An investigation of teacher professional development through the pedagogical cells of secondary school teachers of English in Senegal

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An investigation of teacher professional development through the pedagogical cells of secondary school teachers of English in Senegal

Dame Diop, MRes (Education), MA (TESOL), CAES, MA (English), BA (English).

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies, The Open University, UK, for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Some of the content has been removed

Supervisors
Prof Freda Wolfenden
Dr Ian Eyres
Dr Lina Adinolfi
Abstract

In educational research, a large number of studies on teacher professional development (TPD) have been conducted in various parts of the world and a range of insights gained on this area of research. Most ideas about effective TPD contend that it needs to be context-sensitive, promote learning through reflection, favour collaboration within communities of teachers, aim at improving students’ learning. However, although the role of teachers in education has been widely considered as determinant to successful student learning, there is still little documented knowledge related to TPD in many parts of the world, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa where it is argued to be acutely needed.

Taking a sociocultural approach to teacher learning by understanding it through a situated perspective, this study investigates how TPD is conceptualised in Senegal and implemented through the pedagogical cells (PC) of secondary school teachers of English. It also explores these teachers’ lived experiences of TPD within their PCs and their schools as working environments. Using a vertical case study approach, participants were selected from the three different levels of the organisation of TPD in Senegal: four senior English Language Teaching (ELT) officials at the national level, one teacher trainer and three departmental pedagogical cell (DPC) coordinators at the regional level, and 14 teachers from two schools and their leaders at the local level. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews, observations, and documents inspection. The analysis of the data is informed by a thematic approach.

The findings show that most of the conceptualisations of TPD expressed by the participants of this study are in line with current understandings of effective TPD in educational research, although they are informed by different approaches and views of learning. The findings also indicate that the studied teachers’ DPCs and PCs resemble learning communities in some ways and that the school cultures may impact on teachers’ professional learning. However, the main dissonance in understandings of TPD between the national level and the other two appears to be the scarcity of collective reflection within the activities of the studied DPCs and PCs.

This thesis argues for a shift on understanding of teacher professionalism within Senegalese educational context. In this sense, it proposes a cyclical collective reflection within teachers’ PCs based on classroom practice and the use of peer observation within these small groups of teachers. Nonetheless, this thesis also advocates for a combination of top-down and bottom-up approaches to TPD in this country where learner-centred approaches to teaching are being promoted.
Acknowledgements

This research study has been accomplished with valuable contributions from a number of people.

➢ First of all, my sincere gratitude goes to my Supervisors, Professor Freda Wolfenden, Dr Ian Eyres, and Dr Lina Adinolfi for their enormous contribution to this work. I do appreciate their patience, availability, generosity and guidance throughout this research. They have always cared for the progress of my work and my well-being, especially during the challenging times of the Covid-19 pandemic.

➢ I would like also to express my heartfelt gratitude to The Open University (OU) for granting me this studentship.

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➢ Many thanks to my loving wife, Mame Fatou Diop, and my children for their patience during all these years I have been away and to my brother Khadim for being by the side of my family while I was studying.

➢ Finally, these thanks are extended to my PhD student colleagues for their advice and support and for bringing very joyful moments to this journey through our social gatherings.
Dedication

This work is dedicated to my parents. To my father who sent me to school and did his best to help me succeed in my education. To my caring mum whose tears I still remember when I had to leave the village to continue my secondary school education in a town. May the Lord grant you longer and happier lives!

This work is also dedicated to my late brother, Habib Diop, who passed away amidst this research. May Paradise be his last abode!
Declaration of authorship

I declare that this thesis has been composed solely by myself and that it has not been submitted, either in whole or in part, in any previous application for a degree. Except where otherwise acknowledged, the work presented is entirely my own.
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<td>ATES:</td>
<td>Association of Teachers of English in Senegal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASC:</td>
<td>Association Sportive et Culturelle (a small football club)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BFEM:</td>
<td>Brevet de Fin d’Etudes Moyennes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BC:</td>
<td>British Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BERA:</td>
<td>British Education Research Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAEM:</td>
<td>Certificat d’Aptitude à l’Enseignement Moyen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAES:</td>
<td>Certificat d’Aptitude à l’Enseignement dans le cycle Secondaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAOSP:</td>
<td>Centre Académique de l’Orientation Scolaire et Professionnelle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBL:</td>
<td>Content-based learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLT:</td>
<td>Communicative Language Teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAMELTA:</td>
<td>Cameroon English Language Teachers Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CODESRIA:</td>
<td>Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CoP:</td>
<td>Community of Practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPD:</td>
<td>Continuing professional development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CNA:</td>
<td>Commission Nationale d’Anglais</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRFPE:</td>
<td>Centre Régional de Formation des Personnels de l’Education (Education Staff Regional Training Centre)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CREET:</td>
<td>Centre for Research in Education and Educational Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DFC:</td>
<td>Direction de la Formation et de la Communication (Directorate for training and communication).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPC:</td>
<td>Departmental Pedagogical Cell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EELPA:</td>
<td>Ethiopian English Language Professionals Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EFA:</td>
<td>Education for All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EFL:</td>
<td>English as Foreign Language</td>
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<tr>
<td>ELT:</td>
<td>English Language Teaching</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<tr>
<td>FN</td>
<td>Field Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FASTEF</td>
<td>Faculté des Sciences et Technologies de l'Education et la Formation de l'Université Cheikh Anta Diop de Dakar. (Faculty of the sciences and Technologies of Education and Training)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IA</td>
<td>Inspection d’Académie (Inspectorate in charge of education at the regional level)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEF</td>
<td>Inspection de l’Education et de la Formation (Structure in charge of education at the departmental level)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IGEF</td>
<td>Inspection Générale de L’Education et de la Formation (General Inspectorate of Education and Training)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INSET</td>
<td>In-Service Education and Training for Teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LPP</td>
<td>Legitimate Peripheral Participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LMIC</td>
<td>Low-to-Middle Income Country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MDG</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MoE</td>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OU</td>
<td>The Open University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAQUET</td>
<td>Programme d'Amélioration de la Qualité, de l'Equité et de la Transparence (Programme for the Improvement of Quality, Equity and Transparency)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PDEF</td>
<td>Programme Décennal de développement de l'Education et de La Formation (A Ten-year Education and Training programme)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC</td>
<td>Pedagogical Cell (Cellule pédagogique)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLC</td>
<td>Professional Learning Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PREMST</td>
<td>Projet de Renforcement de l’Enseignement des Mathématiques, des Sciences et de la Technologie (Strengthening Mathematics, Science, and Technologies in Education Project)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSE</td>
<td>Plan Stratégique pour l’Excellence (Strategic Plan for Excellence)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RELO</td>
<td>Regional English Language Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDG</td>
<td>Sustainable Development Goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSA</td>
<td>Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>UPE</td>
<td>Universal Primary Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>USAID-EDB</td>
<td>United States AID- Education de Base (Basic Education)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USAID-EPQ</td>
<td>USAID-Education Priorité Qualité (Education Priority Quality)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WELS</td>
<td>Faculty of Wellbeing Education and Language Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WIP</td>
<td>Work in Progress</td>
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CHAPTER ONE: Introduction of the research context

1.0 Introduction

In educational research, there is currently a large body of knowledge on teacher professional development (TPD) from studies which have been carried out in various settings around the world. Within this literature, the role of teachers has been widely considered as determinant to successful student learning and the significance of TPD stressed for the improvement of classroom practice. Nonetheless, there is still much need for documented knowledge on TPD in many parts of the developing world, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) where the need for the improvement of student learning and TPD has been emphasised by many scholars (Akyeampong et al., 2011; Bantwini, 2019; Bennell and Akyeampong, 2007; Buckler, 2015; Christie et al., 2004; Frazier, 2009; Kelani and Khoureby-Bowers, 2012; Kuchah et al., 2019; Kuchah and Smith, 2011; Reed et al., 2002; Samb, 2013; Tabulawa, 2013; Wabule, 2016; Wambugu et al., 2019).

Senegal, in west Africa, has a well-organised TPD structure (see Section 1.4.3.2 below) which gives teachers much agency to choose the focus of their professional learning activities and many possibilities of support from their peers within their teacher clusters called pedagogical cells (PCs). For instance, these teachers could reflect together on their practice, share ideas and documents, and observe one another. Teachers can also draw on advice from people outside their schools, such as in-service teacher trainers and other specialists in teacher education. This same structure can also be used by educational authorities (policy makers) to introduce reforms related to teaching. In other words, both teachers and educational authorities can initiate TPD activities. However, despite this well-defined TPD structure, as mentioned in section 1.4.3, there is still concern over student achievement and the effectiveness of teaching (OffDoc07,
Hence, as an exploratory research, this study investigates the conceptualisations of and ways of implementing TPD through this structure and a focus on the activities and lived experiences of teachers in the PCs.

As explained below in sections 1.5 and 1.6, the choice to explore TPD with participants from the Senegalese secondary school English Language Teaching (ELT) community is related to my background (as a teacher of English and an in-service teacher trainer) and my previous studies in this field. Since the study investigates the conceptions of TPD and its implementation within DPCs and PCs, the insights gained from it and the recommendations offered are relevant to teachers of other subjects within the Senegalese education system.

This first chapter of the thesis is divided into seven sections. It starts with a clarification of three terms often used when referring to teachers’ professional development and/or learning in the literature. While the second section provides an overview of TPD in SSA with insights from studies conducted in that part of the world and relevant to this research, the third one gives a short presentation of the country of Senegal. The fourth section provides general characteristics of education, secondary education, teacher training and professional development, and the teaching of the English language within its education system. The fifth section describes my background and motivation for doing this study. It is followed by a section on the purpose of the study. Finally, the last section introduces the remaining chapters of this thesis.

1.1 A little clarification of terms

Within the community of educational researchers, there is a controversy over the meaning of professional development. Generally, professional development has been understood as consisting of the different activities that professionals get involved in to improve their practice.
Frequently used to refer to this type of professional endeavour is the concept of continued/continuing professional development (CPD) (Knight, 2002; Kennedy, 2005; Lindsay, 2014; Louws et al., 2017). Although there is no consensus with regards to the scope of its exact meaning, the term is widely used, regardless of the profession, to refer to the ‘process of maintaining and developing professional competence’ (Lindsay, 2014:15). In this respect, it can be assumed that the foci of professional development initiatives are dependent on what is meant by ‘professional competence’ within the concerned profession. In addition, understandings of professional competence may vary from one context to the other. For instance, in the teaching profession, the meaning of professional competence may depend on how teacher professionalism is understood in the context where teachers work, which relates to educational goals, culturally rooted teaching and learning practices, learning and teaching resources, and other various factors (Malderez and Wedell, 2007).

In the literature on teacher education and professional development, it is largely accepted that teachers, as other professionals, need to continuously learn throughout their careers (see section 2.1.1). This type of learning is often referred to as professional learning and understood to be happening mostly through involvement in professional development activities. In educational research, several terminologies are used to refer to the different activities and/or programmes which teachers, who are already in service, engage in to enhance their professional practice (Knight, 2002; Kennedy, 2005; Louws et al. 2017; Guskey, 2002; Opfer and Pedder, 2011). Three of these terms, which are all relevant to this study, can be considered the most frequently used ones: in-service education and training (INSET), continuing professional development (CPD), and teacher professional development (TPD). Although they are often used interchangeably in the literature, there are some nuances in their meanings.

INSET is used in the literature to refer to the process of involving teachers in activities to increase their knowledge of learning and teaching and improve their classroom practice. Often
done through specific programmes, INSET tends to focus on teachers’ acquisition of new knowledge and mastery of new teaching skills (Neil, 1986; Richards, 1990; Waters and Vilches, 2012) with an objective of maintaining quality in teaching (Hayes, 1995 & 1997; Chambers, 1997). In many cases, INSET aims at introducing novelty in the teaching and learning process through training sessions (Waters and Vilches, 2012) and requires the involvement of people external to schools from whom teachers learn. In this sense, other stakeholders, such as governments are involved, especially when those programmes are meant to help teachers to implement education reforms. However, as will be discussed later in this thesis (Chapters Two, Seven and Eight), professional development through training has been considered ineffective by many scholars, especially when it is informed by a top-down approach and consists solely in providing teachers with pedagogical knowledge to be implemented in their classrooms later.

The second term, CPD, is often used in the field of teacher education and professional development to refer to programmes aiming at enhancing teachers’ professional learning and practice. However, this widely shared understanding of CPD has evolved from consisting of mainly formal learning activities, such as courses and training programmes often run by experts, to including in its scope both formal and informal learning activities by professionals themselves (Friedman and Phillips, 2004; Lindsay, 2014). Hence, CPD is seen as related to the lifelong learning philosophy (Knight, 2002) which has been recently given much attention in educational research. This understanding of CPD with a larger scope is also consistent with the new trends of understandings of adult learning (Farrell, 2013), learning in the workplace (Eraut, 2004), and the emphasis of the central role that human agency plays in effective learning (Billet, 2002).

The third term, also frequently encountered in the literature, is TPD. Within educational research, largely shared understandings of TPD are consistent with the meaning of CPD.
Similar to recent understandings of CPD (Guskey, 2002; Kennedy, 2005; Opfer and Pedder, 2011), TPD also covers formal professional learning activities and those with a lesser degree of formality. For example, Rodrigues (2005) defines a TPD activity as ‘anything that helps progress teachers’ existing skills or enhance their professionalism’ (p. 127). Although her definition may seem simplistic, its relevance here lies in the fact that it includes in the scope of TPD both activities initiated by others for teachers and those conceived and carried out by teachers themselves either individually or collectively. This way of viewing TPD is consistent with the promotion of current understandings of learning as a lifelong endeavour. In addition, it can be argued that the word development connotes a continuity in action or thought. Thus, similar to CPD, TPD conveys the continuous character of teacher learning when understood as an ongoing process.

In the context of the current study, the French term often encountered in the consulted official documents is ‘la formation continue’ (continuous training). Understandings of this term, as expressed in those documents, tend to refer to the formal teacher learning activities led by the different actors in charge of teacher professional development within the Senegalese education system (see more of this in section 1.4.3 below). In this sense, it may be seen as having a meaning similar to that of INSET. However, as noted above, it must be understood that Senegalese educational authorities also include in the scope of ‘formation continue’ (FC) the teachers’ own initiatives, especially those taken within their pedagogical cells, which aim at improving their teaching and, consequently, their students’ learning outcomes (OffDoc05, 2011; OffDoc09, 2014; OffDoc14, 2018). In other words, the term ‘FC’ used in the Senegalese context includes both formal activities (e.g. those organised by in-service teacher trainers) and the informal ones (e.g. voluntary participation in activities initiated by teachers themselves). For instance, there are various informal teacher learning opportunities available within the Senegalese ELT community, which is the studied population of this research (see section 1.4.4
for more detail on this). By and large, ‘FC’ is used to refer to all the different activities in which teachers engage for the improvement of their practice while they are already in service, which resonates with understandings of CPD and TPD as stated above. Nonetheless, due to the fact that ‘FC’ is often used with much vagueness in the consulted documents, it is worth recognising the difficulty in choosing between those three terms to convey its exact meaning.

