clark (2006) outlined six phases of thematic analysis. Their framework cannot be viewed as a linear on model, but as a recursive process.
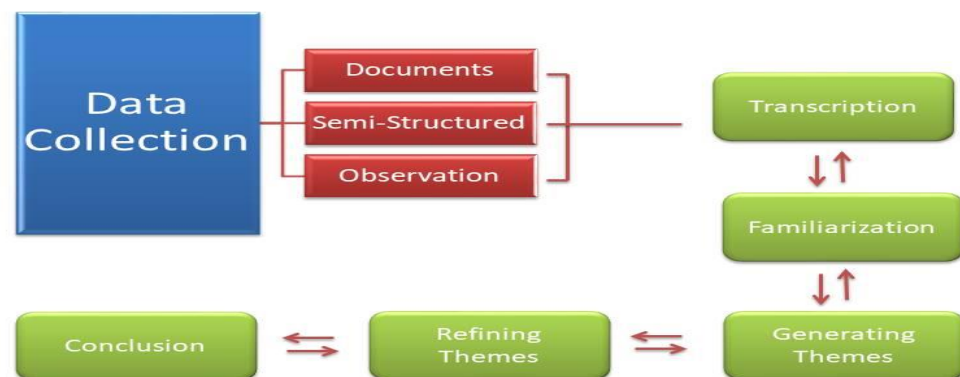
Figure 5: Framework for Data Analysis

Chapter 4

Result

Presentation of Data

The findings are organized according to the research questions of the study. However, prior to providing answers to the main research questions. The researcher believes that framing the characteristics of the teachers' professional development model provided by the Nile Valley NGO can provide better understanding to the results.

According to some key informants and documents obtained from Nile Valley NGO, teachers go through two main stages of preparation: the pre-service stage and the in-service stage. In the first stage which is the pre-service stage, the teacher/facilitator receives various orientation sessions or workshops prior to the actual teaching. The workshops aim to import knowledge to facilitators and developing their skills in order to teach more efficiently. The topics to which facilitators get introduced are:

- The philosophy of community based learning and community schools.
- Basics and strategies of active learning.
- Teaching aids.
- Multi- grade pedagogy and rational.
- Lesson planning.

The second stage is the in-service teacher training. This stage focuses on strengthening the skills of the old-hand facilitators, and is divided into four phases:

- The first phase is the evaluation or assessment phase: In this phase, evaluation forms are devised and applied to assess facilitators' performance and skills. Facilitators' performances are assessed through field mentoring and observations to compare their performance against the standards of community based learning designed by the Nile Valley NGO.

- The second phase is the planning phase to improve facilitators' skills: In this stage, the facilitators' points of weakness are noted, through the observation, and action plans for remedy are researched to develop the facilitators' skills and performance.

- The third phase is the execution phase: In this phase, the action plans are implemented through various forms such as: weekly meetings, workshops, refresher trainings, and facilitator – mentor meetings…ect.

- The fourth and last phase is the assessment phase: This is another assessment and evaluation phase, but with a different purpose. The purpose of evaluation in this phase is to note the development, the degree of understanding, as well as their abilities to apply what they have learnt efficiently.

The most important topics introduced in the professional development program.

Workshop on student- centered approach: A three-day, 18 hour workshop, which aims at building facilitators skills to focus on student-centered learning rather than teacher- centered, learning as well as helping the facilitator to apply it correctly.

Workshop on multi grade pedagogy: A three-day, 18 hour workshop, which aims at tooling facilitators with an appropriate pedagogy to address multi grade schools.

Workshop on lesson planning: A two-day, 12 hour workshop on enhancing facilitators to design an effective lesson plan.

Workshop on teaching aids: A three-day, 18 hour workshop, which aims at providing facilitators with the appropriate tools to devise teaching aids.

*Workshop on reading***:** A four-day, 24 hour workshop, which aims at providing teachers with the tools to help students have better reading skills.

*Workshop on assessment***:** A two-day, 12 hour workshops, which aims at informing facilitators with the assessment tools.

Workshop on community *participation***:** A two-day, 12 hour workshop, which aims at raising facilitators awareness with the necessity of community participation as well as equipping facilitators with the skills to engage the active community members in the learning process.

The process of capacity building for facilitators is done through different forms, the most important forms.

Field visits. During the field visits, the mentor visits the facilitator's classroom to spend with her the whole school day to record notes on the facilitators' performance. Then the mentor discusses the notes with the facilitator and provides her with some instructions and recommendations for enhancement. Adding to that, sometimes the mentor models for the facilitator some teaching aids.

Technical support visit: it is a small training in which the mentor prepares a technical support session based on needs' identification. This session might provide the facilitator models, scientific materials, teaching aids, documentary films, guidelines, different methods of teaching and preparation, besides explaining these models in the session. Those sessions are usually held in breaks or by the end of the school day.

Weekly training: In every school, a day for weekly training is assigned, and usually it comes in the weekends. In this day, mentors visit one school, or a number of schools in the same area to address the same needs.

Coexisting training: In this training, a premium facilitator helps another facilitator who needs improvement. This process takes place where the facilitator in need spends a full school day or more with the premium one in her school. It is previously arranged between technical support officers and the premium facilitator to focus on the needed technical issues. So that the facilitator who needs help would notice these issues and exert effort to reach the best performance.

Transfer expertise: Experience and technical abilities differ among facilitators, according to multiple factors, such as the years of experience. Therefore, some facilitators act marvelously while applying experiments or different activities. To transfer these abilities, the mentors benefit from the experienced facilitators to transfer their abilities and experience to their new colleagues or those who need help. This process can take place in the weekly training session.

Research question one: How the teacher professional development programs provided by the Nile Valley NGO empower teachers?

Autonomy and decision-making. All the facilitators who were interviewed reported that they have the freedom in creating their own teaching approaches, in selecting and controlling the learning activities. In addition, all facilitators reported that they were autonomous in using the appropriate assessment tools to measure students' performance. All teachers, also, agreed that they were encouraged to innovate and devise the appropriate methods of communications and the materials of the activities to meet students' capabilities and needs. Moreover, among the four mentors, three ,when asked about teachers' autonomy in taking decisions, noted that teachers' autonomy is highly encouraged as they believe that when teachers feel that they have the authority and control over decisions regarding students' performance as well as dealing with the problems that they may encounter during their profession, a higher sense ofresponsibility and accountability is gained, which can positively impact on their commitment and instructional practices.

The concept of collaborative autonomy among facilitators and supervisors was also highlighted. The mentors believed that their role lies in providing guidance rather than dictating the actual actions that should be taken.

Another aspect in which facilitators were provided high autonomy is in identifying their professional development needs. The facilitators used to fill in some forms and surveys to identify the challenges they face, and their areas of development.

Accordingly, training sessions and workshops were designed. One facilitator, when asked about this issue, stated "*there was a chance to express ourselves.*" It is worthy to note that this kind of activity received huge praise among facilitators, especially the facilitators who attended other training programs with other institution or trainings with the Ministry of Education. The facilitators reported on the benefits they gain from the training programs, since the topics which were presented were a direct response to their needs. They listed their benefits from the topics related to active learning, teaching aids, teaching methodologies, learning strategies, and the special topics about the subjects' content.

However, there were contradicting views regarding the level of autonomy granted for the facilitators to use their own procedures and guidelines as to meet the requirements set by their mentors; while 15 facilitators, agreed that they are autonomous in choosing their guidelines, 9 facilitators reported the opposite. The 9 facilitators expressed their frustration and disappointment from their sense ofpowerlessness in following their own judgments over tiny instructions such as the classroom setting, for example. One facilitator commented that if a mentor entered a class and found that the classroom setting is different from the instructions given to her regarding this issue, she will be considered as not doing her job. Further, the nine facilitators expressed their anger of being blindly obliged to follow the plans set for them as well as apply decisions of which they are not convinced with no objections. For example, one facilitator reported,

"Sometimes I have to make decisions or apply decisions that I am not convinced with. For example, according to the day schedule,the corners segment has to be after the break. Yet, in the corner's segment, students apply the skills which they

have learnt but in a form of activities or games, so it is a kind of refreshment. Meanwhile, the break is a refreshment too. Therefore, when I try to explain new concepts after the break, the students do not focus because they got very exhausted due to playing for a long time.I always complained about having the corners activity after the break, but my suggestion was refused. Hence, I apply exactly what they asked me to do. I'm not really convinced but I try to convince myself and apply".

As for the textbooks selection and curriculum, all facilitators reported that they do not have the space in selecting the textbooks and curriculum because they should adhere to the textbooks provided to them by the Ministry of Education (MOE).Four of the facilitators were very annoyed and complained about the outdated textbooks since 1999, which resulted in their inability to apply the advanced teaching methods to which they were introduced during the trainings. They, also, complained about the interference of the project in tailoring the textbooks to address the multi grade schools, because this adds to the complexity of teaching.

Another aspect, in which facilitators were given limited autonomy on, is the administrative decisions. All the mentors conveyed about the limited control on the teachers part regarding the administrative control over the crucial decisions such as students' enrollment or expulsion, for example. Although the mentors' belief that that the facilitators are more insightful when it comes to evaluating the situations, determining the courses of actions which are more suitable to address certain problems, and making the best recommendations for remedy, the mentors contend that facilitators are part of a bigger picture and project. Thus, facilitators have to refer to their supervisors, due to the

legal constrains and regulations which govern them. However, there is always a communication chain between the Nile Valley NGO, facilitators, mentors, and the community board under the jurisdiction of which the school in question is.

