

**THE INFLUENCE OF PROFESSIONAL
LEARNING COMMUNITIES,
TEACHERS COLLABORATION
AND EMPOWERMENT ON THE TEACHING
EFFECTIVENESS IN THE MALDIVES**

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EFFECTIVENESS IN THE MALDIVES**

by

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CCCII	Creating Communities of Continuous Inquiry and Improvement
DDAE	Dialogue, Decision Making, Action, Evaluation
EFA	Education for All
ESAP	Education Strategic Action Plan
IGCSE	International General Certificate of Examinations
MDG	Millenium Development Goals
MIC	Middle Income Country
MoE	Ministry of Education
NALO	National Assessment of Learning Coutcomes
NER	Net Enrolment Rate
NIE	National Insitutute of Education
PD	Professional Development
PLCs	Professioal Learning Community
PLCs	Professionl Learning Communities
SBPD	School-based Professional Development
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SIQAAF	School Improvement Quality Assurance Accountability Framework
TRCs	Teacher Resource Centers
UNICEF	United Nation’s International Children’s Emergency fund

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**PENGARUH KOMUNITI PEMBELAJARAN PROFESIONAL,
KOLABORASI DAN PENGUPAYAAN
GURU TERHADAP KEBERKESANAN PENGAJARAN DI MALDIVES**

ABSTRAK

Komuniti Pembelajaran Profesional (KPP) merujuk kepada komuniti yang terlibat secara langsung dengan sekolah bagi melakukan aktiviti penambahbaikan pembelajaran dan meningkatkan prestasi sekolah secara holistik. Penyelidikan ini secara khususnya meneroka i) peranan kolaborasi guru terhadap keberkesanan pengajaran guru ii) peranan pengupayaan guru terhadap keberkesanan pengajaran iii) pengaruh komuniti pembelajaran profesional, kolaborasi dan pengupayaan terhadap keberkesanan pengajaran guru di Maldives. Reka bentuk tinjauan keratan rentas yang melibatkan sebanyak 390 guru dari empat buah wilayah mengambil bahagian dalam kajian ini. Data kajian ini dianalisis menggunakan SPSS IBM versi 23 dan PLS-SEM 3.0, yang memberikan dapatan deskriptif dan inferensi yang komprehensif. Instrumen kajian yang digunakan bagi pengumpulan data terdiri daripada Professional Learning Communities Assessment Revised (PLCsA-R), Self-assessment Instrument for Teacher Evaluation-II (SITE-II), Teacher Collaboration Assessment Survey (TCAS), and School Participant Empowerment Scale (SPES). Dapatan ini menjelaskan pengaruh KPP adalah signifikan dalam memupuk kolaborasi guru ($\beta = 0.733$, $p = 0.5$), seterusnya peranan KPP bagi membentuk persekitaran yang bekerjasama dalam kalangan pendidik. Tambahan pula, variabel kolaborasi guru juga menunjukkan kesan positif terhadap keberkesanan pengajaran ($\beta = 0.245$, $p = 0.5$). Dapatan ini menunjukkan bahawa usaha kolaboratif diperlukan bagi meningkatkan keberkesanan

pengajaran secara keseluruhan. Selain itu, pengaruh secara langsung KPP terhadap keberkesanan pengajaran adalah tidak signifikan ($\beta = 0.099$, $p = 0.214$). Dapatan ini menjelaskan bahawa terdapat kesan yang dimediasikan oleh faktor lain. Walau bagaimanapun, KPP menunjukkan pengaruh yang besar terhadap pengupayaan guru ($\beta = 0.570$, $p = 0.5$). Secara tidak langsung, dapatan ini telah menunjukkan bahawa kepentingan KPP dalam meningkatkan pengupayaan guru dalam konteks pendidikan. Selain itu, pengupayaan guru juga menunjukkan kesan positif terhadap keberkesanan pengajaran ($\beta = 0.565$, $p = 0.5$) dimana ia menekankan kepentingan peranan pendidik yang mempunyai kuasa untuk menyediakan hasil pengajaran yang berkesan. Kajian ini juga mengenal pasti kolaborasi dan pengupayaan guru yang bertindak sebagai mediator yang signifikan antara hubungan PLC dengan variabel keberkesanan pengajaran ($\beta = 0.180$, $p = 0.005$; $\beta = 0.322$, $p = 0.5$). Hasil kajian menunjukkan kewujudan pengaruh dalam komuniti pembelajaran profesional, menekankan peranan kolaborasi dan pengupayaan guru bagi mengoptimumkan keberkesanan pengajaran dalam kalangan pendidik di Maldives. Justeru, kajian ini menyumbang secara langsung kepada pihak pengamal pendidikan, dasar dan intervensi. Dengan menjelaskan perhubungan antara Komuniti Pembelajaran Profesional (KPP), usaha guru kolaboratif, dan pengupayaan guru, penggubal dasar dan pengamal digalakkan untuk mempertimbangkan perkaitan ini apabila merangka strategi bagi meningkatkan kualiti pengajaran dan hasil pendidikan secara keseluruhan di negara ini.