In the rest of this thesis, unless otherwise mentioned, TPD and CPD will be used interchangeably to refer to all activities meant to enhance teacher learning as conveyed through the terms explained above. This is because understandings of both terms are consistent with current thinking on ways of enhancing teacher professional learning in teacher education literature. The next section of this introductory chapter provides a short overview of TPD in Sub-Saharan Africa.

### 1.2 An overview of TPD in Sub-Saharan Africa

The current state of TPD in SSA is strongly linked to the recent changes in the education sector. In the past three decades, a number of initiatives have been taken to achieve internationally set goals for the improvement of education within this part of the world (Bennell and Akyeampong, 2007; Christie et al., 2004; Wabule, 2016; Reed et al., 2002). Chronologically, these objectives firstly consisted of the ‘Education for All’ (EFA) which was adopted at the World Conference on Education in Jomtien (UNESCO, 1990), ‘Universal Primary Education’ (UPE) by 2015 as part of the millennium development goals (MDGs) agreed upon at the World Education Forum in Dakar (UNESCO, 2000). Then, more recently in 2015, building on those previous goals, the sustainable development goal 4 (SDG4) (to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all), among others, was adopted in the United Nations Sustainable Development summit held in New York. The first
two commitments are considered to have positively impacted on the access to education in many parts of the world (UNESCO, 2005), especially in SSA countries, Senegal included, where a ‘great expansion of primary education’ (Akyeampong et al., 2011:7) was observable during the first decade of the 21st millennium.

However, the increased access to education through the creation of more schools, accompanied by legislation through international treaties, has not been followed by quality teaching. The main cause of this is perceived to be related to the fact that a large number of teachers were recruited without initial training at all (UNESCO, 2005; Akyeampong et al., 2011; Buckler, 2015). In addition, many teachers of some parts of SSA work in challenging conditions, such as large numbers of students in the classroom and a scarcity of teaching and learning resources (Buckler, 2015; Frazier, 2009; Kuchah and Smith, 2011; Samb, 2013). As such, one of the main challenges in most SSA countries in the early 2000s was, and still is, to ensure quality teaching after having substantially increased provision of education (Akyeampong et al., 2011; Frazier, 2009; Kelani and Khourey-Bowers, 2012). With quality in education ‘understood predominantly in terms of student performance in tests and examinations’ (Tabulawa, 2013:18) and teachers seen as playing a pivotal role in student learning, CPD has become one of the priorities of educational authorities in those countries (Akyeampong et al., 2011; Bennell and Akyeampong, 2007; Kelani and Khourey-Bowers, 2012). Such a preoccupation is at the heart of the Senegalese educational authorities’ agenda (OffDoc06, 2013) and TPD is for all teachers across the board since all teachers have learning and development needs and, additionally, all learners’ needs change with time.

Two other major interrelated issues of CPD in SSA, as mentioned by Akyeampong et al. (2011) and Christie et al. (2004), are sustainability and the relevance of initiatives. According to Akyeampong et al. (2011), due to low resources, CPD programmes in SSA ‘are often one-offs and funded and directed by NGOs who sometimes have their own agenda’ (p. 50). Furthermore,
in most cases, the foci of this type of CPD interventions are different from the actual preoccupations of teachers they are designed for (Christie et al., 2004). Those types of CPD often take the form of workshops run by external ‘experts’ who may know little about the teachers’ culture and their working contexts. In this respect, such a way of implementing CPD can be seen as based on a deficit view of learning (Kelani and Khourey-Bowers, 2012) and mostly informed by a theory-application approach to TPD. Teachers are considered technicians who just need to be taught how to improve their practice. However, as will be discussed later in chapter two section 2.4.2, this approach has generally proved to be ineffective in many ways (Christie et al., 2004; Guskey, 2002). As mentioned by Kuchah et al. (2019), these types of formal CPD programmes, mainly provided in SSA by governments (often with the support of international organisations), are mostly informed by a top-down approach and they have not been effective in many ways. Such a fact strengthens the widely shared argument that there is a need to promote TPD approaches which put teachers and their contexts at the centre (Frazier, 2009; Guskey, 2002; Opfer and Pedder, 2011; Smith and Kuchah, 2016). Applying bottom-up approaches in SSA seems to be all the more relevant because it may allow teachers to reflect on the specific issues that they encounter in their daily practice. Also, from a sociocultural perspective, decontextualised learning is seen as ineffective (Edwards et al., 2002; Stoll et al., 2006). At a broader level, as argued by Hussein (2006), Africans have to take a critical stance in relation to their current processes of teaching and learning for education to better serve their societies.

Within the educational research literature in SSA, there seems to be a consensus that, because of a dearth of research on that context (Akyeampong et al., 2011; Christie et al., 2004; Frazier, 2009; Kelani and Khourey-Bowers, 2012; Moon, 2007), much about education and TPD has yet to be understood. Although understandings of TPD transcend continents, the African context, due to the recent histories of its countries’ education systems, should not be seen as
being extremely specific nor totally similar to other contexts (Christie et al., 2004). This view resonates with that of Tabulawa (2013) who advocates that much of educational research on both student and teacher learning in SSA has been influenced by a technical approach and tends to overlook the complexity of the various cultural contexts within which studies are conducted. In addition, the problematic shift to a learner-centred pedagogy to improve education in SSA (Tabulawa, 2013), combined with an approach to TPD mostly informed by a deficit view of teacher learning (Christie et al., 2004), brings to the surface the issue of teacher agency in the design and implementation of TPD in that context. For instance, as mentioned above, in programmes initiated by other stakeholders, teachers may feel a lack of agency concerning what they are involved in, which might result in a low motivation to embrace new ideas and integrate them in their classroom practice.

These factors, among others, indicate that there is a need for more effective approaches to TPD in SSA with the involvement of teachers in the whole process and to take account of their contextual realities (Kelani and Khourey-Bowers, 2012). In other words, teachers need to take ownership of their professional development in order to make it sustainable and relevant to their students’ learning. As will be shown in chapter two, this call for a more context-sensitive approach of TPD resonates with many other views within the global educational research community (Darling-Hammond and Richardson, 2009; Frazier, 2009; Guskey, 2002; Kuchah et al., 2019; Moon, 2007; Opfer and Pedder, 2011; Smith and Kuchah, 2016; Tabulawa, 2013). As attempts to apply a learner-centred pedagogy are underway in many African countries (Akyeampong et al., 2011; Miyazaki, 2016; Tabulawa, 2013), although such a move is not without tension with cultural realities (Tabulawa, 2013), it seems more relevant to give teachers much more freedom to take initiatives for their professional development. In this respect, the cluster-based approach to TPD which has existed for years within the Senegalese education system is worth investigating. This study does so by getting insights from both teachers and
the other actors involved in TPD within that context. The next section gives a brief description of Senegal and some characteristics of its society.

1.3 Senegal and its society

Senegal is a small country located in West Africa with an area of 196 712 Km$^2$. It is delimited by Mauritania (to the North), Mali (to the East), Guinea and Guinea-Bissau (to the South), and the Atlantic Ocean (to the West). The country also shares borders with The Gambia which is completely located inside its southern part (see Figure 1.1 below). Senegal’s population is currently estimated to be around 16 million with an average age of nineteen years. Economically, it is classified among the Low-to-Middle Income Countries (LMICs) of the world with GDP per capita estimated at $1,477 in 2018 (Agence Nationale de la Statistique et de la Démographie). The country is divided into fourteen regions. Eleven of these regions have three departments each and the three others have four of the latter. In terms of politics, though the country has known some political upheavals, especially during the elections of 1988 and 1993, power has always been transferred peacefully. Since the country gained independence in 1960, four presidents have succeeded one another at the head of the state in a democratic way and formed various governments to lead the country, which makes Senegal one of the most politically stable countries in West Africa.
Senegal is a country with great ethnic diversity. Five large ethnic groups known as ‘Wolof, Sereer, Haal Pulareen (Peul, Tukileer), Joola and Manding’ (Diouf, 1998: 21) constitute the majority of its population. In total, thirteen ethnic groups exist within the country with some of them having subgroups (Diouf, 1998:22). The society is multilingual with 19 codified languages (OffDoc10, 2014) with one of them, Wolof, representing the lingua franca in most parts of the country (Diouf, 1998; Saltevo, 2005). As far as religion is concerned, the majority of the population is Muslim (around 94%) and the largest minority group is Christian (around 5%) (Diouf, 1998). The rest of the population practises other religions. Despite this ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity, Senegal is a country where there is much tolerance and respect among its citizens, which results in a great harmony of life. Members of all religion and ethnic groups are found in public services of all sectors. It is a society in which people
organise many celebrations in which most people take part. Senegalese people are known to show much generosity and hospitality among themselves and to foreigners to the extent that the country is nicknamed ‘Rewu Teranga’ (the country of hospitality).

In terms of social norms, though people are very open to other cultures, most of them are still rooted in Senegalese traditional values and cultural practices, which is manifested in various ways in how people live. For example, generally, people thrive to preserve family ties and have a strong sense of community. Many jobs, such as dressmaking, mechanics, building work, and hairdressing are still learnt informally through apprenticeship in several parts of the country. Senegalese people also have a culture of belonging to the different communities that exist within their social sphere. It is very common for people to be members of a ‘Dahira’ (a group of people belonging to one of the Muslim brotherhoods existing in Senegal), of a ‘Mbotay’ (group of women living in the same area), ‘ASC’ (a small football club of a neighbourhood or town), and many other types of small communities. However, it is a country in which hierarchy runs throughout its societal organisation in general and seniority in age is given much consideration in people’s relationships.

These general characteristics of the Senegalese people can be observed within all walks of society. For example, it is frequent, especially in small towns or in rural areas, to see teachers living together in one house and sharing the cost of food and utility bills (water and electricity). Newly posted teachers are always welcomed in those houses, which tends to create bonds between novice and experienced teachers and be opportunities to share various documents and information about beginning a teaching career. As a former regional in-service teacher trainer, I knew of the existence of many of these small communities of teachers and understood the important role they can play in helping new teachers to start their job easily. As many other workers of the country, teachers also organise themselves in unions to defend the interests of their profession.
1.4 Education in Senegal

1.4.1 Generalities on education in Senegal

As a former French colony, Senegal inherited most of its current education system from colonial times (Fall, 2013). French is still the language of instruction and the general organisation of education has remained unchanged in many ways. However, ‘despite being in contact with France for almost five centuries’ (my translation) (Diouf, 1998:79) and French being the official language since the country became independent, the percentage of the Senegalese population who were able to speak it was less than 20% in the late 1990s (Diouf, 1998). This percentage has much increased recently, reaching 37% (Niang Camara, 2010), and this can be attributed to the substantial improvement of access to schooling nationwide in the early 2000s. A typical Senegalese school year starts in the beginning of October and finishes at the end of July (see section 1.4.2 below for details on secondary school education).

Within the past two and a half decades, the Senegalese educational authorities have taken several critical decisions. Education has become a national priority and a considerable proportion of the country’s functioning budget (around 41%) is spent on it annually (OffDoc06, 2013; OffDoc14, 2018). The government started by prioritising access to education for every child (OffDoc11, 2015) and the education system has significantly extended its network with new state schools created all over the country (OffDoc14, 2018). This resulted in the creation of many primary and secondary schools and the recruitment of great numbers of teachers. For instance, from to 1992 to 2012, the number of teachers (at both primary and secondary school level) increased over four-fold from 18,345 to 86,000 (OffDoc07, 2014). As mentioned in section 1.2 above, these initiatives are based on both domestic recommendations and international commitments in relation to the EFA, UPE (OffDoc07, 2014), and SDG4 (OffDoc14, 2018).
Currently, after having achieved a massive increase in the schooling registration rate (about 95% at primary level) and making it legally binding for children to study for at least ten years (OffDoc07, 2014), the emerging challenge is the low attainment of students both at primary and secondary school levels (OffDoc11, 2015). Here, mention should be made that the Senegalese education system gives much importance to exams and can be considered as test-oriented in many ways. Responding to the widely shared dissatisfaction among stakeholders, the Ministry of Education (MoE) is endeavouring to ensure quality education in all parts of the country (OffDoc09, 2014; OffDoc14, 2018). The strategies for achieving this quality include the provision of appropriate school infrastructure, contextually relevant curricula, adequate teaching materials and training for all the staff working in the education system (OffDoc06, 2006; OffDoc09, 2014; OffDoc11, 2015) with a focus on TPD to improve teaching (OffDoc05, 2011; personal communication with Mr Sy at the MoE in June 2016). Nonetheless, it is worth mentioning that these good intentions may be different from the reality in many parts of the countries and between schools of the same locations.

Addressing the challenges which are inherent to the rapid increase in the provision of education and the recruitment of teachers without initial training, Senegalese educational authorities have taken many initiatives with the support of foreign partners. For instance, through the past two decades, a number of programmes, such as PDEF (2000-2011), PREMST, USAID-EDB and USAID-EPQ, have been implemented to increase access to schooling and improve quality in education at both primary and secondary school levels (OffDoc07, 2014; OffDoc11, 2015; OffDoc14, 2018). Consistently, the current programme of the MoE, PAQUET-EF, aims at improving education through a holistic approach in which all the different aspects of the education sector (e.g. access, teaching materials and approaches, curricula, school management, teacher professional development) are given equal consideration (OffDoc13, 2018). Although some progress has been made through these initiatives, Senegalese
educational authorities understand that there is still a long way to go to achieve quality education in all parts of the country (OffDoc14, 2018). The next section introduces secondary education in Senegal.