The head of the project explained, when asked about teachers' autonomy and decision making, that there is a compromise between the opportunities provided to teachers to control their classroom contexts while simultaneously operating and espousing under a shared vision and set of goals. Further, decision-making autonomy is not a haphazard practice, yet, it is a conscious practice which has to be implemented according to a high level of understanding and awareness on the facilitators' part. Facilitators are granted autonomy only when they are aware of their role; aware of their students' abilities and areas of development; aware of their students' needs; aware of the outputs and their expectations; aware of their duties and rights; aware of the nature and traditions of their students.

Decision-Making	Highly autonomous	Limited autonomy	Not-autonomous
Teaching approaches	✓		
Identifying needs	✓		
Assessment	✓		
Procedures/ Guidelines		✓	
Learning activities	✓		
Learning materials	✓		
Textbooks selection			✓

Administrative decisions		✓	

Figure 6: Illustration for the Results of Decision Making

Teachers' professional growth and its impact on self-efficacy. All the facilitators reported on gaining practical knowledge about novel teaching techniques and strategies as well as presentation skills. They reported on benefiting from new innovative teaching techniques presented to them by experts. The project director reported,

"In fact the needs of the teachers are divided into two parts: the first part is technical or vocational needs which are provided through search programs in a very good way. The special requirements of the educational process that are needed are fully provided through these projects in terms of the techniques of teaching or their behaviors or that age category of the targeted students by the project or the educational performance that is to say how to deliver the information using the latest technologies and using their strategies of new education".

One of the major aspects they praised was that the teaching program provided to them by Nile Valley NGO helped them to gain pedagogical knowledge. For example, they benefited the most from topics related to learning disabilities, learning strategies, executing development action plans correctly, and the use of multimedia. The training for them,was practical and touches on problems they actually face in their classrooms. One teacher reported:

"for me it's learning how to explain a lesson, and how to prepare for it beforehand, as well as, how to keep the students attention and avoid distractions in class. And I've learnt about the tools we can use to grab their attention and peak their interest in the subject. I've also learnt that I shouldn't just lecture them all the time without giving them a chance to interact with me, and that they should be given room to speak more than I do."

However, some topics were not discussed yet. For example, the topics which were discussed were related to multiple intelligences and personal development. The mentors reported that such topics will enhance teachers' personal skills and help them work with their students more efficiently.   Additionally, the content knowledge is not just based on experience but also on scientific basis. The trainers and specialists are experts from Ain-Shams and Cairo University.

All facilitators reported on the practices of the professional development program as being supportive to them. The program, as per the comments, provided them with better opportunities to collaborate and form communities of learners. For instance, there is no de-privatization of practice which means a collaborative work among teachers who work to develop their instructional effectiveness; the facilitators have their own discussion groups as well as what's app groups forum where they discuss, share and reflect on issues related to the learning goals, appropriate teaching methodologies, teaching aids, and lesson plans. Sometimes, they cooperate during the class time while presenting the materials to the students. This practice requires a high level of harmony and good preparation which was noticed through observations. As a result, students were very enthusiastic, engaged in the learning process, and attained high levels of academic

achievement. In addition, the facilitators cooperate to design a plan to help the week students during the weekends, so they can catch up the pace and have better academic performance. Moreover, it was impressive to the researcher to observe the level of support and harmony between the facilitators working in the same classes. For example, they collegially and passionately share responsibilities and tasks.

Moreover, 15 of the facilitators are taught how to access the internet to find relevant resources to their teaching and to the subject content. They were able to download teaching notes, videos and materials to improve the knowledge and practice. They explained that they benefited from the mentors and workshops in helping them adapt and modify the internet-derived teaching tools and materials to suit their contexts and local conditions.

Experiential learning, hands- on and reflections were observed throughout some of the training sessions and workshops. For example, practicums appeared to be an integral part in facilitating the learning process. Facilitators were divided into groups of four to five people. Each group selects a topic and designs a lesson plan to be demonstrated in the workshops. They had to determine the learning objectives, teaching methodologies, teaching aids, hands-on activities for the practice, formative and non-formative tools of assessment, and the clincher. Then, a member of each group volunteers to make a demo, and the other facilitators act as if they are students. Finally, the training as well the other facilitators engage in an open discussion to communicate their feedback, and ideas for better performance. Another interesting activity is case studies. The trainers used to bring case studies on some problematic students, or students who face difficulties in learning. The facilitators were also divided into groups to design an action plan for

remedy. Throughout this process, the facilitators experience a rich and vivid learning atmosphere where they bring out their experiences, reflections and understandings. The facilitators made it very clear, through the interviews, that those practicums and case study activities enriched their experience as learners. All of them reported on how the feedback, positive energy, reflections, and sharing of ideas had a positive impact on their teaching competencies and performance inside their classrooms. They also commented on how these practicums offered them a healthy and safe context to display their work and to develop their professional knowledge. Further, they reported on the fun, warm, and friendly environment which was created through the practicum sessions. This point was also evident during the observations, teachers used to share lots of laughter and funny comments. They used to laugh when they recall students' reactions and found a common ground among them. They also shared times of silence and reflection as to provide their best in helping each other. Moreover, the facilitators reported on how the practicum fostered their soft skills such as presentation and communication skills. In addition, these activities were a demonstration of linking theory and practice. Facilitators were not just stating what pops in their minds. Yet, it was impressive to see how facilitators are basing their recommendations, justifications and comments on scientific basis. They had to transfer the knowledge they have into actual practice and thinking. These activities provided them with new opportunities to be empowered and actively participate in their learning.

It is worth noting that the program was very relevant to the facilitators' situation. All facilitators commented on the meaning they felt due to the workshops. They found the training relevant to them and the actual problems they face either during the

profession or with the students. They were able to apply the knowledge acquired to their instructional practices and strategies.
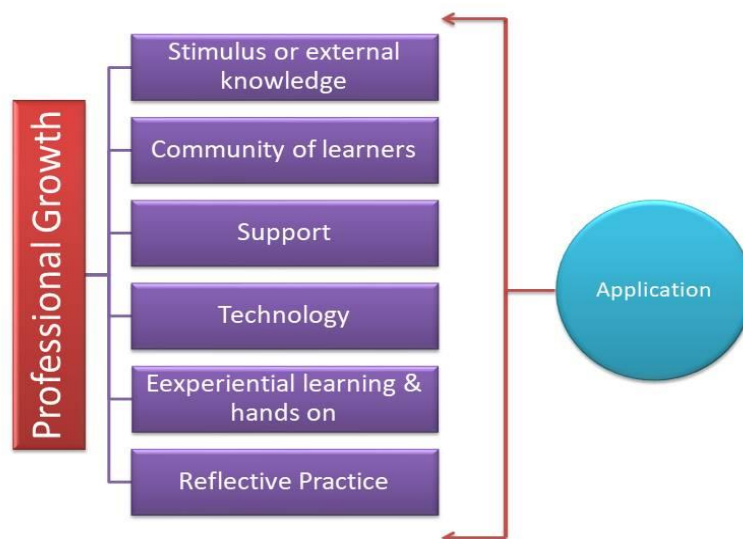
Figure 7: Illustration for the Results of Professional Growth

Impact of self-efficacy. It was consistently and clearly expressed that these learning opportunities which were offered to the facilitators positively influenced their sense of self-efficacy in multiple ways, such as: becoming more cohesive with their colleagues, developing accessible tools and materials, exploring different and more ways to foster students' engagement, and learning new skills. The facilitators commented on their enhancement in assessing the students' performance. Further, they reported that their ability to bring valued outcomes in terms of students' engagement and learning, even among those who are shy and unmotivated; one teacher reported:

"if a student seems too shy, I often make him a leader, and assign him a
set of tasks and responsibilities. This is something that we have learnt
about here, as well; at the beginning of everyday a class leader has to be
assigned, as well as group leaders, a presenter a timekeeper, and a corner
leader. So if there is a shy student, I first assigned him as a group leader,
and then as a class leader for a day".

In addition, they expressed their gratitude to the program as it helped them to
shape their professional identity. This professional identity was shaped over a long time
through the development of attitudes, values, morals and ethics which are associated with
their profession as teachers. It also reinforced their belief system about teaching and what
it meant to be teachers.

The findings showed that 20 facilitators, out of the 24, were aware of the
organizational requirements that they should meet as well as the policies that they should
adhere to. Twenty three were committed to the co-operative and collaborative activities
of sharing ideas, through various platforms, and the support they should give each other.
All of them respect and highly recognize and appreciate the contribution of carers and
parents to raise the students' achievement levels. All of them were able to identify their
needs and are receptive to mentoring and advice. They were also receptive to the new
approaches and ideas.

All of them were aware of the various teaching strategies and how to adapt them
to address students' need. Twenty facilitators were familiar with the assessment tools,

arrangements and requirements for assessing students. None of them were aware of any tool for self-evaluation. One facilitator stated,

Being the perfect facilitator means I don't just state the information, I presented in the best and most interesting way possible. For example, in English, I don't just give them the word and it's translation. I sing it to them, so instead of saying what the word cat means in Arabic, I make it part of a catchy tune. And, for math, I don't just explain the lesson, I have each student come out on the board, and solve a problem. The same thing happens with Arabic, after I finish explaining the Arabic lesson; I call out one of the students to sum up everything that I have said. I'm not just a teacher who blurts out information. I make sure that the students are following, and I get them to interact."

Another facilitator stated, "in the past, when a student didn't understand something, we would not give them any extra help. Now, we have a program at school called free activity sessions, where we sit with weaker students, and re-explain any lessons they may be struggling with once and twice, so that they can keep up with their classmates."

All the teachers believed that they gained more self- confidence. One of the facilitators reported what she learned:

"I was taught how to stand before the students and speak out as they let us in the training to form groups that simulate the class room and another colleague to act as a teacher and explain a lesson with audible voice. They trained us to have a

clear voice, self-confidence, not to hesitate even if someone walked in from outside to listen to you. They pointed out our mistakes and gave us feedback after the training with each group. Peer correction among the groups occurred".

