UNDERSTANDING THE PERCEPTION OF AND NEED FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: THROUGH THE LENS OF STAFF AT AN INTERNATIONAL BRANCH CAMPUS

Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of the University of Liverpool for the degree of Doctor of Education.

BY SUMAIRA AHMED OSMANI

University of Liverpool Student ID # 20116774

Old Student ID #: H00042570

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UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL

Centre for Higher Education Studies, School of Histories, Languages and Culture,

Faculty of Humanities and Social Science.

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DEDICATION

I want to dedicate this thesis to a small group of people close to my heart. This group has been a significant influence in my life as family by birth and by choice. I will start with my father, Ahsan Osmani (deceased), who would have been the proudest and happiest on this day and would have shared the news with anyone and everyone with immense pride in the loudest voice possible. My mother, Iffat Osmani, who has always believed in me and thinks of me quite highly like any mother (though I have doubts about that image she has of me), and my amazing siblings; My sister, Sayya who has always been my role model and my rock, Attee and Faddu my brothers who have supported me always by motivating me and believing in me. Though we all do not live close to each other and are spread across three different countries, we are always there for each other whenever we have to reach out. They cheered me on when I decided to pursue the doctoral program, and they have been my support through ups and downs in life, and my two lovely nieces Sarah (Boo Bear) and Natasha (Nanoo) who are close to my heart always.

My friend Amani, whom I bully constantly to pursue his doctoral degree, somehow, he does not get angry with me. He has been my mimicry partner for years. Shaista (the innocent), Bushra (the diplomat), Nobia (the kind hearted) and Cherian are part of this small circle of people who have been a huge part of my life for over a decade and not to forget Dr. Nasreen, Rak Kam and Sam from this small circle.

Lastly, the two important crazy people who are the two great loves of my life; my beautiful daughter Summer (Timmy), who will be as proud of me as her nana (my father) would have been, who will tell me "Mom I always knew you would do it" and will probably do an insta story or a snap chat posting on it. It is an interesting coincidence that I am done with the doctoral program just as she has started university in Fall 2021. My partner Irfan who believes in me far more than I have ever believed in myself, and from whom I have learned a lot. His unconditional love for me and for us has been my support as he never had any doubts about my reaching this stage (though that did unnerve me at times). He has given me immense confidence in myself, though at times he has driven me insane because of it. Without mentioning all of them my dedication would be incomplete. I consider myself lucky to have them all as a part of my life.

ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the issue of professional development for staff (academic and professional), at an International Branch Campus (IBC), based in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). There is limited literature on how professional development is perceived and understood by staff at IBCs in the United Arab Emirates, and what benefits they associate with professional development in relation to teaching, learning, improving professional practice and enhancing the learning experiences for students. Although a few studies on staff perceptions of professional development have been conducted in schools in this region.

The study aims to gain awareness and insight regarding how the staff at this IBC perceive and understand the need for, and importance of, professional development in improving professional practices and students' learning experiences. Currently there is no defined policy framework for professional development, and no formal professional development programs in place at the IBC. The higher education institutions of today operate in an exigent and competitive environment, which further stresses the role of professional development as critical for higher education staff. The present study is unique in its purpose towards an insight into the staff's perceptual understanding and importance of professional development in enhancing professional practices and improving student learning experiences in higher education in the context of IBCs being a visible and resource intensive example of transnational education. The IBC in the study is unique in being the first IBC from its home country to be set up in the U.A.E.

The study employed a qualitative methodology, following a phenomenological approach, with semi-structured interviews as the primary source of data collection. In the present study the participants' responses highlighted their perception of professional development as an important requirement in improving professional practices, teaching and learning in higher education. The responses emphasized the importance of both formal and informal professional development. Although the IBC in the study does not have a policy in place for promoting formal professional development, nonetheless, the staff discussed the role of situated, social, self-directed learning and reflective practices, in facilitating their understanding of professional development and its beneficial role for the learning of the individuals.

The present study can facilitate in developing a proposal for the development and introduction of a framework for professional development at the IBC in the study.

Keywords: Professional development, self-reflective practice, student learning, adult learning, social learning, situated learning, motivation.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Transnational Education (TE): Provision of education to international students in offshore locations, mainly through satellite campuses or distance learning.

International Branch Campus (IBC): An entity that is owned, at least in part, by a foreign education provider; operated in the name of the foreign education provider; engages in at least some face-to-face teaching; and provides access to an entire academic program that leads to a credential awarded by the foreign education provider (The Observatory of Borderless Higher Education).

Academic Staff: The term "academic staff" is used to include all staff involved in teaching as their primary role at the International Branch Campus.

Professional Staff: The term "professional staff" covers all those who have administrative and management responsibilities in the institution in departments such as student affairs, admissions, human resources, records and institutional effectiveness with some of them also involved in partial teaching as well.

Staff: The term staff for this study refers to both academic and professional staff as mentioned above.

Foreign Education Provider/Home Campus (FEP/HC): The foreign education provider is the home campus in the South Asian country IRP that has been allowed to set up a branch campus in the host country, the United Arab Emirates (UA.E).

Host Country: For the purpose of this study, the host country is the U.A.E that allows educational institutions from other countries to set up their branch campuses to deliver their programs of study as they exist in the home country while at the same time following the higher education guidelines provided by the ministry of education in both countries.

Home Country: For the purpose of this study the home country is the South Asian Country (Initials of the Country are IRP) that has set up an international branch campus in the host country.

Higher Education Institutions (HEI): Universities, colleges, and further education institutions offering and delivering higher education.

KHDA: Knowledge and Human Development Authority that monitors all educational institutions in the emirate of Dubai in the U.A.E.

UQAIB: University Quality Assurance International Board was established by Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA) Dubai in United Arab Emirates. UQAIB is a full member of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE), and abides by the INQAAHE Guidelines for Good Practice and the OECD/UNESCO Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education (2005).

HEC: Higher Education Commission in Home Country of the IBC in the study.

QAA: Quality Assurance Agency in Higher Education Commission of home country of the IBC in the study.

QEC: Quality Enhancement Cell in all HEIs in the home country.

FOREWORD: RESEARCHER'S BACKGROUND

My career in higher education started quite unexpectedly in 1998. I had never intended to be a part of the higher education field, and more specifically, teaching in a university was never something I had seriously considered. I had moved to the United Arab Emirates in 1998 and was exploring job prospects. I had just completed my Master of Philosophy (M.Phil) degree in Psychology and then worked for a year (in a completely unrelated field) at a newspaper in their Promotions and Business Development Department. I enjoyed the brief experience at the newspaper significantly and applied for a few positions in the limited newspapers that were functioning in the United Arab Emirates. I did not receive any encouraging responses. I started thinking about further possibilities, and what I would be good at and contribute to most effectively. This is a common dilemma of my generation, especially given our cultural context where we usually completed college or university without any real thought about what we would do in practical and professional terms after completing our formal education or even why we were pursuing a specific program of study. After this somewhat disappointing response to my attempts at finding a job at a newspaper, I started applying for teaching and administrative positions in the then newly evolving higher education market in the United Arab Emirates.

I applied to the University of Science and Technology in one of the smaller emirates in the U.A.E. and was called in for an interview with the Deans of the Education and Dentistry schools. I still remember sitting and waiting to meet both deans, I was pretty nervous, thinking about why I had even applied there. However, they were satisfied with my credentials, and I was offered a part-time teaching position and even asked to contribute my views for how the existing outline of their foundation course in Psychology could be improved. I was a bit overwhelmed by their request, as I had no previous background in teaching or curriculum design. However, I decided I would pursue

the opportunity, as I would learn a lot. I worked at the university as a visiting teacher for the next five and a half years and also developed the first ever course outline for the university. The first time I entered class in 1998, I almost ran out again, as it was filled with over 100 students from 10 different nationalities. I made lots of mistakes along the way and learned a lot from them as well. I improved over the years by reflecting on what I did and how I did it, reading about various techniques, and observing how students learned when I taught in a certain way. Primarily, it was through self-learning and my own strong interest in self-improvement that helped me develop my teaching skills along the way. I also taught at a Pharmacy and Medical College in the United Arab Emirates, as a visiting lecturer for one year. The motivating factor there was that I was recommended for my excellent teaching skills by the first university where I started my teaching career in 1998.

After this experience, I had a gap of almost four years. I moved to Canada and worked in a completely different field with special needs adults. At that time, Canada still did not accept educational qualifications from other countries as being equivalent to their own, so it was not easy to get into any field of teaching, especially in some of the Provinces (I am primarily referring to my own experience here). Four years later, I moved back to the United Arab Emirates (U.A.E) in 2008 and once again applied to universities here. I received a call for an interview from an International Branch Campus (IBC) from a South Asian country (this country is referred to as IRP throughout this thesis). I joined it as a visiting faculty, and now, I was back in the classroom and realized teaching was something I truly enjoyed. I have been associated with this university for thirteen years now and performed several roles, some by choice, a few because the institute required and asked for my support, and some as part of the job description. Working in these different roles has been an immense source of learning and allowed me to understand how the various departments work, as I realized even more important aspects about myself.

As mentioned earlier, I had never really given much thought while growing up as to what career path I wanted to pursue; however, as I have been associated with higher education for over 18 years now, I know it has been a significant influence on my life. This influence was what finally led me to decide to pursue my doctoral degree, not in Psychology but in the field of higher education. My time here at this IBC has prompted me to move toward taking this doctoral program. My thesis focuses on how the staff at this IBC perceives professional development and its role in improving professional practices and student learning experiences. Reflecting on everything, I realized that I have never attended any formal professional development workshop or training throughout my teaching experience, but what I have learned has come through my interest in education, learning from others, my need for the job, and my own initiative when reflecting on my own practices. I am now far more aware of how higher education organizations are managed, as well as more aware about various factors that are a part of my job because I have observed others, discussed. and asked questions. I have reflected on my experiences and my mistakes, but also what I have done correctly, and my strong desire to be good at what I do. My experiences have become the best source of my learning and developing professionally. My tenure at current IBC has resulted in a lot of respect from the student body and my colleagues, and given me the confidence to continue doing what I am doing.

For this current research study, permission to conduct the research work onsite was given to me readily by the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees of this higher education organization. That made me realize that an immense amount of trust was placed in me and my work. The on-site data collection was undertaken in June/July of 2019. Over time and especially my tenure (the last 13 years) at this IBC, I have gained considerable self- confidence, developed my self-esteem and self-worth, and matured both professionally and personally. Since this journey has been primarily through

self-learning, personal motivation, and willpower, those are the three strengths that I want to share and pass on to my future students as well.

1.0   CHAPTER ONE- INTRODUCTION

Good quality education is essential for the growth and development of individuals and society. Professional development is a significant determinant for enhancing the quality of education and learning (Inamorato, Gaušas, Mackevičiūtė, Jotautytė, &Martinaitis, 2019). Higher education is rapidly undergoing transformation in today's challenging and competitive world, given the massification and globalization, increased competition, and students' having more options and opportunities at their disposal whenever selecting a higher education institute for their future studies. It has become increasingly important for higher education institutions (HEIs) to have the right strategies and measures to stay competitive in today's global higher education market (Aškerc & Kočar 2015, p. 160).

Globalization as the critical reality of the twenty-first century has already influenced higher education through an interlocked world economy, technological developments, multiculturalism, and international knowledge networks, all of which of course are not entirely within the control of these HEIs (Zhu, 2015; Van der Wende, 2003). It is thus vital to understand that higher education cannot be considered in isolation, as learning is comprised of autonomous and distinctly institutional types that are working toward their designated interest and towards realizing their crucial role in society. We exist and operate in a multicultural world where higher education institutions today serve a diverse range of stakeholders (students, staff, faculty) and their unique needs, resources, and competencies (Gurthie, 2019). The HEIs must, therefore, develop and create flexible learning organizations that can respond well to the changing trends within the different fields of study and play a positive role in a rapidly transforming world. The shared capabilities and capacities of academic and professional staff and their continuous improvement are crucial factors that must be considered by higher education institutions in order to enhance the efficiency, effectiveness, well-being of all the individuals involved and the organization.

1.1   Contextual Background of the Study

Transnational education refers to delivering education to international students in offshore locations, mainly through satellite campuses, IBCs, or distance learning. In recent times, the United Arab Emirates (U.A.E) has emerged as one of the largest hubs for international branch campuses all over the world. Since the start of this current century, at least 60% of IBCs have been set up in the Middle East (Miller-Idriss &Hanauer, 2011), allowing students to benefit from internationally recognized graduate and undergraduate degree programs from several countries that have set up their branch campuses in the U.A.E. The literature shows many kinds of educational terms that are linked with international branch campuses, including the branch campus, transnational campus, foreign campus, international branch campus. To maintain consistency, the term used in this study will be International Branch Campus (IBC). The Observatory of Borderless Higher Education (OBHE), together with the Cross Border Education Research Team (2016) jointly discuss IBCs as entities having partial or complete ownership by a foreign education provider (FEP/ Home Campus) and operating under the name, FEP/Home Campus, with student engagement occurring through some face-to-face teaching and the provision of a complete academic program that leads to the awarding of credentials by the foreign education provider.

Although the current study is based on staff perception and an understanding of professional development at an international branch campus, it remains essential to understand the context in which the IBC operates and the home country that has set it up in the U.A.E. In recent times, the U.A.E has been surpassed by China as the top IBC host country. The U.A.E is a much smaller country than China (100 times smaller in area), but it still hosts one of the largest concentrations of IBCs in the world (Gurthie, 2019).

The UAE's recent development especially in the economic and political spheres since the mid-20th century has significantly shaped the form of the nation's IBCs. It also provides a valuable context for understanding the rapid spread of IBCs in the UAE. The UAE has been extremely successful in its efforts to entice foreign higher education providers to its soil. Since the early 2000s, the number of IBCs hosted in-country has grown rapidly, from just 4 in 2000, to 31 in 2015 (Fig. 1.1). The U.A.E also has the highest concentration of IBCs with 40 IBCs located across three of its seven emirates. Figure 1.1 below highlights the C-Bert Branch Campus listing.

Figure 1.1 IBCs in the United Arab Emirates
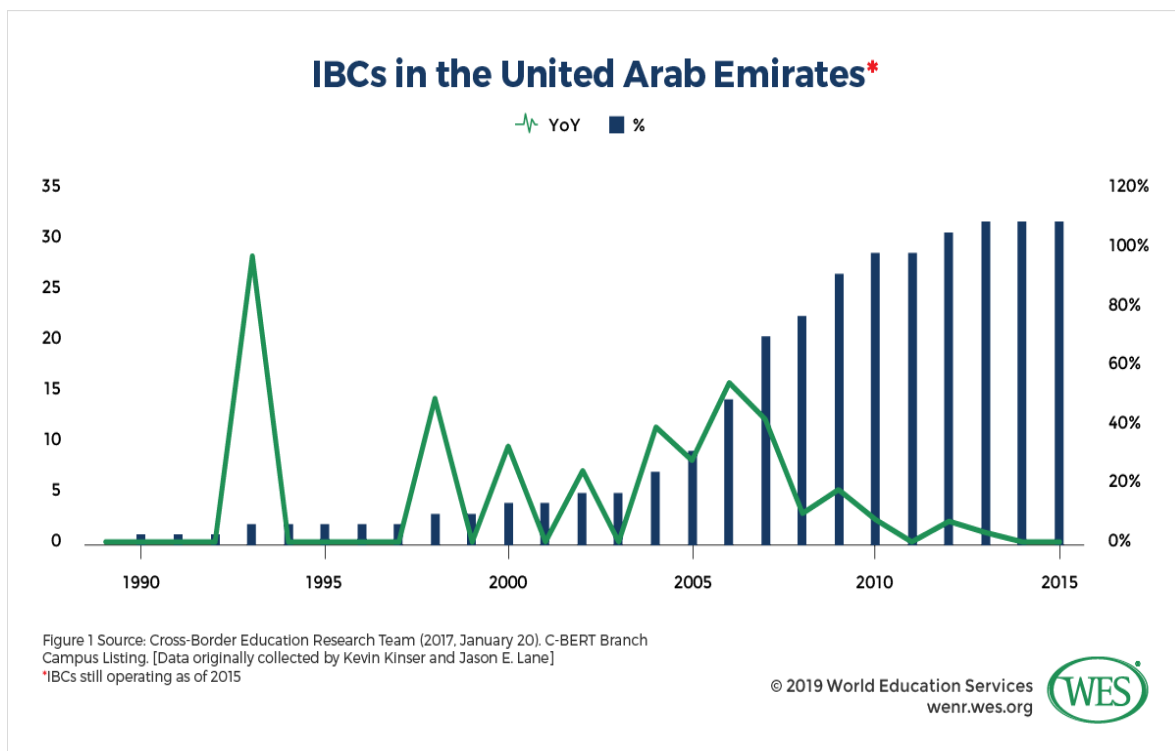
Source for Fig 1.1: Cross-Border Education Research Team (2017, January 20). C-BERT Branch Campus Listings.

1.2   International Branch Campuses in the U.A.E

The central location and growing importance of the U.A.E in the world has made it a hugely popular destination for trade, investment and tourism (Gurthie, 2019). The United Arab Emirates has become home to an ever-growing number of IBCs in the last two decades. International branch campuses are a major source of transnational education that has now gained immense popularity. The IBCs goal is to deliver education to students in a different country from where the awarding institution is actually based. The countries that have set up IBCs see them as prospects for student recruitment, revenue generation, and new research ties with other international educational institutions in the host country (Mackie, 2019). The IBCs also act as economy boosters for any host country and benefit the home country that is using its presence in other countries to take its brand of education to an international level. These international branch campuses also act as a link or a channel for promoting multiculturalism in higher education (Swan, 2013).

The challenges of managing an IBC are multi-fold, given the diverse student and staff body, policies from host and homes countries, globalization, and funding and management from the parent campus. All can impact both the quality and professional standards and understanding of them (Healy, 2016). Although, the United Arab Emirates (U.A.E) is a multicultural country, similar challenges are not faced by local HEIs. The local HEIs cater to the local population, not to the expatriates based in the U.A.E. However, private HEIs in the UAE have a multicultural student body similar to the IBCs in the U.A.E with both local and expatriate student populations (Kamal & Trines, 2018). All IBCs are not similar, and their functioning depends significantly on the policies and procedures of their parent campus and the higher education program that is set up in the home country as well as the requirements of the host country.

The IBC in this study has been in the U.A.E since 2003, primarily as a HEI for the expatriate population from South Asian Country IRP with families who have already settled in the Gulf region. One of the major advantages this IBC offers to the expat population from the home country is that students studying at this IBC can have a seamless transfer process to the parent campus or any other branch campuses in the home country. This advantage is particularly important, as the expatriates from the home country are still a transient population in the U.A.E. This scenario allows for all their completed coursework to be transferred and also the choice of completing the remaining part of their degree program without losing credit due to credit transfer policies.

The IBC in the study was the only IBC from its home country till recently (2018) when a second IBC from the same country was set up (also in the United Arab Emirates) but in a different emirate. It is also important to mention that the IBC in this study is located in one of the more prominent Emirate of Dubai in the U.A.E, while the other IBC is situated in a smaller emirate, but still in the U.A.E. The emirate of Dubai has over 33 IBCs from over 12 countries across the world (see Appendix H & I) and is a more popular investment destination for the growing education market in the U.A.E, with a greater number of IBCs as compared to the other emirates that make up the U.A.E (there are seven emirates that form the United Arab Emirates). This provides more relevance to the importance of professional development among staff at the IBCs in the Emirate of Dubai, as the presence of IBCs from 12 different countries from across the world make it a more competitive environment for the IBCs. In order to preserve the anonymity of the participants, the home country of the IBC has been referred to by a pseudonym hence the identification of any participant is minimized, as well as the South Asian region comprising of a number of countries (including the Country IRP) has a number of IBCs in the U.A.E.

A gap in the literature exists due to a current lack of any studies done on IBCs from this home country and better understand the unique challenges of operating in a multicultural hub in competition with other IBCs. Although some studies in the context of IBCs operating in the U.A.E and the challenges faced by them have been undertaken (Healey, 2016; Franklin & Al Zouebi, 2014; Mackie, 2019), the literature reveals only limited studies done in the context of transnational education in terms of staff perception and understanding of ongoing professional development. Although there are limited studies that have involved staff perception of professional development, still emphasizing how staff and faculty perceive their existing professional development programs at their place of work (AlNaeimi, 2007; Hfnawi, 2012; AlHassani, 2012), however studies on how staff perceive and understand professional development, not necessarily in relation to any existing program, are still lacking. In the current study, the IBC does not have any formal professional development programs for the staff, making the current study a unique study, as it is not just an attempt to understand perceptions of specific existing program/programs of professional development. Rather the emphasis of the current study is better understanding the perceptions of professional development and the need for improved professional practices, enhanced teaching and learning, and related student expectations of the higher education they will receive.

The current study is significant because it is the first and only study done in the context of IBCs in the U.A.E (and at this particular IBC) that aims to understand the staff's perceptions of how they understand and perceive professional development and how they perceive their own professional development experiences and needs. As a researcher I hope this study will help policymakers at the home campus improve the quality of the professional development opportunities they offer their staff. Healy (2016) has discussed the trials of running an IBC. Over the last decade, the expansion of the IBCs has been one of the most noticeable happenings in the internationalization of higher education.

1.3 Role of Host and Home Countries Regarding International Branch Campuses (IBCs)

Dubai, as one of the leading emirates in U.A.E, has progressed rapidly in the field of higher education. The long-term vision of Dubai's leadership in this regard is to build a knowledge economy. In the last thirty years, the number of universities in Dubai have grown from three to sixty-two. Today, Dubai has thirty-three international universities from twelve countries, which offer a wide range of international undergraduate and post-graduate programs (see Appendix H & I). These IBCs are located across the several Free Zones in Dubai, which allow 100% foreign ownership in tax-free environments. Each IBC is required to fulfil the quality assurance criteria set by the respective education ministries in their home countries. To avoid replication of quality assurance practices already being utilized by the quality assurance agency of the home country of the IBC, the University Quality Assurance International Board (UQAIB) first contemplates the prevailing quality reports on the quality of these foreign IBCs as well as the value of the quality systems and measures in place at those institutions. UQAIB in particular examines the efficiency of such measures to safeguard quality assurance of cross-border provision. UQAIB has the right to initiate its own measures in cases where it appears that these external quality reports do not provide satisfactory indications of necessary or expected quality provision (see Appendix I).

The higher education institutions that are based in free zones in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates operate under the Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA) for accreditation and quality assurance purposes. The KHDA launched the University Quality Assurance International Board (UQAIB) in 2008 to ensure the quality of education at the higher education institutions operating in the Free Zone in the emirate of Dubai. The UQAIB ensures that the academic programs delivered in the IBC based in Dubai are the same as the accredited programs being taught at the IBCs home campus. All higher education institutions located in Dubai's Free zones must thus undergo the UQAIB quality assurance process or seek

accreditation through the Federal Ministry of Higher Education & Scientific Research in the United Arab Emirates (Knowledge and Human Development Authority, 2019). The UQAIB functions as a member of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE). It follows the INQAAHE Guidelines for Good Practice and the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OCED) and the United Nations Educational and Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education (KHDA, 2019).

As the IBC in this study operates in the free zone in the emirate of Dubai, it needs to ensure that it abides by the rules and regulations set forth by the UQAIB (see Appendix I) for its accreditation and licensing while at the same time meeting the quality assurance requirements in place at its home campus that operates under the Higher Education Commission (HEC) in its home country. The HEC requires that every higher education institution (HEI) sets up a quality assurance and enhancement cell to ensure that these institutions follow the quality assurance procedures set in place for all HEIs in the home country (see Appendix G). The IBC in this study has a quality enhancement cell (QEC) in place that follows the guidelines of the QEC (see Appendix G) at the home campus. The QEC at the home campus in turn operates under the guidelines of the Quality Assurance Agency QAA (see Appendix G) set up by the Higher Education Commission (HEC) so as to promote, enhance and ensure the quality of higher education across all HEIs in the home country (Higher Education Commission, 2019).

The Higher Education Commission provides a self-assessment manual (see Appendix G) for all QECs in HEIs in the home country. The purpose of the self-assessment manual is to direct the HEIs in the home country to exhibit the success of their academic programs when delivering high quality education that constructively impacts students. All HEIs are required to do a self-assessment review to reflect on their offered programs, delivery modes and learning

environments and allow the HEC in the home country to monitor the functioning of HEIs (Higher Education Commission, 2019). As the IBC in this study operates under the auspices of the home campus, it becomes relevant to mention that the HEC in the country IRP does not have the specific and unique guidelines for any international branch campus worldwide. The IBC in this study was the only IBC from this particular home country IRP until 2018; hence a lot of policies and procedures are not as clearly defined as they were for their home campuses and branch campuses in the home country. Hoodbhoy (2019) has written extensively on the lack of staff professional development in higher education in the Country IRP, commenting on the deplorable state of academic qualification and research background of those in senior academic positions in the home country, raising key concern regarding the entire higher education system in the country IRP.

1.3.1 Professional Development and Professional Learning in the IBC Context in U.A.E

The UAE Vision 2021 is also an important aspect to consider in the context of the current study. The 2021 Vision seeks to make the UAE one of the best countries in the world by 2021 (U.A.E 2021 Vision, 2018). There are six pillars in the U.A.E Vision 2021 agenda, and excellence in education is one of them. The UAE Vision 2021 includes the development of a first-rate education system and fine teaching methods and U.A.E is well on its way to achieving that goal. The 2021 Vision has been the guiding principle for all educational institutions in the U.A.E. Hence, understanding the role of professional development, as perceived and understood by staff when improving practice and teaching and learning, becomes an essential component that should be explored further for more development and improvement. Shaha, Glassett and Copas (2015) have accentuated the role of professional development in permitting for enhanced effectiveness of higher education professionals and their impact on student learning outcomes.

Although, formal professional development programs are vital in warranting that there is a regular addition of essential learning, teaching and evaluation topics (Burns, 2002 as cited in Scott & Sutton, 2009), it is also imperative to clearly comprehend how professional development takes place through the informal learning practices that ensue within that work environment. Boud and Brew (2013) consider it more critical to focus on the development prospects that arise within the context of work than on the development schemes that require a departure from the workplace, colleagues, and professional settings.

In a recent initiative undertaken by the Knowledge and Human Development Authority in the United Arab Emirates, a Higher Education Classification and Rating Framework (see Appendix I) has been implemented to cater to the need for a transparent and robust quality framework that will promote further development in higher education in the U.A.E. The Higher Education Classification and Rating Framework (see Appendix I) has four core categories and five elective ones to be used for assessment purposes. Two of the core areas include teaching and research, while one of the elective areas focuses on student learning experiences or the learning environments being made available to students in the higher education setting. Student experiences include the physical environment in which teaching and learning occurs as well as actual student learning spaces. Quality teaching is of primary importance, as the landscape of higher education has been redefined, increasing international competition, increasing social and geographical diversity of the student body, increasing the demands for value for money, and the introduction of information technologies (see Appendix I).

Teaching excellence forms the central component of the HEIs by developing innovative teaching, sharing excellent and expert practice, and supporting students' interests by ensuring high standards of academic provision and strong academic and employability outcomes. With the U.A.E being a hub of the IBCs it would seem essential that various quality assurance measures be implemented so as to maintain teaching and learning standards, improve

professional practices, and enhance overall student experiences during their higher education period.

In the current study, both the formal and informal aspects of professional development are an interesting area to explore to comprehend and realize how staff at the IBC in this study perceives and understands professional development and its needs, relevance, and benefits in higher education today. An insider's look at this aspect can provide meaningful new insights into the staff's opinions and viewpoints and how they integrate and implement professional development practices that assist the teaching and learning experiences and also enhance professional practices and the student experiences in higher education.

1.4   Research Problem

It is becoming increasingly important for these HEIs to have professional development policies in place in order to stay competitive in the global higher education market of today. That goal needs improved professional practices for staff and enhanced learning experiences for the students. Professional development is considered to be a key factor for enhancing the quality of education and learning by having trained and qualified staff available who are clearly able to handle the challenges of higher education (Inamorato, Gaušas, Mackevičiūtė, Jotautytė, &Martinaitis, 2019).

The IBC in this study does not have any current policy framework for staff professional development that can improve professional practice and the students' learning experiences within the IBC. The United Arab Emirates, however, has emerged as a competitive higher education market. To achieve a firm footing amidst the competing IBCs from the world over, it thus becomes important to focus on the quality of professional development, so the institutions can guarantee an excellent quality learning and teaching experience.

There is currently limited literature on how professional development is perceived and understood by the staff at IBCs in the United Arab Emirates, given their unique set of

challenges due to their distinctive setting and their preparedness for handling those challenges effectively. At present, except for a study by Knight (2014) on professional development at three IBCs in a small emirate in the UAE, there is a lack of relevant literature on staff perceptions of the importance and role of professional development. The IBC in the study, despite being the first one from the home country IRP, has had no research undertaken for better understanding the uniqueness of being the first IBC outside the home country.

This lack of strategic focus for staff professional development at the IBC indeed sets the tone for the present study and the importance of comprehending how staff understand and perceive professional development, as both relate to enhancing professional practices through learning and improving student learning experiences in higher education, given the absence of any relevant policies being already in place. As I have discussed earlier that my association with this IBC has been for over a decade, and during this time I have performed several roles besides just being a teacher. Working in these different roles has been an incalculable source of learning and has allowed me to understand how the various departments function at a HEI, as well as I realized even more important aspects about myself. Pursuing this research area is a personal interest of mine to understand how my colleagues understand and view the role of professional development in their practice and its relevance in improving and enhancing their professional practice. As my own learning throughout my teaching career has been through self-learning, my inner drive, as well as through shared reflections and discussions, I took up this project as a personal initiative to provide a framework for professional development for the IBC based on the views and perceptions of staff who have been associated with this IBC. The research process has been a good exercise in reflexivity as it has required that I also revisit and review my own views and beliefs and values in the process and to keep an open mind during the research process and not let my own views and values interfere with data collection and findings.

1.4.1 Research Questions

The current study is guided by the following research questions:

Research Question 1: What do the participants understand by the term "professional development" and what this concept includes?

Research Question 2: How do participants perceive the role of professional development for enhancing professional practice and students' learning experiences within the institution being studied?

Research Question 3: What are the participants' views on the effectiveness of what they consider to be any form of existing professional development at the IBC in the study?