1.4.2 Secondary education

As in most countries around the world, secondary education in Senegal is composed of two phases: lower secondary education and upper secondary education. The first phase, which follows the primary level, is a four-year cycle during which students go through four different forms. In a general lower education school, students study many subjects with French being both the language of instruction and a subject in its own right. They study history and geography, mathematics, biology and geology, civic education (citizenship), physical education (gymnastics and sports), and English which is the only obligatory foreign language for all students, and it is introduced right at the first form. In the third year, they can choose another subject between physics and chemistry and one of the foreign languages taught at the school where they are (e.g. Arabic, Spanish, Portuguese). They can also optionally choose to study music or art during the third and fourth forms. At the end of this cycle, they sit for an exam called BFEM (Brevet de Fin d’Etudes Moyennes).

The second phase of secondary education is a three-year cycle with three levels. Students studying at upper secondary schools are selected by the regional office in charge of the transition of the students from lower to upper secondary schools called ‘CAOSP’. As in lower secondary education, students study a range of subjects with French as the language of instruction.

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1 The four levels of lower secondary education are called ‘Sixième’ ‘Cinquième’, ‘Quatrième’ and ‘Troisième’.

2 The three levels of upper secondary education are called ‘Seconde’ ‘Première’ and ‘Terminale’
instruction. The subjects which are taught at this phase are history and geography, mathematics, physics and chemistry, biology and geology, French (French and African literature), English (compulsory for all students), other foreign languages (the main ones are Arabic, Spanish, Portuguese, German, and Italian), physical education (gymnastics and sports), and philosophy (this subject is only studied in the final year of upper secondary education). In this second phase of secondary education, students’ study through two main streams called ‘S’ (Science) and ‘L’ (Literature/Arts). For the S stream, the main subjects are physics and chemistry, mathematics, biology and geology. The students of the L stream have French, history and geography, philosophy and languages as their main subjects. At the end of this cycle, students sit for a national exam called ‘Baccalauréat’ (BAC), the passing of which allows them to apply for studies at universities or other higher education institutions.

1.4.3 Teacher training and professional development

In Senegal, the traditional route to the teaching profession at the state schools is through initial training. The process starts with the organisation of national competitive examinations by educational authorities through which the best-scoring candidates are selected for initial training. The teacher preparation courses are run by the regional centres for the primary school teacher trainees and by the universities for the secondary school teacher trainees (Cheikh Anta Diop University of Dakar and Gaston Berger university of Saint Louis). Teacher educators in these institutions are often former teachers at primary and secondary school levels. For instance, current teacher educators at the English department of FASTEF are all former secondary school teacher of English.

The academic qualification required for primary school teacher trainees is the BAC (equivalent to the English system’s GCE A Level qualifications) and they take a one-year teacher training
course at the regional teacher training centres (see section 1.4.3.2 for more detail on those centres). As for the secondary school teacher trainees, depending on the teachers’ entry academic qualifications (BAC, BA or MA), they take a one-year or two-year course at university. All the initial teacher training courses are composed of two main parts. The first part consists of different modules, such as those dealing with learning theories, teaching approaches, psychology, subject related knowledge, and laws related to civil service in Senegal. The other part, the practicum, takes place at the selected schools under the supervision of the university trainers, who observe some of the trainees’ lessons, and the mentors chosen among experienced teachers with recognised expertise and professionalism. The teacher trainees who finish successfully their course are recruited and deployed by the MoE in state schools where they are needed in either rural or urban areas. After spending two years in their schools all those teachers can compete to be posted in a school of their choice anywhere around the country.

However, similar to many other countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, the Senegalese education system has a great number of teachers who started their careers without going through the conventional initial training. The strategy of employing unqualified teachers, which was first introduced in 1995 (OffDoc07, 2014), aimed at solving the shortage of teachers caused by the constantly growing numbers of students (see section 1.4.1 above). As mentioned above, since the 1990s, the demand for teachers has been more pressing with the implementation of the Education for All policy and the decision to make the completion of basic education (6 years of primary school and 4 years of lower secondary school) obligatory to all children enrolled in state schools (OffDoc07, 2014). Although the lack of initial teacher training was considered an issue, the educational authorities were confident that the already existing network for TPD (see section 1.4.3 below) would offer to the new recruits the necessary support they needed to do their job and smoothly integrate into the professional community of teachers.
One explanation for the absence of initial training was the inability of the Senegalese national and regional teacher training institutions to cope with the large number of new teachers needed on a yearly basis. Another element to take into consideration here is that the government, which often had budget constraints, could recruit more unqualified teachers since they would cost less than their qualified counterparts. However, the continuing low performance of students in national exams is acknowledged and partly attributed to ineffective teaching, and it has brought about some dissatisfaction of parents with education in Senegal (OffDoc07, 2014).

Senegalese educational authorities recognise that many teachers work in challenging conditions (OffDoc11, 2015). For example, like in many other countries in SSA, some classrooms are overcrowded with the number of students reaching up to 100 in some parts of the country, which results in teachers having difficulties in catering for each student’s learning needs. Teaching such classes also means that teachers will need more time to mark their students’ progress and achievement tests which are required at all levels. As observed in one of the selected schools (see Chapter Six in section 6.1.3), an insufficiency of learning and teaching materials is also one of the issues faced by many schools in several parts of the country (OffDoc11, 2015). In addition, over the past three decades, there have been serious tensions between the government and the teachers’ unions which have resulted in recurrent industrial actions, such as strikes and boycotting PC meetings and other professional activities. Those tensions are often related to salary increases, delays in processing different types of career advancement and paying allowances for marking national secondary school exams and other issues that teachers may encounter throughout their professional lives.

Within the Senegalese education system, TPD is understood as consisting of the different activities/initiatives in which teachers participate to improve their practice throughout their careers (OffDoc07, 2014). As such, it is complementary to initial teacher training which is seen as insufficient in many ways and the understandings of learning and teaching (i.e. approaches)
evolve with time (OffDoc13, 2016). As will be shown in Chapter Four, TPD is seen as a priority by Senegalese educational authorities in that it is understood as having the potential to impact positively on student learning. The next two sections give more details on the significance of TPD and its organisation in Senegal.

1.4.3.1 The significance of TPD

Senegalese educational authorities accord much importance to the role that teachers play in education. The consideration of teachers as key actors within the education system has led policymakers to give much significance to both teachers’ initial training and their continuing professional development (OffDoc13, 2016). To that end, ambitious reforms have been made in the past decade by creating regional training centres whose main role is to train and support both newly recruited and seasoned teachers (OffDoc05, 2011). For each subject, the regional teacher trainer, who works at those centres, coordinate all the TPD activities within their region to help teachers continue learning collectively while they are in-service. As an enforcement measure, the MoE has made attendance to TPD activities compulsory to all teachers, both novice and seasoned ones. As outlined above, this focus on TPD has been a response to a lack of pre-service training for many teachers. This fact is often seen as one of the main causes of poor quality teaching and students’ low scores in national exams (OffDoc10, 2014; OffDoc12, 2015). However, it is important to mention that no official evidence has been cited to establish this cause-and-effect relationship. In other words, this relationship seems to be merely a widely shared assumption within the Senegalese education sector.

Generally, there is an acknowledged need for professional development for all the staff working in the education sector, particularly for teachers (OffDoc09, 2014), many of whom started their careers without initial training. For example, in 2014, up to 39% of teachers
nationwide had not then obtained their professional teacher degrees and around 42% in the region where the study was conducted were in the same situation (OffDoc10, 2014; OffDoc12, 2015). Here, it should be mentioned that most of these teachers would already have learnt much about teaching through their participation in the TPD activities of their locations. I turn now to the organisation of TPD in Senegal.

1.4.3.2 The organisation of TPD in Senegal

Senegal has a long history of continuous professional development for all teachers at both primary and secondary school levels. Concerning secondary school teachers’ professional development, on which this study focuses, there exists an apparatus which has been developing and coordinating the strategies and activities for TPD all around the country since 1984 (OffDoc07, 2014). Officially, TPD is organised and coordinated from the directorate in charge of it at the MoE (DFC) through the regional training centres (CRFPE) to the inter-school and school PCs (OffDoc07, 2014). Over the past three decades, different names have been given to the same national directorate, but the objectives have remained fairly consistent – to support teachers to keep on increasing their knowledge and improving their classroom practice, and, consequently, improve their students’ learning (OffDoc10, 2014; OffDoc12, 2015; personal communication with Dr Mbaye at FASTEF).

As shown in Figure 1.2 below, at the ministry level, national coordinators for all school subjects collaborate with the in-service teacher trainers in the 14 regions of the country in relation to their TPD activities. At the regional level, the in-service teacher trainers work with teachers to design and implement TPD activities through their inter-school PCs.\(^3\) (composed of teachers of

\(^3\) In this thesis, I am using the term DPC (departmental pedagogical cells) to mean inter-school pedagogical cells. The region of Leeru has three administrative areas and each is one called a department. Teachers who work in schools located in a department belong to a structure for professional development called a DPC.
the same subject working in schools located in the same area). Here, the district and inter-school levels can be considered as one entity. At the school level, teachers of a school PC (teachers who teach the same subject in the same school) work together to design and implement professional development activities based on their teaching and assessment practice (OffDoc04, 2011). Formally, DPCs and PCs are led by coordinators who preside over teachers’ meetings at their levels. They also represent their colleagues in administrative meetings.

As shown in the figure below with the double-headed arrows, there is a two-way communication between the several parties at the different levels. In this way, initiatives for TPD can be started at any of them. For example, this structure can be used by authorities to introduce and implement educational reforms in which teachers play key roles, as was the case with the teachers of English when introducing formative assessment in 2010 (see more on this in section 4.3.4). Similarly, as shown in chapter five, teachers from a school PC, collectively or individually, can make propositions for TPD activities at the DPC level.
Senegalese educational authorities understand a PC as a platform for teachers’ professional development. The rationale behind the creation of these PCs, in which every teacher’s participation has been made mandatory by the MoE since 2011, is to facilitate teacher development.
collaboration in its broad sense (OffDoc04, 2011). More explicitly, they expect the PC to bring teachers together, normally on a weekly basis, for them to share and discuss their views of, practices about, and experiences in teaching (OffDoc03, 2009; OffDoc04, 2011). Teachers’ activities are expected to consist of reflection on the curricula and teaching methods, designing and teaching model lessons, and sharing ideas and teaching materials. Those activities can take different forms such as short exchanges, group discussions, presentations, and peer classroom observations (OffDoc04, 2011). Through the PC meetings, teachers can share success stories with their colleagues and discuss any difficulties they may encounter in their work in a collegial way. In principle, PCs constitute a system for TPD in which teachers are at the centre.

As shown above, Senegal has a well-structured organisation of TPD which seems to give teachers much freedom to take ownership of their professional development through the PCs. However, it is worth underscoring that little is known about the impact that the teachers’ participation in these PCs’ activities is having, if ever, in their classroom practice. Thus, as will be discussed in the literature review in the next chapter, with many current ideas on effective TPD pointing towards a situated learning approach with a focus on collective learning, it is worth investigating how the different actors conceptualise and implement TPD and the teachers’ lived experiences within their PCs at their schools as working contexts. This study explores those questions within the Senegalese secondary school ELT community by focusing on one region with a renowned dynamism in TPD initiatives for teachers of English. The following section introduces the teaching of English in the Senegalese education system.

1.4.4 The teaching of English in Senegal

English has been taught in the Senegalese education system since colonial times. It is taught as a foreign language in all state secondary schools and at some universities’ faculties. The
importance that educational authorities accord to studying English is marked by their decision to make it the only foreign language compulsory to all students in secondary schools (from entry to lower secondary to the end of upper secondary education). English is considered as part of the means for the country to achieve its educational goals which centre around having citizens who are well-rooted to their culture and open to those of others, and who can rise up to the challenges of developing the country (Thiam, 2013). As stipulated in the national syllabus, ‘English is considered an important language for international communication and it is, for that reason, among the main subjects of study’ (my translation) (OffDoc02, 2006: 4). The rationale behind the promotion of English is that, thanks to its international status, it can facilitate the Senegalese people’s communication with others throughout the world, increase their awareness of global issues, and help them access to different types of new knowledge published in English.

Currently, more than 6000 men and women are working at state secondary schools to teach English to young Senegalese across the country (personal communication with Mr Ngom from the MoE, March 2015 and June 2020). While many of these teachers who work at lower secondary schools combine it with teaching French, those at upper secondary schools teach English only. The teaching of English is mainly based on the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach (Samb, 2014). Such an orientation is shown in the national syllabus when it says that ‘it is recommended to use a student-centred methodological approach to allow learners to practise genuine communication activities through group work’ (my translation) (OffDoc02, 2006: 7). Following the principles of the CLT approach means that English should be taught through and for communication. In other words, it is about teaching English through real life situations in which students encounter and use authentic language meaningfully (Richards and Rodgers, 2014).
However, a widely present reality in the Senegalese classrooms is that most teachers’ classroom practice, when teaching English, is still based on reading comprehension. Through those lessons, many teachers tend to focus much on helping student to acquire linguistic knowledge such as grammar and vocabulary instead of encouraging them to develop communicative skills. Such a practice resonates with the view of teaching as transmission of knowledge which is still shared by many within Senegalese society. In addition, the students’ learning outcomes are measured through their scores in school progress tests and exam papers (mostly text-based) which might not be as communicative as they claim to be. One of the dilemmas which teachers face is that although they may want to apply the CLT approach, they also need to cater for the students’ needs to pass their exams.

In terms of TPD, in addition to formal activities within their PCs and DPCs, teachers of English in Senegal have other opportunities for professional development at a larger scale. For instance, over the last three decades, the Association of Teachers of English in Senegal (ATES) has been taking many TPD initiatives in partnership with the MoE through its ‘Office of English Teaching’ (Bureau d’anglais), the Regional English Language Office (RELO), which is part of the American Embassy of Dakar, and the British Council (BC) in Senegal. In partnership with those institutions, the association ‘organises its own annual convention and English language day (ELD) involving all decision-takers in the field of ELT, pulling together teachers, inspectors, teacher trainers and language experts from other parts of the continent’ (Samb, 2013: 36). These two main national events, the convention and the ELD, are held on a yearly basis in December and March respectively. The TPD activities organised during these events are based on themes selected by teachers themselves. Each year, the chosen theme is dealt with through keynote speeches, presentations, and workshops led by teachers, national leaders in ELT, and foreign specialists in the field (from Africa, the UK and USA). The association also organises other local TPD events through its regional chapters and webinars (especially during
the Covid-19 pandemic) led by its own members and foreign partners. Significant to mention here is that all these initiatives are taken by teachers themselves and voluntarily. The educational authorities participate in the organisation of those events mostly by granting absence permissions to teachers and facilitating the securing of venues and/or transportation.