In addition, the facilitators believe that the training helped them gain more self confidence in analyzing the situations. One facilitator reported

"My self confidence in analyzing situations is developed through the training. They give us a case study of a situation and how we should handle it and you come to find the exact same situation in the classroom which we have already practiced on."

All the facilitators also believe that they gained better skills in introducing the lessons. One of the facilitators stated: "the training helped me better use with the visual aids which I wasn't very good at. Yet after I attended the training and learned from them we now create very good visual aids. And the visual aids help to explain lessons." Further, the facilitators believe that they acquired more knowledge in dealing with students with learning difficulties and active learning. One facilitator reported

"we have learned how to deal with the child and that there are individual differences between students and classes so we learned how to classify the students whether in learning or special treatment at home or at school and we were able to classify the student and able to deal with him in his very special way."

Another facilitator stated: "first we had no idea of active learning, but we knew and we practiced at it during the workshops, so we became more efficient and it helped us in the classrooms".

Teachers also perceived themselves as accountable and responsible for their students. One facilitators, when asked about her role, said "A facilitator does everything inside the classroom. She is responsible for cleanliness; organizing the classroom, students' evaluation and follow up she's 7 in one as they say. She's a role model for the students."

All the facilitators reported that they benefited from the workshops and training because it responded immediately to their needs and enabled them to transfer their knowledge and skills they acquired to their instructional practices. They, also, reported that the preparation workload was eased due to borrowing ideas and materials from their colleagues. Further, they indicated their observation of students' improvement and participation when the materials are implemented. All of these factors contributed in creating a positive view to the trainings. One of the facilitator, when asked about the points of strength of the training stated:

"I think that one of the strong points to the trainings is that the content which is presented is very relevant and close to the classroom experience. And that I am not only learning new skills, but also given the chance and opportunity for trial and error while transferring what I learn into actual practice. The trainings are increasing my experience on the practical level."

Another domain is self-confidence. Ten facilitators noted that they gained more self-confidence. They perceived themselves as more competent, skillful and knowledgeable. They expressed their sense of confidence in identifying the problems related to both, their performance and students' problem as well as taking actual and realistic steps towards addressing those problems and solving them.

Furthermore, 11 facilitators stated that one of the strengths was that the project paved the way for better collaboration and communication among the facilitators. This establishment of a healthy teamwork spirit fostered a communication chain of sharing ideas and information which contributed greatly to their learning and knowledge building.

> "We needed a training on some educational methodologies or teaching tools to use in class, so we informed them. And they held a 15-day training program at the faculty of tourism and hotel management for us before we started working. Half of the program was focused on learning strategies, and the other half was focused on teaching tools and multimedia. They brought in professors from the Faculty of special Education, and they taught us how to do a lot of things that we didn't know how to do, before. For example we learnt how to make some shapes and how to make puppets."

Another facilitator, when asked about the difference between the Nile Valley training programs and the previous trainings she attended with other centers, reported:

"Here the training is more intensive and they care for the trainees more because there is an input and I am the one benefiting. I'm here because I want the training but in the Ministry of Education they want to apply an educational plan. So when I asked for the training I had the motive to learn but if I'm going without the aim of learning then I'm just going there to fill in a space."

Another facilitator reported, "It added to my personal life with my children and my husband. All the training topics added to my experience of how to handle my children at home and to understand how people think and want. I learned how to deal with my husband, even my mother in law.

Another finding which was fascinating is that the facilitators are aware of how they are aware of how they are perceived by the officials in the MOE. They reported that the MOE regards them as secondary teachers, and filling in the spaces. Although the pain was very clear in their voices due to this fact, but this did not affect their self image and self-concept.They reported that their role is strategic and they do have an impact on their students.

Teachers' impact. The facilitators had a great impact on students' academic performance, they were trained and qualified teach children who are illiterate, moving to teaching them skills as well as working on their attitudes and behavioral problems simultaneously.

Facilitators not only have an impact on their students' academic performance, but also on the character development. One mentor stated, "I work on the character

development of the children, and try to change and reform their mentality towards learning, help them to acquire habits and skills that are not taught to them in their original environment and she focuses on all the life aspects of her students". All the facilitators reported that they have a great impact on students, and this is felt when parents explain to them how their children's behaviors and attitudes changed completely regarding hygiene, obedience, tolerance, and flexibility. The facilitators commented that these types of feedback are the real reward they receive from the profession, despite the hard time which they experience along the way.

All facilitators were highly confident of their abilities to change students' reality. They reported that their role extends outside the classroom, and beyond the academic level. For example, facilitators play a role in changing the parents' mentalities regarding the cultural issues of marrying their daughters off at a very young age. An incident reported by one of the mentors was about a facilitator who was fighting for a female student whose parents wanted to pull her out from the school at an age of twelve years old, and she succeeded to convince the students' parents. Another incident was about a facilitator who stopped against the parents when they wanted to circumcise another girl at an age of 11. Another facilitators stood n defense of a girl to allow her to be in school in exchange for providing help in making a living. In addition, the facilitators' impact extends beyond the classroom to include the necessity of interacting with the community for the benefit of the school. One mentor commented:

"The facilitator's role extends beyond the walls of the classroom. They are part of the broader community the school is in, and they have to be able to deal with the members of these communities. They will need to deal with parents, and develop

connections with townspeople and community leaders to solve any logistic or operational problems that arise (such as power outages, or plumbing issues). Any training we conduct serves a need the facilitators have, and aims to raise their efficiency, and provide them with the knowledge they need to perform in class".

Teachers' status. Through triangulation, the researcher found a kind of contradiction between teachers' responses on the questions related to teachers' status and the researcher's observation on just two incidents. Even the results of the observations were inconsistent. While all teachers reported on the high level of respect they receive from their fellow colleagues and supervisors, two incidents showed the opposite. In one of the classrooms, the supervisor found the class unclean, so she shouted at the teacher in front of the students which was very embarrassing. The second incident was in one of the training sessions when the trainers shouted at the facilitators who were slow in comprehending as if they are dull. However, in most of the trainings the researcher observed a high level of mutual respect among the facilitators. They were very attentive to each other; they worked with great love and harmony. They showed passion and compassion towards each other. In other training sessions the trainers were very nice to the facilitators. The facilitators were also very nice to each other. This was clearly demonstrated during the practicum; when a facilitator presented any piece of work, the other facilitators were very attention, and never interrupt. Also when they are asked to comment on each others' work, the carefully chose their words and expressions in order not to let the presenter get offended in case of negative feedback. This was, also, supported by the results of the questionnaire used by Aisha Khairat (working thesis) in her study titled "community schools project leadership and organizational leadership:

perceptions of empowerment in an Egyptian NGO." The mean range was 4.6 of the 367 facilitators who had responded on the question that "I feel that my manager respects me." 1 was least, and 5 was the most

In regard to the second research question: What is the impact of the program on teachers' performance?

Classroom planning. Through observations, teachers seem to have a good knowledge of the subject matter they presented. They managed to establish a fun and warm environment which facilitates learning. The researcher observed good time management. For example, teachers managed their time in a way that enabled them to record the students' progress without affecting the flow of the class. The facilitators organized the classroom setting in a way which fostered teamwork and collaboration among the students. In addition the materials were selected in a relevant manner to meet the objectives of learning. The lessons were, also, presented in a sequential and logical way. The facilitators were very well prepared with the resources and materials. It was impressive for the researcher to attend one of the multi grade classrooms and fnd a smooth and ongoing learning process wherein facilitators were able to handle the different abilities and diversity in the classroom. Further, the facilitators were able to organize the lesson and activities in a way which actively engaged students in the learning process.

Facilitators managed to establish a positive, warm, and fun classroom environment. The classrooms were full of appealing artworks, and colors which facilitated a relaxed learning experience. In each class, there was a corner for artistic

stationary where scissors, glue, glitter and colors were found. They also connect the artwork to the events, lessons and birthdays. Science, Math, and Arabic lessons were presented through puppet shows and songs, which created a warm atmosphere. Facilitators were very positive in their comments, in the smile they are drawing on their faces, in their gestures of love and care. Each two facilitators in a classroom served to be a role model of harmony and understanding, the impression the researcher got was that both facilitators were complementing each other rather than competing. They also served to be a role model of adequate social and communication skills; they were very patient with learning difficulties students confronted, they never ignored a student comment, and they had a high level of self-control while dealing with disruptive students. Moreover, students reported on the amount of care they receive from their teachers, and how their teachers show high concern and cater for their needs. They, also, commented on the mutual trust which was developed over the years. Students share with their facilitators their dreams, fears, views, and aspirations. The instructional techniques used by facilitators encourage students to bond with them. In one of the classrooms, the attention getter was asking students to share a funny experience they encountered during the last few days which raised lots of humor, laughter and fun. Students feel very safe in expressing their thoughts, because no teacher chastises or embarrasses students for wrong answers.

Figure 8 & 9. Games in the lesson math, and a puppet show to have a fun and relaxing

environment

The learning was very relevant to the students' lives in the village. The problems which were discussed were not global problems happening in the other world, but were real problems they face in the village, like lack of electricity, water scarcity, female circumcision, and early marriage.The learning was relevant to the extent that no space for raising such questions of 'how can we make use of this?", "how this would benefit me?" Facilitators were very skilled in emotionally engaging students in meaningful activities to stimulate the neural connections and the learning experiences to be stored in the long – term memory. Teaching English, unlike the formal schools, was not presented in a list of vocabulary, but in context and relevant personal experiences. In addition, math was not presented in a way which leaves students uncertain about its benefits in real life. Addition, subtractions and multiplications were explained in the context of the market, the field work in the village, to the cow and to the mow. That was fascinating.