**THE INFLUENCE OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES,
TEACHERS COLLABORATION AND EMPOWERMENT ON THE
TEACHING EFFECTIVENESS IN THE MALDIVES**

ABSTRACT

The Professional Learning Community (PLC) refers to the community that is directly involved with the school to carry out learning improvement activities and improve the school's performance holistically. This research specifically explores i) the role of teacher collaboration on teacher teaching effectiveness ii) the role of teacher empowerment on teaching effectiveness iii) the influence of professional learning communities, collaboration and empowerment on teacher teaching effectiveness in the Maldives. A cross-sectional survey design involving a total of 390 teachers from four provinces who participated in this study. The data of this study was analyzed using SPSS IBM version 23 and PLS-SEM 3.0, which provided comprehensive descriptive and inferential findings. The research instruments used for data collection consist of the Professional Learning Communities Assessment Revised (PLCsA-R), Self-assessment Instrument for Teacher Evaluation-II (SITE-II), Teacher Collaboration Assessment Survey (TCAS), and School Participant Empowerment Scale (SPES). Based on the findings explain that the influence of PLC is significant in fostering teacher collaboration ($\beta = 0.733$, $p = 0.5$), further the role of PLC in forming a collaborative environment among educators. Furthermore, the teacher collaboration variable also showed a positive effect on teaching effectiveness ($\beta = 0.245$, $p = 0.5$). This finding shows that collaborative efforts are needed to improve overall teaching effectiveness. In addition, the direct influence of PLC on teaching effectiveness is not

significant ($\beta = 0.099, p = 0.214$). This finding explains that there is an effect mediated by other factors. However, PLC shows a great influence on teacher empowerment ($\beta = 0.570, p = 0.5$). Indirectly, this finding has shown the importance of PLC in improving teacher empowerment in the context of education. In addition, teacher empowerment also shows a positive effect on teaching effectiveness ($\beta = 0.565, p = 0.5$) where it emphasizes the importance of the role of educators who have the power to provide effective teaching results. This study also identified teacher collaboration and teacher empowerment that act as significant mediators between the relationship between PLC and teaching effectiveness variables ($\beta = 0.180, p = 0.005; \beta = 0.322, p = 0.5$). The results of the study show the existence of influence in the professional learning community, emphasizing the role of collaboration and teacher empowerment to optimize teaching effectiveness among educators in the Maldives. Thus, this study contributes directly to informing educational practices, policies, and interventions. By elucidating the relationships between Professional Learning Communities (PLC), collaborative teacher efforts, and teacher empowerment, policymakers, and practitioners are encouraged to consider these connections when formulating strategies to enhance teaching quality and overall educational outcomes in the country.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction to the Study

The world globalization era has made countries vulnerable to the development of a borderless world concept. Perry (2021) states that this development has impacted the country's landscape, requiring critical players in various fields to take advantage of this borderless world era. This development focuses on economic and political aspects and social aspects such as education. Together with these trends, education progress in a region, including the Maldives, must be consistent with other countries. According to Pashby et al. (2020), the competition will be more intense in this era of a borderless world to get quality resources focused on resources within the country and globally available resources.

In order to further develop the knowledge economy and enhance its capacity to contribute to social well-being, poverty reduction, shared economic growth and prosperity while responding to the needs of the 21st-century economy (MoE & MHE, 2019) the focus is not only on higher education, which is a direct producer of human capital in the country. Equal emphasis is, therefore, also given to improving the primary and secondary levels.

While school reforms target student learning outcomes by enhancing the level of support provided to achieve measurable levels of improvement in learning, skills and learning environment (MoE & MHE, 2019), it is increasingly accepted that the key to achieving such outcomes is improving the effectiveness of teaching (Kyriakides et al., 2021). As a result, various recent educational concepts have emerged and

influenced teaching effectiveness, a critical factor in improving education quality, including professional learning communities, teacher collaboration, and teacher empowerment. Over the last decade and beyond, professional learning communities (PLCs) have attracted an increasing number of schools, education systems, and governments as excellent vehicles for improving teaching effectiveness and student learning outcomes (Hord,1997).