Through the collaboration between the office of English Teaching’ (Bureau d’anglais), the national directorate for TPD, ATES, the BC and the RELO, the teachers of English can participate in TPD activities at both national and local levels. The RELO and the BC are well-known to have taken many initiatives to help teachers to better understand their job as ELT professionals and to improve their classroom practice. They also provide teachers with teaching materials online and in paper. For example, the American English Teaching Forum is freely distributed to many teachers of English around the country. All these are illustrations of the Senegalese ELT community’s dynamism and its fruitful collaboration with its foreign partners (see sections 4.2.4 and 5.2.6 for more on this collaboration). In the next section, I talk about my professional experience and main drivers for conducting this research.

1.5 My background and motivation for the study

After obtaining an MA in English with a specialisation in African Literature awarded in 2003 from Cheikh Anta Diop University of Dakar, I attended the Senegalese national teacher training school (now called FASTEF) for two years and obtained a teaching professional degree for upper secondary schools called CAES (Certificat d’Aptitude à l’Enseignement Secondaire). After a few years in teaching, I was appointed as a teacher advisor in the region where I was posted, a position which I combined with teaching. My work consisted of a variety of in-service training (INSET) activities. As such, I delivered many sessions on a range of topics
related to ELT. In that capacity, I also observed and gave feedback on more than two hundred lessons in secondary schools located in both urban and rural settings.

That new job automatically put me in a position of leadership within the ELT community of Senegal though I had no prior training in advising teachers at all. It seemed to me that I was chosen by the educational authorities based on their perception that a good teacher would be a good advisor. I was among the teachers who had the highest professional degree required at upper secondary schools in the region and I also had a good reputation at my school. At the beginning, as I was not trained for that new position, when giving advice to teachers, I usually drew on my knowledge about the CLT approach and my teaching experience. However, I was not sure whether teachers were learning much from the feedback sessions I had with them after observing their lessons. I would therefore consider that my interest in TPD stemmed from my experience as a teacher advisor and has been growing ever since. Through my relationships with teachers, I was always concerned with how best to help them to keep on improving their proficiency in the English language and their teaching practice. Thus, I started my quest to have a better understanding of how teachers learn and ways of improving professional development for teachers of English in the Senegalese context by immersing myself in the literature.

With the same preoccupation in deepening my understanding of TPD, I continued conducting training sessions with teachers and observed many of those who started without initial training in my region. In 2013-2014, with the sponsorship of the Hornby Educational Trust, I had an opportunity to do an MA in TESOL (Teacher Education) at the University of Leeds in England. The experience was very enriching in that it helped me increase both my knowledge in ELT and my skills as a teacher of English and as an in-service teacher trainer. It is through that Masters programme that I encountered many more interconnected concepts and ideas about learning in general and especially professional learning such as learning through reflection (Wallace, 1991; Schön, 1983 & 1987; Farrell, 2007), learning within communities of practice.
(Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998), learning through the exploratory practice (Allwright and Hanks, 2009), teacher learning through mentoring, coaching and training (Malderez and Bodoczky, 1999; Randall with Thornton, 2001; Richards, 1998), teacher cognition (Borg, 2005, 2009), and others. All these ideas deepened my understandings of theories of learning but also raised some questions related to ways of implementing TPD in my own context through classroom observations, presentations, and workshops.

All my previous research revolved around TPD with the teachers of English in Senegal. I investigated formative classroom observation (Diop, 2014), teacher professional identity (Diop, 2016), and the implementation of the CLT approach in Senegal (Diop, 2018). Those studies have sharpened my understandings of many aspects of TPD. For example, my dissertation for my MA (Diop, 2014) at Leeds, in which I explored formative classroom observation with in-service teacher trainers and teachers of English from Senegal, revealed very interesting insights about ways of learning of the teacher participants. Results showed that teachers learn in various ways, both through formal and informal settings. Interestingly, contrary to my assumption that classroom observation with a teacher advisor would rank very high among opportunities for teachers to learn, learning from feedback came third after learning through discussions with colleagues and through participation in workshops. It was obvious that the studied teachers gave much credit to learning through interactions with their colleagues. A similar importance was accorded to learning from their colleagues by the teachers I studied in my MRes at the OU (Diop, 2016).

As often advocated in social science, research is not ‘carried out in some autonomous realm that is insulated from the wider society and from the biography of the researcher’ (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007:15). The current study is a continuation of my previous endeavours in exploring TPD in general and particularly within the Senegalese educational context. In other words, my interest in how teachers learn to improve themselves (together and individually),
the effectiveness of approaches to TPD and their underpinning principles, and the role that context plays in the enhancement of teacher learning has resulted in my exploration of TPD with actors from the different levels of its organisation within the Senegalese secondary school ELT community. I have been involved in TPD in Senegal for some years as a member of both school and inter-school PCs, and an in-service teacher trainer at a regional level in charge of coordinating TPD activities. Thus, both the area of study and the social context in its broad sense are familiar to me (see section 3.2.6).

1.6 The purpose of the study

While there exists a large body of knowledge in educational research on TPD around the world (Akyeampong et al., 2011; Darling-Hammond and Richardson, 2009; Christie et al., 2004; Frazier, 2009; Moon, 2007; Opfer and Pedder, 2011), it is a recognised fact that most of the studies on teacher education, either at pre-service or in-service level, have been conducted in Europe and North America and a very few in SSA (Christie et al., 2004; Frazier, 2009). Thus, with current ideas for more context-sensitive and teacher-centred approaches to TPD (Darling-Hammond and Richardson, 2009; Guskey, 2002; Moon, 2007; Opfer and Pedder, 2011; Tabulawa, 2013), there is a need for more studies which explore TPD from a situated learning perspective, especially in SSA where great numbers of unqualified teachers are already in service (Akyeampong et al., 2011; Christie et al., 2004). This dearth of research indicates that much about TPD in this African context is yet to be fully documented and understood. This paucity is more than visible in the Senegalese secondary schools where hardly any studies on teachers’ activities for their professional development have been conducted, which shows the timeliness of this research.
As stated above, there exists strong organisation of continuing teacher professional development in Senegal but there is hardly any research on how the different actors conceptualise and implement it through PCs. For example, little is known on how TPD is understood and enacted at different levels, on how teachers perceive their learning within those PCs, the different activities they engage in, their challenges, the social and professional relationships they develop, and the roles that their working context plays in their learning and practice. In my review of studies on TPD, I found only one study on TPD in Senegal with teachers of English (Frazier, 2009). It was a case study on piloting a teacher study group (TSG) in an upper secondary school in Senegal. This study has given significant insights about the possibilities and benefits of implementing a teacher study group as a form of teacher professional development. However, there is still much which needs to be known about TPD in Senegal in general and particularly about how it is enacted through its teacher clusters.

Adopting an exploratory approach, the present study investigates how TPD is conceptualised at the different levels of its organisation within the Senegalese ELT community, the different ways of its implementation at the district level, and the teachers lived experiences in participating in the TPD activities and their perceptions of PCs as communities of teachers. It also explores the impact which schools, as working places, may have on the teachers’ professional relationships within PCs (See section 2.8 for more details on the research questions which guided this study). One of the particularities of this study is that while many previous ones tended to report on CPD programmes, it investigates how TPD is understood by the different actors and how they implement it in the normal course of their work. As such, although this study focuses on TPD with secondary school teachers of English in Senegal, it seeks to contribute to the global debate on it by bringing insights from an under-researched context and to make recommendations for its improvement in Senegal and in other similar contexts. The following section introduces each of the remaining chapters of this thesis.
1.7 The structure of the thesis

After this introductory chapter, the next one provides a review of the literature relevant to understanding of teacher learning and professional development. Throughout that chapter, I discuss the main understandings of learning in general and how those have influenced the different approaches to teacher learning and professional development. Within it, it has been shown that current thinking about effective TPD champions initiatives that are context-sensitive, favour collective endeavours within communities of teachers, and geared towards improving students’ learning.

Chapter three describes the methodological choices which guided this research. It starts with a presentation of the conceptual framework and then goes on by describing the research design. This research was carried out based on a vertical case study approach and different data collection instruments were used during the fieldwork. Data are analysed according to the thematic analysis approach and findings presented in themes with direct quotes (from interviews and documents) and descriptions of events based on fieldnotes.

Chapter four is the first one of the three which present the findings of this study. In that chapter, I present the findings on how TPD is conceptualised at the national level based on the official documents consulted and the interviews with the four senior ELT officials who participated in this study. It is organised into two main parts: generic conceptualisations of TPD and its implementations through PCs based on national policy documents and the views expressed by the senior ELT officials.

Chapter five describes how TPD is conceptualised by the DPC coordinators in the region of Leeru. Findings in that chapter also show the ways of implementing TPD within the DPC meetings of the secondary school English teachers and their focus on increasing teachers’
general pedagogical knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge. It also highlights that the main dissonance between the understandings of TPD at the national level and those at the regional level is the absence of systematic reflection within the DPC activities of these teachers.

Chapter six presents the findings based on data from the two selected schools. It focuses on the studied teachers’ views in relation to learning within a community, such as a strong sense of belonging to their PCs, understanding learning as a lifelong endeavour, and the promotion of values that facilitate their professional relationships as a group. The chapter also indicates that there are similarities and differences between the two schools in relation to how they might impact on their teachers’ professional development within their PCs.

Chapter seven pieces together all the findings presented in the three previous chapters into themes and discusses them in light of the relevant literature. The findings on ways of conceptualising and implementing TPD are addressed in accordance with the underpinning principles of approaches to TPD, the valued types of knowledge, and the valued ways of learning of the studied group. The chapter also discusses those DPCs and PCs with reference to understandings of the concepts of communities of practice (CoP) and professional learning communities (PLC). Elements of the studied schools’ cultures are also discussed in relation to their possible impact on teachers’ learning within their PCs.

Chapter eight, the final one, is where the conclusions of this study are presented in the form of recommendations for the improvement of TPD in Senegal and its contributions to educational research. That chapter also describes the limitations of this study, indicates possible areas for further inquiry, and ends with a personal reflection on my learning journey throughout this research.
CHAPTER TWO: Literature review

2.0 Introduction

In Chapter One, I introduced the site of the study, Senegal. Similar to other countries in SSA, I pointed out that, after increasing access to schools, the country’s main challenge is to ensure quality education throughout the country. In that endeavour, Senegalese educational authorities accord much significance to TPD which they consider as a key factor for the improvement of the teachers’ practice and their students’ outcomes. I related this preoccupation of the authorities to the organisation of TPD in Senegal through the school and inter-school pedagogical cells (I call these PCs and DPCs in this thesis). I also argued that TPD is the most appropriate way to refer to the different types of activities which Senegalese teachers engage in for the enhancement of their professional learning. Hence, this term would be used in this thesis.

This chapter reviews the literature on understandings of teacher learning and professional development through different approaches. To help understand the Senegalese PCs, it interrogates this literature with particular relevance to school based and locally delivered TPD, as being most relevant to this form of TPD through those teacher clusters. It also relates TPD to forms of professional communities – communities of practice (CoPs) and professional learning communities (PLCs) – and the ideas and activities which characterise these communities. However, because the study explores an under-researched context within Africa, the frame of the literature review is not geographically nor historically limited to TPD in that part of the world. It is an argumentative review through which I attempt to show how different models of teacher learning are informed by various understandings of learning. In this discussion, I indicate that clearly emerging from the literature is a move towards bottom-up
approaches to TPD which favour learning through collaboration and reflective practice in relation to teachers’ contexts. The chapter then critically reviews different ways in which scholars have studied teachers’ professional learning, again with a focus on studies from Africa. Later, in light of this literature review, I will be discussing the findings of this study in Chapter Seven. In Chapter Eight, I will draw conclusions based on those findings and make recommendations for further research and implications for the improvement of TPD within the Senegalese educational context.

This chapter is composed of seven sections. The first section provides a brief overview of the two main purposes of TPD initiatives. The second section describes the three principal approaches to teacher education and development by relating them to the understandings of learning and teaching which underpin them. The third section synthesises these approaches through a grouping of the main models used for TPD. The fourth section of this chapter brings in some of the current ideas about ways of improving TPD based on recent views on teacher learning. Those are views of TPD which emphasise the central role that teachers, their communities, and their teaching contexts may play for their professional learning. In section five, the chapter then continues with understandings of teacher learning within communities with a focus of CoPs and PLCs and some school-based approaches to TPD informed by ideas related to these concepts. The sixth section of this chapter deals with the role that schools may play for teachers’ learning. The chapter ends by showing where educational research on TPD needs more exploration in contexts like Senegal and how the current study may contribute to filling in that gap.
2.1 Purposes of teacher professional development

Throughout the educational research literature, TPD has been consistently given much attention and explored from different perspectives. As shown in the introductory chapter (section 1.1), TPD is understood in relation to teachers’ learning and that of their students. Its specific purposes may be defined by policy makers such as governments, especially during educational reforms, other stakeholders within the education sector, or teachers themselves. Generally, TPD has two main purposes: the enhancement of teacher professional learning and the improvement of students’ learning. Significant to mention is that the latter is expected to be the logical consequence of the former in many cases. The next two subsections explore these purposes.