Research Question 4: How do the participants understand the role of professional development policy/policies in terms of improving teaching, learning, professional practices, and enhancing student experiences in higher education and in particular at the IBC in the current study?

1.4.2 Goal of the Current Research

This study aims to comprehend how professional development is perceived and understood by staff at this IBC so as to improve their professional practices, enhance the teaching and learning, and related student expectations of higher education there. This knowledge can provide valuable new insights into how staff learns in informal settings and their preferred mode of learning. These insights can facilitate the development and introduction of a stronger framework for professional development that is based on the staff's responses at this IBC where no professional development policies are currently in place. To warrant that any higher education staff can manage the higher education struggles and matters today, that staff must have the direction and resources available based on their learning requisites. Hill and Thabet (2018) highlighted crucial areas for IBCs, including the challenges present when recruiting high quality academic and professional staff with the necessary training for their

roles which include meeting the challenges they must face in the ongoing ever-changing milieu of higher education.

1.5   Research Contributions

The findings from the study can be shared with the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees at the home campus for better staff understanding and perception of professional development at the IBC and also the importance of staff professional development in the higher education sector of today adding value to the quality of education, learning, teaching and student experiences in higher education. The study's findings can also lay new groundwork for further positive policy development in these relevant areas for the IBC being studied in this research.

1.6   Thesis Overview

The foreword to this thesis outlined the researcher's personal and professional context to give the reader further insights into the setting and the researcher's interest in pursuing the current study. The Introduction chapter offers an overview of the thesis as well as outlining the research problem being investigated and the research questions.

The second chapter is a detailed review of related literature linked to learning theories and professional development as understood via the learning theories. The literature review includes a discussion of how people learn, professional development and its formal and informal aspects, and the designated role of learning theories, situated learning, learning communities, self-directed learning, and social learning for professional development. The chapter also includes a discussion of how higher educational staff understand professional development as part of transnational education. The third chapter discusses the research methodology of the study and provides details on the researcher's ontological perspective and epistemological position in the current study. The methodology section outlines the study's theoretical paradigm along with participant selection, size, and the data collection process. That

section also discusses thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) as used in the current study and NVivo as the software of choice for its thematic analysis.

The fourth chapter is the heart of the thesis with a detailed discussion of the data findings and an in-depth discussion of the four major themes. The fifth chapter presents the conclusions and recommendations of the study as well as its implications for actual practice. This chapter also highlights the study limitations and identifies future areas for related research as identified by the data findings. The sixth and final chapter offers a reflective discussion by the researcher, a valuable addition and corollary that allows me as researcher to reflect on my doctoral journey and the learning I have gained.

2.0 CHAPTER TWO - LITERATURE REVIEW

Today's higher education institutions exist, survive, and operate in an increasingly demanding and challenging environment (Blackmore & Castley, 2006). Keeping these challenges in mind, the value of professional development is of increasing importance for higher education staff for better self-development, continued learning, and growth of their professional practices and consequently their impacts on student learning experiences in higher education. The IBC in this study exists in a multicultural, competitive, and fast-paced emerging hub of HEIs. At present, the IBC does not have a strategic plan for providing professional development to its staff. It is thus essential that the starting point in the literature review focus on what professional development actually is, what it includes, and what roles are being played by staff and the organization in its regard, and how professional development links to quality of education and improves student learning outcomes.

Since the start of this study, the world has undergone a dramatic transformation, with the pandemic heavily impacting humanity in almost all spheres of life. Hence it is vital to start with a brief mention of this current world crisis. Although a discussion of the pandemic's impact on higher education is beyond the scope of this study, it is essential to mention it here. Just as every other economy has been, the education sector has been impacted significantly, with educational staff being forced into roles and responsibilities that they are ill prepared for or in most cases not prepared at all. Most of the global higher education community has thus nosedived into understanding an unplanned and unwanted experiment in online learning since March 2020 in most countries worldwide. Those who are a part of new experiment, be it as educational institutions, faculty, professional staff, or students, it is obviously not what they planned or wanted, but rather they must continue doing through the end of this academic year for some, and others, maybe even longer (Le Blanc, 2020).

When writing this chapter in February 2020, the world as we knew has changed completely and drastically in the ways we live, work and socialize. It would thus be pertinent to refer to this issue in the current study and briefly discuss how the pandemic changed teaching and learning as we knew it. Staff (teaching and professional) and students in educational institutions found themselves teaching, learning and interacting with each other only on digital/online platforms with little or no prior preparation and readiness for their new roles and the rules necessary for those roles. For higher education staff, specifically the academic staff involved in teaching roles, the COVID-19 pandemic has been a transformative challenge, one for which no guidebook can even provide appropriate responses or suggestions. Education leaders were required to design new responses while keeping specific contexts and scenarios in mind and each country handling the pandemic and the response in unique ways that would hopefully suit their own requirements (Reimers, Schleicher, Saavedra & Tuominen, 2020). Keeping this aspect in mind, the current research becomes even more relevant in terms of maintaining the perceptual understanding and importance of professional development in teaching, learning, and improving professional practices in higher education, especially in the context of transnational education. Further reference to the pandemic is made in this dissertation in the conclusion chapter and the comments regarding future recommendations.

2.1   What Is Professional Development?

Pedder and Opfer (2011) stated that professional development and learning are about the growth and development of expertise that leads to changes in staff practices that enhance the learning outcome of students. Huet and Casanova (2020) discussed professional development as the process that prompts and initiates learning. Knight (2014) defines the term as the process of improving and increasing the capabilities of higher education staff through providing them with access to a variety of short- and long-term educational and training opportunities. The increasing diversity of students in higher education is now well recognised,

and it has become essential that higher education staff be well equipped to address the learning needs of students from a wide range of backgrounds (Denson & Zhang 2010; Ryan 2012), thereby highlighting the value of professional development in higher education. Fullen (1995) defined professional development as "*continuous learning focused upon the sum total of formal and informal learning pursued and experienced in a compelling learning environment under conditions of complexity and dynamic change*" (p.265). According to Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, and Orphanos (2009) effective professional development is rigorous, creating new learning opportunities by categorizing learning needs for both the self and others; appraising the self through observational skills, mentoring, engaging in reflection, professional dialogue and feedback, and building strong working relationships between all higher education staff.

To ensure that higher education staff are well prepared to face the challenges in higher education today, this staff should be provided professional development and training opportunities that will enhance their skills and service to society (Haskins & Shaffer, 2011). The current study thus focuses on staff perception and understanding of professional development with an emphasis on improving teaching and supporting all students' learning experiences in higher education. Hence, it becomes essential that any literature review includes an overview of the learning theories and their relevance for professional development, focusing on improving student learning experiences and how professionals in higher education can learn best and improve their professional practices. Professionals and other stakeholders across all professions accept and expect that continuing to learn is universal. Webster-Wright (2009) discussed and reframed professional development by offering a better understanding of professional learning and highlighting the importance of continuous ongoing learning in professional development rather than only a specific focus on delivering content.

2.1.1 Professional Development of Higher Education (HE) Staff

A well-functioning higher education institution needs an effective administration system. Increased competition in higher education makes it even more essential that higher education institutions stay proactive and take the proper steps to handle the increased pressure from stakeholders for improved and better services (Olsen, 2007). For the purpose of this study the term "academic staff" is used to include all staff involved in teaching as their primary role at the International Branch Campus. The term "professional staff" covers all those who have administrative and management responsibilities in the institution in departments such as student affairs, admissions, human resources, records and institutional effectiveness with some of them also involved in partial teaching as well.

The role of the professional staff is also changing and becoming more centralized on student learning experiences (Ryttberg & Geschwind, 2007). Continuing professional development needs to be considered a normal part of professional life for higher education staff, especially in the face of their diverse range of responsibilities. It needs to be self-directed and carefully planned within the relevant context (King, 2004). The students who are joining higher educational institutions today also present more diverse profiles than before, resulting in more new challenges related to multiculturalism and internationalization for the higher education staff, as they successfully deal with a wider spectrum of viewpoints (Osuji, 2017).

Sorcinelli, Austin, Eddy, and Beach (2006) discussed the shift in the roles and responsibilities of the academics, the needs arising due to the diversity of students in higher education today, the increasing importance of integrating technology and still maintaining quality assurance standards. These are some of the primary influences that will bear down hard on professional development guidance for higher education now and in the future .

2.1.2   Professional Development of Local and International Staff in HEIs

In order to successfully work and collaborate across different cultural domains and with people from diverse cultural backgrounds, a set of abilities termed as intercultural competence (IC), enable an effective bridge across different cultural boundaries (Fantini, 2007). The management of academic quality is an essential area in IBCs. Quality assurance at IBCs may be tricky, as both managers and staff work in a host culture with its requirements set far from the home campus. If the staff at an IBC is locally hired, they may share a diverse range of educational and social values that is different from their colleagues and managers and find it problematic to apply the academic rules and guidelines that were set far away on the home campus. For IBCs, there is a dual challenge, namely, fulfilling the standards set by both home and the home campus's higher education regulatory authorities (Pyvis, 2011 as cited in Healy, 2016).

Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002, p.947) postulated that in order to facilitate the professional development of academic staff, it is essential to understand the process by which they grow professionally and the environmental factors and conditions that support and promote that growth. Academic staff in transnational settings are expected to work in environments that are culturally very diverse from their own. Working in a transnational setting forces staff to question their previously held assumptions about university education. Boud and Brew (2013) contended that professional development activities that are developed and delivered in isolation to regular ongoing professional tasks will not work as well as professional development practices that are a direct part of the professional service being delivered and arise from within and in the same context of professional practice. This argument has a significant impact on the current research study, as its focus is on how professional development is perceived and understood by staff at an International Branch Campus (IBC) where no formal professional and academic development procedures and measures are

currently in practice. This could be an exciting area to explore in order to understand how each staff member at the branch campus tries to understand professional development, including where they are positive and thus involved in professional learning and how they see the role of professional development in terms of their own professional growth and their influence on their students' learning experiences.

Boud and Brew (2013) advocated the need to focus on our practices in their entirety and have professional development programs that apply to professional practices in specific work contexts, rather than planning for professional development programs that are not fully relevant to the daily tasks and practices. Reflecting on experiences, engaging in communities of practice and situated cognition are highlighted as being more relevant for promoting professional development through understanding existing practices.

2.1.3 Professional Development of Academic and Professional Staff

Sargeant (2016) highlights the importance of academics and professional staff as being jointly influential for improving professional practices and student expectations and greater education experiences. Parkes (2014) supported the collaborative efforts made by academic and professional staff in higher education institutions as being vital to the higher education experiences of students. Academic and professional staff can reinforce their influence on the student experience and their own professional practices by identifying and making positive use of each other's professional abilities to actively seek more chances to work together for the benefit of learners through both co-operation and collaboration. The current research also focuses on gaining both academic and professional staff's perspectives for how they perceive and understand the importance of professional development and improved professional practices, as well as improved teaching, learning, and the associated student expectations of higher education. Effectively educating academics requires viewing and understanding them as unique adult learners (Beavers, 2009). The academic staff in higher education today is faced

with multiple challenges, including increased teaching responsibilities, reporting and administrative demands by their higher education institutions and related governing bodies, and thus added pressure to improve and update their research profile (Donnelly, 2016).

An exciting approach by Biggs (1999) describes teaching as a personal endeavour where new ideas need to be reflected on and used as per the uniqueness of the individual context, so that teaching generates maximum benefit. Reflecting, doing, sharing and collaborating are some of the ways that academics can reflect on their practice and experiences and enhance their professionalism. This effort requires creating spaces for dialogue between academics so they can benefit from their own sharing and collaboration and experiences. There are several important principles to consider for the most effective professional development in higher education. These include promoting collaboration, understanding that teaching and learning are complex processes, developing a culture of inquiry that requires, even demands, reflection, and understanding how external realities can significantly influence what we can and actually do (Donnelly, 2016). In order for professional development to be effective, it is essential that the needs, values, and assumptions of academics are each understood as being unique and by respecting the individuality of each and in so doing, we allow for self-direction (Beavers, 2009).

Knight (2014) in her study on HEIs in Ras Al Khaimah (United Arab Emirates), emphasized that even though professional development programs might be in place in HEIs, the professional staff is often not given enough priority or importance for managing such programs. Higher education today is not considered the domain of the academic staff only, as the professional staff today is valuable to any HEI, given their increasing role in improving student experiences in higher education. The professional staff should not be considered as being in a subservient role in higher education when compared to the academic counterparts, given the increase in the integration of academic and professional staff (Whitechurch, 2013;

Whitechurch & Gordon, 2016). Students interact with staff at HEIs for various kinds of support, including academic matters, emotional and social support, career counselling, IT support, administrative matters, research related activities and many other areas. It is important that the HEI staff is trained and receives enough support for ongoing successful professional development and learning to enhance their practices and improve student experience and retention (Crawford, 2008 as cited in Knight, 2014). In the current study, the participants were recruited by keeping in mind the point mentioned earlier regarding the importance of both academic and professional staff in a higher education setting.

Boud and Brew (2013) label academic practices as a social process that is comprised of interrelated relationships, emotional aspects, artefacts and communication. According to them, professional development activities for academics need to be devised from within their practice for them to have significant influence. There is little sense in devising and manufacturing development activities that separate the academics from their daily practice, as that only isolates the professional experiences from their actual context and renders it meaningless. Professional and academic development is designed to be a part of everyday practice and seems more appropriate when it allows each adult learner's uniqueness to be preserved and developed within their best context of practice and personal experience. Professional development that involves academics as a complete entity and their values, experiences, and unique assumptions regarding their practice can then be considered truly meaningful (Cranton & King, 2003; Boud & Brew, 2013).

A well-functioning higher educational institution is not possible without having a strong administration. Universities are now engaging more with their professional staff as well as their academic staff to develop as organized institutions that can successfully pursue their goals and targets (Baltaru, 2018). There is limited literature available, however, highlighting how professional staffs are perceiving their higher education roles concerning student

experiences and student outcomes (Graham, 2010). Keeping in view the proposition offered by Prebble et al. (2004) the academic staff is not to be held solely responsible for institutional behaviour and student learning experiences. The professional staff is a significant percentage of all higher education staff, and it would be interesting to research and better understand how they perceive and understand their contributions to higher education (Regan, Dollard, & Banks, 2014). This is an essential aspect of the current study. Understanding the staff's perceptions (both academic and professional) regarding professional development and how to improve professional practices, teaching and learning practices, and student learning experiences is important. Quality has emerged as a topic of paramount importance in higher education. At present, the United Kingdom Professional Standards Framework offers a paradigm through which academic staff can acquire more professional recognition for their academic pursuits and practice. A significant number of universities across the U.K are providing more opportunities for professional development through internal recognition schemes that are based on reflection and retrospection at their universities (van der Sluis, Burden & Huet, 2017).

Sharp (2019) highlighted the importance of understanding that the academic standards in place at any HEI are distinct from the quality of their learning opportunities (QAA, 2016) being offered. Academic standards can be considered as a form of judgment on student achievements, while the quality of the learning opportunities can explain how students are provided the means they need to reach a specific academic standard. These means can include formal teaching, library services, computer labs, library facilities, student services for guidance and placements, and extracurricular activities. An HEI can maintain strict academic standards while at the same time having poor learning opportunities either due to inexperienced or under qualified teachers or a lack of opportunities for staff training and an absence of learning resources or an overall poor learning environment. Alternatively, a good learning environment with excellent resources for learning includes trained and qualified teachers and will not

guarantee good academic standards unless learning outcomes are set properly and relevant assessments are rigidly applied. It is also important to understand that poor teaching by untrained and unqualified staff may not impact the standards themselves (Sharp, 2017). A poor learning environment can refer to a lack of required resources, limited or no training opportunities for professional development of staff, or limited student services related to counselling and placement or limited opportunities for student extra-curricular development. This is an important aspect to keep in mind for the current study.

As we consider the professional development of higher education staff, it also becomes important to discuss the quality of professional development as well as the formal and informal practices of professional development when improving the teaching standards and enhancing the learning experiences of students.

2.1.4   Formal and Informal Professional Development in Transnational Education

The majority of studies in the 1980s revealed that a significant part of learning was taking place on the job (Kaplan et al., 1985); however, at the same time, it is also important to note that formalising learning is essential to provide structure and time for reflection (Huet & Casanova, 2020). The Quality Code by Quality Assurance Agency U.K highlights the importance of professional development by stressing the importance of higher education providers for regularly reviewing and improving learning opportunities and teaching practices. This view is further supplemented in the Quality Code where all those involved in teaching and supporting student learning are provided with adequate training. Teaching and learning grants play an important role in continuing the professional development of teaching academics, and the evidence indicates that formal programs for professional development do foster the development of teaching and learning in higher education (Malfroy & Willis, 2018). However, as the higher education milieu is rapidly changing, it becomes more difficult for formal learning opportunities to keep up with the changing landscape of higher education and creates

challenges for traditional, formal learning (Ellinger *et al*. 2005). Emphasizing the role of informal learning practices, Noe, Tews, and Marand (2013) appraised that informal learning accounts for up to 75% of learning that occurs within organizations. Hoekstra *et al*. (2009) added that informal learning refers to learning in the workplace when the methodical support of learning, such as professional development routes are absent or lacking. Informal learning can happen independently through self-directed or self-focused learning endeavours.

As mentioned earlier, the IBC in this study does not have any formal professional development programs in place to support student learning experiences, improve teaching practices and enhance professional practices; hence, it seems apt to consider both formal and informal professional development in this section. Universities and other institutes of higher education must ensure that their students are taught well and effectively (Beath, Poyago-Theotoky, & Ulph, 2012). This focus should also mean that in addition to being taught well, the students' learning experiences should be facilitated by staff so they can learn in a manner that prepares them well for their future roles. In the higher education environment of today, there is increasing demand from both students and governments for greater accountability from HEIs coupled with the expectation that they can then reassure the stakeholders that their provision of teaching meets certain expressed expectations (Comodromos & Ferrer, 2011). It can be argued that the responsibility to provide academic and professional development to ensure good quality of teaching, and indeed learning is closely linked to ensuring positive educational outcomes (Onsman, 2011).

Professional development can also occur in informal contexts when one is learning from peers, reading, reflecting, discussing, and research can be vital sources for professional development (Mizell, 2010). Thomson and Trigwell (2018) discussed learning in the workplace through having informal conversations between colleagues. Their study discussed

the five categories that the respondents noted when describing the role informal conversations in their practice. These categories included the following:

- Managing their teaching context

- Improving their teaching and student learning

- Reassuring individual teaching practices

- Venting and sharing teaching-related issues

- Transforming teaching practices and individual thinking about that practice.

Informal conversations as a form of professional development have only recently emerged as an area of research and they can serve important functions in developing higher education teaching. However, the actual impact of such informal conversations has still not been investigated in detail, so as to truly understand the magnitude of influence that these informal conversations can have in the context of informal professional growth and development (Thomson & Trigwell, 2018). One of the reasons why such conversations have not been the topic of many researches could be the complexity of studying the impact of something tacit, invisible, and particular the context where it is taking place. This became an interesting factor to consider while conducting this research at an IBC where no formal professional development procedures are in practice and the role of informal professional learning and development might be very significant. The workplace culture at this IBC is relatively informal, as it is a small branch campus with a total staff body of only ten academic and ten professional staff and a lot of emphasis placed on sharing thoughts and ideas, guiding any new visiting staff, learning from the experience of others and sharing experiences regularly over coffee breaks and in informal and formal meetings.

Marsick and Watkins' (1990) emphasized learning from experience, self-directed learning and transformative learning. This theory focuses on the learning process of an individual and adds reflective learning that usually occurs incidentally, but with training, can

further expand the scope of informal learning (as cited in Marsick, Watkins & Lovin, 2011). This area can be an important one to consider in the present study where the lack of professional development programs can be compensated by emphasizing individual learning opportunities.

Informal and incidental learning aftermaths rely on the degree of realization with which one attends to learning and the framework that offers more learning prospects. Informal learning requires placing greater consideration on making the most of the learning opportunity, and that focus may involve planning and certainly involves cognisant attention, reflection, and guidance. While often occurring by chance, incidental learning can also be highly beneficial when we can move the accidental learning opportunity closer to the informal learning realm through conscious attention, reflection, and direction (Marsick, Watkins & Lovin, 2011). I consider this element quite relevant in this study for whether the staff considers its informal interactions as a learning experience for themselves and also how they perceive professional development and the need for professional development when improving teaching and learning and student experiences.

Brookfield (1998) emphasized the role of critical reflection to facilitate and engage academic staff in conversations in order for them to reflect on their practice and develop strategies and solutions for bringing change to that practice. Through such conversations, staff can discover what works within their context, specifically when it is expected that the staff manage their own development and learning (as is the case at the IBC in the current study). Conversations provide a way to relieve frustrations, find quick solutions for workplace problems, and make significant progress in thinking about and developing good practices (Thomson & Trigwell, 2018). The most significant type of adult learning would be where the adult learner gains and learns in a setting that is not always a formal educational zone. These settings can include communities, support groups, community groups, or work groups (Brookfield, 1996). Reflection is vital to every learning phase to learn from experience, even

when reflection is not always a conscious process for everyone. Through reflection-in-action (Schön, 1987), people amend their course of action and learn more while they are carrying out the solution. Reflection after the fact aids in drawing out lessons learned that will be valuable for the subsequent problem-solving cycle.

Van Lankveld, *et. al* (2016) in their research on informal teaching communities as a form of professional development, highlighted that informal teaching communities with the three vital components of domain, community, and practice can facilitate the professional development of academic staff as well as improve and produce a sense of empowerment. Kyndt *et al*. (2016) scrutinized over 70 studies accentuating academic staffs' informal learning to identify their learning activities, earlier conditions, and settings and context for informal learning and ensuing learning outcomes. The researchers have also examined the differences between novice and skilled academic staff by highlighting the foremost and primary difference between novice and skilled/trained teachers as being more in the mindset and attitude toward learning, learning outcomes, and the impact of their own situations and contextual settings.

It is interesting to reflect on my own understanding while working on this literature review, as my professional development views have developed further since the start of this study. To reflect more accurately on our role as educators and the impact we can have on learning and improving our own professional practices, viewing this process through different lenses that would alert us to varied perspectives and perhaps confront some of our own suppositions could be very useful (Fergus, 2016). My previously held narrow view of professional development as formal training, workshops or sessions tailored to guide and teach staff has changed. Looking at professional development in just such a narrow manner prevents us from looking at other ways that professionals learn and how they can contribute to improving teaching, learning, and professional practices to enhance student experiences going forward.

2.1.5 Transnational Education, IBCs, and Professional Development

Altbach and Knight (2007) have highlighted that as higher education is becoming more and more globalised, "internationalization" has become a vital strategy for universities worldwide who are keen to gain prestige and secure a competitive edge, that is considered a result of internationalization. Knight (2008) discussed internationalisation as "*a process of integrating an international, intercultural and global dimension into the purpose, functions (teaching, research, and service), and delivery of higher education at the institutional and national levels*" (p 2). Internationalization encompasses several domains, including the recruitment of international students, staff and student mobility, the development of international curricula, developing international research partnerships and transnational education through the delivery of a program of study/programs in a host country or in collaboration with a host country (Stafford & Taylor, 2016).

Transnational education is becoming increasingly popular, as it provides internationally acknowledged education right at the doorstep of students. It is also considered borderless higher education by offering all forms of higher education activities parallel to and also outside the host country's official higher education system. Transnational education as part of globalization has become a market-driven activity used to promote internationalization and multiculturalism among students (Alam, Alam, Chowdhury & Steiner, 2013). Despite the growing phenomenon of transnational education in recent decades, given the increase in educational partnerships all over the world, the staff involved with these transnational ventures are still not offered enough training or support to work successfully in that transnational setting (Bovill, Jordon & Watters, 2015). Working in unfamiliar and diverse settings can produce several challenges to the existing perceptions of teaching and learning. Thus, any support that allows staff to reflect on their experiences in transnational academic institutions can help that

staff to develop and improve their practice and deliver more enhanced teaching and better learning experiences and produce a new perspective and transformation (Smith, 2009).

Transnational education is a rapidly developing phenomenon that allows a wide range of opportunities for HEIs to expand and reach out to an even greater diverse body of stakeholders. The role of HEIs is significant in transnational education, and they match a justified concern for the learning opportunities offered through the transnational education arrangement and the extent of positive support and development opportunities for staff teaching in such ventures (Keay, May & Mahony, 2014). International branch campuses (IBCs) are a recent phenomenon that now allow universities to be engaged globally and have a greater presence worldwide (Kosmützky, 2018). Academic institutions are now expanding by establishing their presence in different countries. At the same time, the rapid growth of IBCs highlights the most striking development in higher education (Healey, 2015). International branch campuses (IBCs) are now defined as "*educational facilities where students receive face-to-face instruction in a country different to that of the parent institution*" (Wilkins, Balakrishnan & Huisman, 2012, p 414). The economic, political, and societal forces of globalization have propelled higher education institutions to have greater involvement at the international level (Altbach & Knight, 2007).

Wilkins and Rumbley (2018) have added briefly on the existing definition of IBCs by the Observatory of Borderless Higher Education (OBEH) and the Cross Border Education Research Team(C-BERT). The modified version defines an IBC as "*an entity that is owned, at least in part, by a foreign education provider; operated in the name of the foreign education provider; engages in at least some face-to-face teaching; and provides access to an entire academic program that leads to a credential awarded by the foreign education provider. The branch has basic infrastructure, such as a library, an open access computer lab, and dining facilities, and, overall, students at the branch have a similar student experience to students at*

the home campus" (Wilkins & Rumbley, 2018, p 14). Since early 2000, at least 60% of these IBCs have been launched in the Middle East, with a significant majority being in the United Arab Emirates (Miller-Idriss & Hanauer, 2011). IBCs have their own unique set of tribulations, including teaching a more assorted range of students, having a multicultural staff, and needing to measure up to the accreditation standards required by both the host and the home countries. The need to successfully prepare higher education staff to work at an International Branch Campus has thus become essential in this latest context of globalizing higher education (Deardorff, 2009).

O'Mahony (2014) has discussed that transnational education, with its challenges, provides a unique opportunity to reflect on such experiences to facilitate their staff development and ensure there is improved teaching and the highest quality of student learning . This specific view is also relevant in the context of the current study wherein staff perceptions can be a way of reflecting on their current views about professional development and how those views can help them develop a framework for the future at this IBC, while enhancing their own professional practices and both teaching and student learning experiences overall. Smith (2009) argues that being a part of a global setting and working in a culture different than one's own pushes a staff toward reflection, which leads to a change in their perceptions, i.e., *'perspective transformation*'. This focus is a meaningful professional development opportunity that should be further cultivated and encouraged. Smith (2009) argued that when we work in an off-shore or transnational context, we gather novel experiences in our practice and stressed that reflection on transnational teaching experiences should be additionally furthered and reinforced through educational development activity that can connect the transformation and advance educational change. Mezirow (1991) also focused on transformation, emphasizing reflection on content, process, and premise. Further, Beaty (1998) argued that "novel experiences" can promote ongoing review and reflection (p. 102).

The existence of varied models for quality assurance can create complexities in the higher education environment in the United Arab Emirates regarding the coordination and harmonisation within the entire higher education system (Ashour, 2017). This study can help by developing a framework for professional development needs and staff requirements at this IBC based on their unique perception and understanding of professional development. The United Kingdom Professional Standards Framework is globally recognized as a framework for higher education staff. It offers guidelines and professional standards for enhancing and raising teaching and learning profiles (The Higher Education Academy, 2011). The Professional Development Framework in Ireland includes descriptions of the dominions of professional development activity, the professional values linked with teaching, and connected leadership roles. The framework classifies and recognises four types of learning connected with a professional development learning activity. These include 'new learning', 'consolidating learning', 'mentoring' and 'leading' (Donnelly & Maguire, 2018).

The U.A.E facilitates the setting up of branch campuses by using free zones, and this concept has made the United Arab Emirates one of the largest importers of transnational education (Ashour & Fatima, 2016). Further, it requires strict monitoring of the varying quality assurance procedures in place at the different branch campuses as provided by their host countries to allow for sustainability of the institutions and prevent any factors that can impede their contributions to the development of the knowledge society, which is the vision of U.A.E (Lane, 2010 as cited in Ashour, 2017).

2.1.6 The Role of Organizational Culture in Professional Development

It is also essential to understand the role the organizational culture plays in promoting a staff's professional development. The phrase '*organizational culture*' first appeared in the literature in the 1970s and gained popularity in management and higher education in the 1980s and 1990s (Hofstede *et al.,* 1990). As Schein and Schein (2017) explained that organizational

culture and performance depend on both an organization's ability to exist and adjust to its external environment and also the effectual incorporation of internal factors and processes. Organizational culture also impacts change processes and strategies within organizations. Great Places to Work© (2014) highlighted in one of their publications, how a value-driven organizational culture has a better chance of organizational triumph.

Schein and Schein (2017) have also discussed organizational culture as being comprised of three levels. The first level consisted of artefacts, such as charters, vision and mission, technology and codes. The second level was made up of espoused beliefs and values and the third level, the taken-for-granted underlying basic assumptions. Schein (2004) has discussed the espoused values as ones that an organization has openly adopted. They are reflected in an organization's artefacts, such as mission and vision statements, policies, and standard operating procedures. Enacted values, however, represent the supposed truth about what happens within organizations. These are values that are based on norms, attitudes, and the organizational culture within companies. Schein's organizational culture model (as cited in Schein, 2004) presents the three-level explanation for organizational culture and its espoused and enacted values (Fig. 4.8).