Considering these facts, this study will focus on the influence of professional learning communities (PLCs) as the independent variable, thus, directly affecting the dependent variable, namely teaching effectiveness. Additionally, the study will analyze teacher collaboration and empowerment's influence on the relationship between PLCs and teaching effectiveness.

1.2 Background of the Study

1.2.1 Context and Issues to Improve the Quality of Education in the Schools of the Maldives

The Maldives' unique archipelagic coral islands provide a rich and diverse marine ecological system for the country. Marine resources are vital to economic development, with the key driver of economic growth and fisheries being nature-based tourism, an important employment sector for the local population. The people of Maldives speak a unique language, Dhivehi, and use a different script called Thaana, written from right to left. Dhivehi is the official language of the country. English is widely used and is the teaching medium in schools. However, the prevailing low pass rate in the English language raised concerns about school instruction at the end of the Lower Secondary level and the importance of more significant emphasis on developing English language skills.

There are 212 government schools in the Maldives. Access to schooling is for everyone, as the government runs at least one school in each island. However, the dispersion of the islands makes it difficult for the equitable distribution of resources. (Di Biase & Maniku, 2021). The primary (KS1 to KS3) in the Maldives follows a local curriculum. The secondary (K4 – K5) pursue the British O-Level and A-level syllabi system. The English Language is the teaching medium, except for Islam and Dhivehi. The low achievement in both O-Level and A-Level is a considerable concern among stakeholders. Attention has also been given to raising teacher qualifications, particularly in remote islands (Fikuree 2020).

However, the Maldives' Education Strategic Action Plan 2021-2025 sees the Maldives as a country among small nations that provide the best quality education and training for all (Department of Inclusive Education, 2020). The educational sector's mission is to provide quality education opportunities for all, from preschool to university level; nurture well-disciplined students and develop them as healthy and capable students; Under the 'No Child Left Behind' pledge, the critical policy of the current administration is to ensure fourteen years of schooling for all children up to eighteen years of age. In conjunction with this, the Ministry of Education (MoE) is also pursuing a policy of making every young person skilled to make it easier to gain jobs. In the Maldives, education and skills are provided through the following phases of the education system:

- Two years of preschool education
- seven years of primary education
- five years of secondary education (3 years of lower and two years of higher secondary education)

- Development of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Programs and higher education programs through universities and colleges (MoE & MHE, 2019).

Adult literacy rates of over 98% have been achieved and maintained since the late 1990s (Nazeer, 2017). The Maldives have achieved Educational for All (EFA)/MDG for primary education well ahead of the target dates. Universal primary education with no significant gender disparity was completed by 2002. For 2016, the primary Net Enrolment Rate (NER) was 106.2 per cent, with males 104.9 per cent and females 107.5 per cent. With increased coverage and education participation, the Maldives has emphasized addressing quality and equity (Nazeer, 2017).

Education quality is a serious concern across the Maldives, as many adolescents lack higher secondary education admission. Although only 1.6 per cent of children in lower secondary schools do not study, according to the Policy Planning and Research Division, Maldives, Ministry of Education (2019), only 45 per cent of those children move to higher secondary level. As mentioned previously, it is challenging to implement and monitor the National Curriculum since the Maldives is scattered across the ocean. Studies have shown that students perform lower than others in some atolls, such as Laamu in the South of the country, illustrating the geographic gap between educational quality and school performance (UNICEF, 2016).

Perse, the average pass rate at the lower-secondary level is nearly 20 per cent lower in the atolls than in Male', the capital city. Nationwide, the Ministry of Education found that 40 per cent of students in both fourth and seventh grades failed to pass their exams. Although many teaching and learning materials are available, some teachers base their classes on memorization instead of understanding and critical thinking.

Closer links need to be established between teachers, students, and the systems to support them to ensure that children progress at the correct rate (Policy Planning and Research Division, Maldives, Ministry of Education, 2019).

With increased coverage and participation, the Maldives emphasized tackling the quality and equity-identified issues on employment. Around the time the international community moved from Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015, Maldives initiated many educational sector changes, expressed in the Strategic Action Plan for Education 2013-18. These reforms support SDG 4 targets for improving education quality and equity, which remain critical concerns at all system levels.

Although the overall primary net enrollment achievements are significantly high, the system faces a sharp drop in Higher Secondary Education enrollment. The NER was 44.5% for higher secondary education, 50.4% for girls, and 38.9% for boys in 2018 (Policy Planning and Research Division, Maldives, Ministry of Education, 2019). Government initiatives are underway to tackle drop-out between Lower Secondary and Higher Secondary (mainly through policies to create specific educational pathways). Although this does not resolve the low transfer levels from lower to higher secondary education, it offers an alternative direction that provides vocation-oriented education for students who need help to cope with or are not inclined to general education at that point. The strategy is, however, under supervision.