The materials which were addressed were specific to the students' need. The activities and materials which were designed were centered to on students' production and involvement. The teaching instructions were clear. The activities were also engaging in a communicative and meaningful manner. The materials facilitated interactive learning such as group work and pair work. The facilitators were skillful in appealing to variety of learning styles (auditory, visual, and kinesthetic) to respond to students 'multipleintelligences.

In the four schools I visited, the facilitators were able to: encourage individual as well as group work, and enhance the guided self-learning skills; assign tasks according to students' abilities and classroom management responsibilities; foster the students' soft skills of communication and presentation skills as well as self-expression through discussion questions; promote students' participation in producing the learning aids to create a fun and pleasant classroom environment; asses students' performance in different aspects, such as personality development and academic performance; creating a warm and close relationship with students.

In addition, the facilitators were student-oriented and fostered the student-centered learning with an emphasis on cooperation, self-learning, and peer learning. They perfectly managed the multi-grade system focusing on: individual differences, flexibility, group-work, learning corners, integrated curricula, enjoyment, and self-management. They, also, put an emphasis on active learning, highlighting group projects, educational activities, participation, low cost equipment, interaction, educational multi-media, and local community resources. Furthermore, they also developed higher-order thinking such as critical and creative thinking, and problem solving skills. They developed life skills

necessary for students to actively and effectively interact among themselves and with their community. They made the optimum use of the school day through the distribution of responsibilities and goals. They used many evaluation methods conductive to comprehensive, authentic and sustainable assessment. They developed all aspects of the children's personalities: emotional, mental, physical and social skills. They actively developed the children's talents.

Another notion which was also consolidated in the trainings is that success does not depend merely on the core academic subjects, but extends to intertwine between academics and personal will power and creativity through an emphasis on intrapersonal development and interpersonal relationships. This was highly reflected on the teachers' performance inside the classroom. Therefore, the facilitators were trying to focus on the students' abilities to gain understanding, solve problems, use knowledge, while developing a sense of self.

Community participation. In the same vein, the facilitators reported their understanding to the societal role and responsibility in fostering students' learning. Facilitators contact families, parents, and active members in the community to help students who face academic or social problems.

The participation of the community becomes an imperative and integral part for attaining success. One facilitator stated, "My co-facilitator and I discuss everything and agree on decisions together. And once we agree on what is best for the student, we communicate with the student's parents and invite them to take part in the decision making process".

Another example for community involvement is demonstrated in the remedy plan in which facilitators design to improve students' academic performance. This plan is based on connecting and involving the parent and family members in providing a helping hand. For example, if the students have weak reading skills, the facilitators' role is to connect the student to his siblings or parents to help him have better reading skills. Moreover, in each school, a community board for active members in the community gathers. The facilitators seek their help whenever needed. For example, if a girl is engaged and her parents want to pull her out of education to get married, the facilitators report the case to the committee, so they can interfere in the girls' favor. They also play a role for the schools' maintenance and funding.

Teachers' commitment and job satisfaction. Teacher's commitment was observed through the facilitators' enthusiasm and eagerness to acquire new skills and knowledge, in order to meet their students' need as well as meeting their mentors' and supervisors' expectations. Nearly all facilitators showed their willingness to put more effort to positively affect students' achievement and learning. They added that their sense of autonomy and decision making increased their psychological attachment to the schools in general. One facilitator noted, "my work as a teacher becomes a vital part of my life." Ten teachers reported that their sense of commitment fostered their innovations in the teaching practices and methodologies. Another facilitator stated, "The feeling of ownership I receive from my mentors and the project managers raise inside me a sense of commitment towards the profession in general, and my students in particular." Seven facilitators expressed that their sense of commitment urged them to continuously teach

themselves so they can expand their knowledge for the sake of their students' development.

Twelve of the facilitators reported that their commitment and satisfaction from the job is a result of enhancing their sense of competence, impact, meaning and autonomy from the mentors' part. One facilitator, when asked about this issue, reported,

"of course the sense of competence and autonomy I gain in solving the unanticipated issues which arise in my classroom, put a huge responsibility on my shoulders. But at the same time, this feeling of trust makes me very happy that I am able to solve my students' academic and social problems. I feel they are my children. All of this makes me very satisfied and committed to my job."

Another issue which was raised from the interviews is the facilitators' appreciation of the mentors and supervisors recognition of their work and good performance. All the facilitators expressed that the positive feedback and recognition they receive from their mentors and supervisors on their hard work enable them to exert more effort and definitely add to their job satisfaction and commitment. Furthermore, the facilitators reported on the notion of communicating the project's values, vision, and policies to them. Eleven facilitators reported that when these issues are addressed, they feel that they are an integral part of the whole process, and fundamental in attaining achievements. They believe that there is a kind of alignment of the projects' vision and goals, and their personal values. In addition, the facilitators referred to the time and care provided to them by the mentors and supervisors, and how this positively impacts them.

They reported that when mentors pay close attention to their needs, concerns and achievements, their sense of satisfaction is increased

Students' empowerment and self-efficacy. Through observations, the facilitators show a genuine and great interest in the students' abilities and good work. The facilitators' facial expressions, body language, tone of voice, enthusiasm, use of motivating words, paying attention to students' comments and presentations enabled students to develop their self-esteem and motivation. In one of the schools, teachers perfectly managed to engage the unmotivated and shy students and raised their enthusiasm to participate in presentations and teamwork. Four students reported that their facilitators helped them gain confidence in their skills and abilities which motivates them to stand against the challenges of coming to school, to feel safe, loved and appreciated, and to feel sad when the school day ends. One student, when interviewed, noted,

> "This is my first school, and my family never even expected that I will one day go to school. I sometimes thank God for this blessing to be educated and to be able to read and write at my age. I used to see my cousin while reading and writing and I used to feel sad. Until they opened a class here and when I first came I had no idea about anything. I didn't even know how to write my name, but now I can read in English and Arabic and I can write anything. No matter how I speak I will never be able to express how my teachers helped me. I am now so proud of myself that I can read and write. If I get lost, I can read the street signs and know where I stand."

Through observations, it was evident that all students are active learners. In the classrooms, no students are left doing nothing; all the students take a role in managing and creating their learning aids. The students engage in hands-on activities and take ample time to explore and reach conclusions. Meanwhile teachers, as facilitators, take their roles in providing guidance and support throughout the process of exploration and learning.

Students gained a high degree of self-worth and positive self-image. They compared their lives before and after attending the school, and how their lives were meaningless, and how ignorance and illiteracy destroyed them psychologically and disabled them to gain respect and honor from their male siblings and neighbors. They also commented on how the presentation skills they acquired enabled them to confront people and speak in public. They, also, compared between their ability to take decisions before and after school. Now, they can decide for themselves instead of being hesitant. They even felt their self-worth while helping their family members find solutions to their problems, such as financial issues for example. That was the fruit of the open discussion and the case studies brought to them by their facilitators. They were able to bridge the gap between the knowledge in textbooks and real life situations. They also compared between their dreams before and after meeting the facilitators. They commented that before coming to school, their dreams were limited to being individuals who can just read and write their names, an individual who can just live safely and be respected by their parents. Yet after coming to schools, their dreams were to be well educated, to be bilingual, to work as teachers, doctors, lawyers and pilots, and police officers. They want to realize their dreams and believe that they can attain it.

Figure 10: Photo for showing students' expression for their dreams

In one of the classrooms, the teacher was presenting the problem of pollution in the community, and was asking students to sit in groups and create some solutions that can benefit the community. The researcher was astonished with the amount of confidence, maturity, sense of responsibility, and passion revealed in the students' answer. They were very passionate to find practical solutions to their communities. The researcher was also amazed at the facilitator's ability to guide the conversation, not imposing her stance, the nonverbal feedback and the gaze in her eyes to allow each student to feel unique and that his/her solution was worth to listening to admiring.

The teachers' self-efficacy and self-esteem which was promoted throughout the trainings was reflected on the students' sense of self. Many teachers succeed to bring their own sense of self inside the classroom which created a circular process of healthy self-esteem from the facilitator to the student and from the student back to the facilitator. Students were given the opportunity to implement tasks which requires long-term planning, critical thinking, and group efforts. Hence, students were very attentive and

interested in their learning environments, they were active participants.

Figure 11: Photo for Reinforcing Active Learning

Promoting Life Skills. The common theme throughout most of the trainings I attended is to reorient the teachers on what is beyond just cognitive capacities, and ask them to encompass the emotional and social aspects of learning. As a result, the facilitators were using strategies to foster the sense of recognition and support among the students; the facilitators were redirecting students to recognize and support the needs of their surrounding communities.

Figure 12: Photo for demonstrating the Encompass the active and social aspects

of learning

All the facilitators reported that, due to the trainings and workshops, their focus shifted from teaching only numeracy and literacy to include other essential life skills and values which are needed to benefit their communities. This was based on the premise that numeracy and literacy are no longer sufficient for facing today's world and the types of challenges students encounter in their daily lives. They started to highlight the values of love, freedom, cooperation, tolerance and holding responsibility.

Other skills which were also fostered by the facilitator are communication and presentation skills. Through observations, teachers use various methodologies in presenting the lessons, one of which is presenting the content through students. Teachers assign students parts of the lesson to be presented and explained to their fellow colleagues. When this technique was observed in one of the classrooms, students seemed

to be happy due to the facilitator's non-verbal positive feedback, which increased their self-confidence.