Figure 2.1 Schein's Organizational Culture Model Source: (Schein, 2004)
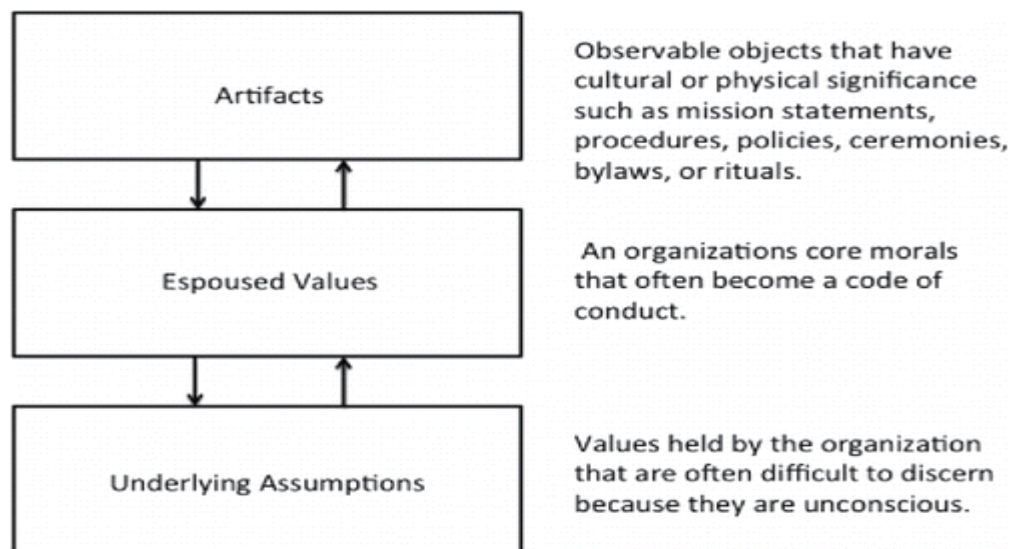
Different organizations will have different cultures. The values, beliefs, and traditions of its multiple stakeholders (leaders, administrators, faculty, students, board members, and support staff) form that organizational culture (Bartell, 2003). Research studies of cultures in HEIs have strongly suggested that institutions with a practical approach to goal and task achievement have also reported enhanced performance (Kish, 2016), while dysfunctional cultures are generally linked to low-performing organizations (Corry, 2016). The present study seeks to comprehend how the staff at the IBC do perceive and understand the role of organizational culture in relation to professional development and learning.

Organizational culture guides how people within an organization behave, help frame what it means to succeed and fail, and influence its aspirations. Organizational culture can shape and determine whether staff are understanding and nourishing or highly competitive for specific roles and positions in the workplace. Organizational culture includes such factors as whether the institution is student-centred, as indicated in its mission statement, or a gap exists between the mission statement and reality. Does support among its members characterize the academic unit, or does distrust infuse the interpersonal relationships? Is the mode of instruction focused on student learning, or is the primary ambition to engage austerely in teaching, so each academic staff member can contribute more time and effort to acquiring external grants and publishing research results because these goals are more greatly prized? (Lumpkin, 2014).

A higher education staff passes through distinctive stages, as they achieve their career goals. It is essential that higher education dedicate more resources to nurturing its staff as a major asset along with their evolving professional needs, so that all the staff can benefit from professional development opportunities and coaching, sponsorship, a listening ear, encouragement, and collaboration. In terms of the cultures of higher education institutions and academic units and their socialization processes, the research must focus on examining the characteristics of the professional work environment to determine what aspects contribute to

the staff's success and sense of satisfaction in higher education (Lumpkin, 2014). The present study also aims to understand how such staff understand the organizational culture in relation to its support or lack of it regarding professional development and further in what ways does the staff understand the commitment of the organization to upgrading and updating their staff in terms of teaching, learning, improving professional practices, and enhancing student learning experiences. As a result, it important to know the related requirements that are considered the key priorities in the field of higher education.

Pabico, Perkins, Graebe and Cosme (2019) highlight the point that successful organizations have a competent workforce with positive organizational support for continuous learning and professional growth. Organizations with a strong continuum of professional development opportunities are linked to job satisfaction and employee retention. Successful educational organizations realize that supporting a culture of lifelong learning is a valuable strategy for their organizational success. By investing in professional growth and development support and ongoing developmental opportunities for staff in an HEI, that organization also shows its strong commitment towards its stakeholders and their own employees' success (Unruh & Zhang, 2014).

In today's rapidly changing milieu, it is even more important that organizations achieve their objectives to promote a culture of continuous and lifelong learning so all can adapt to today's rapidly transforming world (Owen & Dietz, 2012). Organizational culture largely depends on leaders who can create and maintain a specific culture that suits their style, needs, characteristics, ambitions, and corporate strategy (Turker & Altuntas, 2015). Organizational cultures are cited as being crucial for promoting organizational effectiveness, performance, employee growth, and improved innovation (Schneckenberg, 2009).

Wallach (1983) discussed three dimensions of organizational cultures, the bureaucratic, the innovative and its supportive dimensions. Bureaucratic culture (BC) is tiered in nature with

well-defined descriptions of authority and responsibilities, wherein activities are planned systematically and directed to the lower level. An innovative culture (IC) is when creativity and result-oriented activities are encouraged and condoned. A supportive culture (SC) encourages teamwork and people-oriented activities. However, in today's dynamic environment, all three dimensions should be combined to ensure the achievement of set objectives and their ongoing sustainability (as cited in Ibrahim, Mahmood & Bakar, 2018).

Darling-Hammond, Hyler, and Gardner (2017) highlighted the growing importance of professional development and the strong link between professional development, staff learning, and student learning experiences. In the context of the present study, it becomes relevant to discuss the role of learning in professional development as part of this literature review section. Student learning experiences depend on professional staff, as they are often their first point of contact and are a significant presence during their student experiences at any HEI.

2.2   How Do We Learn?

Marsick (1988) defined learning as a process by which people organize, restructure, assimilate, and acquire information. Marton and Booth's (1997) definition of learning as how we comprehend and perceive the world and create our own meaning out of it is suitable for the current study's purpose. The process of learning involves cognitive, social, environmental, and emotional experiences that compel the learner to acclimatize, alter, modify, transform, and enhance their knowledge references. Matterson (2014) highlighted learning as part of our everyday lives and how important it is to understand that learning is not limited to the classroom, but happens everywhere in life and society.

Toward the end of the twentieth century, a body of research advocated that the adults learn differently from children with the key difference being a difference in motivation, these the arguments no longer seem quite so clear (Taylor & Hamdy, 2013). The concept of adult learning, as discussed by Knowles (1980), is that adult learners differ from child learners in

certain respects. An adult learner is someone who is self-motivated with the ability to self-direct his/her learning process and an interest in applying that knowledge in a practical manner by combining it with prior learning and life experiences. Merriam (2017) called attention to the lack of a single learning model that explains how and why we learn. Learning is somehow mostly considered to be related to learning in a formal setting that too often we fail to acknowledge and realize that we are learning continuously, not only in certain designated situations (Merriam, 2017). Still, it is not easy to define or agree on a satisfactory definition of learning that fulfils all requirements and viewpoints, especially when such broad and abstract concept as learning is being examined.

In the 1970s the idea of adult learning and andragogy introduced by Knowles (1973) became a subject of significant discussion and debate due to its novel way of distinguishing between adult and child learning. Merriam & Brockett (1997) described andragogy as a way of working with adult learners to facilitate their learning process. The forte of andragogy is the application of its central learning tenets to any scenario. These tenets include learners' prior experiences, need to know, interest in learning, motivation, self-concept, and individual learning styles (Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 2015). One question that can be asked here is why a discussion of learning theories is included in this chapter when the concept of a different learning process existing for adult and child learners is still an area of dispute. McDonough (2013) considers the learning process to be similar in both children and adults in most respects, including having a safe environment for learning, immersion in learning, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, active engagement in the learning process, opportunities to utilize new learning, being responsible for own learning, and the use of feedback to allow learning to become internalized and connect new knowledge and learning to earlier learning and life experiences. In addition to these similarities, McDonough (2013) highlights two areas where adults learn differently, namely, the use of prior knowledge and life experiences and personal

responsibility. Here the role of adult learner appears to be more conscious and choice-based than that of the child learner. That view makes a strong case for how adults learn differs from how children learn. It thus is pertinent to include a discussion of relevant learning theories as they apply to the learners and, in this particular case, the staff at the IBC as also being adult learners.

Brookfield (1996) discussed six principles of effective practice that can support adult learning practices. The first focuses on individual choice and voluntary participation in learning. Our understanding here is of a learning environment where there is no pressure or coercion to learn, but rather one conducive to the adult learner's voluntary participation to improve or increase his existing learning. The second principle highlights a learning set-up where there is mutual respect for all learners and their self-worth. However, this principle does not refer to a lack of criticism, but more towards a tolerance of differences between learners and celebrating each learner's unique aspect. This aspect can also be linked to the constructivist approach, which emphasizes the construction of knowledge by the unique learner (Meyer & Land, 2006). Both third and fourth principles of effective practices in adult learning focus on collaboration and effective facilitation through continuous reflection on the learning process while keeping in view its social context, one's personal views, and relationships. Effective facilitation promotes the remaining two principles of self-directed learning and critical reflection (Brookfield, 1996). In our rapidly changing world, it is crucial to support/promote self-directed lifelong learners who can take responsibility for their learning in any setting (Merriam, 2017). This consideration is important for the current study by emphasizing the learner's central role for taking charge of their professional learning.

The inclusion of learning theories is relevant to the literature review in order to understand how the staff in this study understand professional development, as well as how staff as professionals in higher education learn. This information is used to propose a

framework for professional development. Although continuing to learn is universally accepted by most professionals and stakeholders; much of professional development still involves delivering a particular type of content rather than promoting learning among professionals (Webster-Wright, 2009). There is a need to understand how professionals continue learning throughout their working lives and gain further insights so as to enhance support for all professionals. Webster-Wright (2009) highlighted the importance of considering learning to be context-based and analyse the workplace as the key context for learning.

2.3   The Value of Learning Theories for Professional Development

A clear insight into learning theories is essential, as it allows us to understand the differences in individual learning, how each of us as an individual learns most productively, and further still, how this knowledge can help design and implement professional development opportunities. Illeris (2018) emphasized that adults show more interest and willingness during the learning process when they find the information or learning to have personal significance and meaning. The learner role should thus be depicted as a receiver of knowledge and challenges, constructs, and expands their own existing beliefs and perceptions regarding their roles in higher education (Taylor & Hamdy, 2013). As professional development matures, the literature emphasizes and stresses precisely what is considered adequate or ineffective when working with adults as learners (Fogarty & Pete, 2004 as cited in Zepeda, Parylo & Bengston, 2014).

Higher education institutions today function in an increasingly demanding and disconcerted milieu (Blackmore & Castley, 2006); hence the role of professional development appears even more critical for higher education staff for enhancement, self-development, and life-long learning. Sentance and Humphreys (2018) highlighted professional development as more of an ongoing process geared toward learning experiences that are grounded in the classrooms or professional learning communities. Eraut (2004) promoted informal learning as

providing greater flexibility for learners by learning from others, as in social learning, and suggesting the importance of the individual in learning rather than only gathered through socialization.

The present study deals with staff learning and professional development at the workplace. In higher education, it is not just the students who are considered as adult learners, but also academics and professionals are in the category of adult learners. It is appropriate to consider the vital role of learning theories, as they apply to both staff and students as learners in the higher education setting (Merriam, 2017). If learning was a simple process that applied in a similar manner for each learner, then it would have been easy to rely on any one learning theory to understand the role of learning or the process for each learner. However, learning is not a straightforward process in my opinion and each one of us learns differently as individuals and in social contexts. It is also important to understand that the context in which our learning occurs is a major influence on our learning. As the purpose of the study is to understand how staff perceives and understands professional development at an IBC, it becomes important to highlight the role of learning theories in this context.

As the emphasis in the present study is on understanding staff perceptions, hence in order to fully grasp the uniqueness of perception an insight into learning theories is significant. The relation between professional development and learning has been introduced earlier in Section 2.1. For the present study I would give importance to social learning (Brown et al., 1989), situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991), self-directed learning (Merriam, 2007) and transformative theory emphasizing self-motivated and reflective learning (Mezirow, 2012; Schön, 1983) in professional development. These theories form an essential basis for the current research, with a special emphasis on the Situated Learning Theory with its sociocultural base and emphasis on learning as a community through sharing, reflecting (Schön, 1983) and motivation to learn and Self-directed learning (Merriam, 2007) as relevant given the context of

the IBC in the study.

Reflective thought denotes active, constant, and careful contemplation of any belief or hypothetical form of knowledge in light of the foundation and justification that support it (Dewey, 1933 as cited in Liu, 2015). The central premise of critical reflection is centred on the process of methodically and meticulously scrutinising an idea or an experience with an open mind, curiosity, and responsibility (Dewey, 1933 in Rodgers, 2002). One definition relevant to the current research considers reflection as a self-critical process wherein the effect of existing practices on situated practice can be examined to convalesce those practices (Tripp & Rich, 2012).

Van Ginkel, Verloop & Denessen (2016) highlighted the importance of professional growth as being promoted and enhanced by how we interact with our peers, especially those with experience in their own relevant professional practices. Through shared experiences, collaboration, and reflecting on our practices, we can share the problems unique to our context and environment and thereby increase our understanding of how we can solve the problems unique to our context. The current study thus includes academic and professional staff and explores how they perceive the need for and importance of professional development in relation to a need for improved professional practices, enhancing of teaching and learning, and the related student expectations of higher education at an International Branch campus. It is a campus that appears to have had no formal professional development procedures or plans in place for the past 17 years for improving teaching and enhancing student learning experiences through better professional practices.

2.4   The Purpose of Learning Theories

Learning theories illustrate and explain how we learn. Theories of learning have arisen from a wide variety of disciplines, including psychology, philosophy, education, pedagogic studies, and also neuroscience in recent times. The wide range of these feeder disciplines

provides us with rich data to help understand the complexities of the learning process (Hunt & Chalmers, 2012). Learning theories also want to explain why one theory works in a specified situation, but does not seem to work as well in another setting. It is important to stay informed, aware, and critical regarding upcoming and existing theoretical frameworks, as we attempt to comprehend and employ these frameworks in our learning practices (Sfard, 1998).

A significant body of educational research into professional learning informs professional development practice (Webster-Wright, 2009). In the last three decades, the research has validated that useful professional learning continues over the long term and is most useful when situated within a community that supports learning (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Wenger, 1998). Rapid economic and social growth has changed the workplace context and highlighted the importance of critical reflection for how professionals learn (Boud & Walker, 2005; Brookfield, 2005).

Merriam (2017) emphasizes the variety of ways used to explain how adults learn. Learning theories focus on three domains, namely, knowledge, skills, and attitudes. The current study does not rely on any single theory specifically, but rather considers experiential, reflective, motivational, and social learning theories as significant contributors to a study on the perception of professional development by staff at an IBC.

A few of the relevant learning theories include the following:

- Social Learning Theories

- Motivational and Reflective Models

- Experiential Learning Theories

- Transformative Learning Theories

2.4.1   Social Learning Theories

Durning and Artino (2011) highlighted context and community as two key components of social learning. Context is emphasized in social learning theories as well as in transformative

learning theories. Social learning theories can be considered crucial in understanding professional development as is explored in the current research. The concepts of context and community originated in the work of Wenger (1998) by emphasizing the importance of communities of practice or professional learning communities that guide and facilitate the learner in the process of learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Instead of considering learning as a concept that has a starting point and an ending point, learning can be seen as a unique experience as something continuous, ongoing, and embedded in our practice and not something that exists in isolation and certainly not a concept to be removed from actual practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The Situativity theory explains how a learner's experience is shaped by both context and community (Durning& Antonio, 2011). Similarly, Lave and Wenger (1991) suggest that with Situated Learning Theory participants in professional learning communities can share and develop practices and learn from their interactions with other members within the professional learning community and discover new opportunities for personal, professional, and intellectual development.

The Situated Cognition theory (Brown et al., 1989) explains learning as a two-way process entrenched in the work environment, where it constructs knowledge created and situated in the work setting. The Situated Cognition Theory primarily sustains the view that knowledge attainment cannot be alienated from the context in which it is developed, acquired, or created. Therefore, a learner must seize the concepts and skills being taught in the context where they will ultimately be employed and where that knowledge will be used . The Situated Cognition Theory relates to the Situated Learning Theory by Wenger (1998).

The Situated Learning theory of Wenger's (1998) details how informal learning from knowledgeable and skilled colleagues and peers is a vital component of situated learning in a community's socio-cultural practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Situated learning refers to creating meaning from real-life experiences as those tend to be more meaningful and relevant

to where the learning is taking place and thus transferable in a more relevant manner (Stein, 1998). The concepts of context and community originated in the work of Wenger (1998) and highlighted the significance of communities of practice that can facilitate the learner in the process of learning as a continuous learning process related to the work environment (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly (Wenger, 2004). Communities of practice (CoPs) have been around as a concept for as long as we as human beings being learning and working together. We are all members of different CoPs depending on our interests. Lave and Wenger (1991) argue that learning is necessarily situated, a process of participation in communities of practice. Communities of practice often focus on sharing best practices and creating new knowledge to advance a domain of professional practice. Interaction on an ongoing basis is an important part of this. Today, communities of practices are increasingly being used to improve knowledge management and connect people within business, government, education, and other organizations. Three crucial components in CoPs include domain of interest, community based on sharing and relationships and lastly the practice by developing a shared repertoire of resources such as experiences, stories, tools, ways of addressing recurring problems (Wenger, 2004).

2.4.2 Motivational and Reflective Models

The importance of motivation should not be undermined in any learning and teaching situation. Motivation is also one of the main principles of andragogy through emphasizing that adults will learn if they are motivated to learn. Knowles (1980) describes an adult learner as someone who is both self-motivated and self-directed. Different approaches conceptualize motivation in different ways. It is difficult to capture the complexities of motivation using any one theory. Avalos (2011) emphasized the point that integrating practical learning

opportunities with reflection can be the basis of efficacious professional development, as it allows for self-assessment by professionals in their own settings. Mezirow (2012) stressed self-reflection as critical for transformative learning. Schön (1983) recommended that actions that follow reflection have a greater chance of moving toward individual growth and learning compared to practices not portended by such reflection. Schön's (1983) views on reflection-in-action to rearrange a problem and reflection-on-action have also been discussed by Brockbank and McGill (2007). Reflection-in-action develops while we are in action, contemplating over the action regarding its appropriateness for that particular or unique context and whether any changes might be required to refine that action further and successfully so .

Roxa and Martensson (2009) stressed the importance of learning in "small significant networks", which does occur informally at the International Branch Campus where the current study takes place (p. 556). The need for reflective practice becomes more imperative in such a situation where no formal professional development programs exist to measure and integrate the insights coming from diverse sources (Warhurst, 2008 as cited in Hibbert & Semler, 2016, p 588). This focus/interaction could also lead to a stimulating perspective that deliberates on how the higher education staff views reflective practice as professional development, given the non-existence of any formal development programs. Parton and O'Byrne (2000) discussed reflexivity as a concept that is progressively gaining significance in professional practice literature, particularly as an essential feature of professional prudence and ongoing ethical and procedures.

2.4.3 Experiential Learning Theories

Learning through experience is not a new idea, but it should be applied more often in today's environments whenever teaching and working. The term "experiential learning" in adult education is linked primarily with particular theories and practices based on reflection of concrete experiences. Kolb, Boyatzis, and Mainemelis (2001) emphasized the role of

experience in the learning process. Experiential learning is related to other concepts in learning, including self-directed learning and lifelong learning, both important concepts from this current study's point of view. Merriam (2017) has discussed the role of self-directed learning (SDL), where the focus is on the learner taking control of her or his learning. A self-directed learner interested in learning can take a class, find a mentor, or join an online discussion group. SDL can be found throughout the contexts of adult life, and thus it is relevant to consider self-directed learning in the context of the current study primarily because the IBC in the current study does not have any formal professional development programs for teaching and learning in place, and hence staff learning could be considered currently as self-directed. Experiential learning actively involves the learners, encourages independent and critical thinking, promotes interactions and relationships, and improves retention (Hornyak, & Page, 2004).

Kolb (1984) highlighted the four components of experiential learning as learning by doing, learning through real-life contexts, learning through projects, and learning through problem-solving. This view is relevant in the current study, where the staff works in a setting where a structured policy framework for professional development does not currently exist. Experiential Learning Theory describes learning as a process that results through the shared process of grasping and transforming experience (Kolb, Boyatzis & Mainemelis, 2001). Hart (1992) has criticised experiential learning in what he terms as its lack of emphasis on the social context and greater emphasis on individual learning by highlighting the significance of the role of educators in adult learning and emphasizing their responsibility for creating, facilitating, and organizing learning experiences to promote adult learning (Bruner, 1966; Piaget, 1952 as cited in Taylor & Hamdy, 2013). Experiential learning is a process through which skills are attained and knowledge is created by transforming experience, cognition, and behaviour (Kolb, 1984). The role of experiential learning in education has gained momentum recently in the higher education sector, precisely because of the recognition awarded it by the universities. Twenty

first century education has evolved to include competence in self-directed learning and employability in addition to gaining traditional knowledge, skill, and attitudes (Deakin Crick, Goldspink & Foster, 2013).

2.4.4   Transformative Learning Theories

Mezirow (2000) delved even further into understanding adult learning theory and highlighted an aspect of that theory that other researchers did not discuss earlier. This unique perspective was that of transformative learning. Merriam and Bierema (2014) describe transformative learning as a process or journey that creates meaning of one's experiences. Transformative learning signifies the process of questioning our beliefs, assumptions, and perspectives that can help facilitate and guide adult learners to change their thinking over a period of time. As we undergo an experience, it can change the way we understand and comprehend an idea or an experience. Learning from our experiences is a complex process and relies on the learner, the desire to learn, the content, and the context in which that learning is taking place. There is very little that is fully controllable in real-life settings, and hence how much of the learning taking place in a formal setting can be transferred to a real-life context is constantly being questioned (Boud & Walker, 1991). Transformative learning occurs when we transform our frame of reference. This process can be either conscious or unconscious (Mezirow, 2000). It can be a unique process for each individual, as experiences are understood differently by each one of us and influence our frame of reference differently. This viewpoint holds an important position in the current research where its unique frame of reference can be due to the IBC being the only off-shore campus from its home country in the United Arab Emirates until 2018 and still the only one in the well-known emirate of Dubai. A frame of reference also includes cognitive and emotional components, including the two dimensions of one's habits of mind and point of view. Habits of mind are more durable than point of view

which keeps changing, as we either reflect on the content of an experience or the process we utilized for problem-solving (Mezirow, 1991).

Mezirow expanded his initial theory (1978) to include three learning types in his revised version, namely, the : dialogic, instrumental, and self-reflective (1985). Simply put, this version has the learners asking what type of information they needed (instrumental), when and where would be the best place for the learning to occur (dialogic), and why we are learning the information (self-reflective). The most crucial component of these three types of learning is the meaning perspective which refers "*to the structure of cultural and psychological assumptions within which our earlier experience absorbs and transforms new experience*" (Mezirow, 1985, p. 21).

In 1991, Mezirow further expanded his original theory (1978) to include a newly renegotiated old phase. The new phase emphasized the importance of critical reflection in the transformative theory. Mezirow (1991) emphasized the constructivist assumptions as the basis of his revised theory, highlighting that meaning is individualistic and found within the learner and the teacher, not determined by external influences, such as texts, speeches, or books. However, meaning becomes significant to the learner through ongoing critical dialogue with others. Critical reflection on our assumptions allows the transformation of our frames of reference. We can become critically reflective about the conjectures we or others make when we understand how to solve problems instrumentally or when we are a part of ongoing communicative learning. Self-reflection can guide us to substantial personal transformation.

Reflection is a routine process that happens regularly, and it can become more specific, explicit and organized if there is a need for doing so. Reflection is an intricate process that includes both cognition and emotional components, and it can often lead to exciting and novel ways of looking at our experiences (Boud & Walker, 1991). This theory is an essential part of the current study by emphasizing reflection, dialogue, instrumentality, and frame of reference

to allow a unique aspect for each learner. In the context of the current study, it will be interesting to explore and understand how each staff member perceives and understands professional development and what type of learning works best for each of them during professional development. Transformative learning theory emphasizes the importance of developing professional skills that are linked with organizational learning and self-reflection, as well as other forms of workplace learning, both formal as well as informal (Evans, 2018).

2.5 Key Points in Literature Review

- The IBC in this study is set in a multicultural and competitive hub of HEIs in a rapidly evolving hub of higher education, and presently this IBC does not have a strategic plan for providing professional development to its staff. Hence the literature review started with a focus on discussing what exactly is professional development and what it includes and how professional development links to quality of education and improves student learning outcomes.

- The current study focuses on staff perception and understanding of professional development with an emphasis on improving teaching and supporting all students' learning experiences in higher education and hence it becomes essential that the literature review includes an overview of the learning theories and their relevance for professional development, focusing on improving student learning experiences and how professionals in higher education can learn best and improve their professional practices.

- It is also important to understand that higher education today is not only the domain of the academic staff only, as the professional staff today is valuable to any HEI, given their increasing role in improving student experiences in higher education.

- As we consider the professional development of higher education staff, it also becomes important to discuss the quality of professional development as well as the formal and

informal practices of professional development when improving the teaching standards and enhancing the learning experiences of students.

- Despite the growing phenomenon of transnational education in recent decades, given the increase in educational partnerships all over the world, the staff involved with these transnational ventures are still not offered enough training or support to work successfully in that transnational setting (Bovill, Jordon & Watters, 2015).

- It is also essential to understand the role the organizational culture plays in promoting a staff's professional development.

- If learning is to be considered as part of our everyday lives that happens everywhere in life, work and society, then it is pertinent to include a discussion of relevant learning theories as they apply to the learners and, in this particular case, the staff at the IBC as also being adult learners.

- The inclusion of learning theories is relevant to the literature review in order to understand how the staff in this study understand professional development, as well as how staff as professionals in higher education learn. For the present study, it was important to discuss a few of the learning theories in detail, specifically social, motivational, situated learning, and self-directed learning, thereby emphasizing both the motivational and the reflective aspects of the overall learning process.

2.6   Identifying Gaps in the Literature

The present study is unique in attempting to understand how staff at this IBC perceives professional development and its relevance when enhancing professional practice with a focus on teaching and supporting the students' learning experiences in higher education, given the absence of any formal professional development programs/trainings offered at this particular branch campus. This literature review has revealed no similar study done earlier, especially in the context of transnational education. Studies that involve staff or faculty perception of

professional development have been done, but with an emphasis on how staff and faculty perceive their existing professional development programs at their workplace. That focus is not the case with this study. Staff perceptions and understanding of professional development do not concern any specific existing program in this current study, which makes this study significant for several reasons. While a plethora of literature can be found on staff's professional development experiences in many other countries, few studies have been conducted on this issue in the UAE. To fill this gap, several researchers (AlNaeimi, 2007; Hfnawi, 2012; AlHassani, 2012) have explored professional development from the teachers' perspectives in public schools in the UAE. The current study is significant because it is the first study that deals with staff's perceptions at an IBC from a South Asian country and how this staff perceives their professional development experiences. As a researcher I hope that this study will help policymakers and the HEI parent campus further refine the quality of professional development opportunities that they offer their staffs in the home country and more specifically in the UAE in the context of IBC.

This study addresses a gap in practice by further understanding the perception of professional development by staff (academic and professional staff) when improving their experiences and roles in higher education, especially in terms of competition from other IBCs in the region. As discussed earlier, professional staff forms a significant percentage of all higher education staff, so it would be interesting to try and understand how they perceive and understand their contributions to higher education (Regan, Dollard, & Banks, 2014), and further still if there are any significant differences in the perceptions of academic and professional staff regarding professional development and its relevance for enhancing professional practice with a focus on teaching and on supporting the students' learning experience in higher education. These findings will be shared with the Director of the parent campus and concerned senior management at the home campus regarding staff needs and

inclinations related to professional development in an off-shore campus where there are no formal professional development practices currently in place.

This study could be considered a pioneering study in providing a benchmark to HEIs from the home country in this study that are planning on setting up IBCs in the U.A.E in the future, in terms of identifying the key professional development requirements for staff in transnational education. As a researcher I am also interested in determining how formal and informal professional development is understood by staff and how that staff considers the value and role of professional development when enhancing teaching, learning, professional practices, and student expectations at the IBC.

3.0 CHAPTER THREE - METHODOLOGY

Taylor, Bogdan and DeVault (2015) emphasise that our interests, assumptions, and purposes define the methodology we select and use for our research. Feuer *et al*. (2002) has stated quite aptly that any method is not good or bad on its own, but rather on how suitably the researcher applies the selected method to a particular problem and allows for clear and accurate judgments about its scientific quality. This chapter thus focuses on the methodology that was used in the present study.

3.1 Ontology, Epistemology, and Methodology

Moses and Knusten (2007) discuss methodology, ontology, and epistemology as the three major interlinked components in philosophy, i.e., by emphasising how knowledge is acquired, ontology focusing on the nature and the form of reality, and the epistemology concerned with the nature and justification of knowledge. All three components are intertwined and help in understanding the role of paradigms. Paradigms present a worldview, how we look at the world, our position in the world and the possible relationships. Paradigms are the values and beliefs that are accepted by members of a specific community that help shape the way we do research. Paradigms allow scientific communities to *unite* their discipline and help the scientists create paths of inquiry, frame questions, and choose the best methods to use to appraise questions and define key areas of relevance (Khun, 1970).

The present study aims to comprehend the participants' perception and understanding and the importance of professional development and its need for teaching and learning, improving professional practices, and enhancing student learning experiences. Perception is a process unique to each individual in terms of how they view the world around them and assign personal meanings to their experiences of the world (Muabane & Oudstrohoom, 2011, p. 298).

From an ontological perspective, this study assumes there are multiple realities for the participants' world views and what the participants have experienced and what it means for

them. The paradigm of choice for the current study is the constructivist paradigm, which emphasises that the staff at the International Branch Campus in this study do create and construct their perceptions and understanding of professional development. The constructivist paradigm facilitates the understanding and comprehension of how the staff at the IBC construct their reality regarding their perception of and need for professional development in the context of their unique work setting at the IBC in the United Arab Emirates. This constructivist paradigm has helped me understand as a tresearcher how participants construct and structure their realities in collaboration with their social connections and exchanges (Golafshani, 2003).

Personal epistemology concerns the beliefs individuals hold about the nature of knowledge and the process of knowing. As a researcher, epistemology for me is how knowledge is unique for each one of us depending on our experiences, our work setting and the way we perceive and understand our surroundings. For the purpose of this study, it is not just to understand objectively what is professional development for staff as the intent is not to standardise an understanding and comprehension of professional development, but to understand what factor might be contributing towards shaping their perceptions regarding how they understand professional development and its role in enhancing student learning experiences and improving professional practices. I consider that an understanding of professional development in a subjective manner is more effective as it includes the individual and unique experiences as understood by each participant in their context making the concept of professional development a subjective reality through constructivism. The term constructivism is helpful because it identifies the basic principle that reality is socially constructed; a relativist position that holds the view that there is no external reality independent of human consciousness (Robson 2002). Looking at professional development without the role of the context in my opinion limits the understanding of this important context.