2.1.1 Improving teacher knowledge and skills

In many countries of the developing world, especially in SSA, teacher development is seen as a priority since a great number of teachers were recruited without initial training (Akyeampong et al., 2011; Buckler, 2015; Kelani and Khourey-Bowers, 2012; Power, 2019). Within the literature on teacher education, it is often advocated that teachers need to know about a number of interconnected types of knowledge to do their job within the premises of their profession (Hiebert et al., 2002; Knight, 2002; Malderez and Wedell, 2007; Shulman, 1986, 1987). The importance accorded to professional development is based on the assumption that creating learning opportunities can help teachers to ‘enhance their knowledge and develop new instructional practice’ (Borko, 2004:3). There is no doubt that teachers, as professionals, are expected to continue learning while they are in service. However, what types of knowledge and skills do teachers need throughout their professional lives?
In the literature, though many elements of teacher knowledge are agreed upon, there is no consensus among educational researchers on its exact constituents (Knight, 2002). Shulman’s (1987) seminal article on teacher knowledge has put forward seven different types of knowledge which teachers need to acquire and develop through their careers. Based on that article, Malderez and Wedell (2007) have provided clear and useful explanations of these in the following list:

1. Content knowledge: knowledge of the subject that you are teaching
2. General pedagogical knowledge: classroom management and assessment techniques
3. Curriculum knowledge: knowing what is in the curriculum, understanding why it is there and planning how to ‘cover’ it within the time available
4. Pedagogical content knowledge: knowing the techniques that are available to use for teaching your subject
5. Knowledge of learners and their characteristics: your learners in general and the individuals making up a particular class
6. Knowledge of educational contexts: the education system as a whole and the school in particular
7. Knowledge of ‘educational ends, purposes, and values and their philosophical and historical grounds’: the ultimate goals of education within the society and what education is thought to be for (Malderez and Wedell, 2007:17-18, adapted from Shulman, 1987)

Shulman’s (1987) perspective may be seen as being informed by a cognitivist view of teacher learning since there seems to be a focus on what Malderez and Wedell (2007: 19) call ‘knowing about’ in their differentiation of types of teacher knowledge. Arguably, the list above is not exhaustive, and other scholars have proposed conceptualisations of teacher knowledge from different perspectives (see Banks et al., 2005 for more on those). Notwithstanding, most of what is often seen as part of teacher knowledge in educational research would be encompassed in those seven categories.
All seven types of knowledge can be considered as being of paramount importance for teachers as education professionals. Nonetheless, the value given to each will vary in accordance with what is expected of ‘good teachers’ within their contexts (Malderez and Wedell, 2007: 17). For example, in a test-oriented education system, such as that of Senegal, educational authorities and school leaders may give much more importance to content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and curriculum knowledge than general pedagogical knowledge. Conversely, another education system may expect teachers to know ‘learners and their characteristics’ in order to provide them with a contextually appropriate education. Furthermore, ways of developing teachers’ knowledge will be dependent on how learning is understood with a given educational context. Hence, different education systems may prioritise unsimilar types of teacher knowledge in their TPD initiatives.

Shulman’s list is very useful when exploring teacher knowledge, but it can be expanded since what teachers are expected to know and be able to do seems to be ever-growing as their students’ needs evolve with time (Hargreaves, 2007; Hiebert et al., 2002; Knight, 2002). Arguably, teachers may need to develop their understandings of all those types of knowledge though at various degrees depending on the contexts where they work and the stage of their careers (Hargreaves, 2000). In this respect, given that context plays an important role in determining the knowledge and skills of teachers (Bautista and Ortega-Ruíz, 2015), their expressed learning needs must be duly taken account of in any initiatives aiming at improving their practice and, consequently, their students’ learning.

2.1.2 Improving student learning

For many years, a quest for the improvement of quality in education, understood through improved students’ learning outcomes, has consistently been a preoccupation of education
systems across the world (Fishman et al., 2003; Hayes, 1997; Guskey, 2002; Korthagen, 2017; Popova et al., 2018; Wang, 2015). One significant element, whose importance has been recurrently emphasised, in the array of the complex and various factors on which quality education is dependent, is the provision of quality teaching (Darling-Hammond and Richardson, 2009) which is considered by many to be much dependent on effective teacher professional development (Chambers, 1997; Guskey, 2002; Korthagen, 2017; Prenger et al., 2017). In other words, it is believed that TPD activities, either initiated by teachers or other education stakeholders, will result in improving teachers’ practice and students’ learning.

The significance of TPD for the improvement of student learning has also been foregrounded recently though by many educational researchers (Bantwini, 2019; Day et al., 2007; Fishman et al., 2003; Guskey, 2002; Popova et al., 2018; Moon, 2007; Ravhuhali et al., 2015). For example, Ravhuhali et al. (2015) advocate that ‘the only way through which quality and effective teaching and learning can be provided is by effective professional development as it helps teachers to acquire new ideas, knowledge and skills to deliver the subject content in their classes’ (p. 57). From these authors’ perspective, effective professional development for teachers is a necessity for them to continuously improve their practice. However, what constitutes effective TPD will depend on how it is conceptualised and implemented in a given context.

As pointed in the previous section, the necessity for teachers to acquire new knowledge is all the more important as their students’ needs and understandings of teaching evolve with time (Albakhshi and Dehvari, 2015; Desimone, 2009; Hiebert et al., 2002; Malderez and Wedell, 2007). Depending on the context, TPD activities can have diverse specific purposes (Kennedy, 2005), but the main purpose is for teachers to improve and/or change their practice and, consequently, improve their students’ learning (Day et al., 2007; Guskey, 2002; Opfer and Pedder, 2011; Ravhuhali et al., 2015; Rodrigues, 2005). This preoccupation is highly relevant
in SSA where, due to an insufficiency of many teaching and learning resources, teachers are expected to play a significantly vital role in their students’ education compared to their counterparts in other contexts where resources are fully available. As mentioned in chapter one, a great number of those teachers have been recruited without formal initial teacher education (Akyeampong et al., 2011; Buckler, 2015; Kelani and Khourey-Bowers, 2012), which might make the fulfilment of their responsibilities more challenging.

The strong link between the provision of quality education and quality teaching has been understood and given much attention by many stakeholders of education throughout the world. According to Guskey (2002), ‘policy-makers increasingly recognize that schools can be no better than the teachers and administrators who work within them’ (p. 381). In this respect, improving student learning goes hand in hand with the effective development of the schools’ staff of which teachers constitute the main part in most cases. Here it can be understood that the enhancement of professional learning has to be a preoccupation of the school as a whole. I will explore the role that schools may play in TPD later in this chapter.

With the main objective being to enhance teacher professional learning, and consequently, student learning, approaches to TPD have been evolving with theoretical understandings of learning in general and that of professional learning in particular. The following section explores those approaches.

2.2 Approaches to teacher professional development

Professional education – pre-service and in-service education of professionals – has been through different stages based on the progression of the understandings of how people learn in general and particularly how they learn to practise a profession. Teaching being a profession, teacher education has also gone through these stages. The ways teachers have been educated
have always been based on people’s beliefs in and understandings of the teaching and learning process and teacher learning itself (Richards and Farrell, 2005). According to Malderez and Wedell (2007), ‘chronologically these theories of teacher learning go from behaviourist to skill theory and constructivism and on to socio-cultural views’ (p. 15). These different stages of understandings and approaches to professional education have been described by Wallace (1991), who classified them into different models of professional education: ‘the craft model’, ‘the applied science model’ and ‘the reflective practice model’ (p. 6). This is consistent with the grouping of Richards and Farrell (2005) who put views of teacher learning into three main categories: ‘skill learning, cognitive process, personal construction or reflective practice’ (pp. 6-7) which have influenced ways of educating teachers. Here mention should be made that this evolution of understandings of learning does not mean that those approaches are necessarily mutually exclusive. The next subsections deal with each of them separately.

2.2.1 Understanding teaching as a craft

With the craft model, the teacher or teacher trainee is seen as someone who learns the job from an expert teacher. From this perspective, teaching is learnt the same way as a craft where the apprentice listens religiously to and observes carefully his/her master. This understanding of teaching, which might still prevail in some contexts, considers it as an art, the mastery of which has to be learnt from expert teachers mostly through extensive classroom observation (Malderez and Wedell, 2007). In a way, it is very close to the philosophical view of teacher education which sees learning to teach as learning a skill (Richards and Farrell, 2005). One must understand that this approach to teaching, which resonates with what Hargreaves (2000) calls ‘the pre-professional age’ of teaching, seems to have been discarded by many scholars.
One of the weaknesses of this model is that it sees the trainee/teacher as an empty vessel and learning to teach can be equated with a mere act of imitation without a clear understanding of the rationale behind actions (Malderez and Wedell, 2007; Wallace, 1991). In other words, this view of learning does not give due consideration to the teachers’ understanding of the knowledge on which teaching, as a professional practice, is based (Hargreaves, 2000). Undoubtedly, the practice of any profession needs to be guided by a clear understanding of its underpinning ideas. As such, this approach to learning to teach, based on considering teaching as a craft, is different from an approach to learning to teach based on an understanding of the theoretical and empirical knowledge which constitute this profession’s fundamental basis. The next subsection explores ideas on that approach.

2.2.2 Teaching as a theory application activity

The second perspective on teacher learning is related to the applied science model (Wallace, 1991) which is based on a theory-application approach. From this understanding, teachers base their practice on the conclusions of researchers who are considered the main producers of knowledge about learning and how teaching needs to be done for people to learn effectively. This approach was consistent with the advancements that science had made in many domains in which practice was informed by research-based evidence and influenced by a positivist view of understanding of learning (Hoban, 2002). It sees learning to teach as learning about theories and taking them into practice (Malderez and Wedell, 2007). The significant strength of this approach is that teaching is conceptualised as a practice based on scientific knowledge developed through theorising understandings of the teaching/learning process and doing empirical research to confirm or contradict the latter. It can be argued that this approach to teacher initial learning and professional development equates teaching with traditional
professions, especially with medicine, where evidence-based knowledge constitutes the main basis of practice (Hargreaves, 1996). In this respect, the practice of teaching is informed by research.

However, types of teacher education and professional development activities based on the theory-application approach have, for many reasons, often proved to be ineffective in impacting on teacher change and student learning. This dissatisfaction has been consistently and widely reported in studies on TPD for many years (Akyeampong et al., 2011; Borko, 2004; Farrell 2007, 2008; Hargreaves, 2000; Hayes, 1995, 1997; Guskey, 2002; Kelani and Khourey-Bowers, 2012; Lamb, 1995; Opfer and Pedder, 2011; Power, 2019; Waters and Vilches, 2012). In many cases, the causes of this ineffectiveness resonate with Freeman’s view of those programmes when he stated that ‘they depend on received knowledge to influence behaviour and do not acknowledge — much less encourage — teacher-learners to construct their own versions of teaching’ (cited in Lamb 1995: 79). In other words, TPD activities based on this approach aim at merely transmitting knowledge to teachers. In this respect, it considers teachers as simple technicians who have just to apply what has been conceived by others (Malderez and Wedell, 2007). It overlooks the complexity of teaching as a profession which requires much more than the sole application of theories (Opfer and Pedder, 2011; Christie et al., 2004) because teachers bring in with them their prior knowledge, beliefs, experiences in learning, and values (Borg, 2009). Hence, TPD activities informed by this approach are considered as failing to substantially impact on teachers’ change of practice (Hoban, 2002; Opfer and Pedder, 2011).

Another weakness of this model is also known as the theory-practice gap which might happen with many cases of TPD initiatives (Christie et al., 2004; Hargreaves, 2000). This gap between theory and practice may be encountered when promoted teaching approaches and techniques are not consistent with the contexts, both physical and non-physical, of the students they are meant for (Tabulawa, 2013). It can also happen when theoretical and practitioner knowledge
are treated as separate (Korthagen, 2010) – when theories are being introduced as isolated from practice. In this case, teachers may not clearly understand the link between the proposed classrooms activities (and the various roles they are expected to play in them) and the philosophical principles that underpin them. Shortcomings of this approach have also been related to the experts’ lack of full understanding of what teachers of given context need to know and how they perceive learning (Borko, 2004; Guskey, 2002; Louws et al., 2017). This gap might be explained by the fact that implementing TPD through this approach often requires the intervention of people other than teachers to lead the activities and those teacher educators may not be aware of many of the teachers’ classroom realities (Darling-Hammond and Richardson, 2009). Similar issues may also arise at a larger scale when foreign experts leading NGOs’ interventions in education are not fully aware of the teachers’ working contexts, which is often the case in SSA (Christie et al., 2004).

TPD initiatives implemented in accordance with these two approaches have been criticised on the grounds that they tend to be predominantly based on a deficit view of teacher learning which does not consider teachers as trusted to learn by themselves (Christie et al., 2004; Louws et al., 2017). In addition, they are mainly informed by understandings of teaching as being concerned with the transmission of knowledge (Louws et al., 2017) and of learning as the acquisition and storage of knowledge. Notwithstanding, there is a need to understand that criticisms of the theory-application approach do not discard the importance of linking theory and practice in teaching. Critics reject a single-minded emphasis on theory to the detriment of practice within a given context, but they recognise that, teaching, as professional practice, does need to be based on theoretical knowledge (Timperley and Alton-Lee, 2008). Not only does TPD need to address the different types of teacher knowledge, such as those identified by Shulman (1987), but, at the same time, there is a necessity to create opportunities to try out ideas during TPD sessions (Malderez and Wedell, 2007), which can impact positively on
teacher professional learning (Waters, 2005). Moving away from the theory-application approach is a way of considering teachers as practitioners who can understand their contextual realities and relate their learning to those. Hence the relevance of putting teachers at the centre of their professional development by allowing them to play active roles in the process of their learning. The next subsection deals with reflective practice within the teaching profession.

2.2.3 Teaching as a reflective practice

The third model, reflective practice, builds on the second one as it can be seen ‘as a compromise solution which gives due weight both to experience and to the scientific basis of the profession’ (Wallace, 1991: 17), but most importantly, it sees the practitioner as an active participant whose knowledge and experience are valuable (Borg, 2009; Farrell, 2013; Richards and Farrell, 2005; Christie et al., 2004). The distinctive characteristic of this model is that it considers professional competence as something to be aimed at through an on-going process of reflection (Wallace, 1991), not just unthoughtful application of theories.

Reflection is a concept which has received much attention within the community of educational researchers and has been explored from different angles based on a variety of understandings. As advocated by Farrell (2013), a full meaning of reflective practice ‘still remains open to question in the general education literature as well as second language education’ (p. 27). This lack of precise delimitations of the meaning of reflection seems to have made it difficult for educational researchers to find common grounds in relation to its definition (Farrell, 2013). Though the use of the concept of reflection in education is often attributed to Schön (1983, 1987) with his distinction between ‘reflection-in-action’ and ‘reflection-on-action’, it had been referred to earlier by other scholars as a way of avoiding routine in thinking, and learning from experience through questioning the effectiveness of practice (Dewey, 1910; Kolb, 1984).
Building on Schönb’s understandings of reflection, many other scholars have given very insightful views on understanding the concept in teacher education and professional development (Akbari, 2007; Burton, 2009; Borg, 2011; Griffiths, 2000; Larrivee, 2000, 2008; Ebadi and Gheisari, 2016; Ryder, 2012; Thompson and Pascal, 2012; Shabeed and Akkary, 2014; Wallace, 1991). For example, while Wallace (1991) focuses on questioning the ‘received knowledge’—understood as mostly composed of theories about teaching and learning—Farrell advocates that:

teachers must subject their own beliefs of teaching and learning to critical examination, by articulating these beliefs and comparing these beliefs to their actual classroom practices to see if there are any contradictions between practice and underlying beliefs (Farrell, 2007: 9).