One other prominent challenge in education is improving learning outcomes and skills for all students equitably and reducing the learning gap. Improving learning outcomes will be driven by the implementation of the new curricula, the production of teaching and learning materials from K to 10, school-based professional development

of teachers and other targeted training, and the introduction of SIPs as part of the School Improvement, Quality Assurance and Accountability Framework (SIQAAF). However, despite progress in access and completion, the National Assessment of Learning Outcomes (NALO) 2016 and 2017 show mixed results on learning outcomes, with a considerable learning gap between those above and below (Di Biase & Maniku, 2021).

1.2.2 Teaching Effectiveness

Enhancing teaching effectiveness stands as a pivotal criterion in educators' instructional practices, encapsulating the dissemination of knowledge and skills (Latifi & Latifi, 2022). As asserted by these scholars, the efficacy of teaching is reflected in students' achievements, underscoring its role in elevating academic success. This effectiveness hinges upon teachers' pedagogical prowess and the creation of a conducive learning environment tailored to address individual student needs. A crucial facet involves elucidating the purpose of academic tasks, with a commitment to providing necessary support when required. Collaboratively, the teaching staff assumes responsibility for mastering new content, strategies, or methodologies to bolster effectiveness, as highlighted by Henard and Leprince-Ringuet (2008).

The challenges impeding the enhancement of teaching effectiveness in the Maldives primarily stem from educators lacking the requisite knowledge and skills (Muralidharan & Singh, 2020). Despite governmental initiatives aiming to elevate teacher competence through in-service training programs, the associated costs pose a substantial hurdle.

On a global scale, educational reform progress hinges on the individual and collective capacity of teachers, intricately linked to the broader school-wide capacity for fostering learning (Lamb et al., 2017). Recognizing capacity-building as pivotal, these scholars emphasize the multifaceted nature of ability, incorporating motivation, skill development, positive learning environments, organizational conditions, and the culture and infrastructure of support.

Together, these factors determine the feasibility of individuals, groups, entire school communities, and educational systems to engage in sustaining learning over time. Consequently, it becomes evident that investigating information related to the educational sector is imperative for research, as highlighted by Akram and Zepeda (2015).

1.2.3 Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)

This phrase refers to any group of people interested in education, including grade-level teaching teams, school committees, high school departments, entire school districts, state departments of education, national professional associations, and more (Hord, 1997).

At the core of professional learning, communities are committed to each student's learning. Therefore, teachers should grasp all students' high learning levels when a school functions as a professional learning community. According to Sperandio and Kong (2018), professional learning community development members are guided by a clear vision of what the school has to become to achieve this objective. Newburgh (2019) claimed that PLCs gives structure to a collaboration that should

happen with every field professional. The main problem is that the teaching profession needs to be more coherent.

Professional Learning Communities are an essential tool that ensures the betterment of educators' professional growth and enhances personal competencies. Educators can only help students learn at a higher level if they collaborate (Ibrahim, 2013). Professional Learning Communities can increase collegiality and continuous improvement, pursuing a more excellent range of interaction about instruction (OECD, 2016). It reduces the attention to school-wide goals, isolation among teachers, and vice versa; it increases job satisfaction and commitment. It also increases the responsibility to improve students' learning. The PLCs reduce the focus on school-wide goals and isolation (Téllez & Manthey, 2015).

1.2.4 Teacher Collaboration

In some studies of school effectiveness and school growth, teacher cooperation has been considered a key factor for school quality, effectiveness, and student achievement (Cansoy & Parlar, 2018). Researchers and professional organisations see collaboration as the core of successful teacher professional development. It has been emphasised as a crucial element for the school's and its students' growth, with research demonstrating a substantial positive correlation between teachers' self-efficacy and job satisfaction (OECD, 2016).

Additionally, cooperation has been positioned at the process level in models of educational effectiveness and quality (Han et al., 2021). According to Hattie (2015), "having highly skilled, inspired, and passionate teachers and school leaders working

collaboratively to optimise the effect of their teaching on all children in their care has the greatest influence on student development in learning" (p. 2).

1.2.5 Teacher Empowerment

Empowerment implies that teachers need to have a significant voice in school improvement. For reform to occur, teachers' working conditions should be considered (Puskulluoglu & Altinkurt, 2017; Rinehart et al., 1998). Empowerment was a subject found in many organizations during the 1980s, but the concept of empowering teachers came into education in the 1990s (Rinehart & Short, 1994). Thomas (2017) suggests that schools listen to the most knowledgeable teachers about the teaching and learning process. Empowered teachers inspire colleagues to improve student achievement.