I considered a qualitative approach with an ontological position of multiple realities as constructed by each study participant through a phenomenological methodology as most appropriate for the current research. The methodology of choice employed for the present study was qualitative methodology, which relied on data collection using semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews were used to allow for phenomenological investigations to reveal important information from the respondents (Groenewald, 2004). Qualitative approach is concerned with exploring a phenomenon, and using the viewpoints of the participants as a starting point (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, & Ormston, 2013, p. 3). This process was considered appropriate, as it would allow participants to tell their stories in their own unique ways and talk about how and what type of learning theories had more relevance for them in their perception of the professional development process and how this process was relevant for their teaching, learning, and professional practices and improving their student learning experiences at the IBC in the study. This use of a qualitative approach allows the researcher to provide a detailed and a widespread description of staff self-perceptions (Merriam, 2009) of professional development and how professional development can further enhance and enrich their professional practices and teaching and learning experiences and consequently the entire student learning experience in the context of the IBC.

Phenomenology is a qualitative approach that examines the "lived experiences for individuals concerning a concept or phenomenon" (Creswell, 2013, p. 51). According to Creswell's (2009) assertions, phenomenology is used to investigate and accumulate an understanding of a specific issue. By utilising a phenomenological approach and interviewing participants, the current researcher was able to understand how staff at this IBC describe their perceptions and understanding of professional development more adequately. As a result, I have utilized the phenomenological research methodology to capture the true experiences of

the staff at the IBC regarding the perception, understanding and importance of professional development. "Phenomenology's approach is to defer all judgments about what is real until that reality is founded on a more certain basis" (Creswell, 2013, p. 52), which is done by bracketing any preconceived ideas from the researcher. Bracketing is used to diminish the potentially harmful effects of the researcher's preconceptions that may influence the research process (Tufford & Newman, 2012, p. 80). Due to the subjective nature of the participants' opinions regarding their "lived experiences", phenomenology became the most suitable approach for the study. The choice of phenomenology for this study was based on its uniqueness focussing on individuals within units and not the entire unit.

The choice of a phenomenological approach was considered suitable to derive meanings from experiences of those that understand the essence of a phenomenon. The application of this phenomenological approach to the present study provides a context where the staff's perception and understanding of professional development and associated factors can be explored fully. Phenomenology reconnoitres the core of experiences of individuals or groups using their first-hand reports. Phenomenological research is used to invigorate a theoretical account that allows the researchers to draw the effects and importance of an experience or experiences that an individual may have had (Davidsen, 2012; Flood, 2010). The inclination was to choose descriptive phenomenology for the present study, as it provides a foundation for outlining the individuals' experience without any sway of the researcher's personal feelings about the phenomenon being studied. Hence, this study of the IBC staff's understanding and perception of professional development in terms of improving professional practices and enhancing student experiences is delineated purely by using staff's constructed meanings as they experienced the phenomenon. Moustakas (1994) reasoned that the experience one lives and that behaviour share an inseparable relationship with the phenomenon

The present study is phenomenological, as all participants in the study are working at the same IBC; hence their unique and familiar setting laid the groundwork for the phenomenology. The study provides a unique insight into the "lived-in" experience of staff (academic and professional) who are working at a small IBC from a South Asian country based in the United Arab Emirates. Husserl (1970) laid the foundation of phenomenology as a descriptive study of consciousness so as to discover the core of an experience. Phenomenological methodology describes a "lived in" experience of participants in a common phenomenon (Creswell, 2014; Patton, 1990), which in the case of the present study are the staff at the IBC and how the perceive and understand professional development. Comprehension of the essence of shared experience lets the reader understand these experiences through the narrations of those who actually experienced it (Creswell, 2014).

It is also important to consider insider epistemology as part of the current study because I am a practitioner at the IBC in the study. Creswell (2014) has emphasised the proximity of the researcher with the participants in qualitative studies, so that the participants can share their "experiences" and "views" with openness and avoid any influence from others. From an ethical perspective, the researcher is placed both inside and outside the current research. Merton (1972) identified two positions: Insider Doctrine and Outsider Doctrine, though he also rejects both doctrines as fallacies. As a researcher, I consider the Insider doctrine as major support for the present study, where the researcher herself has been employed for the past 13 years. The outsider doctrine follows the premise that the outsider researcher can only obtain objective data through neutrality, detachment, and distance. The insider doctrine, on the other hand, maintains the opposite view, namely, that an outsider lacks the capacity to understand alien groups, cultures and societies as the outsider has never experienced the process that makes a culture unique and hence lacks the empathy to understand it clearly (Merton, 1972). In examining staff development research, Asselin (2003) implied that the insider researcher should gather

data with "eyes open" but also accepting that they know nothing about the phenomenon under study so as to elude personal bias perhaps dwarfing the research. The findings from this phenomenological study cannot be generalized, and instead the results would serve to inform administrators and policy makers of what strategies could be implemented to change the situation (Groenewald, 2004; Tam, 2016).

3.2. The Research Questions

Qualitative research can facilitate the researcher in producing quality data and questions that investigate the real-life behaviour of the participants (Kuper, Reeves, & Levinson, 2008). As we formulate research questions, it is important to understand that the best research questions narrow the focus of research and clearly state and detail the phenomenon under investigation (Kivunja, 2016, p. 167). Clear, effective and quality research questions will guide both the methodology and the research findings (Kross & Giust, 2019). The following research questions thus guide the current study:

RQ1: What do the participants understand by the term "professional development" and what this concept includes?

This first research question seeks to understand how participants view and understand professional development and what practices or behaviour are incorporated into their understanding of professional development.

RQ 2: How do participants perceive the role of professional development for enhancing professional practice and students' learning experiences within the institution being studied?

This second research question seeks to understand what participants consider the role of professional development to be when contributing to professional learning and transferring it toward enhancing student learning experiences.

RQ 3: What are the participants' views on the effectiveness of what they consider to be any form of existing professional development at the IBC in the study?

This third research question seeks to delve into each participant's unique understanding for how they construct and understand the concept of professional development, as it exists in any form at the IBC. This question seeks to understand the similarities and differences in the participants' perceptions of any existing form of professional development practices at the IBC. *RQ 4: How do the participants understand the role of professional development policy/policies in terms of improving teaching, learning, professional practices, and enhancing student experiences in higher education and in particular at the IBC in the current study?*

This question seeks to gather information on the role of policy and organisational context as it is perceived by the participants for how they play a role in enhancing professional learning opportunities with reference to the IBC in this study . Table 3.1 list the RQs and their corresponding interview questions.

Table 3.1: Matching the Research Questions and the Interview Questions

Research Questions (RQ)	Interview Questions (Appendix D)
RQ 1	1,2
RQ 2	3,4,5,6
RQ 3	7
RQ 4	8

3.3. The Selection & Recruitment Process for Research Participants

The key to conducting good research is to prepare well, which requires a suitable and wise choice in sampling (Singh, 2018). Sampling is the selection of a small portion of the population to be included in the study. If sampling is done well, it will lead to useful data and findings, while on the other hand poorly done sampling can only result in poor data collection, waste of research time and related resources (Daniel, 2012).

When the data collection commenced in 2018, the IBC in the present study had 12 full-time academic staff (including the researcher) and 12 full-time professional staff comprised of South Asians (primarily from country IRP), North Americans and South East Asian nationals. Initially, the researcher was interested in using the entire IBC staff population. However, it was

considered more relevant to focus on staff that played a more significant role in the students' teaching and learning process at the IBC.

The purposive sampling that was employed in this study is used to identify potential participants who have certain characteristics. Purposive samples are selected because they are "*information-rich and illuminative*" (Patton, 2002, p. 40). Purposive sampling is also referred to as judgmental sampling wherein the sample is selected carefully and included those who have rich information regarding the study phenomenon (Bernanrd, 2002). Regarding the size of the sample, Bowden and Gonzalez (2009) suggested that when following a phenomenological approach for research, the sample size is dependent on the need to unravel all the primary variants within the approach. Creswell (2014) highlighted sampling size in qualitative research, where it is typical "to study a few individuals". A sample size of seventeen to twenty participants is generally enough to include all possible variation (Swartling et al., 2007). In another phenomenological study, Stenstrom *et al*. (1993) interviewed nine participants in their study concerning living life with rheumatoid arthritis, while Shreeve (2010) interviewed sixteen people on the relationship between professional practices and teaching.

The current study used a phenomenological approach and aimed for a sample of twelve to fifteen full-time staff (academic and professional) for interviews based on their active involvement in students' teaching and learning experiences at this IBC. The use of semi-structured interviews was the data collection procedure used in this study, as it allowed for gathering rich and detailed data from the participants. As qualitative interviews are designed to be 'unique' (McGrath, Palmgren & Liljedahl, 2019) and the intention is not replicability hence given the small number of staff at the IBC who would be selected as a representative sample, there was no pilot study done as it would have reduced the already small sample from the IBC. However, the interview guide/protocol was discussed with both primary and secondary supervisors for a 'face validity' process'. The participants in this study were interviewed individually to allow them tell their

own story and were assured that their narratives would get due attention, that *'their individual voices are not lost in a pool of numbers.'*(Dwyer and Buckle, 2009, p.61).

According to Hycner (1999, p. 156), "*the phenomenon dictates the method (not vice-versa) including even the type of participant*s." Purposive sampling was selected for this study. Purposive sampling is considered by Welman and Kruger (1999) as the most important non-probability sampling, to identify the primary participants in this study. The selected sample included those who "have had experiences relating to the phenomenon [in this case PD] to be researched" (Kruger, 1988, p. 150). For this study's sample the inclusion criterion was:

a. Full-time staff (academic and professional) who work at the IBC in the study with active involvement in the student learning experiences.

b. Full-time academic staff involved in teaching and student learning at the IBC (including academic teaching staff only).

c. Full-time professional staff with significant involvement in student learning either by teaching foundation courses or being involved in academic guidance and counselling related to their learning at the IBC (including staff in Records who are teaching foundation courses, staff in Admissions and Enrolments who are either teaching a foundation course as well as involved in academic counselling as first point of contact for the students at the IBC and the Operations Manager who has a dual role as Program Manager and hence significantly involved with student learning experiences)

d. Full-time staff (academic and professional) at the IBC fulfilling point b and c and being fluent in English for the purpose of the research.

The staff who were not considered for this study were:

a. The professional staff in financial services and the front desk staff were not approached due to their limited interaction with teaching and learning; however, the operations manager, who is program manager as well, was approached and agreed to be a part of the study.

b. The IT assistant was not approached due to language and communication gaps, as his English proficiency was limited, and the researcher could not communicate in the native language of that IT assistant.

c. The library functions with an administrative assistant only responsible for issuing books and no direct or indirect role related to the teaching and learning experiences at the IBC

(guidance concerning library resources is provided by individual academic staff per the students' needs and requirements).

A research study's success depends significantly on how effective the recruitment process and retention of the study participants becomes. The research recruitment process involves classifying and recognising potential research participants and providing them with enough information to ascertain their interest in part of the research study. Research studies are often time-consuming and require a significant amount of effort to be invested in it. If the recruitment process is not organised or appropriate at the start, that can significantly impact the study findings overall (Manohar, MacMillan, Steiner & Arora, 2018). The permission for the study was granted by the Chairperson Board of Trustees who is also the owner of the HEI and all its branch campuses. After that I had approached the senior management team at the IBC for permission to approach the potential participants for the study, as well as the use of a vacant office for conducting interviews once the sample was finalised. Participants in this study were identified based on their contract types: Academic staff and professional staff. The term "academic staff" refers to staff primarily in teaching roles, and professional staff for this study refer to full-time professional staff working in educational operations, records, admissions, front office, IT support, finance, examinations, program management and library services. The recruitment process included the following steps:

- Initially approaching all full-time academic and professional staff (through email) based on their active involvement in teaching and the learning experiences of students at this IBC.
- Eight academic staff and five professional staff expressed their willingness to be a part of the study bringing the total number of participants to thirteen.
- After the invitation to participate was sent out, those staff members who had volunteered to participate in the study were provided more detailed information (Participant Information Sheet-Appendix B) about the study.
- Each participant was asked to sign the Participant Informed Consent Form (Appendix C) before data collection commenced.

Table 3.2 presents the participants as per stakeholder type and their academic qualifications (all participants have post graduate qualifications or higher).

Table 3.2 Participant Profiles (Stakeholder Type and Academic Qualifications)

Participant Number	Stakeholder Type	Academic Qualifications
1	Professional	Post Graduate
2	Academic	Doctoral
3	Professional	Post Graduate
4	Academic	Post Graduate
5	Professional	Post Graduate
6	Academic	Post Graduate
7	Professional	Post Graduate
8	Academic	Post Graduate
9	Academic	Doctoral
10	Academic	Post Graduate
11	Academic	Post Graduate
12	Academic	Doctoral
13	Professional	Post Graduate

3.4. Data Collection Methods

Data was collected over three months, keeping in consideration the participants' schedules, workload, examinations at the IBC, and other work and personal commitments. Thus, when the interviews were conducted, each participant was fully at ease and not in any urgency to complete the interview.

3.4.1. Interview and Interview Protocol

Interviews allow us clear insights into the lived-in experience of individuals and what meanings they make out of that experience. We interview people to know more, and the purpose of interviewing is not always to prove something. Interviewing allows us to link a context with behaviour to enhance our understanding of that particular behaviour (Tseng & Seidman, 2007). At the start of this study, several other methods were considered for the data

collection, such as focus groups, group interviews, or a survey. However, as anonymity and confidentiality were extremely important, it was considered appropriate and suitable to use individual semi-structured interviews to gather the in-depth experiences of the staff at the IBC while still preserving their anonymity during the study and in later publications as well. Creswell (2007) supported the qualitative interview approach, as the qualitative approach follows a philosophical assumption of moving to find a world view through a theoretical lens placed on various procedures involved in understanding social issues and problems. Interviews can be used in an assortment of situations for a range of epistemological perspectives hence allowing for sincere personal relationships with the subjects that lead to insightful data (Cassell, 2009).

Creswell (2007) discussed the importance of context when conducting face- to- face interviews. The present study's approach was to understand that the stories told by these participants for how they understand and perceive professional development would provide rich information reflecting the context in which the research is taking place. The use of semi-structured interviews to elicit detailed data is a time-consuming process and hence justified a small sample size (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Semi-structured interviews facilitate gaining new insight into educational and social issues by understanding the experiences of those individuals whose lives reflect the issues under study (Tseng & Seidman, 2006). In case of the IBC in this study, by understanding the staff's perceptions regarding professional development, the researcher could gain further insights into the functioning and sustainability at this international branch campus. Launching and preserving a culture of continuing learning is the basic principle motivating that sustainability. Creating a culture that is passionate about learning, is the most important step for developing and maintaining best practices in any learning organisation in education (McLester, 2012).

3.4.2. Interview Protocol

Appendix D details the interview protocol used for the current research. Interviews provide researchers with rich and detailed qualitative data for understanding participants' experiences, how they describe those experiences, and the meaning they make of those experiences (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The interview protocol can be considered as a standard for the interview, such as what to say at the beginning of the interview to introduce yourself and the topic of the interview, collecting participant consent, the interview questions, and what to say when you complete the interview. A reliable interview protocol is the source to gathering good, quality interview data.

A trustworthy interview protocol is critical for obtaining qualitative data. It enables the interview process that involve assorted groups of people in a systematic, stable, and comprehensive manner through a prior demarcation of the issues to be studied (Patton, 2015). In addition, an interview protocol increases the effectiveness of the interview process by ensuring that comprehensive information is obtained within the allocated time. Rich qualitative data helps the researcher better understand the respondents' experience and identify crucial elements relevant to the subject matter. The current study's interview protocol was designed to start with more general questions and then move into more detailed questions related to the current study. This interview protocol was reviewed and checked by both supervisors to ensure that the interview questions aligned well with the research questions (Appendix D). Each interview's time frame was between forty-five minutes to an hour, and a couple of interviews did last up to one hour and ten minutes. All participants expressed their interest in being interviewed on-site (at the IBC being studied). This on-site face to face format had the added advantage of the interviewer being able to observe non-verbal cues, and the participants being able to take their time to respond without feeling hurried. Permission was obtained from the Operations Manager to use one of the vacant offices at the IBC for the interviews, as to provide

a safe environment. The researcher conducted the interviews in a private room selected by the participants, so they would not feel restricted or uncomfortable about sharing information (Turner, 2010). The office used for conducting the interviews is tucked away in a corner and hence not in a visible location and has little or no traffic of people in its vicinity, which allowed for the seclusion and privacy needed for the interview process.

As part of the interview protocol, each participant was informed before the interview that the interview would be audio-recorded. This process would allow the researcher to easily recall what was discussed without any information being misunderstood or misquoted. The participants were informed that they would be provided with a password-protected file containing the draft of the interview transcription before coding started so each participant would have the opportunity to comment and ask for changes, as necessary. Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros (2008) argued for positive phrasing of interview questions to allow participants to feel comfortable and be not under any pressure. After each interview, the participants were debriefed. They were notified that their transcripts would be emailed to them for scrutiny and confirmation of the truthful record of their responses and that they could take this opportunity to make corrections or additions to their interview transcripts as needed or required .

3.4.3. Transcription of the Interviews

The present study included qualitative data comprised of thirteen transcripts of the interviews of academic and professional staff members' working at an International Branch Campus (IBC) in the United Arab Emirates. The thirteen interviews were recorded using an application called "Recorder" and transcribed using another application called "Transcribe". However, it should be emphasised here that the transcribing was not just dependent on the use of the application "Transcribe". The Transcribe app provided the first transcription of each interview. However, the range of accents and pronunciations of the thirteen participants meant

that large segments of the transcribed interviews put through "Transcribe" had many gaps left from the audio files. These gaps were identified and I worked on each transcript precisely to learn ever more from each interview and keep that information in mind. Each transcript took 5-6 hours of meticulous reading and listening to produce a detailed transcript. The audio files were transcribed, making the transcribed version an exact representation of the audio files without removing any slang or informal truncation of individual words, such as '*cause, gonna, donna, wanna . These expressions* were not changed or removed. Grammatical errors or sentence structural errors were also kept in their original forms. The reason for going to such lengths when transcribing was to ensure that the richness of the data was preserved well. As the respondents were not native English speakers, the transcribing application was not accurate in several sections.

As a researcher I was actively involved in verifying the transcript's contents with that of the audio files to eradicate all transcribing errors. Any additional questions were sent to two of the participants to expound some parts of their responses that were not accurately understood from the face-to-face interview. The participants were very obliging with the additional question/s and responded swiftly with their answers through emails. Final copies of the transcripts were also 'signed off' by the participants. No participants made any rectifications in their transcripts. Any changes that were required were made accordingly before the data analysis began. This participant checking and verification process served as part of the validity and reliability process (Noble & Smith, 2015).

All participants were assigned codes to maintain their anonymity regarding their names and contact details. This information was kept until the participants were provided transcripts of their interviews to read for verification. The main identifier was stakeholder type, i.e., professional or the academic staff, besides academic qualifications (Table 3.2). Geographical details were minimised to preserve full anonymity of the organisation and all the participants.

3.5. The Data Analysis

It is essential to discuss the importance and rationale of a qualitative data analysis to offer clarity to the reader for how the researcher approached the qualitative process . Data analysis is integral to providing good credibility to qualitative data. The qualitative researcher's ability to understand, interpret, perceive, and analyse qualitative data plays a major role in revealing the meanings of various contexts, circumstances, and situations (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017).

3.5.1 Using Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis (TA) was adopted for use in the present study. Thematic Analysis is considered an excellent starting point for undertaking qualitative research for a novice researcher (Holloway & Todres, 2003). Thematic analysis was initially named as an approach in the 1970s (Merton, 1975). It has since several versions proposed by Joffe and Yardley (2004), Tuckett (2005) and Braun and Clarke (2006). The appeal for thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2006) rests in its inherent flexibility, which allows it to be identified as an analytical method rather than as a methodology. Thematic Analysis (TA) was used in the current study for qualitative analysis to keep in mind its relative simplicity and flexibility, especially for novice researchers, as it allows them to use that method with relative ease. However, TA requires significant input from the researcher, as the emphasis is on the identification and description of implicit and explicit meanings found within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). One advantage of using TA lies in its ability to identify and work easily with complex meanings found within textual data. For those new to qualitative research, TA offers a more accessible entry into a research effort that otherwise might be mystifying, confusing, challenging, and often too complex. Thematic Analysis is also a method rather than a methodology. Hence, it is not tied to any one particular epistemological or theoretical

perspective and its primary aid is to identify themes within the data to understand how these themes relate to the study's precise research questions (Clarke & Braun, 2018).

Braun & Clarke (2006) explain TA as an essentialist or realist method for reporting participants' experiences, meanings, and reality. It can be constructionist by examining how realities, meanings, and experiences are the effects of a range of discourses operating within society. Thematic analysis is flexible and can be conducted by using both realist/essentialist and constructionist paradigms due to its independence of theory and epistemology (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This aspect is based on our assumption that the accounts and narratives researchers use for thematic analysis are more or less true (Vaismoradi et al., 2013).

3.5.2. Inductive and Deductive Coding

The use of thematic analysis via coding has been recommended by Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2011) as a method to convert qualitative data from semi-structured interviews into a manageable form, but without compromising its quality. In thematic analysis, an inductive approach to coding depends on what is in the data, so the codes and themes are derived from the data content. A deductive approach to coding, on the other hand, is done with the researcher bringing forth a set of ideas, concepts, and topics to the data and then the codes and themes are generated with these concepts or ideas already in mind (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It is not always easy to identify an analysis style entirely as inductive or deductive; however, one does tend to be predominant when using thematic analysis. In the present study, the deductive approach became predominant as the interview questions were constructed, keeping in mind that learning theories were emphasising situated learning, social learning, experiential and self-learning through motivation and reflective practices. Hence the process of coding was done predominantly by keeping the concepts mentioned above as the key reference points.

Braun and Clarke (2013) used a six-step framework for thematic analysis to have a clear and easy approach. The six steps included:

- Become familiar with the data

- Generate initial codes

- Search for themes

- Review the themes

- Define the themes

- Write up the findings

The pre-coding stage included gaining familiarisation with the data by going through each transcript several times. The pre-coding phase allowed for gaining a sense regarding the potential themes in the raw data. The transcripts were reviewed several times to stay connected with the data and understand each transcript's underlying meanings and messages. This was a very helpful activity as it allowed me to associate with each transcript individually and to gain an insight into the content of each transcript which was helpful in the understanding of data. Appendix J provides an overview of the way Nvivo was instrumental in the coding and the subsequent sorting and understanding of data through the various coding stages. I have included screenshots from NVivo to highlight the process through the different coding stages (Appendix J). Initially, the data set consisting of interview transcripts was imported into NVivo. The transcripts then went through a process of fragmentation and connection. The connecting process involved associating and connecting codes that are similar into categories and are referred to as overarching themes in this study. The creation of themes within the connecting process highlights the context and richness of the fragmented parts of the interview dataset, which becomes interpreted (Sivesind, 1999).

The initial coding was closer to the main interview questions; however, that was only a starting point, and after reviewing and scrutinising each transcript, the codes were modified

and generated, and themes emerged as a result (Appendix J). Mind maps and word query searches were used to see the pattern of these themes and help review and redefine them. The word query searches and mind maps allowed me to revise the visual representation of nodes done initially so that it helped me with making the codes and the themes more clear, and connected to my research. A journal/memo was also created on NVivo 12 to document a record of annotations of ideas, meanings, questions, and reflections during the data coding process. This process was helpful in understanding the similarities and differences in the transcripts (Appendix J).

Following the first cycle of coding, the codes created in the first cycle were further examined during the second cycle of coding and repositioned into emerging themes (see Appendix J). Some codes became overarching themes, whilst others were integrated under the pertinent overarching themes. Looking at the data with fresh eyes after a break also allowed for a more unsullied reflection that shed new light on the data. When the overall coded data were analysed again after the second cycle of coding, some of the codes were further split or merged or even discarded. Figure 3.1 below shows how the data was processed using NVivo.

Figure 3.1. The Data Analysis Process Using NVivo

The word 'code' refers to *"a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and evocative attribute to a portion of language-based or visual data."* (Saldaña, 2015, p.3). Codes are formed to represent recognized themes and consequently evaluated by relating the code frequencies i.e., the co-occurrence of codes that identified the relationships between codes in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As I was interested in addressing specific research questions, hence the data was analysed keeping this

goal in mind. Thus, it would be apt to say the coding was predominantly deductive. The coding was done primarily to view adult learning theories that had formed the basis for the interview questions, emphasising social, situated, self-learning, and self-motivation and reflection, but the actual codes and themes were developed and modified by reviewing each transcript in detail several times.

I used word clouds as an initial supplemental tool to identify the commonly occurring words and phrases used by the participants and help identify the frequently occurring words that can facilitate the developing of the major themes. Despite initiating with the world cloud, I did not solely rely on a word cloud to develop themes and sub-themes. Using only a word cloud cannot be considered a very effective measure, as it is not always an accurate portrayal of the themes and sub-themes that can be generated from the data, and thus ,it can often mislead the researcher into discounting vital areas. The word cloud is used to make key words stand out based on how frequently they occur in the data. Other factors can also influence the visual 'decoding' of the data from the researcher's perspective. For example, the length of the word and the space around it can make it look more or less important relative to other words in the cloud, which then can mislead our interpretation of it (Hein, 2019).

It is crucial to consider word clouds as a primary accompanying numerical tool for qualitative explanation (McNaught & Lam 2010). Like all statistical tools, they are easy to misemploy and/or construe poorly. As researchers we need to know what is being considered, what is being missed, and before drawing any inferences, make sure we comprehend the rudimentary data and how it was gathered. As the counting of words is seen as non-interpretive and non-subjective, some people feel they can 'trust' what is shown by the words more than any verbose explanation of the full rich data. Knowing the data and reading the nuances can separate analysis from being a one-click feature into being a well communicated and detailed analysis. Word clouds are used to highlight certain words as frequently occurring in the data

and allow the researcher to see the possible emerging patterns for coding, which then leads to categories/sub-themes and eventually develop the major themes. They can also be helpful as a starting point or a screening tool for reviewing large amounts of text data as was done in the present study. A word cloud provides a graphical representation of knowledge that permits the viewer to form a quick, perceptive sense of a text. The tool is an easy way to share high-level data without user information overload (Depaolo & Wilkinson, 2014).

3.5.3. NVivo 12.2 and Data Analysis

The present study with its semi-structured interviews utilised NVivo to manage its data effectively. Although software such as NVivo has been criticised for adding complexity to qualitative research and often distancing the researcher from the research, its use in qualitative research cannot be overlooked. NVivo is a supportive tool that allows the user to gain depth and breadth during qualitative analysis. NVivo offers an excellent data management system for the qualitative researcher through three essential features that allow for data management, data coding and data analysis (Mortelmans, 2019). The use of NVivo software to aid in data analysis allows the researcher to break down the data into smaller chunks and refer back to it in its complete form at the same time. Although no software can completely replace human analytical ability, the use of software like NVivo allows for help in the initial stages of data sorting as well as depending more on the critical and analytical skills of the researcher. Also, software like NVivo aids in the analysis and understanding data and its context and the rationale behind it (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). NVivo, given its features of mind maps and concept maps, allows for better visualisation of data and facilitates the initial process of coding and developing themes.

This feature was quite helpful for the researcher for visualising the data and its emerging themes and codes. NVivo also offers features like linking memos with files to keep track of important ideas or notes. The software also offers a transcription service. However,

the researcher used "Transcribe" software for the initial transcribing and later on all the transcribing was checked manually and rechecked to avoid any errors and stay as close to the actual data as possible.

The online NVivo course trainer suggested it would be helpful to review the initial themes after the researcher coded all the transcripts and then modified the themes and codes based on a theoretical or literature-based framework. The literature-based framework for this current study primarily focused on the relevance of the learning theories in professional development as related to teaching and learning. Bazeley (2007) highlights five major contributions of NVivo in qualitative data analysis, including managing data through organising a variety of data documents, such as interview transcripts, observations, surveys, images, published documents; managing ideas to understand the conceptual and theoretical issues generated in the course of the study; query data by posing several questions regarding the data; visualising data by creating graphs to see the relationships between the conceptual and theoretical data, and finally, the last contribution in form of reporting. To gain familiarity with the NVivo software, I viewed several video tutorials online and completed two online training offered by QSR International.

The first online training was entitled "Fundamentals of NVivo" and following it, second one was called "Moving on with NVivo". Both online trainings were beneficial and allowed the researcher to understand how to use the software and also the possibilities it offered for qualitative research. For the analysis, all interviews were imported into NVivo, and instead of dividing the data into academic and professional staff, I used the attribute "stakeholder type" to differentiate the two through the use of case profiles.

Table 3.3 provides the design framework kept in mind while creating the research project for the current study in NVivo.

Table 3.3 The Design Framework Used in NVivo

Data Type	Unit (s)	Variables	Study Type	Themes
Interview Transcripts Transcripts were imported into NVivo for analysis	Staff/People Individual case files were created for each unit to represent each staff member	Age Education Stake-holder Type	A phenomenological study with semi-structured interviews as main data collection source	Perceptual Understanding of Professional Development through Learning Theories. Role of Professional Development in Higher Education Setting as perceived by Staff. Organizational Context guides Professional Development in higher education. Role of Policy & Professional Development as perceived and understood by the IBC staff

3.6. Validity and Reliability

If any research findings are considered trustworthy, it is important that the quality of that research study be given considerable importance. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested that the criteria include credibility, dependability, conformability, and transferability/applicability, especially for qualitative research where the traditional concepts of validity and reliability as applied in quantitative studies cannot exist. Lincoln and Guba (1985) also discussed the importance of insight in our role as researchers who are conducting research in our place of work. This insight can influence the process and the outcomes of the research study and eventually determine the reliability of the research findings.

Credibility is needed to establish confidence that the results (from the perspective of the participants) are true, credible and believable. For the purpose of this study, it was by

detailing the interview protocol and in-depth interview findings as well as member checking. Triangulation and member checks help establish credibility and truth value and contribute to trustworthiness of data. The truth value for the current study can be the acknowledgement that there are multiple realities, and the reality of each participant in the study was reported as accurately as possible by using direct quotes from their interviews to keep it close to the participants' "lived in experiences". Member checks occur when researchers ask the participants to review the data collected through the interviewers and the researchers' interpretations of that data, keeping in view that as insider researcher our own biases can be a source of influence on the data. Participants generally appreciate the member check process because it gives them a chance to verify their statements and fill in any gaps that might be there. In the present study the participants were also provided with transcriptions of their interviews before data analysis, so that the respondents had the opportunity to read the transcripts and provide respondent validation that would allow the transcribed data to be consistent to the actual recorded data.