Here, it is evident that Farrell is emphasising the significance of reflection on teachers’ personal constructs (beliefs) and their practice. Reflection can also consist of the act of critically thinking about one’s knowledge of, and experience in, teaching and trying to adapt those to a new context (Borg, 2011; Ryder 2012). From this perspective, reflection does not stop at the questioning level, but it goes beyond towards actions for improvement of practice. In the same vein, Otienoh (2011) extends the scope of reflection by pointing out the importance of reflecting on the critical incidents, which (Farrell, 2013: 42) defines as the ‘unplanned and unanticipated events’ occurring in the classrooms.

In educational research, teacher reflection can be conceptualised in development levels. According to Larrivee (2008), understandings of teacher reflection in previous studies (e.g. van Manen 1977, Jay and Johnson, 2002; Larrivee, 2000) converge towards the identification of three different levels: an initial level which mainly focuses on actions and skills, an advanced level which considers rationales for actions, and a higher level which is concerned with examining ‘the ethical, social and political consequences of teaching’ (p. 342). Building on these understandings of reflection, Larrivee (2008) classified reflection into four levels and
labelled them in these terms: ‘pre-reflection, surface reflection, pedagogical reflection and critical reflection’ (p. 348).

In each of the perspectives above, the constant dimension is that reflection implies questioning one’s beliefs and actions in relation to one’s practice in context. As such, reflection is seen as embedded in the contexts of the teachers and as a way of learning from experience in order to improve one’s future practice. Here, it is worth mentioning that most of those understandings of reflection tend to see it as an individual enterprise.

As shown in the discussions above, these approaches to teacher learning indicate that conceptualising and implementing TPD can be based on a range of ideas related to different understandings of learning. The next section provides a synthesis of the main models of TPD.

2.3 Synthesis of approaches

From a philosophical angle, each of the approaches above corresponds to a view of how teachers learn to teach and develop as professionals. As such, the adopted models of TPD within education systems are related to how the different actors in charge of it conceptualise both teacher professional learning and student learning. Consequently, these different understandings of teacher learning lead to different ways of designing and implementing pre-service teacher education programmes and in-service TPD courses and/or activities. Here, it is worth understanding that the different approaches above have strong relationships among them. Each approach has built on the previous one and they can be considered as forming the theoretical underpinnings of almost all TPD models within educational research.

Kennedy (2005) has offered a succinct summary of the main models mostly used to implement TPD and classified them into three categories based on their main purpose: ‘transmission,
transitional, or transformative’ (see Table 2.1). Mention should be made that other terms, such as ‘teacher study group’ (Frazier, 2009), ‘lesson study’ (Schipper et al., 2017) and others are used within educational research, but their meanings mostly overlap with those of these models in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model of CPD</th>
<th>Purpose of model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The training model</td>
<td>Transmission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The award-bearing model</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The deficit model</td>
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<tr>
<td>The cascade model</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The standards-based model</td>
<td>Transitional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The coaching/mentoring model</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The community of practice model</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The action research model</td>
<td>Transformative</td>
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<tr>
<td>The transformative model</td>
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</table>

Table 3.1 Spectrum of CPD models (adopted from Kennedy, 2005)

Each of these models is underpinned by principles of understanding of teaching and learning. With the first group, professional learning is understood as a transmission of knowledge from more knowledgeable to less knowledgeable people. In other words, teachers are seen as people to whom knowledge has to be transmitted. For example, with the cascade model ‘training is conducted at several levels by trainers drawn from a level above’ (Hayes, 2000: 137). In this respect, the cascade model implies a certain notion of verticality. One of the weaknesses of this model is that the content of the training may be diluted as it goes through the different levels (Hayes, 2000). With the models of this first group, knowledge is acquired, and as such, can be transmitted to others.
While the first four models in the table can be seen as being aligned with the theory-application approach, the two models at the bottom have a transformative purpose and are inquiry-based. This indicates a departure from conceiving teacher training and education as a mere transmission of knowledge and skills to be applied in classrooms to having a new aim for ‘transformative teacher learning – that is learning that has a genuine impact on practice’ (Malderez and Wedell, 2007: 29). Through these models, teachers play central roles for their professional development by taking ownership of it and having an objective of improving their teaching practice. Hence, these models promote reflection within TPD activities.

As for the three in the middle, their purpose is not rigidly fixed. In the words of Kennedy, they ‘have the capacity to support underlying agendas compatible with either of these two purposes of CPD’ (Kennedy, 2005: 248). For example, the coaching/mentoring model can have a transmission purpose if a mentor sees his or her role as only telling their mentee what to do. Conversely, this same model can be transformative if the mentor understands his or her role as helping their mentee to reflect on his/her knowledge and actions. As a whole, this spectrum gives a snapshot of how TPD has been broadly understood and implemented throughout the world. However, it is worth underscoring that this categorisation is not perfect since the grouping could be done differently. For example, the training model (of the first group) could be considered as transitional depending on how it is implemented. In addition, the appropriateness of the use of ‘purpose’ in the second column may be questionable. What it refers to (transmission, transitional, transformative) can also be understood as approaches to teacher learning informing those TPD models.

In a similar attempt of grouping models, Farrell (2013) argues that current TPD activities are mainly being informed by one of two main approaches: top-down or bottom-up. Succinctly put, the first approach applies when TPD initiatives are taken by other stakeholders and the second entails that initiatives start from teachers and they play active roles throughout the
process. TPD understood from a situated learning perspective sits comfortably within the premises of the bottom-up approach.

So far, this chapter has explored the main purposes of teacher education/professional development. It has also shown the different approaches to teacher learning related to the evolution of the understandings of learning in general, provided a synthesis of the main TPD models, and shown how those models are linked to those approaches. Now I turn to current ideas on what constitutes effective TPD.

2.4 Which ways towards effective TPD?

As mentioned above at the end of section 2.3.2, much research on teacher professional development activities has considered models based on the theory-application approach to be ineffective as there has been little evidence of change of teacher practice or improvement of student learning as a result of their usage (Guskey, 2002; Farrell 2007, 2008; Opfer and Pedder, 2011; Waters and Vilches, 2012). This dissatisfaction prompted reconsiderations of understanding of how teachers learn effectively within the educational research community and resulted in the identification of some directions for the improvement of TPD. For Malderez and Wedell, (2007) the ‘current approaches might be labelled “investigation-articulation”’ (p. 22) for which reflection is central. These current understandings of learning put teachers and their social context at the centre of TPD activities. In this respect, they resonate with the situated learning theory (Lave and Wenger, 1991) which sees learning as participation in social practice which is inherently embedded in its context. So, it can be argued that attempts to understand ways of improving teacher professional learning requires paying much attention to teachers themselves and their schools as working contexts.
In their review of studies on teacher learning, Darling-Hammond and Richardson (2009) have offered a useful set of criteria to take account of when exploring teacher professional learning. Though there is a diversity of views on ways of enhancing teacher learning, these authors found that research tends to see TPD as effective when it:

• deepens teachers' knowledge of content and how to teach it to students
• helps teachers understand how students learn specific content
• provides opportunities for active, hands-on learning
• enables teachers to acquire new knowledge, apply it to practice, and reflect on the results with colleagues
• is part of a school reform effort that links curriculum, assessment, and standards to professional learning
• is collaborative and collegial
• is intensive and sustained over time (Darling-Hammond and Richardson, 2009: 49)

A close look at these criteria may allow to say that these directions for effective TPD oppose a view that sees teachers as passive learners and ignores the crucial role that context can play in their professional learning. The move is to consider teachers as professionals whose learning needs to be linked to their working environments. Here, it is worth underscoring that this set of criteria resonates with most of the characteristics of TPD initiatives seen as positively impacting teachers’ professional learning.

Different studies have strongly advocated that improvements in TPD activities may result from the promotion of approaches that put teachers and their contexts at the centre (Danielowich, 2012; Guskey, 2003; Lin and Beyerlein, 2015; Ravhuhali et al., 2015; Van veen et al., 2012). In their attempt to develop a TPD model for effective teaching and learning, one of the main conclusions of Ravhuhali et al. (2015) is that TPD ‘should be planned, conceived and implemented by teachers themselves’ (p. 65). Since the aim of TPD is to improve teaching, it
is important for teachers to have ‘opportunities for active, hands-on learning’ (Darling-Hammond and Richardson, 2009:49) in that these may allow them to see the potential difficulties which their students may have and try to adapt their teaching activities accordingly. This way of seeing teachers as active learners emphasises the significance of implementing a situated approach to teacher learning in professional development activities. As pointed by Saigal (2012), in a report of a study to implement situated learning in an Indian context, ‘in this approach, teachers are positioned as active participants in the learning process, rather than passive recipients of training directives’ (p. 1011).

Darling-Hammond and Richardson (2009) also mentioned the importance of sustainability of TPD which is one of its main challenges in many developing countries, especially in SSA where many CPD programmes are sponsored by international organisations (Akyeampong et al., 2011; Christie et al., 2004). Such a view of effective TPD is in line with the views of several other scholars (Moon and Boullón, 1997; Opfer and Pedder, 2011). For example, Opfer and Pedder (2011) argue that ‘most research has concluded that activities that effectively support teachers’ professional learning need to be sustained and intensive rather than brief and sporadic’ (p. 384). However, for TPD to be sustained, the realities of the teachers’ and students’ context need to be considered since they are determinant factors to its effectiveness. A closer analysis of the criteria above permits us to see that teacher learning, student learning and school culture are strongly interrelated. Not only does this interconnection stress the significance of each element but it also allows us to see them as forming a whole.

As shown within these criteria, effective TPD is mainly linked to collective reflection on practice, collegiality among teachers, sustainability of activities, and geared to the improvement of student learning; all of these in relation to their working contexts. Here, collaboration in collegial environment needs to be emphasised as it is an element which may facilitate the sharing and exchanging of ideas and practice between teachers (Hargreaves and
Fullan, 1992; Prenger et al., 2017). Nonetheless, it is apparent that the theory-application approach in TPD is not completely discarded through these criteria, particularly with the presence of ‘knowledge acquisition and application’.

Interestingly, throughout the literature on TPD, there is a recent move towards a bottom-up approach (Farrell, 2013) to TPD which gives due attention to teachers’ specific learning needs and goals (Hipp et al., 2008; Louws et al. 2017; Waters and Vilches, 2012; Van veen et al., 2012) and allows them to collectively play central role in both its design and implementation stages (Farrell, 2013; Kennedy, 2005; van As, 2018). Such a move is consistent with understanding TPD through the situated learning perspective within which the consideration of teachers and their teaching contexts is seen as vital for the enhancement of their professional learning (Christie et al., 2004; Wong, 2010). This call for a more context-sensitive approach emphasises the significance of focusing on what teachers see as their preoccupations in relation to their students’ needs, not based only on what the other stakeholders of education consider as priorities. In this respect, this move is a way of giving much more agency to teachers as far as their professional development is concerned. Such a perspective is aligned with what Sachs (2001) calls ‘democratic professionalism’, a view of teaching as a profession through which teachers are given much freedom on how they understand and practise their job. However, teachers’ views of themselves and what they do as professionals have to be understood in relation to the expectations of other education stakeholders within their working contexts (Hargreaves, 2000; Tateo, 2012; Welmond, 2002). To some extent, understandings of teacher professionalism are under the influence of how teachers are perceived within their educational contexts. As such, I will argue for a shift of understanding teacher professionalism in Senegal as a starting point to make reflection a reality within PCs (see Chapter Eight).

As pointed out through the ideas elaborated above, one consistent consensus is that effective TPD needs to be viewed in relation to the central role that teachers, as active learners (Hoban,
2002), and their working contexts play in it, the significance of collaboration between teachers, and the importance of its sustainability. One can argue that since the main purpose of TPD is to improve the learning of all students, teachers of a given context need to learn collectively to achieve such a goal. The next section deals with learning within communities.

**2.5 Understanding teacher learning within communities**

As discussed above, recent understandings of teacher learning and professional development point towards a focus on collaboration among teachers. Such ways of understanding learning are often linked to the concepts of communities of practice (CoP) and professional learning communities (PLCs). The next subsections focus on understandings of these two concepts in relation to teacher professional learning.

**2.5.1 Communities of practice**

The concept of CoP is often seen as originated from the work of Lave and Wenger (1991). A CoP is a group of people who share, and relate to, interests and common practices/activities in a given context over time (Lave and Wenger, 1991). People within a CoP need to be in ‘mutual engagement’, have ‘a joint enterprise’ consisting of improving themselves, and develop ‘a shared repertoire’ of practice and regime of competence (Wenger, 1998: 73). Members of a CoP must be in constant ongoing learning partnerships or relationships for the improvement of the practice they share and a commitment to this improvement (Farnsworth et al., 2016). In Wenger’s (1998) terms, within a CoP ‘it is a matter of sustaining enough mutual engagement in pursuing an enterprise together to share significant learning’ (p. 86). A CoP aims at developing its ‘members’ capabilities’ and allowing them ‘to build and exchange knowledge’
(Wenger and Snyder, 2000: 142) in order to improve their shared practice ((Farnsworth et al., 2016; Wenger and Wenger-Trayner, 2015). As such, learning within a CoP is understood as happening through engaging in practice with others (Boud and Middleton, 2003), and it is not a mere construction of knowledge through individual abstractions. This way of understanding learning is consistent with the learning as participation perspective (Sfard, 1998).

Through what they call ‘legitimate peripheral participation’ (LPP), Lave and Wenger (1991: 29) offer an explanation of the movement through which newcomers become established members of a community of practice. Metaphorically, this movement is from the periphery towards a virtual centre epitomised by full members’ (old-timers’) practice. Within a CoP, it is through movement towards that centre that practice is constantly being reproduced and changed by both ‘newcomers’ and ‘old-timers’ (Lave and Wenger, 1991: 29), and learning is an integral part of that movement (Wenger, 1998). Significant to integrate in our understanding of the concept of CoP is that, as learning is an ongoing process, it is expected of all members (not just the newcomers) because practice evolves with time. In this sense, learning becomes a lifelong endeavour.

Conceptualising learning through a CoP sits within the situated learning perspective. Of great importance in understanding learning from this perspective is that, as explained by Lave and Wenger (1991), ‘participation in social practice – subjective as well objective – suggests a very explicit focus on the person, but as person-in-the-world, as a member of a sociocultural community’ (p. 52). Further into their argument on situated learning, these authors make it clear that ‘activities, tasks, functions, and understandings do not exist in isolation; they are part of broader systems of relations in which they have meaning’ (p. 53). In other words, the situated perspective is a holistic view of learning which takes account of the interconnection between learning, the individual, and his or her social context because ‘learning and knowing are made up of learning as belonging, learning as becoming, learning as doing and learning as
experience’ (Trevethan and Sandretto, 2017: 128). Hence, membership of a CoP is synonymous with learning through participating in the practice of that community (Davies, 2005; Little, 2002). Such a view also links membership of a CoP to the sense of belonging which is of great significance in fostering the learning of members of a community of teachers.