Several steps are involved in empowerment, emphasizing the necessity of consistently putting these steps into practice to accomplish the intended results (Al-Abri, 2019). Giving instructors the freedom to use professional judgment when selecting daily curricula and lesson topics is one way to envision teacher empowerment at the micro level. Short and Rinehart (1992) reveal six teacher empowerment dimensions. They are professional growth, decision-making, self-efficacy, autonomy, status and impact. However, the researcher needed help tracing any published document regarding teacher empowerment in the Maldives.

1.3 Statement of Problem

The Maldivian educational landscape is presently at a critical juncture, marked by significant societal transformation and pressing challenges. Despite commendable proficiency in both the Dhivehi language and English among Maldivian adolescents,

a significant educational disparity persists, resulting in the exclusion of certain children from the formal education system.

While statistics indicate that only 1.6% of lower secondary-level children are not engaged in formal education, a concerning deficiency arises as only 45% of lower secondary students progress to higher secondary levels. This reveals a noteworthy gap in educational continuity, emphasizing the need for comprehensive reforms. Recent data from the World Bank in 2022 further underscores the urgency for change, revealing stagnation in English, mathematics, and Dhivehi scores for fourth and seventh graders at 50 to 60 percent.

UNICEF's 2018 report exposes a predominant pedagogical approach in Maldivian classrooms characterized by rote memorization, with limited focus on comprehension and critical thinking. Dr. Hawwa Shiuna Musthafa's research at the Maldives National University substantiates the pressing need for improving teaching effectiveness, especially in terms of pedagogical excellence.

Dr. Musthafa's findings highlight a stark reality: students in classes led by less prepared and less effective teachers significantly underperform compared to their peers guided by well-prepared educators. The consequences of subpar teaching extend beyond the classroom, impacting students' well-being long after they leave the education system.

Despite in-service training opportunities, UNICEF's 2018 review report indicates the limited impact of such training on teachers' pedagogical development in the Maldives.

This study addresses the critical need to enhance the quality of education in the Maldives and bridge educational disparities by investigating the influence of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) on teaching effectiveness. By examining the nuanced aspects of PLCs, teacher collaboration, and teacher empowerment, the study aims to provide valuable insights into potential strategies for improving the education system. The research explores whether teacher collaboration and empowerment positively influence the relationship between PLCs and teaching effectiveness, offering a promising avenue for the improvement of the unique Maldivian education system in light of its context and challenges.

1.4 Research Objectives

Broadly, this study investigates the condition and level of the professional learning community, teacher collaboration, and empowerment among teachers in the Maldives. Moreover, this study also aims to understand better teacher empowerment and collaboration as mediators in the relationship between a professional learning community and teaching effectiveness in Maldives schools. Thus, accomplishing this purpose, Specifically, this study aims:

Specifically, this study aims at answering the following questions:

1. To determine the level of professional Learning Communities on the teaching effectiveness in the Maldives.
2. To determine the level of Teacher Collaboration on the teaching effectiveness in the Maldives
3. To determine the level of Teacher Empowerment on the teaching effectiveness in the Maldives

4. To determine the level of Teaching Effectiveness in the Maldives
5. To examine influence PLCs on Teacher Collaboration on the teaching effectiveness in the Maldives
6. To examine the influence of Teacher Collaboration on the Teaching Effectiveness in the Maldives
7. To examine the influence of PLCs on the Teaching Effectiveness in the Maldives
8. To examine the influence of PLCs on the Teacher Empowerment on the teaching effectiveness in the Maldives
9. To analyse the influence of Teacher empowerment on the Teaching Effectiveness in the Maldives
10. To analyse the role of Teacher Collaboration as a mediator on the relationship between PLCs and Teaching Effectiveness in the Maldives.
11. To analyze the role of Empowerment as a mediator on the relationship between PLCs and Teaching Effectiveness in the Maldives.

1.5 Research Questions

Specifically, this study aims at answering the following questions:

1. What is the level of PLCs on the teaching effectiveness in the Maldives?
2. What is the level of teacher collaboration on the teaching effectiveness in the Maldives?
3. What is the level of teacher empowerment on the teaching effectiveness in the Maldives?