Dependability refers to ensuring that the findings of a qualitative inquiry are repeatable if the inquiry occurred within the same cohort of participants and context. Conformability requires that we extend the confidence that the results would be confirmed or corroborated by other researchers through reflexive journals. As a researcher, reflexivity was a continuous part of the study. I maintained a journal especially during data collection and understanding the findings. Besides the reflexive journal the regular meetings with the primary and secondary supervisor also allowed me to keep looking at the study in a reflexive manner and to keep analysing my own views and thoughts regarding the study so as to become more aware of how I was understanding the various aspects of my study through the feedback from both supervisors and the work of other researchers in related or similar areas. Transferability refers to the degree to which the results can be generalized or transferred to other contexts or settings. However, applicability may not apply in all qualitative studies. If by transferability or consistency, we consider the existence of only "one reality" then when we acknowledge

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multiple realities, then consistency does not matter for the current study. The same can be said for any transferability that refers to how the current study's findings can be generalised.

Most qualitative research studies, if not all, are meant to study an explicit issue or phenomenon in a certain populace or ethnic group, at a focused locality in a specific context. Hence the applicability of qualitative research outcomes is usually not an expected feature (Leung, 2015). In terms of neutrality though, the researcher works in the same organisational context as the participants. However, none of the research participants worked under me hence minimising any conflict of interest that could have created issues of biasness.

3.7. Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are based on a study's context, the character of the research, type of methodological techniques used, nature of the participants and how the data will be applied and shared (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). I first obtained verbal informal consent and later written approval from the Director of the IBC, who is also the Chairperson Board of Trustees for the parent campus in the home country. The IBC does have a small research office for student research purposes; however, there is no research centre at the IBC that provides approval and consent for such research projects. The approval for the current study was given by the EdD Virtual Programme Research Ethics Committee (VPREC) after all standards and requirements of the Ethics committee were fulfilled. That approval from the VPREC is included as Appendix A.

All participants in the study were able to understand and speak English fluently. Parsons (2015) has emphasised the importance of informed consent in research, so that the rights of research participants are safeguarded and their confidentiality not violated in any way. Although no adverse effects of the research were anticipated, it was made clear that this study is not directed toward assessing either the participants' or the organisation's efficiency.

Participants were assured that they could withdraw from the study if they wanted to, without facing any consequences.

The study also required that participants be assured that their data would be secure without any breach of confidentiality, especially regarding the data recording. This area is usually of concern for participants due to the sensitivity involved in sharing data. Participants were also informed that they could refuse to be a part of the study if they felt that confidentiality assurances were weak and the researcher could not convince them properly.

The use of a tape recorder or a digital voice recorder is usually not an everyday experience for most participants; hence it is essential to use several techniques to reassure the participants; such as granting control to the participants to pause, hear, or end the recording at any time (Fabian & Gunther, 2009). Participants were assured that to maintain confidentiality and anonymity, the data collected would only be used to complete the dissertation and subsequent publication of it. There would be no disclosure of any participation to ensure privacy. To maintain data confidentiality, for secure data storage all files were stored on a password protected personal computer only accessible and in use by me as the primary researcher. In the case of any electronic transfers through email I ensured the participants that all data would be password protected whenever emailed

Coding allows for the safeguarding of the confidentiality of the participants as well as the use of aliases to maintain anonymity (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 1992). For the current study, I used coding to guarantee confidentiality to the participants, so there would be no identifying features could compromise confidentiality. The participants were also informed that the raw data would be stored safely for five years on a secure password protected university server. It was further explained that all participants in the study would be given pseudonyms or codes for anonymity, and geographical details would be minimised to preserve anonymity fully.

4.0 CHAPTER FOUR - DISCUSSION OF THE DATA FINDINGS

The discussion and analysis are combined in a single chapter for this study. As a researcher it was my understanding that combining these two components is a more suitable approach for qualitative research that has a rich and robust data set, as is the case of the present study. The rationale behind using this approach is to present the data findings and provide interpretations and link them with earlier findings found in the literature. This combined approach was employed to facilitate the navigation between chapters, as the data set at hand was a large amount of textual data, which otherwise would have been a tedious process for the reader.

4.1 Theoretical Background and Themes

The theoretical foundation for the study is predominantly based on theories of social learning (Brown et al., 1989), situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991), self-directed learning (Merriam, 2007) and transformative theory emphasizing self-motivated and reflective learning (Mezirow, 2012; Schön, 1983) in professional development. As human beings, we are social creatures and learning for us occurs as a part of the response to social interaction and participation (Wenger, 1998). Learning is a situated activity embedded within what we are doing and practising (Lave, 2009; Lave & Wenger, 1991). The four components of social learning, as highlighted by Wenger (1998), include community, identity, meaning/experience, and doing/practice. These four components were interrelated and evident in the participants' responses in the present study, especially in the major themes A and B. How individuals interrelate with one another and their environment outlines and styles their actions and their understandings of those actions and experiences, thereby shaping and forming learning (Thacker, 2015). Social networks, as collections of those ties, enable both collaborative and individual learning and also knowledge sharing (Schreurs et al., 2014).

4.2. Themes

Four main themes and sub-themes emerged after the coding stages were completed.

Table 4.1 presents the theme structure.

Table 4.1: Theme Matrix - Coded Theme Structures for the Analysed Data

Overarching Themes and Sub-Themes	Description
Theme A: Perceptual Understanding of Professional Development (PD) through Learning Theories	This overarching theme captures how professional development was understood by study participants by emphasizing social, situated, self-directed and self-motivated learning theories.
Sub Theme: Understanding Professional Development (PD) through Skill Development, Personal growth, and professional growth.	This sub-theme comprised personal and professional growth by improving skills through learning continuously via reflection, discussion, self-direction and motivation
Sub-Theme: Conceptual understanding of professional development as formal and informal learning.	This sub- theme comprises staff perception of formal and informal learning as ways through which professional development takes place to help staff to stay updated on the latest trends in their profession and improve their practice through upgrading academic qualifications, having discussions, learning from experiences on the job, and ongoing self-interest and motivation for keeping updated.
Theme B: Role of Professional Development (PD) in Higher Education (HE) as perceived by Staff	The overarching theme captures the influence of professional development in higher education (HE)
Sub-Theme: Impact on Professional Practice with emphasis on job embedded professional development	This sub-theme discusses how professional development influences professional staff practices with an emphasis on social, self-directed and situated learning by motivated members of the higher education community.
Sub-Theme: Impact on Teaching and Learning with emphasis on job-embedded professional development	This sub-theme discusses how professional development influences academic staff practice in relation to teaching and the learning by learning from experiences, discussions and reflections with others.
Sub-Theme: Impact on Student Learning Experiences	This sub-theme discusses how staff perceive their impact on student learning experiences through improved professional practice and teaching and learning through transfer of learning to actual practice.
Theme C: Organizational Context guides Professional Development (PD) in higher education	This overarching theme captures how the organizational setting and culture impacts professional development according to the staff at the IBC
Sub-Theme: Relevance of Organizational Context	This sub-theme includes IBC staff' perception of the relevance of the organizational context in professional development
Sub-Theme: Concept of Organizational Context	This sub-theme includes the role of unwritten rules and organizational support in professional development. The sub theme focuses on how the staff at IBC understand the role of organizational culture when learning in different situations, through discussions, self-motivation, and observations
Theme D: Role of Policy in Professional Development (PD) as perceived and understood by the IBC staff	This overarching theme includes the role of policy in professional development as perceived and understood by the staff.
Sub-Theme: Role of Policy as Beneficial	This sub-theme captures whether policy is viewed positively in its relation to professional development by the IBC staff
Sub-Theme: Role of Policy as Hindrance	This sub-theme captures whether policy is viewed as a hindrance in its relation to professional development by the IBC staff
Sub-Theme: Policy and Implementation at IBC	This sub-theme captures how the IBC staff view policy and its implementation in the context of the IBC for professional development.

As a researcher I was interested in addressing specific research questions and analysed the collected data with this goal in mind. The research questions were based on social, situated, self-motivated and self-directed learning. The coding was deductive and done primarily to view the learning theories mentioned here earlier that formed the basis for the interview questions. These codes and themes were developed and modified by reviewing each transcript in detail several times. The coding was done in NVivo before finalising the final four themes (as discussed in the Methodology chapter). The themes are discussed below.

4.2.1 Theme A: Perceptual Understanding of Professional Development

Initially word clouds were generated from the entire data set (Figure 4.1) to identify commonly occurring words and phrases used by the participants to identify the frequently occurring words that were simply for the purpose of gaining an initial impression of the frequently occurring words in the data set. Despite initiating the analysis using the world cloud, I did not solely rely on the word cloud to develop the major themes and their sub-themes.

Figure 4.1 The Initial Word Cloud of the Commonly Occurring Words in the Entire Data Set

A word cloud highlights certain words as frequently occurring in the data that allow the researcher to see the possible emerging patterns for coding, which then leads to categories/sub-

themes and eventually developing the main themes. After the first word cloud, a second word cloud was generated from the participants' responses to the first two interview questions to further look into the frequently occurring words in a limited domain of the first two interview questions. The frequently occurring words in the second word cloud (Figure 4.2) highlight the **formal and informal learning in professional development, teaching and learning, reflecting, discussions, self-interest, motivation, workshops, seminars, education, continues, skills, colleagues, community, reading, experiences, personal** and **initiatives** to name a few. The second word cloud allowed for a more intensive conception of frequently occurring words, thereby laying the groundwork for developing Theme A.

Figure 4.2 A Visual Overview of the Participants' Responses to Interview Questions 1 & 2

Fig 4.3 highlights the components that comprised Theme A and its sub-themes through the NVivo generated concept map. Theme A highlights how professional development is perceived and understood by the staff at the IBC. Theme A is comprised of two main sub-themes. The first sub-theme for Theme A is "Understanding Professional Development through Skills Development, Personal and Professional Growth", emphasizing skill improvement through learning continuously via reflection, discussion, self-direction and motivation . The second sub-theme is "Conceptual understanding of Professional Development as Formal and Informal Learning." It comprises formal and informal learning as the ways through which professional development helps the staff stay updated with the latest trends in their profession and improve their practice. The perceptions of the staff regarding the two sub-themes seem to be well aligned with the social learning theories (Brown *et al.*, 1998), situated learning (Wenger, 1998; Lave & Wenger, 1991), and self-motivation learning Knowles, 1968; Knowles, 1980).

Figure 4.3. Perceptual Understanding of Professional Development
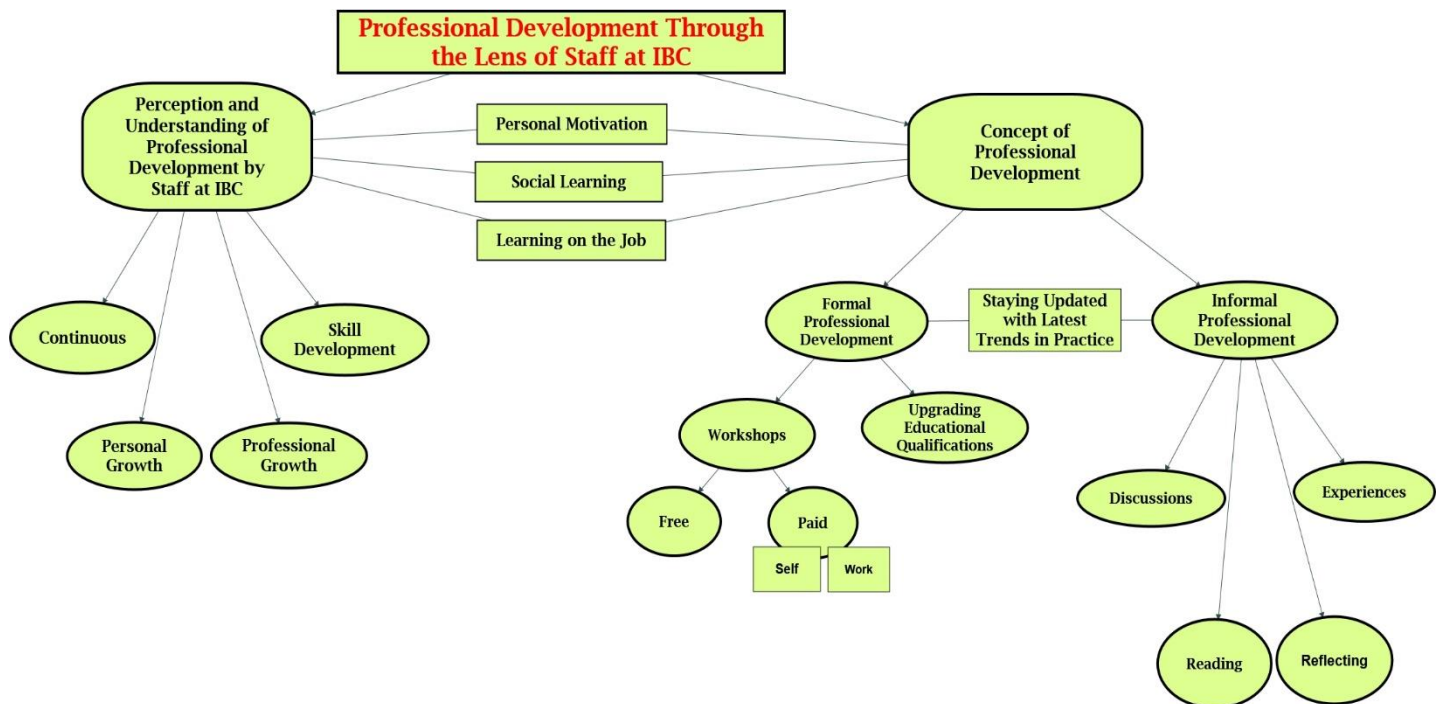
The present study participants perceived professional development as personal growth, professional growth, skill development, and continuous and life-long learning (Fig. 4.3). The participants' perceptions were supported through the vast array of definitions of the concept of professional development. One of these is the view of professional development as a *continuous process* that is intended to support the professional and guide the professional fill in any existing gaps in terms of knowledge and *developing their skill sets* (Gall et al., 1985). The participants' responses in the study corroborated the views of developing skill sets and professional development as a continuous and life-long process. Similarly, the participants discussed professional development in terms of personal and professional growth, which refers to the desire to develop one's set of skills to advance one's level of expertise in one's field for more *professional growth* (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). The present study participants perceived professional development as a continuous process of life-long learning that allows both personal and professional growth and skill development (a sub theme of Main Theme A). Participant 7 (professional staff) explained her perception of professional development as requiring motivation, interest and understanding the social aspect of learning to develop professionally:

> "....*Professional development for me stands for how and when you basically begin working in an organization and how do you start picking up things and how it basically influences your personality. I don't think it's difficult to keep updated if we have the motivation and interest to do so. It should be more of an environment where each one of us gets an opportunity to share and discuss without being judged and standing at an equal platform.....*"(P7)

Reflective practices play an important role in effective learning through situated cognition and situated learning theories. As learners when we reflect during situated learning we analyse our performance and determine how to improve in future experience (Bell & Mladenovic, 2015). This view was also evident in the participants' responses in the study that emphasised how their learning takes place within their work, be it teaching or professional staff. Schön's reflective model (1983) emphasised reflective practice as a leading paradigm in

teacher education. Reflective practice enables individuals to think about what, how, and why they reflect; it allows them to step out of routine activities and adapt to match their learners' needs. The primary benefit of reflective practice for teachers is a deeper understanding of their own teaching styles and, ultimately, greater effectiveness as a teacher. Participant 10 (an academic staff member) shared views and perception of professional development by emphasising the role of social, situated, self-motivated learning and reflecting on actual practice:

> *".......we are a very small branch campus and majority of us here are involved in several roles sometimes to help out a colleague as a personal initiative, sometimes out of interest to know more. We are also given other responsibilities other than teaching so as we are small group so we take up all those responsibilities and at times we might end up doing things which we are not familiar also so we try to get information and we try to learn about that through some videos or ask colleagues or anyone who is familiar with those things and then we try to bring that so these are part of our professional activities. We reflect on our work and discuss and try and improve......."*(P 10)

Participant 13 (professional staff) explained how he understands and perceives professional development with an emphasis on the personal motivation, self-interest, and learning that occurs within the context of the work environment of the job and through discussions and learning from other colleagues at the workplace:

> *".....It means how we can do the things in the best possible way in whatever capacity we are working. It's about new learning as well as improving on what we know already. I do keep myself apprised on these matters and make it my responsibility to keep myself updated by my own initiative and not waiting to be informed officially but making sure I know it to keep updated and aware....."*(P 13).

Formal and informal learning forms an essential part of the "concept of professional development" the major sub-theme of Theme A, according to the participants. Formal learning was discussed as a form of professional development and a major component of the sub- theme, "Concept of Professional Development" by all thirteen participants. According to the participants' responses, formal learning includes learning that occurs via professional workshops, seminars, certificate courses, or through upgrading their educational qualifications. Similarly, all participants referred to informal learning as an essential form of professional

development that allowed them to stay updated on their profession's latest trends. Participant responses emphasised that informal learning occurs with an emphasis on learning through colleagues, self-learning practices, reading, discussions and learning from their own practice and their own initiatives.

Although the participants discuss both formal and informal learning, the emphasis on informal practices of learning in professional development appears to be predominant for the professional staff, although the academic staff also highlighted the role of informal learning in their responses. The academic staff emphasised the role of learning on the job through discussions with colleagues, reading, experience and self-motivation. The academic staff also emphasised the importance of online courses, workshops, seminars through both self-initiative and as an organisation's responsibility to make such provisions for their employees. Ungar and Herscu (2019) in their study discussed the perceptions of academic staff in various stages of their career to understand the importance of formal professional development for new and advanced teachers who valued the participatory based experiences in formal settings. Professional development opportunities for professional staff are often given low priority in higher education institutions, even though the importance of professional staff cannot be undermined and no one would disagree about the critical role that they play in operating these institutions (Knight, 2014). In her study (Knight, 2014) also highlighted that professional staff places more value on professional development through on the job learning through mentoring and discussions. Similar trend is seen in the current study as well. The professional staff primarily discussed the role of discussions, mentoring, reflecting on personal experiences and learning within the context of their work as being more relevant for them, though not disregarding professional training by the organisation through workshops or seminars, upgrading educational qualifications by pursuing a higher academic qualification or attending courses at the same time (Figure 4.3). There was more emphasis on

learning on the job as part of the job profile, through experience at the workplace, through colleagues, discussions, reading, trial and error, and personal motivation. The participants in the current study discussed how important the role of discussions among colleagues and learning from others in the organisation is to use their learning and pass it on to others. This aspect becomes even more relevant in a context where there is no formal professional development program in place, as is the case for the IBC in this study (although participants did talk about workshops and seminars they have attended or they would like to attend, but done through their own initiative and not because the IBC sponsored these workshops and seminars for their staff).

Brown, Collins and Duguid (1989) in the Situated Cognition theory have put forward learning as a joint process rooted in the work or setting where learning is taking place, hence constructing knowledge that is fashioned and situated in actual work situations. Situated cognition theory by Brown (et al., 1989) accentuated that people's knowledge is assembled within and related to the activity, context, and culture in which it was learned. Learning is social and does not exist in isolation, as people learn while interacting with each other through collective and joint activities and communication, as they discuss, share knowledge, and problem-solve during these tasks.

The Situated Cognition Theory of Brown is linked to the Situated Learning Theory by Wenger (1998) and elucidates how informal learning from experienced colleagues and peers is vital in situated learning. The Knowles Model (1968) emphasised the role of self-directed learning based on the readiness of the learner, use of experiences, and being intrinsically motivated to learn. Similarly, the participants' responses emphasised their motivation to keep themselves updated by reading, discussing with colleagues, primarily to keep up with the current trends and happenings in their field of study. The participants considered this practice as essential to be better informed regarding transfer of this knowledge to their own practice.

Another academic staff, Participant 11 shared views on the importance of motivation and self-directed learning in developing and enhancing professional practice:

"...........Until and unless your determination to apply those skills or lessons in some real- life situations is not there then if that motivation and determination is not there and that instinct is not there, we will not be able to learn anything........" (P. 11)

The professional staff made fewer references to professional workshops, seminars, or advancement of academic qualifications in their perception of professional development (Figure 4.3). This observation can be considered an important one when planning and developing a professional development framework for the IBC. Based on the emphasis the professional staff placed on informal professional development where they learn more through discussions, experiences, colleagues from the job through their own interest and motivation, a framework of professional development should keep this observation as the focal point for professional staff. For the academic staff, the proposed framework can include both formal and informal professional development components while keeping in mind their approximately equal emphasis for both formal and informal professional development.

Participant 11 (academic staff) commented on the importance of workshops in professional development, although emphasising that it is through his self-interest and motivation, not something that is provided by the IBC where he is employed:

"........first of all formal training methods are formal training sessions organized by the organization or through an external source then it can be on job training. The most important and contributing activity in my opinion would be workshops...technical workshops where we can learn specific skills. I have attended certain workshops over here but out of my own interest........"(P 11)

Participant 2 (academic staff) also discussed similar views regarding the value for workshops and seminars as being crucial for professional development and relating it to her own motivation:

"........I'm looking for those seminars and sessions which I really find challenging worth dedicating and investing my time towards. It says more about your area of interest now or what you actually want to invest your time and rather than something which is available for free. I will be interested in taking up because it has some value to offer to

meet it is worth investing my time. It is worthy of dedicating those efforts towards it then only then I feel motivated to take up those seminars and sessions. ……"(P 02)

Almost all staff members during their interviews commented on learning significantly within the context of the work environment and the role of their own interests and motivation in this professional learning. Participant 1 (professional staff) expressed her views regarding learning on the job through practice and from the environment so it became more context-based within the IBC:

> "*.......Usually our point of contact is our home campus and we try to incorporate what is being done over there. As such I have not done any formal training in my work area related to records, but then yes I do look into things that are happening around me and my work and I try to improve on that....*" (P 01)

Academic and Professional Staff commented on the role of their own motivation and interest in facilitating their learning and professional development, be it through formal or informal ways. With reference to how professional development happens for her, Participant 3 (professional staff) highlighted her own motivation and her learning from experience:

> "*....So it's my responsibility to keep myself updated about any changes in these policies and it's mostly self-learning as we access the information ourselves so we are doing discussions within our department and getting advice from senior managers...*" (P 03)

Calvert (2016) highlighted an interesting point that there is more emphasis on identifying teachers who are more self-oriented and can lead their own learning and transfer that learning to educate others in the process. The views expressed by respondents in the present study also highlighted the same wherein participants discussed their own initiatives in directing their learning. This view is evident through the responses of both academic and professional staff.

Participant 2, an academic staff, on being a self-motivated and self-directed learner, expressed her views on developing as an academic professional:

> "*I am myself a self-motivated individual, so if I have to learn something, I don't wait for the organization to initiate something for my learning, I find a way myself. Now we are in a stage in our career where we don't wait for things to happen. We take initiatives*

ourselves and we need to be self-motivated so that we go and lookout for opportunities to learn something new or develop ourselves......." (P 02)

Lave and Wenger (1991) postulated that learning is unintentional and situated within authentic activity, context, and culture in their situated learning theory. This focus appears to support learning that occurs unintentionally within the context of a certain environment. When we consider the context of the current study and review the participants' responses, we can see a significant number of references to how learning for them at the IBC is occurring through their interactions with others and that learning is based on their roles and responsibilities within the IBC as well as how self-motivated they are regarding professional development for improving their practices. Thus, a lot of it was relevant to the context of their current workplace (Figure 4.1)

Participants' views on social, situated, and self-motivated learning in the present study were supported by other studies wherein higher education staff has emphasised social learning as a focal point in their professional development. It is increasingly recognised that social learning by academic staff can stimulate professional development. A study by Vrieling, den Beemt & de Laat (2019) searched for social behaviour patterns that can act as a catalyst for professional development, with an explicit focus on teachers' learning. The role of the social aspects of the learning process as professional development was highlighted by Van Amersfoort *et al*. (2011) in a study on higher education staff, which emphasised the role of networked learning in professional development as a significant finding of the study. In another study, Meijs, Prinsen, de Laat (2016) shared a vital observation highlighting social learning as a promising form of professional development. In their study, the academic staff liked to explain and share their knowledge, which is probably a common trait of teachers. The academic staff wanted to have control over their professional development by deciding what and where they would like to learn. They did not show an inclination toward anything that was not in line with social learning. Emphasising the importance of social learning in professional

development, Participant 8 (academic staff) discussed the significance of discussions as well as the importance of having community in learning:

> *".............as far as discussions with colleagues is considered it is helpful and I have experienced a lot of support and information sharing and they are always there to provide support. They're always there to help me out indirectly or directly................ if I'm isolated if I'm going to be only at the front-end development and I don't know what is going on at the back then my knowledge there is not going to be enough. It's going to be obsolete very soon, so we need to handle this. We need to have a very good community............"* (P 08)

Fullan and Hargreaves (2012) raised an interesting argument that the focus is shifting from workshops, general courses and seminars, to learning in the workplace and to teachers' building their own professional capital. This aspect is similar to the participants' views in the present study, be it professional or academic staff. Respondent 12 (academic staff) discussed an interesting point of professional development, as he realizes that the motivation to develop professionally should be an ongoing exercise, not something to be turned on and off at will:

> *"......so that it is a lifestyle that is to be developed and how do you develop through various formal and informal ways and you become a role model for others, then whether through formal or informal ways they do have an impact on the behaviour being projected......"* (P 12)

Thacker (2017) drew on concepts and principles of social and situated learning theory to examine the formal and informal professional learning among higher education staff primarily in academics. The staff in Thacker's (2017) study ranked their informal learning experiences as more beneficial, constructive, and significant for their classroom practice than their formal learning experiences. In the present study at the IBC, as formal professional development programs are absent, this aspect becomes important to explore as to what shapes the perception and understanding of professional development by the staff at this IBC and how did they consider how professional development played a role in improving their practices, teaching and enhanced the learning experiences. Richter *et al*. (2011) distinguished formal professional learning as taking place in a controlled environment, such as workshops, seminars or training, from informal professional learning, as those experiences that do not follow a

particular program and are often planned in isolation and not within the context of the teaching and learning environment.

Zepeda *et al.* (2013) expressed the philosophy that teachers grow, evolve, and emerge as professionals via the daily work they do, which is why learning opportunities embedded within such practise should be the focal point of professional development. Gheith and Aljaberi (2018) revealed a strong correlation between reflective practices and the attitudes toward teachers' self-development. The suggestion was to allow educational organisations to develop reflective and critical thinking practitioners to improve their staff's professional learning capabilities.

4.2.2 Theme B: Role of Professional Development in HE as perceived by Staff

The second theme in this study that emerged through the data analysis relates to the second research question.

Research Question 2: *How do participants perceive the role of professional development for enhancing professional practice and students' learning experiences in the institution being studied?*

Theme B and Theme A are linked. However, it is important in that each is discussed as a separate theme due to its emphasis on how participants perceive the role of professional development for improving their professional practice and enhancing the student learning experiences. The way participants perceive and view professional development for their own practice is in turn going to determine how they consider the relevance of professional development for improving their practice, be it teaching or providing professional services to facilitate and enhance students' learning experiences.

Similar to Theme A, a word cloud was generated from the participant responses to the third, fourth, fifth and sixth interview questions (Figure 4.4). As mentioned earlier relying entirely on a word cloud is not the most reliable approach for generating a theme; however, it

is a good starting point to use to see the frequently occurring words using the visual representation provided by the word cloud. Some of the frequently occurring words included the following: **Learns, learning, students, opportunities, learners, develops, knowledge, experience, teacher, practice, context, reflect, professional, opportunities, learning, socially, adults, trainings, providing, develops** and **educators**.

Figure 4.4 The Word Cloud for Theme B

Theme B comprised three sub-themes: (1) Influence on Professional Practice with an emphasis on job-embedded professional development; (2) Influence on Teaching and Learning with an emphasis on job-embedded professional development; and (3) Impact on Student Learning Experiences (see Fig. 4.5).

Figure 4.5 Role of Professional Development in Higher Education Setting as perceived by the Staff
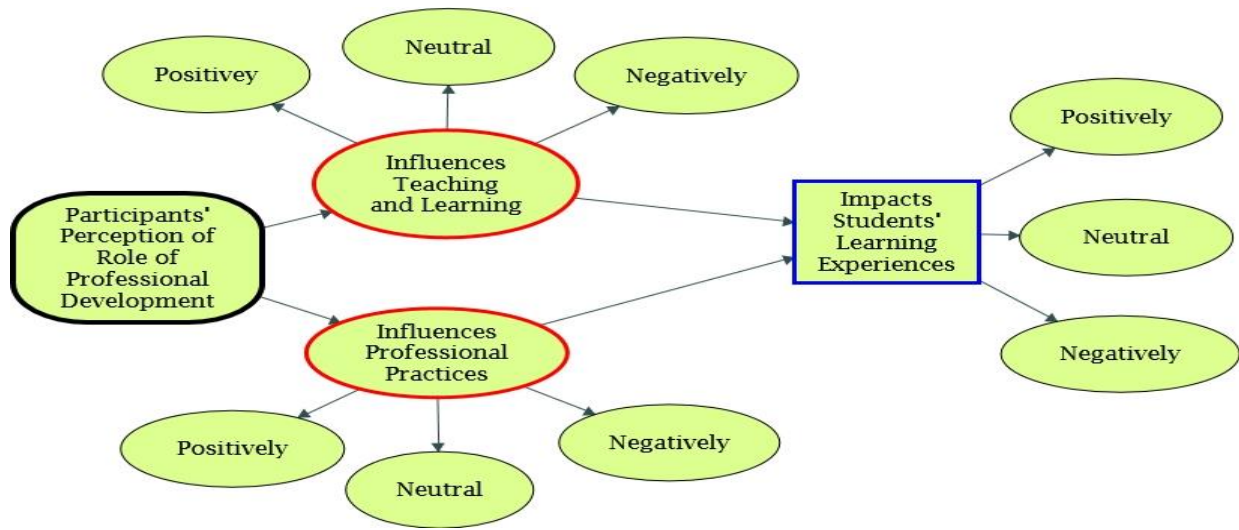
Figure 4.5 highlights the interconnectedness of how academic and professional staff perceive the role of professional development in terms of their teaching and professional practices respectively and the impact on student learning experiences as a result of how they perceive the role of professional development in a positive, negative or neutral manner. In the present study, all participants (academic and professional staff) responded positively regarding the role of professional development in improving their professional practices, teaching, and learning as all relate to student learning experiences in higher education and shared their experiences of how they have applied the new knowledge and learning they acquired to their professional practices or in their teaching. Condon, Iverson, Manduca, Rutz, and Willett (2016) explained that staff development has measurable impacts on teaching. The authors also highlighted the independent ratings of students' learning outcomes that establish that when faculty learn and apply enhanced ways of targeting desirable student learning outcomes, they transfer their learning into course materials and assignments that positively impacts and inspires their students' learning. Parkes (2014) supported the shared efforts by academic and professional staff in universities to shape student experiences in higher education. The staff at

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HEIs must thus be prepared and coached for further ongoing professional development and learning to augment their practices and improve student learning experiences (Crawford, 2008 as cited in Knight, 2014).