It is the view of many scholars that CoPs can form without systematic planning and that learning is associated with these communities (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Frazier, 2009; Wenger and Snyder, 2000; Wenger, 1998). For instance, by doing the same work at a given context, sharing understandings of their practice, and overcoming challenges together, people develop various types of relationships that keep them together as a CoP (Wenger, 1998). As explained by Wenger and Snyder (2000), the formation of a CoP often happens through voluntary participation of its members and, as such, it may not be ‘difficult for meaningful communities of practice to emerge naturally’ (Frazier, 2009: 29) within groups of people who share the same practice.

Applied to effective TPD which is understood as being strongly linked to teachers’ context (Bautista and Orgtega_Ruíz, 2015; Darling-Hammond and Richardson, 2009 Farrell, 2013; Kuchah et al., 2019; Smith and Padwad, 2017; Waters and Vilches, 2012), a CoP can be an effective model (Trevethan and Sandretto, 2017) as it may allow teachers to learn from one another through their mutual engagement (Little, 2002; Putman and Borko, 2000; Wenger, 1998). Within a CoP, learning can happen in both formal situations (e.g. organised professional development activities) and informal ones. From a situated perspective, teacher professional learning is not conceptualised as locating within the sole confines of formal TPD activities. For example, a teacher may learn from a short conversation with a colleague, a parent or a student. From this perspective, learning may be done consciously or unconsciously, which reminds us of the complexity of teacher learning (Opfer and Pedder, 2011) and the challenges that mark out attempts to get fuller understandings of it. What is of great significance is that a CoP of
teachers enhances its members’ professional growth (Patton and Parker, 2017) as they continuously learn through their participation in the community’s activities either formally or incidentally.

2.5.2 Professional learning communities

The concept of professional learning community (PLC) is partly rooted in educational researchers’ understandings of that of a CoP (Wang, 2015). In educational research, it is accepted by many scholars that there is no unanimity in defining a PLC (Chen and Wang, 2015; Hairon and Dimmock, 2012; Servage, 2008; Soares et al., 2020; Stoll et al., 2006; Zhang and Pang, 2016). Nonetheless, it is noticeable within the literature that many of their understandings of PLCs tend to share similar elements such as inquiry on practice, collaboration, and sustainable commitment. Through what can be considered a largely-encompassing definition, Stoll and Louis (2007) understand a PLC as ‘a group of teachers sharing and critically interrogating their practice in an ongoing, reflective, collaborative, inclusive, learning-oriented, growth-promoting way’ (p. 2). Along the same lines, Wong (2010) accords that members of a PLC ‘search for good practice through inquiry’ (p. 624) with an objective of improving themselves. From these authors’ views, learning within such a community happens through a continuous collective reflection on practice.

What is critical within a PLC is that its members have a sense of purpose in their actions and reflection before and after actions is at the centre of their activities (Stoll et al., 2006). As stated by Hairon (2017) ‘the major aims of PLC are to enable students’ learning; build a culture of collaboration; and focus on student outcomes’ (p. 8). From this perspective, it can be understood that teachers of a PLC seek to improve their students’ learning by trying to improve their classroom practice. To this end, those members aim at ‘establishing a culture of
collaboration and collective learning’ (Chen and Wang, 2015: 427) through their constant attempts learn from one another (Danielowich, 2012; Lin and Beyerlein, 2015; Vescio et al., 2008; Penner-Williams et al., 2017). In this way, working as a PLC ‘can help teachers to pool resources to make shared sense of, and develop collective responses towards, intensified and often capricious demands on their practice’ (Hargreaves, 2000: 162). Understood from these perspectives, implementing PLCs may have much potential for the improvement of teachers’ practice in resource constraint contexts such as in low-middle income countries.

Other key features of the concept of PLC is that learning is strongly linked to the context of the learners and ‘the focus is not just on individual teachers’ professional learning but on the professional learning within a community context – a community of learners, and the notion of collective learning’ (Stoll et al., 2006: 225). These authors advocate that teachers need to learn collectively to improve themselves in accordance with the challenges they may face within their working contexts. Hence, reflection within this community needs to be ‘designed for the context’ (Boud, 2009: 32) since ‘learning takes places in an authentic context that allows people to try out new ideas about their practice through reflection-on-action and reflection-in-action’ (Wong, 2010: 624). Such an understanding of a PLC stresses the important role that the school may play in framing the activities of the PLC, for example in encouraging and supporting teachers to try new ways of teaching (see more on this in section 2.6 below).

Thus, conceptualising TPD through PLCs is consistent with current understandings of effective ways of enhancing teacher professional learning (Chen and Wang, 2015; Hairon, 2017; Hairon and Dimmock, 2012; Prenger et al., 2017; Vescio et al., 2008; Wong, 2010). As advocated by Darling-Hammond and Richardson (2009), there is a necessity of a paradigm shift of approaches to TPD towards an understanding of teacher learning through collaboration. In their review of 11 studies (10 American and one English) on the impacts of PLCs on teaching and student learning, Vescio et al. (2008) state that their positive effects on both teachers’ practices
and students’ outcomes are widely agreed upon. In this respect, approaches to TPD with the characteristics of a PLC through which teachers collectively take active roles in a variety of initiatives to enhance both their learning and, consequently, that of their students have the potential to improve classroom teaching.

2.5.3 Putting the concepts of CoP and PLC together

While a CoP focuses more on acculturating members into practice through participation in the community (Lave and Wenger, 1991), a PLC pays highly specific attention to ways of understanding and improving the professional practice of the community through collective inquiry for an explicit purpose (Prenger et al., 2017; Stoll and Louis, 2007; Wong, 2010; Stoll et al., 2006). Arguably, the concept of ‘community of practice’ and that of ‘professional learning community’ are not mutually exclusive. TPD understood through these two concepts is consistent with the idea of creating and sustaining learning opportunities within groups of teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2017; Stoll et al., 2006). The core unifying element here is that members of these communities learn together through their practice in relation to their own contexts.

At this stage, mention should be made that the existence of groups of people called CoPs or PLCs within schools does not guarantee teacher professional learning for all members nor the happening of its expected consequence, the improvement of student learning (Prenger et al., 2017; Stoll et al., 2006). Members have an active role to play to make these communities active learning entities. There is a need to create learning opportunities for all members and promote values conducive to professional learning. These communities must be understood as existing organisms with the potential to facilitate collective learning (Hipp et al., 2008; Chen and Wang, 2015) in various forms through the interrelationships of members and their working contexts.
For instance, members of a given community of teachers may promote mentoring, group discussion, collective action research, peer observation, and many other activities to enhance their learning.

As shown above, understanding TPD through these two concepts is a way of championing collective learning within groups of teachers. The implementation of TPD through the concept of CoP is promising in terms of enhancing teacher professional practice. However, with schools where there is a defined objective that bring people together, the concept of PLC has also been found to have much utility for the enhancement of teacher learning (Chen and Wang, 2015; Hipp et al., 2008; Vescio et al., 2008; Wong, 2010). As already indicated above (see section 2.4), there is a move towards approaches to TPD that favour collaboration among teachers. The next subsection focuses on TPD through collaborative approaches.

2.5.4 School-based TPD approaches

Within the frameworks of CoPs, PLCs or similar ones, teachers engage in a number of different types of activities - these are explored here. Consistent with the move towards a situated approach to learning, views on effective TPD of teachers of English have emphasised the significance of taking account of the realities of the teaching contexts (Farrell, 2013; Kuchah et al., 2019; Smith and Padwad, 2017; Waters and Vilches, 2012). In their study on in-service teacher training with English teachers and trainers in the Philippines, Waters and Vilches, (2012), argue that bringing external input through training sessions alone might be ineffective since teachers may not change their practice if they are not actively participating throughout the process of TPD initiatives and relating their learning to their schools’ realities. To some extent, these authors argue for giving to teachers a central role in the process and for a combination of training sessions led others and school-based activities by teachers themselves.
In the similar vein, Wambugu et al. (2019) advocate for school-based TPD activities. In their study of a school-based TPD programme in a Kenyan primary school, which was initiated by the school headteacher and implemented by the TESSA team, they found that teachers expressed positive views about their experience; they were able to focus on their own issues through their collaboration with their colleagues. For these authors ‘this was evidenced by the fact that they [teachers] opened up their classroom for observation and had a candid discussion with their peers’ (p. 79). Arguably, such a type of discussion is only possible when teachers trust one another and are open enough to accept criticisms and suggestions from their colleagues. In the next two subsections, I explore some school-based approaches to TPD at school level and the significance of teacher agency in TPD.

2.5.4.1 Collaborative School based TPD approaches

2.5.4.1.1 Collective reflection

Understood from the situated perspective, reflection is considered a collective enterprise rather than the individual activity described by Schöhn (1987). Boud (2009) argues that reflective practice within an organisation needs to be a collective endeavour for it to impact positively on its people’s work. For such a reflection, Boud (2009) uses the term ‘productive reflection’ which he defines as a group activity since it ‘engages with the context and purpose of work, and most importantly, with the imperative that reflection in such settings cannot be an individual act if it is to influence work that takes place with others’ (p. 30). From Boud’s (2009) perspective, this type of reflection has a dynamic character, needs to concern the different stakeholders, and must be part of the organisational practice of the schools. In the same vein, Knight (2002) argues that ‘from an organization’s point of view, continuing professional development should enhance collective capability. It is a social matter and not merely an
individual one’ (pp. 231-2). Consequently, as institutions, schools need to create and sustain opportunities for teachers to reflect on their work (see more on this in section 2.6 below).

As discussed earlier, there is much support for the potential of reflection in helping teachers to improve their practice. For instance, in the field of English language teaching (ELT), reflective practice has been championed as potentially having positive impacts on English language teachers (Akbari, 2007; Al-Asmari, 2015; Burton, 2009; Borg, 2009; Ebadi and Gheisari, 2016; Farrell, 1999, 2013; Ryder, 2012; Shabeed and Akkary, 2014). In the same way as teachers of other subjects, teachers of English can deepen their understandings of the rationales behind their actions by reflecting on the relationship between theory and practice, and most importantly, in relation to their teaching contexts (Borg, 2009). It is argued that reflection allows teachers to cast a critical look on themselves as language teachers and on the effectiveness of their teaching (Ebadi and Gheisari, 2016; Farrell, 2013).

Teachers who engage in reflection on their skills in teaching the English language can learn much through the process. For example, Farrell’s (2013) longitudinal study (over a 2-year period) of CPD initiatives through reflection with three ESL teachers working in a college in Canada yielded interesting insights. Using qualitative methods to collect data (group discussions, journal writing, classroom observations and interviews), the author found that through their regular group discussions, these ESL teachers dealt with topics on teaching approaches, their professional lives, evaluating their students’ learning, and their perceptions of themselves as teachers. They all acknowledged the usefulness of practising collective reflection in that it helped them improve their understandings of interconnected aspects of teaching the English language. Furthermore, in practising reflection, the studied teachers felt that they were empowered in that they could focus their talk on issues of their interest (e.g. how to improve their daily practice, ways of motivating learners, balancing personal and professional lives, etc.). The teachers found group discussions beneficial to them in many ways.
since those discussions facilitated the sharing of resources and ideas and collaboration among colleagues.

Findings showing the usefulness of engaging in reflection were also reported by Shabeed and Akkary (2014) in their study of teachers working in a private primary school in Lebanon. This study explored the experiences of the teachers who engaged in developing reflective skills as part of their school’s strategies for TPD. It was guided by an interpretive epistemology and data was collected through documents inspection, interviews (with teachers and the school leaders), observations of training sessions, focus group, and class observation. Though the context may be different from schools in SSA, what is significant here is that participants found it useful to reflect together on their practice and they acknowledged having increased their understanding of reflection itself. Nonetheless, the authors also found that there were misunderstandings of what constitutes reflective practice, and the studied teachers did not show signs of having reached a critical level of reflection (see 2.2.3 above).

By taking collective initiatives for reflection, teachers are expected to increase their learning and improve their practice more substantially than when they reflect individually (Boud, 2009; Farrell, 2013). In relation to their constructs of teaching, reflection can help teachers to have a clearer understanding of their ‘teaching practices and routines’ (Richards and Farrell, 2005: 7) and the rationales behind those. This is because by reflecting on practice, teachers may change their ways of understanding concepts related to the teaching of English and, consequently, make changes in their daily practice (Ebadi and Gheisari, 2016).

However, in most cases, practising reflection will require support from more experienced people (Bean and Stevens, 2002; Reed et al., 2002; Ryder, 2012; Shabeed and Akkary, 2014). In an investigation of the use of reflective practice in a 3-year INSET programme in South Africa with primary and secondary school teachers of English, Mathematics and Science, in
both rural and urban contexts, Reed et al. (2002) reported interesting findings. The authors used a variety of methods, such as interviews, teachers’ narratives, questionnaires, notes from observed lessons, and video-recordings of lessons. One of their main findings is that practising reflection positively impacted on some of the studied teachers’ classroom practice. They state that:

those teachers who appeared more able to be reflective-in-action during lessons and reflective-on-action when planning their teaching or discussing their work, did offer learners richer, more coherent and more appropriately scaffolded learning experiences than those who appeared less able to teach reflectively (p. 271).

However, they strongly argue that there is a need for teachers to be scaffolded for them to become reflective practitioners, but not just to be introduced to the reflective practice discourse and left on their own. They hold the view that although it is very important to familiarise these teachers with the discourse of reflection, which currently is much more prevalent in high-income countries than in low-middle income countries. The working conditions of teachers in the former are very different from those in the latter, which may impact on teachers’ attitudes to and practice of reflection. For instance, due to heavy workload and a lack of incentives, some teachers in SSA may not have enough time and motivation to reflect collectively on their practice on a regular basis.