Figure 13 &14: Photo for students' presentations and soft skills

Another skill was creativity. This was manifested in students' drawings and the art works displayed in the classrooms. These kinds of art works revealed the emphasis put on individuals' self-expression. One of the most important factors which contributed in enhancing the sense of creativity was that students were encouraged to create their work without the fear or the pressure of losing grades. This strategy had a positive impact on pushing students to their full potential. For example, one of the practices followed by the program is motivating students through incentives to do their own research. For instance, one of the competitions was on doing the best research on an effective initiative for the benefit of the community. An initiative on raising the awareness of the community

about the dangers of pollution was run by the students along with their facilitators'
guidance   and   support,   and   launched   by   one   of   the   schools.

Figure 15 & 16: Photo for Students' Art Work

Another skill which was highly consolidated is the adaptive skill; almost all
facilitators commented on their concern of teaching students the skill of coping and
managing stress. They, further, asserted that in order for the children to face the
challenges in their daily lives, children need to learn how to deal and cope with pressure
and anxiety, and never hesitate to seek help.

Figure 17: Ethics and Social life Skills

Chapter 5

Discussion and Interpretations of Results

Research Question 1: How the teacher professional development programs provided by the Nile Valley NGO empower teachers?

Professional growth. The findings showed that the model of teacher professional development provided by the Nile Valley NGO succeeded to involve teachers in the learning process to be active participants. This supports Fullan's and Stiegelbauer's (1991) notion of empowering teacher through enabling them to be involved in their education rather than being passive recipients of education and learning. According to Daloglu (2004), teachers are empowered when they participate in designing hands-on activities, and are supported to take initiatives in guiding their learning.

The findings indicated that the facilitators were encouraged to reflect continuously on their practices, so they can determine their needs as practitioners. This emphasizes Schon's (1983) belief when he noted that teachers are empowered when they are engaged in ongoing critical reflection so they can grow professionally. This is also in line which Daloglu (2004) who contends that the professional development activities which lead to teachers' empowerment and enhancement are based on:

- an immediate response to the teachers' needs,

- embedded in the actual situation of school's life,

- directed and designed to increase teachers' knowledge and input,

- adequate to facilitate reflection, growth and change,

- long and does not just happen on one or two workshops.

The data collected showed that the trainings offered by the Nile Valley's development project, fostered collaboration and networking among facilitators. This result aligns with Webster's (1994) as cited in Stacy (2013) ideals about teacher's collaboration; he asserted that teachers' isolation is considered as a hinderer to teachers' empowerment. When teachers are isolated, they become unaware of the support that they can receive from each other. Further, it supports Beane's (1993) as cited in Stacy (2013) notion that teachers' empowerment emerges from developing "community of learners" which puts an emphasis on: opportunities of sharing experience and expertise, opportunities of developing common practices, opportunities which help in assessing the impact of the instructional practices on improving students' learning, opportunities for making professional judgments, and opportunities which validate and support teachers' voices. In addition, Clark and Hollingsworth (2002) reported that the empowering professional development programs help teachers to establish communities of learners, and view teachers as learners. They added that in order for teachers to be active, they have to be engaged in collaboration and inquiry throughout the professional development practices and programs.

In addition, the results showed that the strategy of training reinforces the concept of de-privatization of practice. "De-privatization of practice" means a collaborative work among teachers who work to develop their instructional effectiveness (Kruse, Louis & Bryk, 1995). To illustrate, the activity of de-privatization of practice requires teachers to share skills and knowledge to heighten their competence, observe and react to one another's assessment and teaching practices. Additionally, it requires teachers to invite their colleagues into the classroom so they can solicit their feedback on a new teaching

approach or an instructional problem. This kind of reflective dialogue sustains and nourishes a healthy professional community; teachers discuss pedagogy, curriculum, problem solving and student development. Through ongoing and regular discussions, teachers become more sensitive to their teaching practice and its impact on students (Kruse, Louis & Bryk, 1995).

The practices of the Nile Valley regarding creating a strong network among facilitators, as previously mentioned in the results, is similar to the good practices of Teach Plus initiative, conducted by a national organization in Chicago which aimed at developing students' outcomes by empowering teachers. It was founded on the premise of giving teachers' the space and chance to grow professionally and increase their experience. One of the main practices of the Teach Plus initiative was to foster a sense of collegiality and strong network by involving teachers in book clubs, group discussions, mentoring and co-teaching, so they can collaboratively reflect on students' achievements and share values and attitudes among themselves (Stacy, 2013).These activities resulted in enhancement in teachers' methods, pedagogy, and reflection, which is in concordance with the results of this study

Another example is the similarity between the Nile Valley programs and the success story of empowering teachers in Finland. In Finland, teachers collaborate to develop innovative strategies to support students during their academic journey. They take into account students' group relations, records of academic development, and interests in learning particular subjects (Malinen, Vanisanen & Savolainen, 2012).

Another good practice is in Mascouth High School in Illinois which is in congruence with the results. In Illinois, the school initiated a professional development initiative based on teachers' collaborative involvement and engagement in their learning. The workshops were presented by teachers about topics of developing students' critical thinking and academic level. The workshops were formulated in a sequential manner, and teachers collaborated in the success of the workshops through their active participation. Subsequently, they formed group discussions on the readings materials and were given time for reflection. Further, they collaborate to transfer the knowledge they gained from readings and theory into actual practice, apply and contextualize into their own contexts according to their classrooms and subjects. Therefore, they identified themselves as active professionals (Stacy, 2013). Despite of the good practices of Nile Valley to empower teachers through building the facilitators professional growth, teachers did not reach this level of involvement as in Illinois. The researcher interpretation for this is that she believes that teachers may lack the adequate level of flexibility, readiness, or preparation to lead their professional development as in the case of Illinois. Another interpretation is that the teacher population in the Nile Valley NGO was not sufficient if compared to the enrollment rates in faculty of education or school as in Illinois. The researcher believes that good practice cannot be simply borrowed without the contextualization aspects taken into consideration.

Teachers' self-efficacy. All the facilitators, as illustrated in the results, reported a major transformation in their skills, knowledge, and beliefs about the teaching profession itself due to the topics presented to them in the workshops. Ortactepe's and Akyel's (2015) demonstrated that teachers are empowered when their beliefs about themselves,

knowledge, and attitudes are enhanced, when they experience support and encouragement; when their instructional practices develop; and when they observe students' learning. This aligns with the results.

The teachers' experiences of empowerment in the Egyptian community school is very similar to the story of success of empowering English teachers in Turkey. In Turkey, according to Daloglu (2004), the empowered teachers reported their development in terms of knowledge and skills in terms of developing effective materials for better and more engaging classroom environment. They noted their sense of self-confidence in presenting the content to students. They, also, believed in the usefulness of the professional development programs they experienced since it easily enabled them to transfer the knowledge they acquired into teaching practices. They stated that the professional development program they attended directly affected the quality of their instructional practices.

Furthermore, the results indicated that teachers' determination of their needs in development influenced their autonomy and self-efficacy. This is also similar to Turkey's successful case study; the professional development program in Turkey was bottom-up in its nature because it engaged teachers in a reflective inquiry to identify and determine their needs to be a fundamental concern and fully addressed while designing the core courses of the development program. This resulted in gaining a real enhancement experience to teachers. Teachers in Turkey pointed their motivation and commitment to the teaching profession. After the training, they perceived themselves as conscious individuals about their teaching and how it should be. They perceived themselves as competent and capable of impacting their students' learning and personality

tremendously. They perceived themselves as owners and active participants in the development. Finally, they reported their willingness to support and take initiatives towards the betterment of their students' condition on the academic level as well as on the social level (Daloglu, 2004).

The findings of this study showed a positive relationship between promoting the facilitators' self-efficacy and their teaching practices. This partially contradicts with Ortactepe's and Akyel's (2015) results; they were examining the relationship between English Language as a second language teachers' self-efficacy and classroom practices. They found that teachers' self-efficacy in terms of content knowledge was not associated with teachers' classroom practices. However, their results show a positive relationship between teachers' instructional practice and self-efficacy in terms of engaging students, managing classrooms, and applying new instructional methodologies into their teaching.

Another domain for the results relevant to the self-efficacy dimension is teachers' report of their ability to endure stress and depression. According to Bandura's (1997), people's views about their self-efficacy affect them in a number of ways; for example, it influences their actions, choices, the amount of effort they exert, their resilience towards failures, their abilities to cope with depression and stress, and their level of accomplishments. Studies reveal that role preparedness, teaching satisfaction, classroom management, peer relationships, stress, and academic emphasis are variables which distinguish teachers with high efficacy from low-efficacy (Frase & Sorenson, 1992).

The findings of the present study were supported by the findings of Darankolaee, Esmaeili and Nikaeen (2014) of 1596 physical education teachers in Iran. Their findings

showed that when teachers felt competent and skilled, their quality of performance and teaching improved.

Autonomy and decision-making. The findings revealed that the facilitators, who reported their autonomy, associated this autonomy with their teaching effectiveness, competence, experience and job satisfaction. This result goes with Rowan (1990) who contends that teachers' participation in decision making enhances teachers' competence, expertise, commitment and effectiveness. Furthermore, according to Swartz (1996), empowerment meant to draw upon the critical and individualistic traditions of students' and teachers' autonomy. It is mainly concerned with developing critical skills in the teachers so they can become "conscious of their agency to think and act in the interest of their own liberation within controlled forces" (P.400).

As shown in results, not all facilitators perceived themselves as autonomous; while 50% agreed that they were empowered and trusted to make decisions, other facilitators perceived themselves as non-autonomous. These controversial views can be interpreted by Fraser and Sorenson (1992); they introduced paradoxical views of teacher autonomy. While some teachers may perceive autonomy as a way to gain "substantial freedom" from supervision and interference, other teachers perceive autonomy as means of freedom to accomplish tasks and develop better collegial relationships which extends beyond the classroom. The latter side views autonomy as a construct which enables them to believe more in their abilities and decisions, so they can be productive, creative and powerful agents. In the same vein, Fraser and Sorenson (1992) distinguished between the old definition of teacher autonomy as alienation and isolationism "to be isolated in a classroom without collegial interaction or meaningful feedback is not the intended spirit

of autonomy" (Fraser & Sorenson, 1992, p. 40), and the modern definition of autonomy as collaboration and freedom to make decisions and choices related to students' lives.