I used detailed excerpts from the participants, as these are more meaningful when used in their entirety rather than in small brief quotes. Quotes can be the life's blood of qualitative research; however, they are evidence, not argument, so it is essential to provide a relevant context for them to provide full clarity (Lingard, 2019). Participant 11 (academic staff) discussed an interesting perspective on how transfer of learning is important from being a learner to being an academic staff member who will facilitate the students' learning by using newly acquired knowledge gained through professional development.:

> *"........it's not only about your long-term development but people can attend courses online and these courses are very important. Let's suppose I am teaching a course on services marketing and there may be a course that is being taught by an MIT professor on Coursera and the title of the course might be the same as what I am teaching. So I can compare my course content with that of the MIT teacher and I can upgrade my way and style of teaching my course............."*(P 11)

At another point in the same interview, Participant 11 (academic staff) discussed the importance of professional development and its role in improving existing knowledge and skills for their best application both professionally and personally. He stressed that for him it is important to consider the transfer and benefits of a particular type of learning before he feels compelled to adopt it:

> *".........it depends on what type of skills I have acquired through professional development. For example, I attended a course online again in R Analytics and this has broadened my way of looking at a research question. How can I analyse a specific problem what specific areas can I cover and how can I design a study that is just one specific skill. ...."* (P 11)

The above response also highlights a mature approach toward what we learn. This learning can then be specifically considered in terms of how our experience as adults facilitates what we wish to pursue by better understanding its potential in terms of how it will benefit us and how the learning can be best transferred to our profession. This comment can also be

understood in relation to Brookfield's (1996) principles that emphasize the choices of the learner, focus on collaborative practices in the social context, and reflective practices to view and understand precisely what learning is taking place. Experiential learning discusses the role of the self-directed learner (SDL) where the focus is on the learner taking control of his/her own learning (Merriam, 2017) by learning through whatever channel and source is available and providing the required learning be it by taking a class, finding a mentor, or joining an online discussion group. It is crucial to consider self-directed learning in terms of the current study's context, as there are no formal professional development programs currently for teaching and learning in place. Hence, learning by a staff can be clearly explained through self-directed learning initiatives that apply to the interest of the entire staff as a single learner or as a group of learners.

Participant 10 (academic staff) expressed his opinion on how he feels professional development for him is feedback from program managers and students and how he tries to incorporate this feedback in his practice so as to facilitate how his students learn and how he improves his own practice:

> *".........Maybe a few things about teaching from the review that I get from my program manager that usually comes with the comment saying that I am fast in lecture delivery and students finds it difficult to catch up with the subjects like mathematics and statistics so I reduced my speed and at the same time you have to cover certain course outline follow the course content and whatever topics need to be covered for the semester so keeping pace with that and still be able to deliver the content and whatever has to be done for the particular semester........"* (P 10)

According to Solheim *et al.* (2017) effective faculty learning is also vital for student achievement. Faculty learning is a continuous process that promotes better teaching skills, mastering of new knowledge, and developing new proficiencies, which then improve students' learning. It is important to understand that when higher education staff believe that professional development as necessary, on what basis do they acknowledge its importance. The answer can be gained through emphasizing the role of motivation or their

acknowledgement of self and situated learning. When staff pursues professional development through either formal or informal ways, the process should be determined by what the staff wants to do with that new professional development and learning.

At another point during the interview, Participant 10 (academic staff) discussed the importance of professional development in upgrading his/her overall skills and knowledge, especially in an academic institution:

"......Professional development helps in keeping up with the current trends. Subjects that I teach as maths and stats require application software where you can incorporate them in your course. Faculty should be encouraged to learn from journals and update their knowledge of current trends in their field to keep abreast of what and how their field is progressing. Professional development whether through personal interest and motivation or through organization is essential for faculty in teaching and learning......" (P 10)

Participant 2 (academic staff) also stressed the role of the transfer of learning to our practice, as when there is no transfer of learning, then that new professional development will neither benefit the faculty nor the students nor the organization:

"The essential part of having professional development at the workplace would also require how I would implement the things I learn through these programs to my job practice as a teacher so in a way data transfer to relevant discipline should take place......." (P 02)

I observed that this view was reflected in other interviews as well for how important it is that what we learn we must apply in our own practice in order to improve our professional practice. Participant 4 (academic staff) corroborated that view that professional development allows us to be more prepared to improve what we deliver as lectures, and the learning is not just for us, but also for how we use that learning when teaching our students:

"......Yes it is a norm, a dire need especially if I'm not updated especially if I am actually practicing for myself it won't be that effective if I have to produce something by myself it won't be that effective if I'm not updated with the latest technology around. If I am teaching students, even then I have to be updated. I have to read a lot. I cannot actually apply the same knowledge that I had 6-7 years before when I was an undergraduate student myself so I cannot actually apply the same theories…."(P 04)

Onsman (2011) highlighted that the responsibility to provide professional development to ensure good quality of teaching and learning is closely linked with ensuring positive educational outcomes. Participant 1 (professional staff) discussed how important it is to apply her learning to her practice to facilitate student learning experiences:

> "*.........I am not aware about how a formal training would work but maybe it can help with the technical part of our skills to improve them to facilitate our work. For our daily tasks I think discussions and reflecting on practices seem more beneficial to me. These reflect in our improved services and our practice which I believe facilitates student learning experiences be it in form of accuracy of their data in our system or in terms of student academic records. . I feel it is important to have these discussions as an aspect of my professional growth so whatever's been happening has worked for me in improving my service……."*(P 01)

Participant 3 (professional staff) expressed similar views regarding learning informally through discussions and then applying that learning to their professional practice to improve the students' learning experiences:

> "*………Though it has been primarily informal but through trial-and-error, thinking back on my practice and reflecting I think I have improved how I interact with the students and communicate important requirements whether it is policy regarding admission, transfer or guiding them about GED. I have also improved my office skills as well. The admissions office is an important entry point for students in their academic journey and the counselling at that stage is important. For me a lot of what I do now and know is my self-learning. ….*"(P 03)

During the interview, Participant 3 highlighted the improvement in her own professional practice as follows:

> "*………When I first started in my current role in admissions department I felt I was not very clear about my role and my knowledge of policies and procedures for enrolment was not clear, but now I feel like it is very clear in my mind and it does reflect on my practice and in improving student experiences through the type of program advising we do…..*"(P 03)

Participant 5 (professional staff) performs a dual role at times, as she is Manager of Admissions and also involved in teaching two foundation level courses to students who need to fulfil the admission requirements at this particular IBC. She has not received any formal training for both roles, however, so her learning is primarily self-learning and her experience and discussions and using online available resources that she applies in her practice. She

discussed the importance of professional development in how it can facilitate her learning as a professional staff member as well as helping her in her teaching capacity:

> "……*In this part of the world the parents accompany their children for undergraduate admissions and stay in touch with us regarding updates on progress. My colleague and I have learnt this in our line of work that customer service matters significantly. We also act as liaison with program managers and with admission officers at our home and branch campuses in the home country. We implement this aspect greatly in our department. I am also involved in teaching 2 courses in the foundation program that some applicants enrol in due to deficiency in their admission criteria. So for a lot of new enrolments I am the first teaching experience they have at the institution. I keep myself updated with GED information to improve student learning …….*"(P 05)

As the IBC in the study is a small setup, sometimes the professional staff are also involved in teaching 1-2 courses during the year in the foundation program. Participant 7 (professional staff) discussed her view of how professional development links to improving student learning experiences and her own professional practice as well as her teaching delivery in the foundation course:

> "*Professional development these days is more about being savvy around technology, using technology, using media and using these resources to your own effectiveness and if you're learning something and if you could use that for your own advantage I think it would help you get more effective with your output be it as a professional staff or a teacher.*"(P 07)

Sutherland and Hall (2018) highlighted the need to justify the impact of professional development on teaching and learning in higher education. Mizell (2010) has emphasized that professional development is not effective unless it leads the academic staff to improve their instruction overall. The significance of staff professional development is that it should improve both teaching and learning quality in all educational establishments (Opfer & Pedder, 2011). Most of the participants in the current study discussed how they incorporate their learning in their teaching style and also the importance that their professional and academic development has for enhancing student learning. Whitworth and Chu (2015) emphasized the role of professional development in providing further expansion of knowledge and skills to improve classroom practices. Shumack (2007) in his study concluded that a significant majority of

academic staff indicated that they implemented their learning from professional development in both their classroom practices and instructional strategies.

As we examine the responses from all 13 participants, it is interesting to note that the academic staff (8) clearly expressed their interest in applying what they learn to their classrooms in enhancing the teaching and learning experiences. Similarly, in order to improve student' experiences the professional staff (5) expressed their interest in facilitating the students through new learning in such a way as to enhance their learning experiences. Most respondents talked about the role of motivation and taking initiative on their own to improve their practice in either formal or informal ways. Almost all discussed the importance of transferring learning to their own practice and how it plays a role in motivating them to learn what they can use to improve their practice or pass it on to their students. The intent with which we learn plays a dominant role in what we learn, how we learn, and why we learn and can determine the significance of that learning and how it is implemented in actual practice. It is also interesting to note that all the participants expressed their desire to do better at what they are currently doing.

There was no reference made by staff (academic and professional) to move up to a senior position, but the reference was made for wanting to improve their own work domain or enhance their own skills. This view is called "lateral professional development" (Avidov-Ungar, 2016). Helvey (2016) remarked on a noteworthy study by Cornerstone OnDemand that reported an interesting and surprising finding regarding how eager people are to make horizontal career moves into positions with similar titles and pay grades in different departments. The study by Cornerstone OnDemand further found that 89% of surveyed respondents said they would consider making a lateral career move with no financial incentive for several reasons. The respondents generally responded that they would be keen to make a lateral career move to find greater personal fulfilment (57%) or to pursue an entirely new career path (41%), and/or take

up a professional challenge (40%). The study highlighted the role of learning as a major motivator for employees and good to use as valuable knowledge by employers for engaging and retaining their employees.

Looking at Themes A and B and highlighting how staff understands and perceives professional development and its relevance in teaching, learning, professional practices, and improving student learning experiences, it becomes apparent that professional development needs to be continuous and ongoing with a significant social contribution that is self-directed and situated learning. The responses by participants emphasized the value of social, situated, and self-directed learning. Participating in social learning and knowledge sharing networks has become an essential aspect of lifelong professional development for academic and professional staff alike. Academic staff develops relationships within and outside learning organizations that help them learn, solve problems, and innovate and develop (Haythornthwaite & De Laat 2012). Social relationships that refer to the ties people have with others, can boost or impede the quality of life, rationality, sense of personal worth, health, and educational and economic opportunity (Hawe & Ghali, 2008).

Jolaee, Nor, Khani and Yusoff (2014) discussed that social network and self-efficacy significantly impact attitude and organizational support showed a strong influence on subjective norms toward knowledge sharing intention. These could be important factors to be kept in mind when developing the professional development framework for the IBC in the present study. The concept of flexibility and easy interaction between employees at all levels was mentioned by the participants quite frequently in the interviews.

4.2.3 Theme C: Organizational Context guides Professional Development in HE

The third theme emerging through the data analysis is "Organizational Context guides Professional Development in Higher Education". This theme emerges in answer to the third research question. Similar to earlier themes, a word cloud was generated in NVivo to visualize

the frequently occurring words to allow the researcher (Fig. 4.6) and readers to visualize the frequently occurring words, such as **unwritten, professional, development, organization, context, values, management, individuals, practices, opportunities, employees, motivation, support, culture,** and **differences**. Although, as discussed earlier, this is not the defining technique used for theme development, but only a preliminary step.

Figure 4.6. The Word Cloud for Theme C

Following the word cloud, a mind map was generated through NVivo. The mind map (Fig. 4.7) allowed me to visualize the theme development for organizational context, how participants understand the role of organizational context on professional development in higher education, and as related to the IBC in terms of teaching, learning, professional practices, and student learning experiences.

Figure 4.7 Organizational Context guides Professional Development in higher Education: Through the Staff Lens
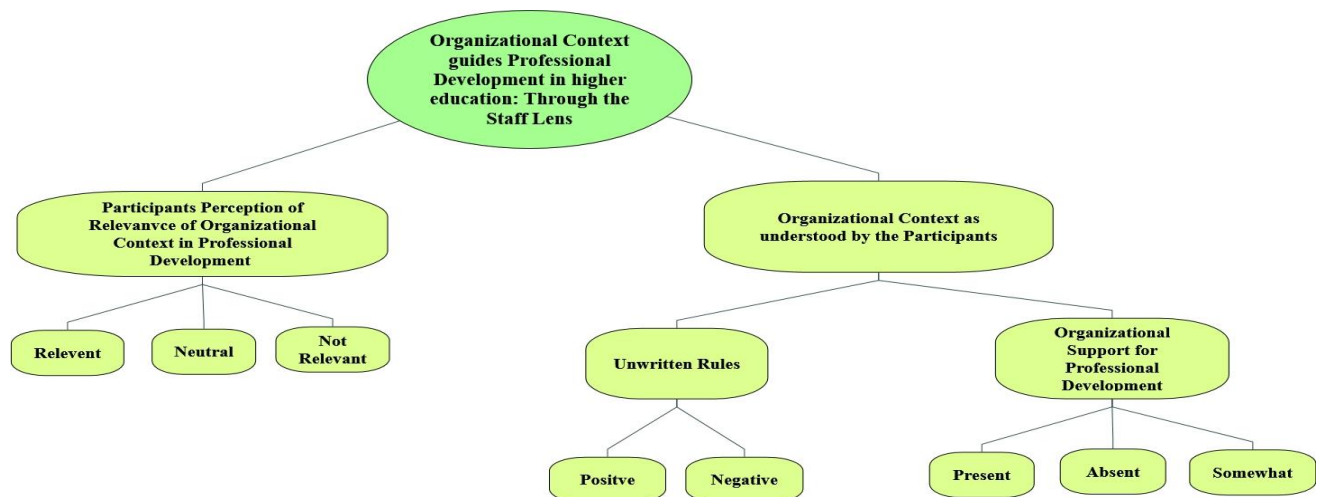
Figure 4.7 explains how the main theme C regarding Organizational Context guiding professional development is divided into two sub-themes: the first sub-theme is about the *participants' perception of the relevance of organisational context in professional development* and whether they consider organizational context as relevant, not relevant or neutral in relation to professional development. The second sub-theme is how *organisational context is understood by the participants, and this sub-theme is further divided* in two categories of *unwritten rules and organisational support for professional development* as considered by the participants in their understanding of organizational context as understood by the participants.

The participants discussed the role of organisational context and its relevance in shaping and determining professional development at higher education institutions with a specific reference to the IBC in the study. All the participants (academic and professional staff) expressed in their interviews how they consider the role of organisational context as extremely relevant in what practices are also prevalent for professional development for teaching and learning and professional practices. However, only three participants from the total of thirteen referred to the role of IBC in the study as providing some form of support for professional development at the IBC. However, their reference was not in terms of professional training being provided, but more along the lines of the flexibility provided by the IBC for the participants in terms of pursuing training or attending courses (not held or organised at the IBC) even during university time.

Organisational context plays a significant role when creating a productive work environment. The culture within an organisation and its communication to the people working for that organisation influences their work, attitudes, and behaviour and what policies are formulated and implemented in that workplace (Tsai, 2011). Organisational context and culture in higher education include the norms, values, and ideologies created and sustained in that

organisation and can be examined through examining an institution's mission, environment, leadership, strategy, socialisation, and history (Tierney, 2008). Organisational values are incorporated within that organisation, and it guides behavioural patterns and influences how stakeholders are treated by the organisation (Gorenak & Kosir, 2012). Organisational culture comprises shared assumptions, values, and beliefs, guiding how people behave and act in organisations. These shared values have a significant influence on the organisation's people and guides/determines how they dress, act, and perform their jobs.

The participants' responses raised a concern related to the lack of an organisational context that actively supports professional development. Participant 5 (Professional Staff) mentioned the role of the organisational context in providing professional development although this aspect was not emphasised significantly but only as an isolated occurrence:

> *"......the university did encourage me to teach the foundation program. I would consider this as a formal professional development practice for myself and while teaching in this program acts as a dual role for me because I get to interact with the students that helps me to perceive what the students really have in their minds......"*(P 05).

Participant 8 (academic staff) similarly mentioned that the IBC supported a way for her doctoral studies to proceed, not by providing a grant, but by allowing flexibility in her timing, so she can pursue her studies in collaboration with another university

> "*........When I took admission for my PhD so I was looking for opportunity where I can actually go and implement my data my algorithm so I requested the management at the IBC is there any way they could provide me with a kind of policy where I can look for my requirements and opportunities somewhere else while still working here at this IBC. The management supported me with this.......*"(P 08)

Participant 7 (professional staff) discussed the importance of organizational context and culture in relation to the professional development opportunities:

> "*.....Organizational culture does dictate your professional development because you see organizations that are more vision driven who want to have a lasting impact later on like 10 years down the line they would focus more on professional development because they would want to invest in their employees and again their employees would not be their liability. But for a smaller organization like ours which is just trying on day-to-day basis to just meet their targets and they are just focused on that the culture would not be very favourable for*

professional development because let's face it number one they would not have the financial means and secondly they would not have a dedicated professional to initiate those professional development courses so it would just by default become difficult for that. But yes organizational culture plays a very important role……."(P 07)

Besides the above three participants, no other participant discussed the organizational context at the IBC in terms of providing support of professional development opportunities for the staff. All participants (academic and professional staff) expressed in their interviews how they consider the role of organizational context as crucial in terms of what practices are prevalent for professional development for teaching and learning. Their understanding of organizational context included what are considered as unwritten rules that are a part of the organizational context as well as the type of support for professional development that exists at this IBC and also a general perception for how the context and culture in any HEI is important in professional development.

Participant 6 (academic staff) was quite vocal about the importance and role of organizational context in relation to professional development:

> *"………I think organizational context and culture have to play a very important role which is very important because if your organization is not ready to hold certain things that is that helps the employees sort of enhance their skills the employee of the organization will automatically feel de-motivated or maybe ignored or neglected so that doesn't create a good impression it might not just leave a very lasting impression or as far as that particular experience is concerned……"*(P 06)

Participant 13 (professional staff) was similarly quite expressive about his understanding of organizational context and professional development:

> *"……..I believe that the organizational culture is a sub culture of the bigger society. Whatever is happening in our society is what is reflected in our organizations as we get it from the main society from there. Nothing works in isolation and we get influenced by the bigger society. Our society is an underdeveloped society and it is reflected in our organizational culture. There has been no modernity and we are still almost Stone Age reflection and our organization is part of subculture of main cultural influences and we are doing the same thing which is happening in the society at large……….."*(P 13)

The participants also discussed professional development opportunities at the IBC in this study with predominant references made to a lack of formal professional development

opportunities at the IBC. The staff at the IBC referred to the flexibility in the organizational culture at the IBC which allowed for informal professional learning through discussions and work requirements. Most participant responses highlighted that, as such, no formal structure exists for professional development opportunities. The parent campus has an EDC (Executive Development Centre) that provides training for staff and faculty; however, for the IBC there is no such office in place. Participant 2 (Academic Staff) expressed her disappointment at the lack of professional development programs at the IBC due to a lack of interest by the organization:

> "*As such in my present organization we don't have any formal professional development programs in place, and there's no excuse for it.*" (P 02)

Participant 6 (academic staff) also talked about the absence of any professional development programs during her tenure at the IBC primarily due to the organizational context.

> "*It has been almost four years since I joined the organization. To be honest, but I don't remember attending any such session or workshops which is pretty much focused on teaching development strategies or methodologies. I don't think so I have attended anything like a formal or informal session that I have attended in this regard….*"(P 06)

Similar views have been shared by Participant 13 (professional staff) regarding a lack of support from the IBC in the available provisions for professional development.

> "*I don't think so that we have got opportunities created by the organization. It depends mostly on how we as individuals make any effort to go ahead. It is quite sad though especially for an academic and educational organization that no formal professional development opportunities have been provided. Whatever professional development is happening here is entirely on the initiative of the individuals and of their own self-interest and motivation.*" (P 13).

Simpson and Cacioppe (2001) in their article describe the "unwritten ground rules" (UGRs) and the role that they play in hindering or helping an organization to achieve its objectives. When we speak about an "organization's culture," we are referring to the leading culture that represents the central values shared by most of the organization's members. Strong cultures have a greater influence on the behaviour of its members. Unwritten rules are inferred from the observations of the arrangement between what the company proclaims in public and

internal documents, what management and staff say in public and private contexts, and what management and staff actually do. Following are some excerpts from the participants regarding what they consider as the existing organizational culture, which conveys a sense of informal environment that is considered an advantage and a shortcoming, depending on its influence on how it impacts professional development opportunities supported by the organization. The casual and flexible environment at the IBC in the study allows for flexibility in terms of timing, easy approachability with everyone at the IBC. At the same time, it also means that people take a more laid-back approach as well. However, most participants have considered this an advantage when doing research work, but a disadvantage when it comes to having a more formal approach toward professional development, its implementation, and staff development.

Participant 1 (Professional Staff) expressed her opinion of the unwritten rules at the IBC:

> *"In our organization from top to the bottom of the management we are a flexible organization and it's easy to be heard and to have access to anyone in the organization. So this is one thing that I was thinking a positive thing here I guess and but then they could be one drawback as since it is mostly an open door policy so a lot of time gets wasted sometimes due to the informal atmosphere."* (P 01)

Participant 2 (academic staff) has also talked about unwritten rules at the IBC in relation to the organizational context there.

> *"I wouldn't put it as an unwritten rule only, but I would say it is a common understanding. Over a period of time this unwritten rule is now a common understanding that even though the organization wants to provide professional development opportunities to our employees but we cannot, because we have certain constraints ok and now over a period of time even the employees have accepted it more or less….."* (P 02).

Participant 13 (professional staff) has also talked about unwritten rules as an important aspect of organizational context at the IBC and their detrimental impacts on lack of professional development and learning.

> *"I would say a lack of strategic leadership and vision is the main reason. The top management does not care about these things. They work within a very narrow context*

of their own understanding. It is not necessary that whatever they are thinking is the right thing for the organization and its stakeholders. As far as my experience goes I will not consider it as a good thing or a positive thing." (P 13)

. The organizational context of the IBC is not entirely similar to that of the home campus due to differences in the geographical surroundings as well as differences in the stakeholder types at the home campus and those at the IBC. The academic and professional staff have highlighted the lack of organizational support in providing for formal training and development to create an environment of continuous learning. This is contradictory to the vision and mission statement of the HEI.

The vision of the parent campus of the IBC says:

"…….*be a world class institute recognized globally for its excellence in education, scholarship in research and distinction in service……*"

Similarly, the mission statement of the parent campus mentions:

"…..*objectives of producing highly qualified, scientific and technical personnel to meet the country's requirements; conducting state-of-the-art scientific and technological research and development in support of the private and public sector; providing hi-tech scientific and technological assistance to the home country's industry to enable it to compete with the world industries in global trading; providing highly trained scientific and technological personnel to be able to attract the growth of high-tech industries and foreign and local investment; and providing a sound socio-economic and scientific base and infrastructure to the country to be able to meet the economic and technological challenges of the 21st century*".

Schein (2004) has discussed the espoused values as ones that an organization has openly adopted. They are reflected in an organization's artefacts, such as mission and vision statements, policies, and standard operating procedures. Enacted values, however, represent the supposed truth about what happens within organizations. These are values that are based on norms, attitudes, and the organizational culture within companies. Gopinath, Nair and Thangaraj (2018) in their study also discussed the value of espoused and enacted values in relation to the organization and its implications for the workforce and its overall performance in the organization. Espoused values exemplify the explicitly stated values and norms that are favoured by an organization, while the enacted values denote the values and norms that actually

are presented or converted into employee behaviour. Organizational values provide an outline of an organization's ethical standpoint and outlook and employee commitment (Ostroff, Shin, & Kinicki, 2005 as cited in Gopinath, Nair & Thangaraj, 2018).

The IBC in this study, as based on the participants' responses does not have any value congruence between espoused and enacted values as discussed earlier. The academic and professional staff have expressed their support for the role of organizational context in relation to professional development, as well as through their responses it is evident that the organizational context at the IBC is not particularly supporting a culture of promoting PD. Participant 2 (academic staff) expressed her views regarding importance of organizational context in relation to professional development:

> "….*If an organization believes in or has an element of belief wherein they dedicate their resources and they really genuinely value the development and growth of the employees and organization and stakeholders then they will take initiatives to invest in it. So whatever philosophy an organization follows is the foundation for the culture of the organization. That philosophy is a reflection of the context in which the organization is operating………."*(P 02).

This area could be a separate topic for research at the IBC, focusing on the divide between the two sets of values and how it impacts both employee productivity and organizational effectiveness.

4.2.4 Theme D: Role of Policy in Professional Development as perceived/understood by IBC Staff

A fourth and related theme D that emerged through the data analysis is the *Role of Policy and Professional Development as perceived and understood by the IBC staff* in the current study. Similar to the other themes, a word cloud was generated as a starting point for understanding of Theme D.

The word cloud in Figure 4.8 offers an interesting blend of words as expressed by the respondents during their interviews, specifically regarding how they view the role of policy and whether they perceive it as aligned to promoting professional development practices.

Words like **implementation, policy, vision, organization, culture, alignment,** and **clarity** are

a few of the interesting observations taken from the word cloud.

Figure 4.8. Word Cloud for Theme D

Following the word cloud, I used a mind map to depict the theme and its related sub-

themes. The mind map (Fig. 4.9) allowed me to visualize the theme development for participant

perception of the role of policy in professional development in higher education and

specifically at the IBC in this study in terms of teaching, learning, professional practices, and

students' learning experiences.

Figure 4.9 Theme D: Role of Policy and Professional Development: Through Staff Lens

The mind map provides an overview of how Theme D is further divided into three sub-

themes, including the perceived role of policy as beneficial, the perceived role of policy as a

hindrance, and the third theme that regards policy at IBC (present, absent, or not aware). The third sub-theme further is policy implementation as a sub-category of the sub-category "policy is present". All thirteen participants expressed their views as per their perception that a policy for professional development can be beneficial and none of them commented towards policy being a hindrance, however, majority of the participants also expressed the view that unless a proper implementation of policy is in place, that policy does not serve any purpose, and usually it is the implementation of policy that can be an area of concern. Overall participants talked about either a lack of policy for professional development or a lack of awareness by the participants regarding the existence of any policy for professional development at the IBC. The majority of the participants in the study voiced their support of policies for professional development. A policy that is well justified offers a logical and feasible solution to the policy problem and will determine to a great extent whether it can be implemented and how and to what degree (Viennet & Pont, 2017).

Participant 9 (Academic Staff) discussed the role of policies as crucial in professional development, specifically for teaching, learning, and professional practices in order to enhance student learning experiences:

> *"Policies are important. The whole institutional development and professional development of the people who are linked with institution policy is something that is giving clarity to the individuals, clarity about the role, clarity about the responsibilities, clarity about their choices, clarity about the right, so if policy is missing then everything is blurred…….."*(P 09)

Similarly, Participant 13 (Professional Staff) shared similar views regarding the influence of policy as being vital in professional development, specifically for teaching, learning, and professional practices to enhance student learning experiences:

> *"In any established organization the role of policy is very important and there should always be a policy for professional development in relation to our ever-changing world."* (P 13)

Regarding specific policy at the IBC a number of the professional staff were not even aware whether any such policy existed, while most of the academic staff expressed their views

that the IBC and the home campus are not aligned in terms of policy implementation for any of the professional development initiatives. Participant 1 (Professional Staff) when asked about awareness regarding a policy for professional development at the IBC, responded with:

"No, I am not aware of any policy for professional development at the IBC." (P 01)

Participants discussed their views of policies as being beneficial, if they were implemented and enforced as required. Participant 11 (academic staff) shared his thoughts:

"Policies need not be strict but more like guidelines. They can be flexible but they need to be there. I think in professional development in our organization we don't have strict policies which organization should follow but as no such policy to my knowledge exists hence no professional or personal development initiatives are provided or openly supported by the organization in relation to teaching and learning and broadly as well. When we have policy it plays the role of a filter or criteria. I would refer to policy as an anchor. Policy allows and guides us to compare our performance with a standard. Policy is very important and it is about each and every minor and major thing within the organization. Yes bad policies can interfere with professional development as needed. Good policies are good." (P 11).

Participant13 (professional staff) shared his thoughts regarding the value of good policies, when implemented properly.

"In any established organization the role of policy is very very important and there will always be a policy for professional development, in terms of our ever-changing world but the problem is implementation and whether the policy is relevant to the purpose. However, I don't see anything like that happening in our organization." (P 13)

Participant 2 (academic staff) shared her thoughts on the value of good policies, if implemented properly:

"I believe we develop policies with an intention of ensuring that these things happen or these things are done on a regular basis over a period of time it just becomes a sort of something which we have to do it, it becomes a sort of compulsory activity for us, so we don't put a lot of thought into it we just do it just for the sake of doing it. A policy just for the sake of coming up with the policy may not be helpful because you're talking about employee development and it shouldn't be governed it shouldn't be within the framework of a policy and it should be more of need based it should be more in line with the overall future of the organization because if you put me through development program today do not expect me to deliver the results tomorrow." (P 02).