4. What is the teaching effectiveness in the Maldives?
5. Does PLCs have any influence on the teacher collaboration in the teaching effectiveness in the Maldives?
6. Does the teacher collaboration have any influence on the teaching effectiveness in the Maldives?
7. Does PLCs have any influence on the teaching effectiveness in the Maldives?
8. Does PLCs have any influence on the teacher empowerment influence on the Teaching Effectiveness in the Maldives?
9. Does teacher empowerment have influence on the teaching effectiveness in the Maldives?
10. Is there any mediating effect of teacher collaboration on the relationship between Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and teaching effectiveness in the Maldives?
11. Is there any mediating effect of teacher empowerment on the relationship between Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and teaching effectiveness in the Maldives?

1.6 Research Hypothesis

Based research questions mentioned above, a few hypotheses have been formed to be tested at .05 significant level. The hypotheses are as below:

H1: PLCs has significantly positive influence on teacher collaboration on the teaching effectiveness in the Maldives.

H2: Teacher collaboration has significantly positive influence on the teaching effectiveness in the Maldives.

- H3: PLCs has significantly positive influence on the teaching effectiveness in the Maldives.
- H4: PLCs has significantly positive influence on teacher empowerment on the teaching effectiveness in the Maldives.
- H5: Teacher empowerment has significantly positive influence on Teaching Effectiveness in the Maldives.
- H6: Teacher collaboration significantly mediates the relationship between PLCs and teaching effectiveness in the Maldives.
- H7: Teacher empowerment significantly mediates the relationship between PLCs and teaching effectiveness in the Maldives

1.7 Significance of the Study

In order to address professional development among teachers in Maldivian schools, this study delves into the concept of professional learning communities, which is an emerging area of research. This exploration is poised to bring about significant shifts in how educational institutions approach continuous professional development. Additionally, the research aims to expand educators' horizons, offering innovative and enticing avenues for instructors to advance their careers.

1.7.1 Significance to the Knowledge

This study scrutinizes the impact of professional learning communities, teacher empowerment, and collaboration on teaching. While various research endeavors have delved into these topics elsewhere, there exists a well-established body of literature on professional learning communities and their influence on teaching effectiveness. This study seeks to augment this body of knowledge by addressing the gap in understanding

professional learning communities' impact on teaching effectiveness specifically within the Maldivian context.

1.7.2 Significance to Policymakers

The study's findings hold promise for shaping the training and professional development of teachers in Maldivian schools. Notably, there is a scarcity of current research literature that explores teachers' perspectives on the development of professional learning communities in Maldivian schools. Furthermore, this research presents an original contribution as there are no published studies on professional learning communities, particularly in relation to their influence on teacher empowerment and collaboration as mediating variables in the context of teaching effectiveness in the Maldives.

1.7.3 Significance to Practitioners

Moreover, this research promises to be of practical value to teachers involved in the development of professional learning communities within their schools. It offers the potential to make educators feel valued, appreciated, and supported in their efforts to enhance the quality of teaching in their classrooms. The concept of professional learning communities envisions creating an environment characterized by collaborative inquiries, cooperative decision-making, and instructional planning throughout the entire educational community.

Lastly, and most importantly, the study has the potential to indirectly benefit students by seeking to improve teaching conditions through the establishment of professional learning communities at the school level. When teachers feel valued and supported in their work environment, they are more likely to be motivated to perform

their roles effectively. Furthermore, the results of this study are essential in several respects:

- a) The findings of this research will contribute to the further development of teaching effectiveness in the Maldives.
- b) The research's findings can inform future policy planning in the Maldives, particularly concerning teaching effectiveness among Maldivian teachers.
- c) This study can make substantial contributions to existing research related to teaching effectiveness in the Maldives.
- d) The findings, recommendations, and suggestions of this study could be shared with relevant institutions operating across the country.

1.8 Limitation of the Study

This study investigates the impact of professional learning communities, teacher collaboration, and empowerment on teaching effectiveness in the Maldives. However, in the course of conducting this research, certain unavoidable limitations need to be acknowledged.

As Nenty (2009) points out, limitations represent potential shortcomings inherent to a researcher's study and are often beyond their control. Similarly, Twantwa (2016) defines limitations as issues and events that may emerge during the study, which are beyond the researcher's control and can restrict the extent to which a researcher can influence the study's outcomes and conclusions.

This research employs a survey questionnaire completed by teachers based on their assessments of the variables under investigation. It's important to note that the

perceptions of school teachers regarding professional learning communities (PLCs), empowerment, and collaboration may influence their responses to the questionnaires. As suggested by Obenauer and Kalsher (2022), opinions expressed in a study can affect the interpretation, attitudes, and behavior, which, in turn, might impact their survey responses.