The results collected from the facilitators who reported their autonomy in decision-making, are in the same line with Parker (2015) characterization of autonomous teachers as teachers who willingly accept responsibility, have self-reliance, self-expression, and independent judgments over situations.) noted that teacher autonomy is manifested in teachers' right to plan the learning process based on their own decision and choosing, teachers' formulation of their own rules which helps them to operate within classrooms.

In addressing the relationship between teachers' autonomy and creativity, Eye and Netzer (1965) as cited in (Thakra, 2015) stated that freedom has to be granted to guarantee teachers' creativity in their teaching. They relate imagination, creativity, and originality to autonomy. However, the literature showed that there were some teachers who always prefer to be dictated what to do, refrain from taking any decisions even if they are given the chance to, and resist this kind of autonomy. It can be interpreted that those teachers do not have a sense of ownership or commitment which can motivate them to participate in school decisions for the betterment of their students.

The results about those facilitators who reported their sense of powerlessness found that this sense of powerlessness is correlated to anxiety, tension, and frustration. This aligned with several studies which reported that the sense of powerlessness and lack of autonomy over decisions are related to the variables of anxiety, frustration, and tension among teachers (Bacharach, Bauer & Conley, 1986).

The autonomy provided to the facilitators regarding the selection of teaching materials and methods is similar to the autonomy provided to teachers in the European countries. In the majority of European countries, teachers are assigned responsibilities in an attempt to create autonomous school environments. Teachers are allowed to choose their teaching materials, methods. This growing sense of ownership and leadership motivated teachers to actively engage in designing education plans. Further, it leads teachers to develop their innovation and creativity (Eurydice, 2007).

The findings of the current study showed the teachers are not autonomous over the curricula. This contrasts with the international experiences as well as the original model of the community schools. In Estonia, the United Kingdom, and Sweden, the school head along with the teachers are engaged in determining the curriculum. In the Netherlands, for example, curricula as commonly defined do not exist. Since 1993, the goals and aims to be attained have been set to both primary and secondary schools. Teachers are the ones who are responsible and accountable in ensuring students' achievement; they have to report why some students were able to achieve the goals and why other students were unable to achieve the goals. Therefore, teachers exert effort collectively as members within each school (Eurydice, 2007).

The autonomy provided to community schools' facilitators is similar to the autonomy provided to Swedish teachers who are allowed to make use of the syllabuses as basis for organizing teaching activity. Swedish teachers make decision of the teaching methods and content according to their discussion with the students to identify and determine their needs. Community schools' facilitators are given similar autonomy which is provided to teachers is Bulgaria, Belgium, Estonia, Germany, Ireland, Poland, Malta,

Sweden, Slovakia, the United Kingdom, Norway, and Iceland. In Belgium, students' assessment for content knowledge is conducted by teachers while the overall assessment of pupils and decisions are made by a council of which the head of the school is a member. Teachers in Italy, Denmark, Hungary, Lithuania, Romania, Austria, Finland, and Slovenia, are fully autonomous in assessing students (Eurydice, 2007).

The reports of the project director and the mentors agreed with Stacy (2013) that in order for teachers to be empowered, they need a certain level of intellectual stimulation, autonomy, and professionalism. In Finland, for instance, teachers are considered highly autonomous professionals who are expected to adapt and apply new educational ideas in their work according to their own judgment. (Malinen, Vanisanen & Savolainen, 2012).

The researcher believes that while the level of autonomy practices provided to teachers in the Western countries regarding curriculum and textbooks seem very impressive, it cannot be easily transferred to the Egyptian context. The Nile Valley NGO, if allowed this autonomy to teachers, may be constrained and confronted by the Egyptian system regulations and rules. It is not as simple as many facilitators think. The researchers' interpretations is that the Nile Valley NGO project leaders do not communicate the policies which restrict them from applying the teachers' suggestions, so facilitators can understand the situation. Another interpretation may be the lack of communication chain which enables the facilitators to express their objections and receive a proper reply for why it may be hard to apply their suggestions. What I believe the Nile Valley NGO succeeded to do is to operate autonomy within the space provided to them by the Ministry of education.

Unlike the views of the supervisors' of the Nile Valley NGO regarding teachers' involvement in decision making as shown in the results, Chebet (2013) found contradicting views of supervisors in Bomet country in Kenya. Supervisors, as per Chebet's results, believed that teachers' engagement in decision making did not have a significant influence on teachers' instructional practices nor their performance generally.

Teachers' impact and status. Short, Geer and Melvin (1994) indicated that when participants believe in their capabilities to make real changes, and when they are allowed real opportunities and chances to speak up and have voices, they unhesitant take risks, develop more creative ideas, and exercise energy and power during their work.

The results of the present study contradicts with Kelly (2012) who found that teachers were not sure of their role in making an impact on the learning process, which resulted in teachers' disempowerment. It, also, contrasts with Klecker and Loadman (1998) who indicated that since teachers were not provided any opportunity to make a significant impact, they rated their sense of empowerment as neutral.

The findings of this study are aligned with the results of Hamadneh (2016), who found that due to the care and appreciation received by the gifted students' teachers (status) in Jordan, the level of empowerment increased.

Role of the professional development programs. The role of the professional development programs in Nile Valley proved to be successful. It is similar to the role of teacher training centers in Lebanon, which were proved through empirical evidence to be successful in empowering teachers. According to Zeitoun (2016), Role of Centers (RC) are perceived to update, refresh, and broaden teachers' knowledge as well as empower

them to take initiatives towards their education. Zeitoun (2016) added that the practices of RC in Lebanon are not restricted to training sessions, yet it creates a culture of learning communities. His research showed the need for a long term vision to interpret outcomes and goals.

Research Question 2: What is the impact of the program on teachers' performance?

Commitment and job satisfaction. The current study results contrast with Al-Yaseen's and Al-Masaileem's (2015) findings regarding teachers' sense of commitment and job satisfaction, which indicated that teachers in Kuwait believe that the practices which foster empowerment are absent. Teachers in Kuwait experience low sense of commitment and job satisfaction due to five reasons: they lack encouragement and support from their supervisors; they got limited chances to improve professionally; the working environment is not professional; they lack the social respect from the direct supervisors and their counterparts; they lack appreciation from their supervisors on their effort and hard work.

However, the results of this study align with Khany and Tazik (2015). The aim of Khany's and Tazik's (2015) study was to explore the relationship between empowerment and teachers' job satisfaction among Iranian secondary school English language teachers. They found a strong relationship between the two variables and that Iranian teacher worked with more passion and were committed when they were empowered to take decisions. Iranian teachers, as a result of the empowering behavior, were more flexible, innovative, pass over hard conditions and obstacles and strive to accomplish goals.

Teachers' performance. The results agree with Desimone (2011) who defined empowered teachers as professionals who "have the power to… administer their own lessons, and, as a result, have the ability to effectively teach their students." He added that this kind of empowerment raises teachers' sense of ownership, and motivates them to invest in their learning accordingly. Focused, engaged, and positive teachers have a tremendous effect on student's achievement. However, this result contradicts with Chebet (2013) who found no correlation between teachers' involvement in decision making and teachers' performance inside the classroom in Kenya.

The data collected from this study indicated that teacher's empowerment and the support provided to facilitators during the training sessions resulted in better teaching methodologies. This result contradicts with Marks's and Louis's (1997) conclusion that teacher empowerment is considered a mediator to increase teachers' commitment, job satisfaction, and sense of collegiality, but it does not ensure betterment in instructional practices and pedagogical quality. Marks and Louis (1997), argue that teacher empowerment, though an important strategy in raising students' performance is not sufficient. They contend that empowerment does not necessarily guarantee a real transformation in teachers' instructional practices and work. They also argue that students' achievement is not a default outcome of teachers' empowerment.

Students' empowerment and self-efficacy. Empowered teachers directly affect students' sense of competence in explaining and demonstrating their thinking by organizing, interpreting, synthesizing, evaluating, or hypothesizing. Further, the empowered teachers are trained to apply these intellectual qualities to performance (Marks & Louis, 1997)

The findings of the current study showed that students were positively influenced due to the teachers' selection of the pedagogy which reinforces critical thinking and creativity. The findings of this study are in line with Marruncheddu and Weidinger (2016) results in Romania who found that:

- The teacher professional development helped teachers to understand how to empower their students and guide them to take their decisions. This had a positive impact on teachers' perceptions of their role as facilitators as they become more alert to students' needs. Therefore, the teachers' pedagogy turned to be more student-centered rather than teacher-centered.

- The teachers' training put an emphasis on the importance of the relevance of teaching materials to students' needs. Thus, when teachers applied this methodology in their pedagogy, they noticed a great transformation on students' results.

- As a result of the trainings' effort in highlighting the importance of non-verbal communication strategy, the Romanian teachers became more attentive to students when they expressed their opinion. Students became more confident while expressing their thoughts, and communicating their opinion freely with no fear of making mistakes. Students reported their appreciation to the sense of acceptance and the unconditioned love they receive from their teachers regardless of their school achievements.

Furthermore, the findings of this study are in line with Chebet (2013) who found a positive association between students' achievement and teachers' empowerment. However, the finding contrasts Kelly's (2012) findings which indicated no relationship

between teachers' empowerment and students' development. While status had a slight positive statistical significance association with student's achievement ($p = 0.48$), the other dimensions of empowerment were not correlated with student's achievement.