Education policy implementation is a complicated and evolving process that involves numerous stakeholders and can result in failure when not well directed. In fact, a range of

reasons can thwart implementation from being successful, such as a lack of focus on the implementation processes when outlining policies at the system level; a lack of recognition that the core of all change processes requires involving people; and the fact that implementation processes need to be altered to adapt to new complex governance systems. It is, therefore, critical to comprehend the policy implementation , explain its determinants, and explore ways in which the policies can be clearer and more effective. If policy makers and stakeholders want policies to be effective and upgrade education, they need to share a shared understanding of execution to be able to work together on the process (Arshad, Mason & Carter, 2016).

Participant 3 expressed interesting views regarding policy and its implementation and a lack of initiative at the IBC in this regard:

> *"I feel there is no funding made specifically available for this branch campus professional development requirements as well. I don't see any initiative that has been taken. I would say most of our learning is informal, self-directed and dependent on discussions and researching information ourselves or asking help from other colleagues. There is an underlying expectation that everyone should pitch in and try and do things through our own initiative. I would say it is helpful but at the same time it can be an interference with actual work on several occasions. I think the quality enhancement cell should ask us as to what are other requirement and develop a policy according to the do that and if it so it suits the organisation purpose and enhances our skills and careers in line with the purpose or mission of the organization."* (P 03)

Professional development of faculty members is a relatively new phenomenon in HE institutions in the developing countries and its identity, functions, and strategies are still being explored (Phuong et al., 2018). The IBC in the study is also a branch campus from a developing country like IRP. To briefly summarize the findings for Theme D, the responses of the participants discussed earlier in this section highlight towards the importance of policies for professional development as perceived and understood by academic and professional staff, while emphasizing at the same time that policies will be beneficial only if enforced properly. None of the participants voiced their understanding regarding policies as a hindrance even in the context of not being enforced. Regarding policy for professional development the

perception was almost unanimous by all participants that no such policy exists at the IBC. Governments in the Country IRP are known to make only insincere assurances regarding the significance of education; however, what is truly more perturbing is the fact that whatever little allotments they manage to make, those in authority have constantly appeared incapable of utilizing those allocations to the fullest. The education budget is not adequate enough to expressively raise the standard of education in the higher education sector. Further, there is a dearth of consistent and forward-thinking higher education policy development (Navivala, 2016). Country IRP has a history of developing detailed and well-designed nine education policies over the last 70 years, but has fallen short of implementing them. As most policies seek to bring a change to how education works, applying them requires facing manifold trials in the process. These include communication and co-ordination issues, problems with organizational resources, capacity and amenability of policy operators and the policy targets (Weaver, 2010).

The development of education policies always needs to take into account country-specific conventions and descriptions of respective education systems. Not all policy options are equally pertinent for different countries, and diverse contexts can give rise to different primacies. In some countries, policy suggestions may already be in place; in others, they may have less bearing owing to the specific social, economic and educational structures, and traditions. Policy options can rather filter potentially beneficial ideas and lessons from the practices of countries that have been investigating for ways to improve their educational system. The internationalization of higher education has also created a greater need for transparency and accountability and requires a universal quality culture for higher education that requires useful policies to be developed to satisfy these objectives (Schmidt, 2015).

Table 4.2 summarizes briefly the important findings within each major theme to provide an overview for the readers.

Table 4.2 Summary of Findings for the Analysed Data

Themes	Findings
A	Professional development is perceived as continuous, self-directed, situated within practice, social and reflective practices. Academic and professional staff discussed importance of both formal and informal opportunities of PD with more emphasis on informal by professional staff. Academic staff talked about both formal and informal PD but emphasized importance of formal PD in order to stay updated.
B	Participants (academic and professional staff) regarded the role of PD as important in improving their professional practices, teaching, and learning as all relate to student learning experiences in higher education.
C	The academic and professional staff have expressed their support for the role of organizational context in relation to professional development, as well as through their responses it is evident that the organizational context at the IBC is not particularly supporting a culture of promoting PD.
D	Role of policy was highlighted as being beneficial in PD at the workplace, if implemented properly. Regarding the IBC in the study, participants discussed a lack of policy or being unaware that any such policy existed.

5.0 CHAPTER FIVE - CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

The purpose of this research was to study the perception and understanding of staff (academic and professional) regarding professional development and learning at an International Branch Campus (IBC) in the United Arab Emirates (U.A.E) in relation to its importance by improving professional practices as well as teaching and learning experiences, in the absence of any policy framework that is supporting professional development. The study participants were comprised of thirteen staff working at an IBC. Eight were academic staff, and five were professional staff. The findings from this study have helped to understand how staff perceives professional development and how it views its role in the context of higher education and more specifically, in the context of international branch campuses (IBC), where often the same conditions are not completely replicated and enforced as they are at the home campus (foreign education providers-FEP). In this chapter, I will present the conclusions, implications for practice in higher education, the limitations of the current study and final study recommendations.

5.1 Conclusions

The findings of this study draws attention to an alignment between the views and perceptions shared by the staff at the IBC regarding professional development and the social, situated, reflective and self-directed learning theories. The present study's findings accentuate that the academic staff emphasises the significant role of professional development for facilitating their teaching activities and consequently allowing them to keep improving their practices. Similarly, the professional staff considered the importance of professional development when facilitating them to improve their professional practices and enhance the student learning experience. As discussed earlier, the IBC does not have any policy in place or practice for professional learning and development; however, all the participants did share their

views regarding what they consider to be a shift in professional development from being done primarily through workshops, general courses and seminars (formal learning) to learning in the workplace, and building their own professional investments and resources (Fullan & Hargreaves, 2012). These views of the participants were not specifically directed toward only the IBC in the study, but rather their views regarded the shifts in trends of what they perceived as professional development. Kaplan et al. (1985) have highlighted that a significant percentage of learning takes place on the job rather than through formal training only, however, at the same time it is also essential to formalise this process in a way that the higher education professionals are provided with a space to reflect and discuss (as cited in Huet & Casanova, 2020).

Boud and Hager (2012) have ardently advocated for the presence of learning as a normal part of working. In educational organisations the staff learns during their daily work and by managing the challenges they encounter. They assert that more learning occurs when teachers rely and depend on their peers and colleagues' expertise, compared to the more formalised activities. Lovett and Cameron (2011) shared similar views in their study on the importance of learning at the workplace. Their study emphasised that 40% of the influences regarding staff professional development comes from seminars and articles and 60% of that influence comes from associations, discussions with colleagues, their experiences and interactions with students, and their everyday experiences in the workplace. Learning in professional communities and networked learning have both garnered much attention (Lieberman & Mace, 2010).

Mejis, Prinsin and De Laat (2016) defined social learning as social interactions, knowledge sharing within a community, and actual change in understanding of the learner. Similarly, the present study's findings also emphasise the networked aspect of learning, the sharing of knowledge and resources regarding the skills and abilities that enhance and improve

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learning between colleagues in the context of the work environment to upgrade the professionals in educational organisations. The present study also highlights that point that both academic and professional staff were already quite inclined and positively oriented toward social, situated, self-motivated and self-directed learning. This inclination encompassed other underlying factors, such as learning from colleagues/others, their interest in enhancing their learning to improve their practices at the place of work through a transfer of learning, their motivation to develop themselves professionally within their own practice as well as having a positive attitude towards knowledge dissemination and sharing through collaborative efforts. The study further found that the staff discussed formal and informal learning as part of their professional development and growth. The responses in the study highlighted an interesting point that although all the staff considered professional development as essential and vital for growth in their domain, at the same time this growth was not discussed only in terms of the formal learning opportunities. The staff at the IBC discussed various informal learning opportunities that they practised at the IBC. The views shared by the participants further highlighted the benefits of collaborating and sharing resources, availing themselves of online platforms with free courses, learning from their experiences, and learning through personal motivation. The participants shared their views regarding making use of these learning opportunities to improve different areas of their practice, be it teaching and learning or professional services offered to enhance the students' learning experiences at the IBC. The present study's findings also indicate that the role of a self-directed, self-motivated learner was predominant in the views shared by the participants in the study, and they considered the role of active participation and self-motivation as a requirement for acquiring knowledge through applying social learning principles.

Earl and Katz (2006) described collaboration as an intensive interaction, in which staff and other professionals collaborate and open up their practices to investigation and debate so

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as to enhance their own practice and help build their profession. Collaborative efforts as a part of professional development make it more effective because it engages teachers in both active and interactive learning (Hunzicker, 2011). People engaging in networked learning communities will create new ideas, new information, and new skills (Earl & Katz, 2007). Social learning is not a certificate course, and it is not developed or planned by management, rather it mostly occurs on its own accord during practice, or it may occur more deliberately during self-planned meetings to promote social learning (Mejis, Prinsin & De Laat, 2016). This aspect supports the findings of the current study, wherein the staff emphasised that they have explored learning venues through discussions with colleagues, by relying on gaining experience in their roles, and taking charge of their own professional learning or learning from senior staff and those with more experience.

The staff at the IBC did not absolve the organisation from the responsibility of providing more opportunities for professional development for its staff in order to improve their practices and benefit the stakeholders through professional development of their staff. Yeo (2008) highlights the point that a major part of learning at work emerges informally and in a self-directed manner. Knowles (1978) discusses self-directedness in learning as part of adult learning wherein adult learners are considered autonomous and capable of furthering their learning goals by using their experience as new learning resources, and being motivated to learn through using internal factors instead of external ones. The academic staff at the IBC also discussed that workshops and training are required as well as informal opportunities for professional development. The professional staff placed more emphasis on how and what they learn at the workplace through their colleagues, the nature of the work as well as reflecting their own practices to improve their performance

Another area that was specifically discussed in the study was the role of organisational context and culture in determining how professional development is practised and implemented

through policies and procedures. The staff at the IBC considers organisational context as a major factor to be considered in how professional development is understood and its opportunities provided, be it via formal or informal means. A major contributor to any organisation's success is its culture as it can significantly influence an organisation's performance and effectiveness in how that organization motivates their people. In defining culture, Edgar Schein, a leading authority in the study of organisational culture, used the word "group" to describe all the sizes of social units (Schein, 1980). Organisational culture describes the environment where people work and the influence it has on how these people think, act, and experience work (Warrick, 2017).

The current study's participants also discussed the gap between the organisation's vision and mission and what is already in place in terms of policies and procedures at the IBC. Schein and Schein (2017) discussed organisational culture, including three levels: Artefacts such as charters, vision and mission; espoused beliefs and values; and taken-for-granted underlying basic assumptions or unwritten rules. The present study participants further discussed the unwritten rules in their organisational culture that do not promote professional development as a top investment priority, which appears to contradict the mission and vision statements for the HEI in the home country IRP and its IBC (where the study has been conducted) . Participants indicated that although the organisation provides flexibility to all staff and faculty, there is no initiative taken by the parent campus to specifically address the professional development needs of the staff at the IBC. The participants shared their knowledge that the IBC and the parent campus did not invest in the staff's professional development opportunities at the IBC although it should have been a priority, given its unique nature.

As mentioned earlier, the IBC is not on the same financial footing as the home campus. The IBC, like most international branch campuses in their bid for survival amidst competition from other IBCs in a multicultural hub can fall victim to compromises regarding enrolment and

teaching standards and the values espoused in its vision and mission. Although the IBC regularly provides verbal recognition to employees for their innovation, hard work, responsibility, dedication and performance, there are no overtly stated policies or practices that will assure employees about the presence of a transparent system that provides fair and just assessments and appraisals. The QEA at the IBC has lately put measures in place that have performance appraisals (Appendix G1). However, the HEI's vision and mission or objectives do not embrace or openly state these measures, which can allow the employees to feel valued in the organisation. In fact, the three most important stakeholders, '*teachers*', "*professional staff*" and '*students*' are not even overtly mentioned in the vision or mission statement. The present study participants suggested that at the IBC, the aim of providing quality education and international recognition for excellence in education does not completely align with the required means and ends of education.

University culture can also be thought of as the personality of an organisation. University leaders are progressively becoming more aware of the concept of culture and its meaningful role for university change and development (Fralinger & Olsen, 2007). Still, even now, those who are in management positions are either unaware of the significant impact culture can have on any organisation or they are aware, but daunted by the extensive information available on culture, or they are not well informed about how to build and sustain any cultures effectively that can help bolster and maintain the image of their organisations. To work toward positive culture development, leaders must consider it as one of their key tasks and understand the importance of aligning organisation strategies and decision-making to cultural ideals (Warrick, 2017).

Calder (2011) mentions in his study on institutional values, vision, and mission statements on websites that out of the 55% of institutions that were able to classify their values, only a few could discuss key evidence for how these values will be made noticeable and

integrated within their institution. The staff of an academic institution echoes its values, and an institution that allows for enabling its staff through boosting the opportunities for creative and intellectual abilities will set that institution unmistakably apart from others (Stone, 2014). The parent campus of the IBC is accredited by the higher education ministry of the South Asian country where the parent campus is based. The accreditation enables the staff at the parent campus, as they can benefit from various professional development prospects as well as various research and study grants. However, at the same time the staff at this IBC are not able to feel empowered by the same vision highlighting staff development and retention through empowerment and academic freedom, which is one of the standards of excellence held by the higher education authority of the South Asian country and also amalgamated in the vision of the home campus.

It is quite important to understand the process of policy development rather than just policymaking in isolation. As individual and societal values shape policy development, it is essential to understand the full complexity of policy development to comprehend and appreciate who will benefit, for what purpose, and how (Bell & Stevenson, 2006).

Regarding higher education-related policies, the problem is more about the implementation of the policies set by HEC in the home country and the University Board of the parent campus. Due to an absence of accountability at all levels, these policies remain largely 'just policies' with no authentic implementation. Policies do not essentially empower or constrain, as sometimes it is how those policies are interpreted, understood, and implemented that makes them essential. Most staff in the present study were not aware of the types of policies that existed related to professional development. Although most participants considered policies to be important, unless they are aware of the policies and their implementation, they felt they did not serve any purpose.

Table 5.1 gives an overview of the overall way the professional and academic staff responded to the research questions.

Table 5.1: Similarities and Differences in Staff (Academic and Professional) Responses

Research Question	Responses from Academic Staff & Professional Staff	
	Similarities	**Differences**
1: What do participants understand from the term professional development and what it includes	Academic and Professional staff both emphasized continuous learning and self-directed learning in social context.	Academic Staff emphasized role of formal professional development including trainings, seminars, courses besides informal professional development and learning
2: How do participants perceive the role of professional development for enhancing professional practice and students' learning experiences within the institution being studied?	Academic and Professional staff both emphasized that professional development is important in improving their professional practices and consequently student learning experiences in case of academic staff and student overall experiences in case of professional staff.	Professional staff emphasized role of professional development but with more emphasis on informal professional learning and development.
3: What are the participants' views on the effectiveness of what they consider to be any form of existing professional development at the IBC in the study?	Academic and professional staff both discussed a lack of professional development opportunities at the IBC. However, the emphasis was more actively discussed by academic staff in terms of lack of any professional trainings or workshops. The professional staff also discussed a lack of organizational involvement for specific professional development	The professional staff discussed the environment at the IBC being helpful in providing them opportunities to learn from their colleagues in an informal manner and through their own trial and error experiences. The academic staff emphasized that the organization needed to have a more focussed approach towards professional development of staff and not rely only on informal and self-directed opportunities by the staff themselves.
4: How do the participants understand the role of professional development policy/policies in terms of improving teaching, learning, professional practices, and enhancing student experiences in higher education and in particular at the IBC in the current study?	All participants shared their perception 'that a policy for professional development can be beneficial and none of them commented towards policy being a hindrance. However, majority of the participants also shared the view that without proper implementation of policy it does not serve any purpose. Overall participants talked about either a lack of policy for professional development or a lack of awareness by the participants regarding the existence of any policy for professional development at the IBC.	

5.2   Limitations of the Study

The findings from the study were based on the unique perceptions and understanding of a particular cohort of staff at the IBC regarding the need for and importance of professional development. The particular cohort was comprised of staff (academic and professional) who had a role to play in the teaching and learning experiences of students at this IBC. The uniqueness of the findings was also due to the fact that there is currently no policy framework for professional development in practice at this IBC. The views shared by the participants present a unique perspective of this particular cohort regarding their understanding of professional development in the absence of any professional development programs in place. The following are some of the limitations of the present study:

- The specific role of leadership in relation to professional development has not been included as part of the study.
- Student perceptions are also not included to further strengthen the understanding regarding the role of professional development. This particular component can add valuable information to validate the findings of the present study through feedback from the students regarding whether they agree with the staff perceptions of how professional development adds to the teaching and learning experiences for students.
- There is no data for comparison from staff working in other IBCs in the region to ascertain if the findings from the present study are consistent with perceptions of staff at other IBCs in the U.A.E.
- Staff at the parent institution in the home country has not been included in order to understand the similarities and differences apparent in the perceptions of professional development by staff at IBC and the home campus.

Each IBC operates with its own particular set- up monitored by the host and home country regulatory bodies. In their attempt to be prepared for the challenges that will need to be faced in the twenty- first century, most universities and colleges today have developed strategies for supporting and augmenting academic and professional practices in HEIs (Chism, Evenbeck & Lees, 2002). The present study can thus be a valuable one in helping the parent campus and the IBC better understand the comprehension and perception of professional development and how a transnational setting can have unique requirements in terms of professional development and enhancement in relation to their practice.

There has been no study ever done at the IBC or its home campus. The current study in understanding the issues that exist at this IBC can help bridge this gap. As a piece of practitioner research, this study aimed at helping the IBC better understand their staffs' view of professional development within the institution, by focusing on the specific study population and the unique context of this one institution. That was the best way to proceed. Further research in this area needs to expand that scope and include staff from other IBCs in the region to ascertain if the findings from the present study are consistent at other IBCs in the U.A.E. Future research can also include staff at the parent institution in the home country so to understand the similarities and differences apparent in the perceptions of professional development by both staffs.

5.3   Implications for Practice and Recommendations: A Framework for the Professional Development of Staff at the IBC

In the area of professional development, teachers have long been approached as only passive consumers of pre-packaged knowledge (Mejis, Prinsen & de Laat, 2016). Based on the data findings highlighting these participants views regarding the importance of social, situated, self-directed and reflective learning, I would propose a framework for professional development of staff at the IBC through using the communities of practice (CoP) in order to better facilitate the concept of continuous and social learning. This framework will also encourage learning and critical thinking among the staff and put them in charge of their learning process in an active role.

Lave and Wenger (1991) are credited with proposing the concept of Communities of Practice (CoP) and placing learning as the integral component of social practice (p.31), and further highlighting that CoPs form spontaneously in organisations and are not just created from the top. This focus allows the members of these communities to maintain their sense of ownership and their role in lifelong learning. COPs include three vital components: the domain; the community and the practice. Huet and Casanova (2020) have emphasized COPs as strongly

linked to professional development. Farnsworth, Kleanthous and Wenger (2016) supported CoPs as they ensure that "learning" in them is "situated" within the practice. Sense (2015) discusses situated learning as evolving through discussions, conversations, observations between people, and can be referred to as "learning on the job" (p.288).

Macpherson and Antonacopoulou (2013) highlighted that CoPs initially did not necessarily involve participation from management when creating these communities; however, they do not specifically rule out management involvement (p. 267). Conditions in the organisation must support the development of CoPs which again is why management must have some involvement to provide the required support for the thriving of such CoPs (Sense, 2015). The concepts of context and community originated in the work of Wenger (1998), thereby highlighting the significance of communities of practice that facilitate the learner in the process of learning as a continuous learning process that has relevance to the work environment and does not exist in isolation as a stand-alone workshop or training session, rather a process with a start and an end (Lave & Wenger, 1991). I consider it more appropriate to have programs designed for staff that are working within the same setting, as it offers the benefits of learning within that same context as discussed by Lee (2005). An advantage when developing a learning community is the significant majority of staff that has been at the IBC for over five years; hence a strong sense of community exists due to the small size of the IBC and the limited staff that is employed. Boud and Hager (2012) emphasised the benefits of a bottoms -up approach for professional development, as it perceives learning as participation and a continuous process for the staff. Internationally, there is growing attention being paid to learning in professional communities and to networked learning (Lieberman & Pointer Mace, 2010).

COPs include three vital components: the domain; the community and the practice. It is essential that in order for it to be referred to as a CoP a shared interest, discussion and

interactions are important. Simply having a conversation with someone can provide us with a significant amount of information, however it does not mean it can be referred to as a CoP. In case of the IBC in the study the discussions and interaction between the colleagues are frequent and important in the learning experiences and professional development of the staff, however in order to give it a more structured approach and to be considered as a CoP it is important to develop a framework guiding and directing the informal discussions and conversations in a manner that it highlights the shared interests and CoPs are a familiar experience, so familiar perhaps that it often escapes our attention. Yet when it is given a name and brought into focus, it becomes a perspective that can help us understand our world better. CoPs can be formal, informal, face-to-face or virtual, operating both inside and outside the physical school environment. For the IBC in this study, the suggested CoP will be face-to-face and semi-formal in structure. It will be based on the following guiding principles:

- *Knowledge is primarily situated within the context of the workplace. Knowledge benefits more when it is shared and reflected upon by the staff.*

- *Knowledge increases when the staff and other stakeholders (students, university leadership and parents) actively engage in a learning community. They can increase their action capacity, leading to greater achievement and success in improving teaching, learning and professional practices for an enhanced student learning experience.*

The COPs during their initial stage at the IBC can broadly be in two categories, i.e. for the academic staff and the professional staff with a strong facilitator for each community. Each community can set its own goals and procedures to make its learning community more than just an informal discussion or a meeting. The targets for an academic staff CoP can be in the form of improved teaching and learning, use of innovative teaching techniques, reflection on

its own practice, gauging student learning, understanding student learning, collaborating with academic staff from the parent campus, and matching its institutional vision and mission with an open environment for more discussion and better collaboration. The professional staff's CoP targets can include improved professional services, enhancing and upgrading professional services to facilitate the student learning experience, developing customer service skills to enhance community relations with stakeholders, and collaborating with peers from the parent campus. As the development of these communities will be intended for continued learning, it will be essential for these communities to have some form of formal presence and structure with a reporting mechanism to create a system of checks and balances that can allow for gauging and measuring the learning, the improved professional practices, and their impacts on the student learning experience. Communities of practice have been widely used in the professional development of staff (Hill & Vaughan, 2018 as cited in Huet & Casanova, 2020). Communities of practice have been around for as long as human beings have learned together. I consider that given the context of the IBC in the study where a community sense prevails already, the use of CoP would be a feasible approach geared towards professional development and learning.

The professional learning needs of educators are evolving. The research describes a number of factors for success of CoPs (Lave & Wenger, 1991) including the below:

- Identifying a domain that energizes a core group

- Recruiting a skilful and reputable facilitator
- Tapping into the expertise of local and international experts
- Addressing details of practice
- Establishing the right rhythm and mix of activities
- Having visible support of organizational leaders, but without micro-management
- Accessing adequate resources in order to reduce barriers to participation.

Figure 5.1 presents the proposed framework highlighting the stages using Communities of Practice (CoP) that can contribute towards professional development of staff at the IBC.

Figure 5.1. A Proposed Framework for Professional Development of Staff Using CoPs

QEC at IBC to orient the academic and professional staff to the concept of CoPs

CoPs to be developed for Academic and Professional Staff separately

QEC at IBC to liasion with Home Campus Representative

CoPs to Meet and Discuss once a Month

Set Targets

Insight Sharing between Academic CoP and Professional Staff CoP

QEC sharing insights with Home Campus

Meet and discuss post implementation

Such learning communities will allow both the academic and the professional staff to be more actively involved in improving their practice as well as contributing towards institutional growth and advancement using new learning, improved professional practice and enhanced student learning experiences as goals continuously being pursued for existing and new staff that are joining the IBC.

6.0   CHAPTER SIX – FINAL REFLECTIONS BY THE RESEARCHER

The doctoral journey has been an extended time of professional education, lasting almost six years by the time I hopefully complete it. I joined the Doctoral program in October of 2015 after thinking extensively about the amount of monetary and time-related investment it would require from me. I had already been a part of higher education for 13-14 years; however, that was mostly in a teaching capacity until 2014-15, when I became more involved in administrative responsibilities as well and found out that I enjoyed that experience. Gradually, my involvement became significant, and I started understanding more about various aspects of higher education: delivery of a program, coordinating with faculty, students, examinations, the financial side, and the everyday running of an International Branch Campus. For me being a part of and being involved in these different aspects involved a significant amount of learning and most of it was self-learning using my inner-self sense of motivation because I wanted to learn and I wanted to explore various venues for myself and give back more to the organization.

During this learning process, I realized that there was no professional development plan or training in place for even something basic like orientation to use software or becoming aware of the latest advances in the field of higher education. My learning primarily took place through personal motivation and interest or discussions with senior and more experienced individuals in the organization or others and sharing experiences. This issue led me to think at first that it would be interesting to pursue my doctoral research in professional development in higher education. I was not too sure exactly what I wanted to explore, but eventually, after discussions with my supervisor, I narrowed the focus to a specific aspect of professional development and trying to study how the staff at the IBC where I work perceives and understands the role of professional development when improving professional practices, teaching and student learning experiences.

As I finalized the topic, the mindset for the investigation moved into understanding the staff's perceptions toward what they considered professional development and the role that aspect plays and its importance for improving professional practices and teaching and learning experiences. It would be a landmark study. The IBC where the study would be conducted was the only IBC of any institution from the South Asian Country IRP. There had been no earlier study earlier at this branch campus concerning any aspect of professional development or any study specific to this branch campus and its challenges. I reviewed the existing studies on professional development as it relates to transnational education and IBCs and saw a gap in the existing literature, especially in relation to understanding the perception of staff toward professional development in the transnational context. This knowledge garnered my interest in investigating this particular aspect and contributing something to the organization where I have worked since 2008. I have a deep emotional connection with this place. It has been my second home for a long time, through both ups and downs on the personal area of my life.

To prepare for data collection, I viewed several recorded interviews to learn the tips and guidelines that interviewers use during an interview. This exercise in reflexivity was a source of great help in my preparation for the actual process of conducting the interviews. Some of these key areas include the tone of voice to be used, avoiding probing unnecessarily when the interviewee refuses to give specific examples as that can breach confidentiality, and not asking leading questions. This exercise in reflexivity was helpful, not just for me as a novice interviewer, but also as an experienced researcher as well so as to keep learning and not become stagnant in one's interviewing skills (Donalek, 2005).

The data collection stage was one I approached with due caution. At first, I was apprehensive, as it required me to take on a different role and be more objective and research oriented. It required I pose questions and not let my personal opinions and views overshadow the interview proceedings and thus allow the participants to express their views, thoughts, and

ideas themselves without being influenced by my views as a staff member at this IBC . I had

to take on a more neutral stance toward the process to still allow the participants to be at ease.

As a researcher researching my own workplace, an insight into how my role could influence

the process and my research study outcomes was also crucial in determining the reliability of

the research findings.

The data collection stage took me two months. I had to consider a number of factors

before scheduling appointments for interviews, such as staff schedules, my own schedules,

and the availability of location where I would be able to interview with no distractions. After

the interviews were over, I explored my options for transcribing. I was never interested in

consulting a transcription agency. I was more interested in transcribing each interview myself,

as I believed that choice would allow me to be closer to the data, and this aspect could be the

most crucial component in this study. I used a software called "Transcribe" to transcribe the

interviews and then went over each individual transcript while listening to each audio file from

each interview to complete the transcription as efficiently as possible with also as much

accuracy as possible. Though it was an extremely time-consuming process, I believe it did

serve the intended purpose, as I understood my data clearly and gained immense insights into

what the participants were sharing and expressing regarding the nature of professional

development and how they understand it as a part of their profession.

The start of 2020 saw the entire world fall victim to the pandemic that changed

everything worldwide and also how we worked and offered our services. It threw us all into

different ways of offering our services, but I am proud to say that despite my lack of experience,

I led the e-learning initiative for my organization and saw social, self-motivated and situated

learning at work using immense reflective practices. Even though we are a small IBC, we all

collectively rose to this occasion through having a lot of support for each other, learning from

each other, and sharing new experiences. We were meeting up regularly as faculty and sharing

our experiences of e-learning with each other. I coordinated with our visiting faculty and guided them, explained the requirements to them, shared resources with them, and followed up with both students and faculty for how the experience was working out for them. It was very hectic and time consuming for everyone on campus and myself specifically, as besides teaching my own five large classes, I had taken on responsibility for the e-learning initiative. I understood it was a crucial time, and someone had to step up and lead. The experience made me realise that I had the ability to be a good leader and how to lead a team towards a target and to work side by side with the team and set example by setting the pace in the journey. I would say it was an insightful experience for me as to how I developed as a professional over the years. I have been available to students and staff almost around the clock from March 2020 to the current date. It was hectic, tiring, but also quite fulfilling, and I consider it to be a huge achievement in terms of a successful year, although we had no training in place or structured guidance from the parent campus, so it was all self-motivation and learning at the workplace using shared experiences. We had just completed three weeks for Spring 2020 semester when all universities and schools were shut down in the U.A.E from the 8th of March for students, thus forcing the IBC, like everyone else, to orient everyone to the e-learning platform. This change also meant communicating with students, visiting faculty and full-time faculty online to reassure them about the measures being put in place, so that no education time would be either missed or wasted. The students at the IBC had never been a part of an e-learning platform, so panic and concern were reactions to be expected.

This experience, however, further strengthened what had appeared as part of the data and data findings analysis. All staff in their interviews discussed the importance of social, situated, self-motivated learning and reflective practices as an essential aspect of professional learning and development for positive student learning experiences and improving their own

professional practices. The present study, therefore has even more significant implications for this IBC and its ongoing staff development.

I was initially hoping that by January 2020, I would be submitting a draft of my thesis for review; however, I understood that that schedule was somewhat over ambitious on my part, as being a full time higher educational professional with a family, it was not always possible for me to set aside a specific time for writing. However, I also realized that my persistence and commitment were valuable skill- sets that allowed me to keep moving forward. I will admit that the EdD's long duration did de-motivate me a bit and lowered the morale somewhat, but thankfully I was always able to pull myself out of that situation. I planned on submitting my first complete draft dissertation for review by the middle of November 2020, which I managed to do so despite the challenging time during the ongoing pandemic. I maintained a journal as well during this stage. Moon (2006) highlights the reflexivity in journal writing by allowing the learners to understand their own learning process.