Additionally, it's essential to recognize that the teaching staff in most schools comprises individuals with varying years of teaching experience, encompassing those who have worked in different schools before joining their current institution. Consequently, the study encompasses both experienced teachers and recent graduates with limited teaching experience. To mitigate this variability, the respondents for this study are exclusively selected from individuals who have served for at least two years in their respective schools.

1.9 Delimitation of the Study

This study encountered certain limitations, primarily related to the geographical and logistical context of the Maldives. As an island nation comprising 19 widely dispersed atolls, conducting an extensive study across the entire country posed substantial logistical and cost-related challenges.

For practical reasons, this research was focused on a specific region, and as a result, not all areas of the Maldives were included. The study centered on schools located in five out of the seven provinces, excluding those in Malé, the country's capital. The omission of schools in Malé was motivated by considerations of cost and the substantial time and resources that would have been required to conduct a comprehensive survey in this densely populated and bustling urban area.

Furthermore, the study's scope was limited to teachers in government schools. This choice was informed by the fact that there is only one private school within the atolls under investigation. To ensure a coherent and comprehensive understanding of the subject matter, the perspectives and opinions of school leadership were also considered and incorporated into the research.

In essence, these delimitations were made to balance the research's scope, feasibility, and resources, ensuring a focused and practical study within the available parameters.

1.10 Operational Definitions

This part explains term and concepts which are the significant measurement for this study.

1.10.1 Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)

In this study, Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) are characterized as continuous processes in which educators engage in collaborative efforts, involving repeated cycles of collaborative research and action research, aimed at enhancing educational outcomes for their students (Hord & Tobia, 2015). As a pivotal focal point within this study, PLCs are assessed across six distinct dimensions employing the Professional Learning Communities Assessment-Revised (PLCA-R) questionnaire, developed by Olivier et al. (2010). This instrument comprises 52 items that facilitate the evaluation of the following dimensions: shared and supported leadership, shared values and vision, collective learning application, personal practice sharing, supportive environment, and relationships. These dimensions collectively offer an in-depth

exploration of the dynamic components within PLCs, providing a comprehensive understanding of their impact on educational practices and student outcomes.

1.10.1(a) Shared and Supported Leadership

This dimension of PLCs centers around the concept of shared leadership within a school, involving multiple staff members who actively contribute to leadership roles. While the principal holds a pivotal position with various responsibilities, driving progress and facilitating change is just one facet of their role. Hence, it becomes imperative for the school's success to garner support in this vital capacity.

Furthermore, the principal plays a significant role in nurturing a culture of professionalism within the school community. This is achieved through activities such as informing teachers about opportunities to assume leadership roles and facilitating their professional growth by imparting new knowledge and expertise (Hord, 2011). This dimension underscores the collaborative approach to leadership within Professional Learning Communities, where leadership responsibilities are shared and supported among various staff members to enhance the overall educational environment.

1.10.1(b) Shared Values and Vision

Within this dimension, Shared Values and Vision pertain to the alignment of values and collective vision among school staff, a critical factor in guiding decisions related to student teaching and learning. Furthermore, within the context of a professional learning community, fostering shared values and vision serves to promote commitment and harness the unique talents of each team member.

In this study, the researcher evaluates the extent to which staff members are engaged in the collaborative process of establishing a shared vision that aligns with the broader school vision. This endeavor encourages individual responsibility for school activities and underscores the significance of shared values in shaping individual awareness, fostering critical thinking, and ultimately enhancing organizational effectiveness (Hord, 2004). By assessing this dimension, the study seeks to gain insights into how shared values and vision influence the decision-making processes and effectiveness of professional learning communities.

1.10.1(c) Collective Learning and Applications

Within this dimension, Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) engage school staff in a collective journey of acquiring new knowledge at every stage. As emphasized by Hord (1997) and Hirsh (2008), collective learning serves as the cornerstone that significantly contributes to the quality of teaching and learning for students. Consequently, this research assesses the extent to which teachers partake in a collective process of learning new knowledge and how effectively this new learning is applied in practice.

This dimension of PLCs assumes a pivotal role as it encompasses the exploration of novel insights and the practical application of this acquired knowledge within the classroom. By scrutinizing this aspect, the study seeks to shed light on the dynamic interplay between collective learning and its real-world application, thereby advancing our comprehension of the impact of PLCs on teaching practices and student outcomes.

1.10.1(d) Personal Practice Sharing

This dimension within Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), as outlined by Hord (1997), revolves around the consistent sharing of personal knowledge and expertise. It entails conducting research to address challenges in the teaching and learning process, fostering collaborative learning among teachers, and the exchange of teaching materials and methods, all with the ultimate goal of enhancing the effectiveness of student learning.