The results are consistent with Ortactepe's and Akyel's (2015) findings from a sample of 50 Turkish English language teachers, who found that teachers' self-efficacy has a statistically positive impact on classroom management ($p < .01$), effective instructional practices ($p < .01$), and students' engagement ($p < .01$).

Conclusion and Recommendation

According to the researcher's readings and knowledge, the literature demonstrated that the teacher professional development progrmas provided by the Ministry of Education in Egypt failed to provide proper training that would empower teachers to face challenges, to take initiative towards their learning, to offer support, to raise their confidence in their skills and knowledge, teach them how to take decisions and be autonomous in many aspects, and to provide them with updated teaching methodologies, and address their real needs.

However, according to some successful stories introduced in the media, the Nile Valley development project appeared to provide an innovative model of teacher professional development through intensive, long, ongoing trainings and workshops. It appeared to be an initiative of which its designers were thinking out of the box regarding teacher education. Hence, the objectives of this study were: to investigate whether the teacher professional development program provided by Nile Valley empower teachers in reality, and to examine the empowering practices followed by the Nile Valley in the light

of the Short and Rinehart's (1992) framework of teacher empowerment. It also aimed at understanding the impact of the empowering practices on teachers' performance.

The approach used for this study is the qualitative approach. The qualitative data was collected through a triangulation of instruments: semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and observations. The sample size was 35 participants: facilitators, mentors, project director, and students.

The findings showed that community schools' facilitators are fully empowered in some dimensions, while having limited empowerment in other dimensions. Regarding decision-making autonomy, they are autonomous in terms of identifying their needs to be addressed in workshops, assessing students' performance, selecting the teaching materials and methods. However, they are not autonomous in selecting textbooks and curriculum, nor in taking administrative decisions over crucial matters. For self-efficacy dimension, the professional development succeeded in fully empowering teachers. Almost all of the facilitators reported their gratitude to the trainers because they enabled them to gain trust in their skills and knowledge, gain confidence in their decisions, raise their sense of responsibility and accountability for students' performance, and shape their perception about their good judgment as well as in their abilities to operate under stress and pressure. In terms of impact, teachers were fully empowered; 90% of facilitators were highly confident in their ability to change students' reality and altering the circumstances to desirable ones. Regarding the professional growth dimensions, the facilitators were fully empowered; they perceived the programs as offering better opportunities for networking and collaboration between them and their colleagues through various ways during the workshops. Further, the program helped them in shaping

their professional identity. This professional identity was shaped over a long time through the development of attitudes, values, morals and ethics which are associated with their profession as teachers. Moreover, on the classroom level, facilitators are taught how to access the internet to find relevant resources to their teaching and to the subject content. They were able to download teaching notes, videos and materials to improve the knowledge and practice. They gained practical knowledge about novel teaching techniques and strategies as well as presentation skills.

Future recommendations. Based on the findings, some recommendations can be provided for future studies; since this study follows the qualitative design, I recommend, using mixed methodology sothe results can be generalized. In addition, I recommend conducting comparative studies between the teacher professional development programs which are conducted by the Ministry of Education, and the professional development programs run by the development projects such as Nile Valley. Furthermore, a comparative study between Nile Valley's teacher trainings as a development projects and the other development projects may also be helpful. Finally, future research can focus more on the direct relationship between teachers' empowerment and students' empowerment.

Lessons learned and General Practical Implications. The findings of this research, despite limited generalizability, can have some practical implications for practitioners generally speaking.

One recommendation is to conduct a serious needs assessment through documented observations of teaching, surveys and focus group interviews by levels of teaching experience, so that any planned activity is purposeful and effective.

Professional development is a long term process rather than a 'quick fix' to problems. It should be closely studied, and appropriately applied to induce positive change (Hargreaves and Hopkins 1994).

For teacher professional development to be effective, it has to be relevant to teachers' needs and the real challenges they face throughout their profession. In addition, it has to provide practical solutions for remedy. Teachers will perceive the trainings and workshops as beneficial when they can easily transfer the knowledge they gained into actual successful practice, and when the programs address their needs and meet their aspirations. Vermunt and Endedijk (2011) concluded that many educational innovations were not successful because teachers' needs in learning were not acknowledged.

Effective teacher professional development programs have to provide a meaningful learning experience which is related to the teacher's daily work, the content they provide to their students, and why the content is organized and delivered as it is. It is worth noting that these content and pedagogy- specific professional development opportunities stimulate the interest of teachers and encourage their full participation as opposed to the one size fits all types of initiatives (Patton, Paker & Tannehill, 2015). Teacher professional development programs should help teachers master the content, evaluate their own and their students' achievement, hone teaching skills, and address changes needed in teaching and learning. Also, it should engage teachers in the tasks of

observations, assessment, teaching, and reflection which illuminate the processes of learning and development.

To ensure the benefit of the teacher professional development, it has to be based on hands-on activities which can be immediately implemented inside the classroom, so teachers can experience a change in their learning and teaching. Teachers judge professional development to be valuable when it provides opportunities for hands-on activities, as opposed to passively sitting through lectures. Whereas professional development is often designed to transmit knowledge and teachers are viewed as uninvolved recipients of curricula and ideas, effective teacher professional development places the teachers in role of active learners, with focus on inquiry and reflection, constructing their meaning and understanding through collaborative engagement in relevant tasks (Patton, Paker, & Tannehill, 2015). Teacher professional development has to empower teachers to take initiatives towards their education. In addition, teacher-led professional development proved to be very beneficial and intrinsically motivate teachers. However, the researcher recommends teachers readiness and preparation when student teachers receive their education in faculties of education to such types of programs so it would be a real benefit, rather than being a mess.

Teacher professional development has to be ongoing rather than 'one-shot' workshops where teachers can actively engage in inquiry, building skills and knowledge, collaboration and reflection. Teacher's education is a continuum and not a finite event; it should encompass a variety of processes, formats, and organizational arrangements. It should reject just reliance on outside experts, passive view of teacher's role, and the disregard for the contextual aspects of teaching (Libermann & Miller, 1978) as cited in

(Patton, Paker, & Tannehill, 2015). Moreover, the professional development which is intensive, ongoing, and includes application of knowledge to the teachers' instructions and planning, has a positive impact on teachers' practice and students' academic performance.

Leaders are responsible for creating a vision for professional development. Yet they cannot enact it without coordinators who translate the vision into plans and practical initiatives. The coordinators should be trained and sensitized to the personal, cultural, and structural factors which determine individual teachers' attitudes and needs.

Mentors should listen rather than tell, question rather than show, and guide rather than direct. This skill is referred to as the 'pedagogy of facilitation' (Poekert, 2011) as cited in (Patton, Paker & Tannehill, 2015). Mentors should not pose their vision, but rather hear and listen. Mentor, also, should aid teachers to become life-long and independent learners.

Practical implications directed to the Nile Valley NGO to enhance its practice. Although teachers were provided chances for reflection on their needs and peer assessment, reflection was a limited practice. The professional development designed by the Nile Valley NGO should encourage teachers to have reflective journals. Reflective practices boost the gains from PD as teachers compare their own practices to the practices of successful practitioners and engage in self-reflection. Professional communities helps in flourishing self-reflections, where teachers share experiences and conceptions through debates, dialogues, and discussions, (Andrews & Lewis 2002), leading to collegiality, productive learning environments and a healthy school culture. Another benefit of

reflection is presented by Field (2011), who argues that during a PD activity, teachers' exposure to knowledge and skills should be coupled with reflection as they implement the new learning and assess its impact on their teaching, and this fosters their empowerment and emotional development. Writing reflective journals allows teachers to judge whether the newly-learned strategies are valid for their classes.

Despite the fact that teachers were involved in hands-on activities, the researcher believes that the Nile Valley NGO can provide more occasions to do hand-on work that builds teachers' knowledge of academic content and instructional practices. Such possibilities include action research, making more presentations, and conducting research for publication just as the case in Japan. Action research allows teachers to improve their rational, social and educational practices by learning from their own experiences in a strictly directed and inquiry-based environment (Ponte, 2005). It can have a positive effect on teachers' practices because it is practical and easy to conduct. The teacher is a major participant in the research by identifying a problem, formulating a series of clear researchable questions to be investigated, reviewing the literature regarding the targeted issue, collecting and analyzing data, and communicating answers to the school community so that everyone can benefit from the findings (Ross-Fisher, 2008) as cited in (Nabhani, Bahous & Hamdan, 2012).

It was evident, as shown in the results, that the Nile Valley NGO successfully managed to form a community of learners. However, this strategy can be enhanced by acknowledging that professional development is a social process. According to Hord and Tobia (2012) as cited in (Patton, Paker & Tannehill, 2015), participating in informal social events as an element of professional development allows teachers and facilitators

to begin to know each other on a more personal basis, enhancing trust and strong collegial relationships, characterized by an ability to work together towards shared goals. The social nature of learning through the creation of a human supportive environment permits intentional collective learning and the application of that learning, thus paving the way for a transformation in teachers' thinking.

Another recommendation to foster professional growth, self-efficacy, and status, is to design outreach and exchange programs like in Lebanon. Through the outreach and exchange programs, facilitators can attend conferences in order to get exposed to the international standards, new educational practices, and interact with local and foreign teachers. This can expand the facilitators' educational scope. Additionally, facilitators will feel satisfied when they share their standards and values with other teachers from different educational settings.

The Nile Valley NGO should provide a more effective communication chains regarding certain aspects of their policies and procedures, such as the curriculum design. The inefficiency of communication between managers and facilitators can sometimes produce negative feelings of ambiguity and lack of confidence.

The Nile Valley NGO should develop a strategy of reward as a kind of appreciation to good work and practice, either through promotions or financial supplements. The rationale behind this strategy is that some facilitators may participate in trainings just to abide by regulations, but they do not take the activities as serious as it should be, or may not make a considerable effort to apply what they learn in classrooms.