Reflective practice requires an openness and willingness on the part of the practitioners to understand themselves better through reflecting on what they do, why they do it, changes needed for personal enhancement and desire for life-long learning. Edge (2011) has discussed prospective and retrospective reflexivity highlighting how we as researchers impact the research and how does the research impact us as researchers (as cited in Attia and Edge, 2017). The workings of reflexivity are assessed through observation and reflection. The value of reflexivity lies in the individual researcher's ability to construct an overall sense of congruence in their research practice. The workings of reflexivity are, therefore, integral to all human development (Attia & Edge, 2017). During this journey, I also realised that sometimes I was not able to articulate my ideas well primarily due to teaching and learning in an environment where English was a second language spoken and written by individuals from varied cultural backgrounds. However, from a positive point of view I discovered that, as

I was writing, I was gaining new understanding of the literature. Each time I read my own work, I managed to gain more in-depth understanding. This made me realise that, even as an experienced learner, learning takes time and is dependent on my own 'readiness to learn'. The support from the supervisors, especially the primary supervisor increased and became more critical. The feedbacks were not always completely understood, which in turn impacted the number of times the same manuscript had to be revised. At times, these feedbacks also contributed to the manifestation of self-doubts (Evans, 2013). These moments of self-doubt led me to think that emotional resiliency would be needed.

As I became a more reflexive learner during this journey, it became more evident that learning takes time and I have to keep learning. As I reach the end of this journey, I can say that it has been the most rewarding academic learning experience.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A- VPREC Approval

UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL | ONLINE PROGRAMMES

Dear Sumaira

I am pleased to inform you that the EdD. Virtual Programme Research Ethics Committee (VPREC) has approved your application for ethical approval for your study. Details and conditions of the approval can be found below.

Sub-Committee:	EdD. Virtual Programme Research Ethics Committee (VPREC)
Review type:	Expedited
PI:	
School:	Life Long Learning
Title:	Understanding the perception of and need for professional development by staff at an international branch campus.
First Reviewer:	Dr. Carolina Guzmán Valenzuela
Second Reviewer:	Dr. Deborah Outwhaite
Other members of the Committee	Lucilla Crosta, Morag Gray, Arwen Raddon, Eileen Kennedy, Julie Regan
Date of Approval:	6 February 2019

The application was APPROVED subject to the following conditions:

Conditions

		M: All serious adverse events must be reported to the
		VPREC within 24 hours of their occurrence, via the
1	Mandatory	EdD Thesis Primary Supervisor.

This approval applies for the duration of the research. If it is proposed to extend the duration of the study as specified in the application form, the Sub-Committee should be notified. If it is proposed to make an amendment to the research, you should notify the Sub-Committee by following the Notice of Amendment procedure outlined at

http://www.liv.ac.uk/media/livacuk/researchethics/notice%20of%20amendment.doc.

Where your research includes elements that are not conducted in the UK, approval to proceed is further conditional upon a thorough risk assessment of the site and local permission to carry out the research, including, where such a body exists, local research ethics committee approval. No documentation of local permission is required (a) if the researcher will simply be asking organizations to distribute research invitations on the researcher's behalf, or (b) if the researcher is using only public means to identify/contact participants. When medical, educational, or business records are analysed or used to identify potential research participants, the site needs to explicitly approve access to data for research purposes (even if the researcher normally has access to that data to perform his or her job).

Please note that the approval to proceed depends also on research proposal approval.

Kind regards,

Lucilla Crosta

Chair, EdD. VPREC

APPENDIX B–

Participation Information Sheet

Research Study: Understanding the Perception of and Need for Professional Development by Staff at an International Branch Campus

You are being invited to participate in this research study because you are a staff member of this university. Before you decide whether to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and feel free to ask us if you would like more information or if there is anything that you do not understand. We would like to stress that you do not have to accept to participate in this study and should only agree to take part if you want to.

Thank you for reading this.

Purpose of the Study

This study aims to comprehend how professional development is perceived and understood by staff at this 15-year-old IBC (where no professional development plans are currently in place) and how it can be implemented to enhance professional practice with a focus on teaching and on supporting the students' learning experience in higher education. To guarantee that the higher education staff can deal with the problems and issues of higher education today, it is important that they have the guidance and means available to them.

Why have I been invited to take part?

The study will look at the lived experiences of all staff working at this IBC through their narratives. This will lead to an understanding of how professional development is perceived and understood by staff at this 15-year-old IBC (where no professional development plans are currently in place) and how it can be implemented to enhance professional practice with a focus on teaching and on supporting the students' learning experience in higher education.

Do I have to take part?

Participation is voluntary. Should you decide that you do not wish to take part in the study, you are free to decline with no consequences. You also have a right to withdraw from the study if you do not wish to continue and also request that your data is excluded from the study.

What will happen if I take part?

If you agree to take part in the study, you are agreeing to be interviewed by me as a researcher. The interview will be semi-structured, which means some questions will be asked in a rather informal way to which you are invited to respond. You can request to have the question beforehand if you wish so. The questions will mainly relate to how you perceive and understand professional development and its need in relation to improve teaching and learning and enhance professional practices in higher education. The interview questions are **not** used to assess your performance nor that of your organization. The interview should last about one hour. The interview will take place in a face-to-face environment or through skype, at a convenient time for both of us. You can suggest a place to meet where you feel comfortable and where your privacy can be maintained. The organization's Human Resource Office can be informed of the interview process and can have access to the interview protocol and questions, if requested. Hence individual participants do not need to seek permission to participate if they are interested in being part of the study. The HR will not have access to any of the interviews or transcripts. With your permission, the interview will be audio-recorded so that I can easily recall what we discussed without any information being misunderstood or misquoted. If you wish, I will provide you, via a password protected email, with the draft of the interview transcription before coding starts, so that you will have the opportunity to comment and ask for amendments, if necessary. The recording of the interview and the anonymised transcriptions will be kept for five years, after the data collection has started, in a secured place, which will be password protected and only accessible by me. The Participant Consent Form will not require signatures but only initials in order to maintain anonymity of the participant. However, I might have to share with my thesis supervisor some of the data findings. The collected data will be used to write my EdD thesis and may partially be used for publications. Direct quotes can also be used to illustrate the arguments I'm making, but these will be always kept anonymized. You and your organization will receive pseudonyms or codes and no geographical details will be revealed so that no one will be identifiable in my thesis or publications.

Expenses and / or payments

There will be no compensation, whether in forms of gifts or monetary reimbursement as you shouldn't incur any expenses by taking part in this study.

Are there any risks in taking part?

No adverse effects are expected in this research. However, I will stress again that the aim of the research is **not** directed towards assessing your work or your organization's efficiency/productivity level. For your comfort, your Human Resource Office can have access to the interview protocol and to the interview questions, if requested. Moreover, you are assured that you can withdraw from the research at any time without any negative consequences. You have also the possibility to refrain from answering questions you don't feel comfortable with. This means should you not wish to answer any particular question or questions, you are free to decline without any consequences. Furthermore, you will have the occasion to read the transcription of the interview before data analysis occurs so that you have the opportunity to ask for amendments if necessary.

Are there any benefits in taking part?

The study has potential benefits for you and your organization, as well as for the academic and professional community in higher education by providing recommendations to the senior management for introducing a framework for professional development at this IBC following the findings and analysis of the collected data.

What if I am unhappy or if there is a problem?

If you should be unhappy with the interview procedures, or if there is a problem, please feel free to let me know by contacting me **(Sumaira Ahmed Osmani)** at the following email address: sumaira.osmani@online.liverpool.ac.uk or my thesis supervisor **(Isabel Huet, PhD)** at Isabel.huet@online.liverpool.ac.uk and we will try to help you as best as we can. If you remain unhappy or have a complaint which you feel you cannot come to us with, then you should contact the Chair of Liverpool Online Research Ethics Committee at liverpoolethics@liverpool-online.com. When contacting the Chair of Liverpool Online Research Ethics Committee, please provide details of the name or description of the study (**Understanding the perception of and need for Professional Development by Staff at an International Branch Campus**), and the details of the complaint you wish to make.

Will my participation be kept confidential?

Yes, your participation will be kept confidential. The data I collect will be used to complete my EdD thesis and for subsequent publications. I will not disclose to anyone that you have agreed to participate in this study. The PCF will not require signatures in order to preserve anonymity of the participants. Participants will only be required to initial the PCF. You will remain anonymous throughout my thesis and in any other publication. The interview transcripts will be stored in my personal computer that remains password secured until the thesis will be successfully completed and up to five years. You and your organization will receive pseudonyms or codes and no geographical details will be disclosed that will be used to identify you or your organization. My thesis supervisor from the University of Liverpool and myself will be the only persons who will have access to the collected data and the latter will be destroyed five years after data collection.

What will happen to the results of the study?

Data will be used to discover findings that will be used in my thesis to fulfil the requirements of the EdD doctoral program. A copy of the thesis can be provided if requested.

What will happen if I want to stop taking part?

You can withdraw from the research at any time and without explanations or consequences. Results up to the period of withdrawal can be used, if you agree to it. If this shouldn't be the case, then you need to request that they are destroyed and that no further use can be made of them.

Who can I contact if I have further questions?

Researcher: Sumaira Ahmed Osmani
Sumaira.osmani@online.liverpool.ac.uk

Supervisor: Isabel Huet, PhD
Isabel.huet@online.liverpool.ac.uk

APPENDIX C: PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT FORM
Committee on Research Ethics

Title of Research Project:

Understanding the Staff Perception of and Need for Professional Development Through

the Lens of the Staff at an at an International Branch Campus in the U.A.E

Researcher(s): Sumaira Ahmed Osmani

Supervisor: Isabel Huet PhD

Please initial

1. I confirm that I have read and have understood the Participation Information Sheet (version 1.3 dated 29 .01.2019) for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, without my rights being affected. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline.

3. I understand that, under the Data Protection Act, I can at any time ask for access to the information I provide and I can also request the destruction of that information if I wish, before the data will be anonymised.

4. I understand and agree that once I submit my data it will become anonymized and I will therefore no longer be able to withdraw my data.

5. I understand that confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained and it will not be possible to identify me in any publications. All the information provided by me will be pass word protected and kept locked accessed only by the researcher'

6. I understand and agree that my participation will be audio recorded and I am aware of and consent to your use of these recordings for the purpose of the current research.

7. I understand that my responses will be kept strictly confidential. I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials, and I will not be identified or identifiable in the report or reports that result from the research.

8. I understand that there are no potential psychological, legal, economic, professional, relational or physical risks associated to the participation in this study.

9. I understand that the HR at the IBC will have access to the interview protocol. However the HR will not have access to any of the interviews or transcripts.

10. I agree to take part in the study.

Participant Initials   Date   Participant Initials

_____Sumaira Ahmed Osmani_____   _____   _____

Researcher   Date   Signature

The contact details of Principal Investigator are:

Sumaira Ahmed Osmani

[050-1753139]

[sumaira.osmani@online.liverpool.ac.uk]

University of Liverpool

EdD Program

APPENDIX D: Interview Protocol and Interview Questions

Thank you for agreeing to be a part of this study. This study aims to understand how professional development is perceived and understood by staff at this 15-year-old IBC and how it can be implemented to enhance professional practice with a focus on teaching and on supporting the students' learning experience in higher education.

A copy of the Participant Information Sheet has been provided to you already and it is my understanding that you have reviewed it. If you have any further questions at this point please feel free to ask them.

(wait for participant response)

If there are no questions at this point I would request you to initial the Participant Consent Form so we can proceed with the interview.

Before we start with the interview, I would like to emphasize that your participation is voluntary. Should you decide that you do not wish to take part in the study, you are free to decline with no consequences. You also have a right to withdraw from the study if you do not wish to continue and also request that your data is excluded from the study. Should you not wish to answer any particular question or questions, you are free to decline without any consequences as well.

I would also like to inform you that the interview will be audio-recorded so that I can easily recall what we discussed without any information being misunderstood or misquoted. If you wish, I will provide you, via a password protected email, with the draft of the interview transcription before coding starts, so that you will have the opportunity to comment and ask for changes, if necessary. Data about you and your organization will be assigned codes and no geographical details will be revealed so that no one will be identifiable in my thesis or later publications.

If you do not have any question we will proceed with the interview.

RQ1

> 1.Thank you for agreeing to talk with me today about professional development. I guess a good place to start the interview would be to ask you what you understand by the term 'professional development'.

a. *Prompt: How do you keep up with the latest trends in your area/field?*

2. What sorts of activities do you think professional development includes?

b. Prompt - If they only talk about formal opportunities, prompt them to other activities that they themselves may instigate such as reading, observing others etc. *(Besides the activities you have mentioned earlier, have you initiated any professional development activities at work yourself or have you been a part of any initiative introduced by colleagues at work? Can you give some examples of any such activities that you might have undertaken?)*

c. Prompt –If they only talk about the current institution, encourage them to think of other activities they experienced elsewhere.*(In your work experience besides your current work place, what other professional development activities have you undertaken? Can you give some examples?)*

RQ2

3. To what extent do you think professional development activities play a role in developing and improving your practice as an academic/member of professional services?

a. Prompt – can you give me some examples of how your practice changed *as a result of engaging in any of the professional development activities that you have mentioned earlier?*

4. How would you describe the role of professional development activities in relation to the influence they might have on student experience?

a. Prompt – can you give me some examples of how student experience has been enhanced following professional development activities that you have undertaken?

5. We have talked about the range of activities you consider as professional development. I would now like to talk specifically about the opportunities that currently exist here in this institution. Could you tell me about any professional development opportunities you have experienced here, and your views of them?

   a. *Prompt: (At this point, hint towards peer discussions, collaborations, reading, research initiatives, reflection etc if there is no mention from the participant)*

   b. Prompt – ask them about the positives & negatives of specific examples if possible.

6. Have you attended any free sessions offered by both government and non-government organizations for professional development?

   a. Prompt: If you have attended any such sessions, how would you perceive their value to your professional development?

RQ3

7. How do you view the role of organizational context and culture in relation to professional development?

What I mean by **_Organizational context is_** *the "background" or "environment" in which the organization operates. And when we speak of background or environment or atmosphere, we are pointing to organizational culture. Organizational culture includes an organization's expectations, experiences, philosophy, and values that hold it together, and is expressed in its self-image, inner workings, interactions with the outside world, and future expectations. It is based on shared attitudes, beliefs, customs, and written and unwritten rules that have been developed over time and are considered valid.*

   a. As per your understanding what unwritten rules of behaviour and norms influence professional development at the IBC?

   b. Prompt: Are they any aspects of organisation context and culture that you feel promote or inhibit professional development?

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RQ4

8. (If the role of policy has not come up in their responses so far, and it is something you want to know – ask this question.) *We have talked quite a lot about professional development here at the institution but so far we have not discussed policy. Would you like to tell me about how you perceive the role of policy in promoting professional development?*

    a. Prompt – are there any aspects of policy which could hinder professional development?

9. Well we are coming to the end of the interview now, but before we finish is there anything else you would like to say about this topic that we have not yet discussed?

Thank you for taking time out of your busy day to talk to me and sharing your insights and thoughts.

APPENDIX E: Invitation to Participate

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

I am currently studying for my Doctorate of Education programme at the University of Liverpool in partnership with Laureate Education. As part of my degree completion requirements, I am carrying out a study to understand how professional development is perceived and understood by staff at this 15-year-old IBC (where no professional development plans are currently in place), and how it can be implemented to enhance professional practice with a focus on teaching and on supporting the students' learning experience in higher education. My research proposal has been approved by both my primary and secondary supervisor and ethical clearance has been granted by the University of Liverpool's research ethics committee.

The study will look at your lived in experiences as a research participant to understand how professional development is perceived and understood by you as a full-time staff at this 15-year-old IBC (where no professional development plans are currently in place) and how it can be implemented to enhance professional practice with a focus on teaching and on supporting the students' learning experience in higher education. The evidence gathered from the interviews will not serve as a way of testing your personal performance or the organization's productivity or efficiency level.

Your participation will be kept confidential. The data I collect will be used to complete my EdD thesis and for subsequent publications. I will not disclose to anyone that you have agreed to participate in this study. You will remain anonymous throughout my thesis and in any other publication. The interview transcripts will be stored in my personal computer that remains password secured until the thesis will be successfully completed and up to five years. You and your organization will receive pseudonyms or codes and no geographical details will be disclosed that will be used to identify you or your organization. My thesis supervisor from the

University of Liverpool and myself will be the only persons who will have access to the collected data and the latter will be destroyed five years after data collection.

The study has potential benefits for you and your organization, as well as for the academic and professional community in higher education by providing recommendations to the senior management for introducing a professional development program at the IBC following the findings and analysis of the collected data.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please email me at: sumaira.osmani@online.liverpool.ac.uk **or contact me at 050-1753139.**

Full details about the research project and your participation in the study will then be provided to you.

Thank you for having taken the time to read this.

Advertisement Version 1.2 (30.11.18)

APPENDIX F: INSTITIUTIONAL APPROVAL FOR RESEARCH

UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL

Authorisation Letter

My name is Sumaira Ahmed Osmani and I am enrolled in the Doctor of Education (EdD) Programme at the University of Liverpool in partnership with Laureate Education.

I entered the programme in order to develop doctoral-level studies in the area of higher education studies. This has been a very enriching experience which has allowed me to critically reflect in areas such as higher education management, professional development, and innovative approaches to educational leadership, decision making, as well as ethics, social responsibility, and social change. As an EdD student I am required, as part of this programme, to undertake a research project which will be part of my doctoral thesis. This research provides an opportunity for me to reflect on critical issues that I encounter in the context of my work, apply scholarly and research evidence to these issues, and, in the end, develop as an agent of positive change in our organisation.

In the context of my research in the EdD programme, I hereby request authorisation to access organisational data and interview a sample of full-time staff. This includes permission to access policy documents from the archives of the organisation which are not necessarily in the public domain and which I may not normally have access to when performing my work at the university. This also includes authorisation to conduct interviews with a sample of academic and professional staff to comprehend how professional development is perceived and understood by staff at this 15-year-old IBC (where no professional development plans are currently in place) and how professional development can be implemented to enhance professional practice with a focus on teaching and on supporting the students' learning experience in higher education. I attach to this letter the Participant Information Sheet which outlines in greater detail the nature of the current research project, as well as the ethics application form. The data collected from the institution will be solely used for the purpose of my EdD studies and to inform some publications that may be written as an outcome of this research. Confidentiality of the data will be guaranteed throughout the study as clearly stated in the ethics application form.

I appreciate the opportunity to engage in this research involving my organisation. Please contact me or my supervisor and/or the Chair of the Research Ethics Committee at the University of Liverpool with any question or concerns you may have.

My contact details are:

Researcher: Sumaira Ahmed Osmani

[050-1753139]

[sumaira.osmani@online.liverpool.ac.uk]

Supervisor: Isabel Huet, PhD

Isabel.huet@online.liverpool.ac.uk

The email detail of the Chair of Research Ethics Committee at the University of Liverpool is:liverpoolethics@liverpool-online.com

Sincerely,

Sumaira A. Osmani

UNIVERSITY OF
LIVERPOOL

Title of Research Project:

**Understanding the Perception of and Need for
Professional Development at an International Branch
Campus**

Researcher:
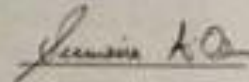
Sumaira Ahmed Osmani

1. I confirm that I have read and have understood the Participant Information Sheet dated [Version 1.2 dated 30.11.18] for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions, and have had these answered satisfactorily.

2. I hereby grant permission to the researcher for all relevant data access, facility use, interviewing of full-time staff and use of personnel time for research purposes.

3. All the staff who will be contacted to participate in the research shall have my approval and consent to be a part of this study as it is aimed towards improving teaching and learning experiences.

4. I understand that, under the Data Protection Act, I can at any time ask for access to the information provided and I can also request the destruction of that information if I wish.

5. I understand that information on the organisation will be anonymised, will be maintained as proprietary information, and will be kept in confidentiality. Additionally, I understand that no results of the research will be made publically available without my specific approval.

| Sumaira Ahmed Osmani | 01/12/2018 | *(signature)* |
| Researcher | Date | Signature |

| ██████████████ | 01/12/2018 | ██████████████ |
| Name of Person Granting Permission | Date | Signature |
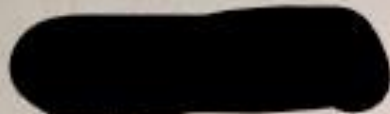
178

Appendix G: Quality Enhancement Cells in HEIs in Country IRP and Self-Assessment Framework

All HEC's recognized HEIs of **Country IRP** have established their Directorates of Quality Enhancement and have achieved W level of Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) mechanism. For the purpose, the section administers the activities w.r.t. establishing: new Quality Enhancement Cells (QEC) and IQA mechanism in HEIs. To reinforce its objective, IQA holds periodic Progress review meetings and perform monitoring visits. The quality of IQA mechanism in an HEI is measured quantitatively, on annual basis, by means of a score card. The assessment period starts from 1st of July each year and ends on 30th of June next year. The assessment is rated in terms of percentage and reflected in terms of four quality levels/grades i.e. W, X, Y, Z. The major outcome of a good IQA mechanism is an HEI ready for external evaluations by QAA-HEC (or any 3rd party) as well as by accreditation councils.

The IQA section executes its policies through Quality Enhancement Cells [QEC], established in universities/ Higher Education Institutes [HEIs], in **Country IRP**. The establishment of Quality Enhancement Cells roots in the establishment of Quality Assurance Agency (May 2005). Initially the PC-I of QECs was approved by DDWP, in August 2006 which was executed from September 2006. Consequently, the phase wise establishment of QECs began [Listed below].

These QECs, alongside undertaking many other measures for enhancing academic quality in HEIs, also implements quality assessment mechanism of academic programs, called Self-Assessment Process. The outcome of this process is Self-Assessment Report [SAR]. The main objectives of preparing SAR are:

To improve academic programs and ensure high academic standards by providing feedback for faculty and administration to initiate action plan for improvement.

To provide students with essential skills to enter the workplace well prepared in the core competencies: problem solving abilities, experimental and data analysis techniques, team work experience, interpersonal skills, basic and advance IT skills.

https://www.hec.gov.pk/english/services/universities/QAA/InternalQA/Pages/Summary-of-Self-Assessment-Manual.aspx

Objectives of QEC Home Campus

Quality Enhancement Cell/Institutional Research is a broad category of work done at colleges and universities to improve informed campus decision-making and planning in educational institutes' core departments.

IR/QEC supports institute-wide strategic planning; manages and coordinates the majority of

campus survey development and research and provides reports on management information and policy analysis.

Institutional researchers IR/QEC officials collect, analyse, report, and warehouse quantitative and qualitative data about their institution's students, faculty, staff, curriculum, course offerings, and learning outcomes. They are involved in collecting and reporting information to government bodies, to the public, and various college guide publishers.

The IR/QEC department has to provide an absolutely unbiased judgment by providing an open forum, easy access and clear assessment criterion. Hence, it works in isolation from all core departments. IR/QEC's subsequent intention is to link the academic, administration and social community together in order to achieve an environment of mutual trust and academic freedom.

Documenting Home Campus's mission.

Streamline processes across campuses according to International Standards.

Ensure that a conducive environment exists for Research and Development across campuses.

Documenting the mission and objectives of each academic program offered by Home Campus

To develop a robust academic program and ensure its integrity with qualitative and quantitative analysis

To measure learning outcomes with the undertaken learning objectives and the degree to which these objectives were achieved.

To ensure standardized syllabi across all sections of a course.

Documenting the mission and objectives of each non-academic unit of Home Campus.

Measuring on a regular and repetitive basis the achievement of mission and objectives by Home Campus as a whole and by individual academic and non-academic units.

To provide a cohesive and open environment of mutual trust and academic freedom.

To report to the Higher Education Commission (HEC) as and when required.

To ensure compliance of HEC guideline by Home Campus

Appendix H: UQAIB Quality Assurance Manual

https://www.khda.gov.ae/CMS/WebParts/TextEditor/Documents/UQAIB_EN.pdf
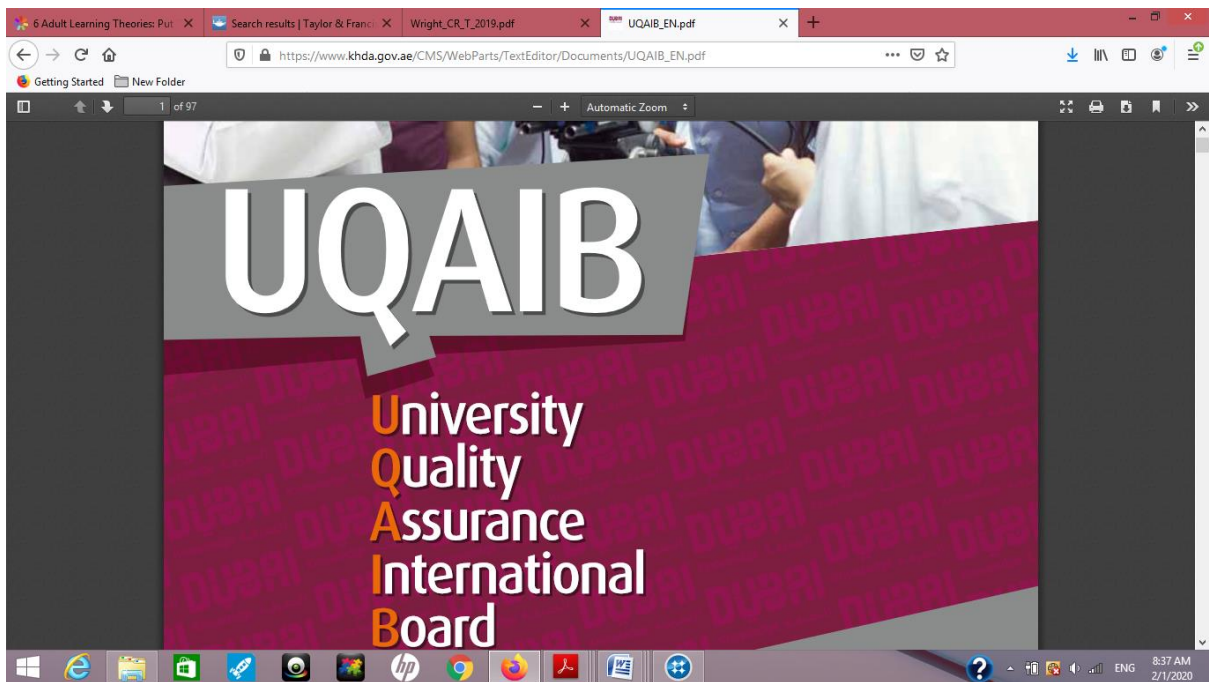
Appendix I: Higher Education Classification Framework

https://www.khda.gov.ae/en/highereducationclassification

Appendix J: Nvivo for Coding

The screenshot allows a view of the way Nvivo was instrumental in the coding and understanding of data through various stages. The screenshot below identifies the use of reflective journal being maintained as well as the initial and later coding stages along with summary of each transcript being maintained for a quick reference for my own use as researcher. The notes section also included a section on annotations where important references made by the participants were stored for use as direct quotes in Chapter 4.
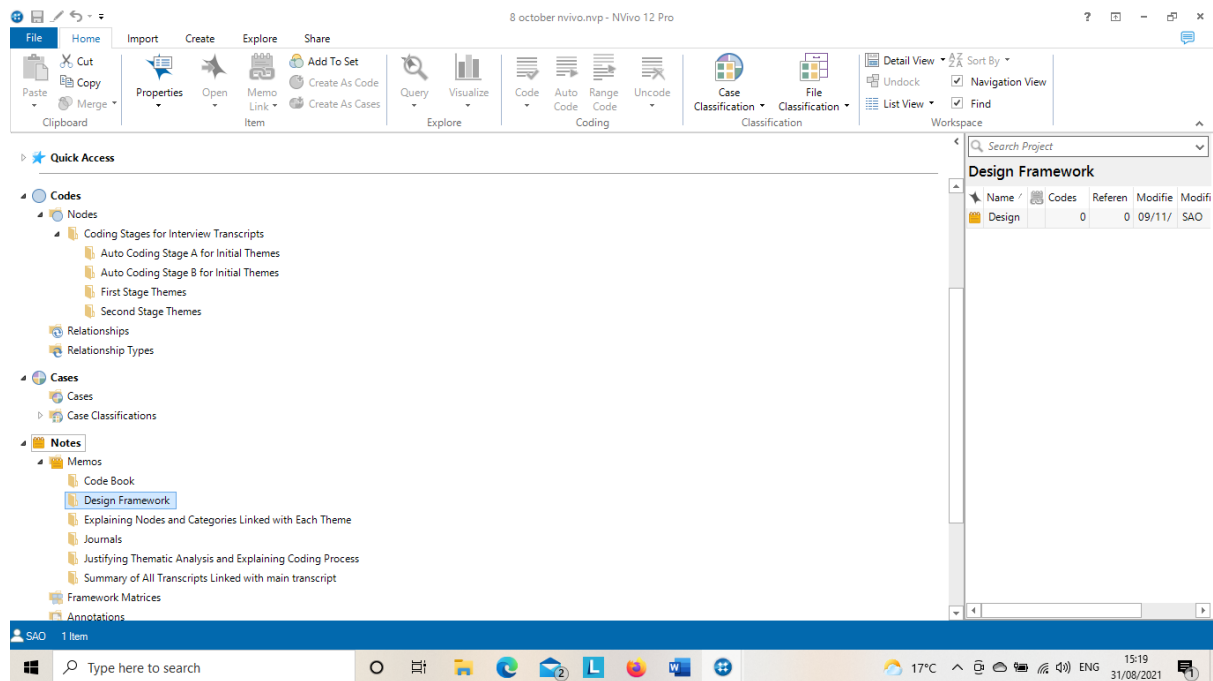
Progression of Coding

Auto Coding Stage A

Auto Coding Stage B

Research Journal

Another main node is that of organizational context in higher education and 2 child nodes of factors that determine organizational context and relevance of organizational context with further sub nodes of yes relevant and not relevant.

Factors Determining Organizational Context in HE according to Respondents

Organizational Context in Higher Educational Institutions

Relevence of Organizational Context

Yes

No

10/18/2019 12:41 PM
I am linking each memo with a mind map to explain the train of thoughts regarding a node and its sub categories.

10/21/2019 7:07 AM

The discussion on policy highlighted a basic discussion on policy and its implementation and was further

First Stage Coding

Second Stage Coding

Final Coding