In the context of this research, the investigator examines the actual practice of sharing within the collaborative learning environment. This encompasses an evaluation of whether lesson preparation is conducted collaboratively, and if lessons are subsequently evaluated in accordance with this collaborative approach. By scrutinizing this dimension, the study aims to gain a deeper understanding of how the sharing of knowledge and teaching practices within PLCs influences the effectiveness of student learning.

1.10.1(e) Supportive Conditions– Relationships

This dimension focuses on the establishment of supportive conditions within Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), and these conditions are recognized through cognitive and social support mechanisms. Cognitive support encompasses the provision of opportunities in leadership roles, facilitating the growth of individuals within the educational community. Simultaneously, social support is fostered through the development of effective communication systems (Hord, 1997). In essence, this dimension underlines the significance of supportive conditions, both cognitively and socially, in nurturing and sustaining robust relationships within PLCs, which, in turn,

contribute to their overall effectiveness in promoting professional growth and collaboration among educators.

1.10.1(f) Supportive Conditions – Structures

In contrast to the previous dimension that emphasizes relationships, Supportive Environment – Structures identifies the conditions for its formation through logistical support in scheduling (Hord & Sommers, 2009). This dimension underscores the significance of well-defined structures and logistics within Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). These structures play a pivotal role in shaping the operational framework of PLCs, thereby facilitating efficient scheduling and the smooth execution of collaborative efforts among educators. By examining this dimension, the research aims to shed light on how supportive structures impact the overall effectiveness of PLCs in enhancing professional development and teaching practices.

1.10.2 Teaching Effectiveness

Teaching effectiveness, often referred to as instructional quality, serves as a metric for measuring the degree to which instructional objectives are realized. It is quantified by the overall growth in intellectual aptitude and skills, typically assessed through students' achievements (Akram & Zepeda, 2015; Evans, 2006). Within the context of this study, the researcher evaluates five fundamental dimensions of teaching effectiveness: subject matter knowledge, instructional planning and strategies, assessment methods, the learning environment, and effective communication (Akram & Zepeda, 2015).

To assess teaching effectiveness, this study utilized a well-established questionnaire, namely an adapted version of the Self-Assessment Instrument for Teacher Evaluation (SITE II) developed by Akram and Zepeda (2015). This questionnaire, consisting of 28 items and employing a 4-point Likert scale, serves as a valuable tool for appraising the multifaceted dimensions that collectively define teaching effectiveness. Furthermore, it plays a pivotal role in comprehending the impact of instructional practices on student outcomes.

1.10.2(a) Subject Matter Knowledge

Subject Matter Knowledge pertains to a teacher's comprehension, organization, and command of their subject matter (Akram & Zepeda, 2016). It encapsulates a teacher's proficiency in understanding subject-specific information, concepts, principles, as well as their pedagogical reasoning and decision-making abilities (Akram & Zepeda, 2016). This dimension underscores the essential role that a teacher's subject matter expertise plays in ensuring effective instruction and student learning outcomes.

1.10.2(b) Instructional Planning and Strategies

Instructional planning and strategies serve as critical indicators of teacher effectiveness, demanding that effective teachers employ a diverse range of teaching methods and techniques to optimize student learning (Akram & Zepeda, 2016). This dimension highlights the pivotal role played by the deliberate planning of instruction and the thoughtful selection of strategies in enhancing the overall effectiveness of teaching, with a primary focus on improving student learning outcomes.

1.10.2(c) Assessment

Assessment, within the context of teaching effectiveness, encompasses the process of evaluating student performance, during which the teacher systematically collects, analyzes, and utilizes data to gauge learner progress and understanding (Akram & Zepeda, 2016). This dimension underscores the significance of ongoing assessment as an essential tool for educators to gauge the effectiveness of their teaching methods, adapt instruction as needed, and ultimately enhance the learning experience for students.

1.10.2(d) Learning Environment

A conducive and engaging learning environment is an imperative factor for nurturing student growth (Stronge, 2013; Akram & Zepeda, 2016). Effective teachers are adept at fostering a learning environment where respect is cultivated, interactions are meaningful, and students are motivated to learn (Muijs, 2012). They prioritize the organization of learning activities throughout the teaching and learning process.

In this dimension, it's essential to recognize that effective teachers build rapport and trust with their students by consistently demonstrating fairness and equitability (Akram & Zepeda, 2016; Stronge, 2013). This fosters a supportive learning environment that encourages active student engagement and contributes significantly to their academic and personal development.

1.10.2(e) Effective Communication

Effective communication is a hallmark of effective teaching. Skilled teachers excel in their ability to communicate with students by modeling standard language usage, actively listening, and responding constructively to students' inquiries and