The Nile Valley NGO should involve teachers in curriculum design especially for the multi grade schools such as the case of the original version of the community schools and the case in America. A five-year study in which American middle-grade science teachers participated in curriculum design, and the results confirmed teachers' awareness of the value of curriculum writing as a PD activity (Anderson, 1992) as cited in (Nabhani, Bahous & Hamdan, 2012).

Another recommendation for the Nile Valley NGO is to create 'recreational workshops' as in Lebanon such as stress and anxiety management, theater and music, and retreat workshops to enrich facilitators'' artistic and creative skills, recharge their energy, and relieve facilitators from pressure and stress. Their importance lies in their influence on the 'professional self' aspect of teachers' growth (Kelchtermans, 2004) as cited in (Nabhani, Bahous & Hamdan, 2012) and on awareness, creativity and motivation of their effect on students' lives (Milner 2002) as cited in (Nabhani, Bahous & Hamdan, 2012).

A final recommendation is that the Nile Valley NGO should put more emphasis on the bridge between theory and practice. Theory-based thinking gives perservice teachers the knowledge as well as the frame of reference based on which they grow as a professional teacher. They learn to take over responsibility for their actions and communicate their decisions on a rational basis, for example, within their community of practice.

Limitations. The first limitation of this study is that the data of the study were gathered within Nile Valley NGO development project professional development program which has certain characteristics. Therefore, the attempt to transfer the results

and implications has to be carefully done and contextualized within other professional development programs. The second limitation is thatthis study only investigated the teacher professional development program in El Fayoum, and observations were carried in only four community schools. Thus, the scope of this research pose a limitations since the results from one governorate cannot be generalized to the 11 governorates, and the results from four schools cannot be generalized to the 85 community schools in Fayoum, and the 556 community schools in the other governorates. The third limitation is that while 34 participants may be an appropriate sample size for a qualitative research design, it may not accurately represent the views of all facilitators.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview Questions with Teachers

- What is your name?

- How long have you been working with Nile Valley NGO's community schools?

- Did you attend all the training sessions and workshops?

- Where have you been graduated from?

- Did you receive any additional certificates related to teaching or any other field?

- Have you ever attended any teacher training programs other than those provided by Nile Valley?

- Do you know the goal, vision and mission of the Nile Valley NGO?

- Do you believe in them?

- Do you think they make a difference?

- Do you know the policies and regulations that you have to adhere and stick to?

- Can you please define your role?

- How the program helped you to shape your professional identity?

- If, yes, Please tell me what are major differences between the teacher trainings programs offered by the Nile Valley, and other trainings provided by other institutions?

- Do you think that you were in a need for this training program?

- Do you usually have a voice in identifying your needs to be addressed in the training sessions?

- How the training raised your self-confidence?

- Do you think that the trainers bridge between the theoretical aspects to the practice?

- What did the program add to you?

- How the topics presented in the training sessions and workshops didaffect your performance inside the classrooms, or it did not affect?

- What are the new strategies you learned while dealing with the students?

- What are the topics which are not addressed yet, but you feel that you want to know about?

- Do you think that training are relevant to you and the actual problems you suffer from inside the classrooms?

- Do you think that the solutions provided to you are applicable and feasible?

- How do you appreciate the group discussions and team work?

- What did the teamwork and group discussion add to you?

- Do you think that your supervisors respect you?

- Do you think that your fellow colleagues respect you?

- Do you think that you have a strategic role and real impact on your students?

- What are the aspects that you are allowed to take decisions about?

- What are the aspects that you are not allowed to take decisions about?

- Do you think that the trainings added to you knowledge?

- Do you think that the role of parents, family, and community has an impact on students' achievement and betterment?

- What are the strategies followed which allow you to grow professionally?

- What are the challenges you face?

- From your point of view, what are the points of strength to this program?

- From your point of view, what are the points of weakness to this program?

- What do you think the success in academic performance is the most valuable one?

- What are the values you try to foster in your students?

- How do you prepare them to face the challenges they face?

- Do you believe in your students?

- Do you think one day they can become beneficial to the community?

- Do you trust their abilities?

- What are the values you stress?

- What are the strategies you follow to foster cooperation and creativity?

- Please give me examples?

- How can you see yourself now?

- Do you think you need more training, or you think that was sufficient?

- Do you think your mentors helped you?

- Are you satisfied with your job?

- Tell me about your sense of ownership? How do you feel you attached?

Appendix 2: Interview Questions with Mentors and Supervisors

- Introduce yourself?

- Can you please tell me more about the program?

- What is your role and responsibility?

- How do you define 'professional development'?

- How do you define 'empowerment'?

- What are the main topics introduced throughout the training sessions?

- Do you think the teacher training program provided by the Nile Valley NGO differs than the other programs held in other institutions?

- How did you plan for this program?

- What are the indicators that alerted the Nile Valley NGO to provide this program?

- What is the philosophy of the program?

- What are the scientific bases which govern the preparation?

- What are the learning outcomes expected from teachers upon their completion to the trainings?

- What are strategies followed to professionalize teachers?

- What did you chose to call teachers 'facilitators'?

- What are the strategies followed to empower teachers?

- How do you support the teachers in order to apply what they have learnt?

- Do you think the program provide the proper knowledge that qualify teachers to take decisions?

- What are the aspects in which you allow teachers to take decisions about?

- What are the aspects which you do not allow teachers to take any decisions about?

- Do you respond to teachers' objections and voice? Or you feel it is not needed?

- Do you trust teachers' abilities?

- What are the coming steps after training teachers?

- Do you think teamwork is important for teachers' development?

- If you, can you tell me how did the program succeed to form community of learners?

- From your point of view, what are the points of strength?

- From your point of view, what are the points of weakness?

- How do you grantee the sustainability of performance?

- How do you follow teachers' performance?

- What are the challenges which face Nile Valley NGO?

- Do you trust teachers?

- Do you think they have a real impact on students' performance?

- What are the opportunities provided to them to grow professionally?

- How do you allow them to gain self confidence?

Appendix 3: Interview Questions with Students

- Would you please introduce yourself?

- Do you like the school day?

- Do you think your teacher loves and cares for you?

- Give me examples on situations when you feel that your teacher loves you?

- Do you think that your teacher is grade oriented?

- What are the other skills you feel that your teacher is trying to stress?

- How did the teacher make a change in your life? Or no change?

- Do you think you take a change to express yourself?

- Tell me how?

- Do you think that your teacher appreciates your hard work?

- How did your teacher foster team work and collaboration?

- Do your parents feel that you changed due to the school?

- Do you think that your friends respect you?

- Tell me more about it?

- Do you think that the information presented to you is relevant?

- Do you think you can benefit from Math, Science, Arabic and geography in real life?

- How is that? Tell me more about it?

Appendix 4: Observation Grid for Classrooms (but not limited to)

- Lesson objectives are clearly stated

- Materials and equipments are suitable to the objectives

- Teacher talk time and students talk time are balanced

- Non verbal feedback is positive

- Verbal feedback is positive

- Students actively participate in group discussions

- Facilitators show respect to students

- Facilitators encourage students to respect each other

- Facilitators provide enough time for practice

- Facilitators create a warm and fun environment

- The flow of class is smooth and eased

- Facilitators addressed multiple intelligences

- Examples of illustrations are relevant to students' life experiences

- Facilitators incorporate various teaching activities and class work

- Facilitators relate the concepts in textbooks to the real world

- Facilitators don't embarrass students

- Facilitators respond to students' comments and questions appropriately

- Facilitators show care and love to students

- Facilitators treat students equally

- The class atmosphere is relaxed

- Facilitators praise good work and behaviors

- Facilitators have high level of self-control while dealing with disruptive students

- Classroom setting reinforces group work and active participation.

Appendix 5: Observation Grid for Training Sessions

- Teachers listen effectively to each other

- Teachers are enthusiastic

- The trainers foster group work and discussions

- The trainers are able to form community of learners

- The trainers fosters critical and analytical thinking

- The relevancy of materials and examples to the actual problems students face inside the classroom.

- Trainers incorporate various teaching methodologies

- Facilitators show tendency to cooperate

- The trainers create warm and fun learning experiences

- The trainers allocate time for reflection

- The trainers encourage self expression

- Time span of the trainers talk time and teachers' talk time is appropriate

- Trainers use various ways to deliver information

- Trainers consider the cultural and social backgrounds of the teachers

- Trainers bridge the gap between theory and practice

- Trainers show interest and appreciate teachers' work and assignments.

- Trainers encourage mutual respect among the teachers.

Appendix 6. Photos

This photo was captured in one of the classroom to show students' handmade artwork on applying the English lesson of the four seasons, the Arabic lesson of the 7 days of the week, and Geography. The artwork was made of recycled papers, and materials

This photo was a painting hanged on the wall. Students made the letters, numbers, and shapes from the dough. It shows how the students were creative, and were able to match colors in order to form a nice piece of work.

This photo was sent to me by the project manager as evidence on students' participation in activities. Students in this picture were making healthy meals under the supervision of their facilitators. It also support the concept of encompassing the social aspect of education

This photo was captured to show how the class furniture is flexible to many settings, and also to

show how the classes were very cheerful. All the pictures hanged on the wall were designed by

the students.

This photo was captured to show how the lessons were introduced through puppet shows to stimulate students' interest, and to create a warm an fun learning environment.

This is the school library

This photo was captured as part of the students' activity. The activity fosters the sense of collaboration, responsibility and seeking help among students.

This is a Math lesson, students learn through games.

These photos show the corners segment as part of the school day. It also shows how the classes were very cheerful. This is part of Math lesson on counting. Student learn through games