2.5.4.1.2 Peer observation

Within the literature, it is largely agreed that classroom observation can be very useful in enhancing teacher learning (Cosh 1999; Hobson and Malderez, 2013; Malderez, 2003; Vacilotto and Cummings, 2007; Yürekli, 2013). One form of peer observation, which is based on classroom practice, is known as peer coaching. As defined by Vacilotto and Cummings
‘peer coaching, a reflective approach to teacher development, proposes that teachers share data collected through peer observation as a means for reflection on their individual teaching practices’ (p. 153). In this sense, the observed teachers can look back to their practice through the observer’s feedback. It is argued that being observed by a colleague from whom one gets a feedback in a collegial and constructive manner can be a great learning opportunity for both novice and seasoned teachers (Sonneville, 2007; Yürekli, 2013).

Vacilotto and Cummings (2007) studied the effectiveness of peer coaching with 16 student teachers studying an MA course for teaching English as Second Language at a Midwest university, in which they used both questionnaires and interviews to collect data. Student teachers shared their lesson plans, observed lessons and provided feedback to one another, and wrote reflective journals. The authors reported that participants found the approach to be very useful during their practicum since ‘the peer coaching experience facilitated the exchange of teaching methods, materials, approaches, and techniques’ and ‘made student teachers aware of possible inconsistencies in their lesson plans and practice’ (p. 156). This approach is a way of promoting collective reflection since it helps both the observee and the observer to reflect on their practice and improve their teaching skills (Farrell, 2001). However, the main challenge is to make sure that all the actors understand that one of the defining characteristics of peer observation is its formative character (Hobson and Malderez, 2013; Vacilotto and Cummings, 2007).

2.5.4.1.3 Japanese lesson study (JLS)

Similar to peer observation, the Japanese lesson study approach to professional learning has been credited for its effectiveness to help teachers to improve their practice through reflection (Lewis and Perry, 2009; Groves et al., 2013; Randall et al., 2020). As a school-based approach
to TPD, it originated from Japan and has been implemented by many of its teachers for decades and also widely used in other parts of the world, such as the UK, US, and other countries in the recent years (Groves et al., 2013; Randall et al., 2020). The ‘core elements of Japanese Lesson Study include collaborative lesson design, empirical trials of lessons, collective analysis of empirical trials, and subsequent lesson re-design’ (Randall et al., 2020: 93). Through its cycle which starts with formulating students learning goal, through planning and conducting a research lesson to analysing the effectiveness of that lesson, this approach allows teachers to learn together throughout the process (Lewis and Perry, 2009).

2.5.4.4.4 Teacher study group (TSG)

A TSG is a type of professional development in which participants meet regularly ‘to discuss and inquire topics of the group’s choosing in a collaborative effort to develop as professionals’ (Frazier, 2009: 38). As such, a TSG is a type of PLC at a small scale with voluntary participation. In her PhD research study, Frazier (2009) piloted a TSG with teachers of English at a secondary school in Senegal, the geographical context of this study. The researcher collected data for five months during which she used an ethnographic case study approach. She participated in the activities of the TSG, co-taught with one of the teachers, interviewed the teachers and took fieldnotes about the upper secondary school which she selected. She found that teachers who participated in her study had positive views of their collaboration through the TSG.

On the one hand, her study has revealed several benefits of implementing a TSG in Senegal. She summarised those advantages as: ‘ownership of professional development, low-cost, frequency and intensity of meetings, pedagogical discussions, reflection on/in practice, contextual relevance, cultural relevance, creation of learning community’ (p. 191). On the
other hand, she mentioned some challenges faced by the participants. Those are ‘facilitation and leadership, meeting place, resources for meetings (especially copies), motivation of teachers, administrative support and administrative recognition’ (p. 191). Again, these challenges emphasise the significance of the role that schools may play for their teachers’ professional development.

Based on her findings, she concluded that this type of TPD can be beneficial to teachers as they are free to choose the types of activities they want to do, the time at which they meet, and the venue. More explicitly, it gives teachers more agency in and ownership of their professional development. As shown throughout this chapter, all the supportive elements to teacher learning related to TSG mostly resonate with those advocated in the wider literature on TPD and with ideas of teacher professional learning within communities (CoPs or PLCs). To some extent, this implementation of a TSG with teachers of English of a secondary school in Senegal has shown the potential of promoting a situated learning approach to TPD in this country and in other similar contexts. Nevertheless, there should be much caution when considering these positive findings as Frazier, who has much knowledge about and experience in ELT, acknowledged having played a leadership role at the beginning of her piloting of TSG in Senegal.

2.5.4.1.5 Learning circles (LCs)

Another approach which can enhance teacher learning is what is known as learning circles (LC). Members of LCs, which is a type of action research, ‘are involved in an action research cycle of initial reflection, planning, action, observation and critical reflection’ (Hairon, 2017: 3). As a strategy to improve teachers’ practice, it is informed by a bottom-up approach to TPD. LCs, which can be considered as forms of PLCs (Hairon and Tan, 2017), have been
implemented in Singapore for many years and considered as a useful tool for teacher
development (Hairon, 2017; Hairon and Dimmock, 2012). These authors argue that as an
approach to TPD, LCs can allow teachers to become more critical about the effectiveness of
their teaching. This is because throughout the process of implementing LCs, teachers will need
to question their teaching right from the start of their actions and assess what they will have
done after their attempts to improve their classroom practice. Nonetheless, Hairon, (2017) has
pointed some challenges in the implementation of LCs in the Singaporean educational context.
For instance, the teachers’ heavy workload and the hierarchical culture are seen as challenges
to effectively implement this approach. Hence, it is relevant to take account of the contextual
realities when attempting to implement this approach in other contexts, such as the Senegalese
education system where hierarchy among teachers is still present in many ways. Arguably, all
the examples above give teachers some agency in their TPD actions. I turn to this in the next
subsection.

2.5.4.2 Teacher agency in TPD

As discussed earlier in this chapter, throughout the literature, there is a call for teachers to play
active roles in TPD activities. More explicitly, teachers themselves, not the external
stakeholders alone, should decide on the purpose of their professional development activities
(Hayes, 2019). This is an invite to give teachers the freedom to tackle the difficulties which
they face in their classrooms by themselves and, as such, give them ownership of those
innovations (Wabule, 2016). Allowing teachers to play a central role in their TPD (Darling-
Hammond and Richardson, 2009; Christie et al., 2004) resonates with one of the main
characteristics of learning within a PLC (Stoll and Louis, 2007) which is the active participation
of all members in the learning initiatives of their community. Insights from a number of studies
within the field of second language teacher education, carried either with teachers of English as a second language (ESL) or English as a foreign language (EFL) from a variety of contexts (Burton, 2009; Frazier, 2009; Kuchah et al., 2019; Penner-Williams et al., 2017; Smith and Padwad, 2017; Waters and Vilches, 2012; Zonoubi et al., 2017) are aligned with the recent conceptualisations of TPD which emphasise the active role that teachers need to play for the improvement of their professional practice.

For example, in their report of a five-day school on ‘teaching in low-resource classrooms’ with group of 34 teachers and teacher educators from Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan, one of the points made by Smith and Padwad (2017) is the importance of listening to teachers and letting them share their experiences with their colleagues during CPD opportunities. These authors, who facilitated the training sessions, call this the ‘enhancement approach’ (p. 3) which they differentiate from the well prevalent deficit model that favours the introduction of new knowledge and skills to teachers by others. Through their training sessions, they also found that teachers appreciate sharing their success stories and finding solutions to their problems themselves through their discussions. The sharing which these scholars are referring to consists of e teachers collectively questioning the issues they are facing in their classrooms and trying to find possible solutions. The significance of such an approach lies in the fact that after sharing and receiving suggestions from their colleagues, teachers try out new ideas in their own classrooms and later report back to the group. The key message which they have put forward is ‘that teachers themselves are the best “experts” of their own classrooms, especially in a situation where ideas that are usually given to them via the relatively little pre-service or in-service training they receive are so often derived from relatively privileged settings’ (p. 7). Hence, they argue that teachers should be agentive and CPD initiatives need to be context-based. Such a form of professional development is often referred to as a ‘bottom-up’ approach.
Kuchah et al. (2019) also restate the issue of effectiveness of many formal CPD programmes in SSA, mostly provided by governments, which are informed by a top-down approach. They argue that the importing of ideas and solutions conceived for privileged contexts (e.g. European contexts) is problematic since they may not fit the realities of the low-resource contexts of SSA. In response, they point out a number of collaborative initiatives currently taken by teachers which may be more effective to teacher learning. For instance, many teachers of English are working together within associations which can be considered as learning communities where issues and the agenda come from the grassroots. In their study with participants from the teachers’ associations of Cameroon (CAMELTA), Ethiopia (EELPA) and Senegal (ATES), they contend that those professional communities have much potential to foster teacher professional learning. Now, I turn to the role of school cultures in TPD.

2.6 School cultures and teacher professional development

The move towards teacher-centred and context-sensitive TPD, which was pointed out earlier in this chapter, underscores the significant role that schools may play in the professional learning of teachers (Opfer and Pedder, 2011). More explicitly, schools, understood as working environments (Billett, 2004), are not neutral places for teacher learning since they have cultures of their own. In general terms, school culture can be understood as representing ‘the shared assumptions, beliefs, values, and habits that constitute the norms for the school that shape how professionals think, feel, and act’ (Hipp et al., 2008: 176). In this way, a school’s culture is created and nurtured by its people (all the stakeholders included) within a wider educational context (Deal and Peterson, 2016). A given school’s culture is made of various interconnected elements which makes it a unique working context.
Schools, as institutions, can either provide affordances for TPD initiatives or put constraints against them (Hutchinson, 2008; Postholm, 2012). The values, norms, and practices of the schools have a potential impact on the people within them, both students and staff. What is supported by the school culture is expected to draw people’s attention and motivation (Deal and Peterson, 2016) and impact on teachers’ learning since the school can be seen as the best place for effective TPD (Postholm, 2012). For instance, teachers of a school may not be given the freedom to try out new ideas and practice which they may see as important for the improvement of their students’ learning or their school may simply not see the promotion of learning for its staff as a priority. However, as emphasised by Hutchinson (2008), the affordances of the schools are not sufficient in themselves because teachers need to be willing to benefit from them. In other words, there is an individual responsibility of the teachers to make use of what their schools offer both in terms of physical and non-physical affordances. At the same time, it can be advocated that teachers can also play a central role in the formation of their school’s culture in their ways of responding to the challenges they face there.

As workplaces, schools need to be supportive to TPD initiatives (Chen and Wang, 2015; Postholm, 2012; Waters and Vilches, 2012) as quality teaching is partly dependent on them (Darling-Hammond, 1996). If schools do not support what teachers have learnt from their professional development activities, individually or collectively, those practitioners may find it very difficult to try to implement it in their classrooms (Little, 1993). As such, a supportive environment is essential for teachers to grow professionally and improve their students’ learning (Opfer and Pedder, 2011). To make collaboration and collective learning a reality within the school, there is also a need for an inclusive leadership (Chen and Wang, 2015; Hairon and Dimmock, 2012; Hipp et al., 2008; Wang, 2015). In other words, all teachers should be seen as leaders, and consequently, be allowed to and supported in taking initiatives in response to their issues related to practice.
Here, mention should be made that this chapter has explored understandings of TPD for all teachers regardless of the subject they teach, not just for language teachers, or specifically teachers of English.

2.7 Chapter conclusion

This review of scholarship on teacher learning shows the complexity of TPD. In their review of the literature on TPD practices, Opfer and Pedder (2011) advocate that current research has been missing much because:

for the most part, this research is based on the assumption that teacher professional development consists of a repertoire of activities and methods for learning and that teacher follows more or less directly from the frequency with which professional development programs use these specific activities, structures, and so on (Opfer and Pedder, 2011: 377-8).

As stated by these authors, such a way of conceptualising TPD and its direct link to teacher learning fails to acknowledge the complexity of the latter. They believe that, in addition to focusing on the ‘micro context (individual teachers, or individual activities or programs’ there is a need to give more consideration to the ‘meso (institutional) and macro (school system) contexts’ (Opfer and Pedder: 378) to better understand the complex nature of teacher learning. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the novelty of this study is that it contributes to the global debate on TPD with insights from a very under-researched context by exploring TPD with participants at the different levels of the education ecosystem in Senegal. Another main objective of this study is to generate ideas on how to improve TPD of secondary school teachers of all subjects in Senegal and, possibly, in other similar contexts. To this end, the study was conducted in the attempt to propose answers to the following research questions:
1) How is teacher professional development through pedagogical cells conceptualised within the Senegalese ELT community?

2) In what ways is TPD implemented at the district level through the DPCs and to what extent can the latter be considered COPs and PLCs?

3) What are the teachers’ lived experiences of their participation in their PCs within their schools as working contexts?

At this stage, it is worth mentioning that the research questions have undergone some changes through the course of the study, which is not uncommon in qualitative research (Hammersley, 2015). This was due to the adaptation to circumstances out of my control in the first fieldwork. Hence, as explained in the methodology chapter in section 3.2.1.2, the study was repositioned and the research questions above generated. The next chapter explains the methodological choices that have guided this study.
CHAPTER THREE: Conceptual framework and methodology

3.0 Chapter introduction

The previous chapter has substantiated the value of TPD undertaken at a school level, driven by teachers themselves, and geared to the improvement of student learning, which aligns with the structure of TPD through the PCs in Senegal. However, there is little research on how these PCs are understood by the different actors, what is happening in them, and how they might be supporting teachers’ professional learning. Hence this study takes an exploratory approach to investigate these PCs within the Senegalese ELT community. This approach will enable me to look at the different activities and the forms and extent of reflective practice within and around the PCs. As shown in Chapter Two, educational research indicates that school-based TPD approaches in which teachers play active roles through collaborative activities, such as collective reflection, action research, team-teaching, peer observation and so on have the potential to enhance teacher professional learning. These are best explored through understanding teachers’ experiences. Hence, the study adopted the qualitative approach with interviews, observation notes, PC meeting recordings, and document inspection as its main methods of collecting data.

In line with the socio-cultural conceptual framing of the study, discussed below in section 3.1.2, activities in a school are influenced by both local and national policies and the ways in which these policies are understood and mediated by actors across the different levels. As such, drawing together these strands has informed my choice of the vertical case study approach which enables me to investigate how TPD is conceptualised and implemented by actors at the national, regional, and school levels. In this sense, my methodology allows me to relate each
of these level to the other and identify mismatches as well as harmonies and discuss them in light of the literature.

This chapter, which describes the methodology adopted in this research, consists of two main sections. The first one focuses on the conceptual framework. There, I present the philosophical paradigm and the theoretical framing within which this study is located. The second describes the research approach through subsections on the research sites and participants, the process of gaining access, data collection and analysis, my positionality, and the ethical processes inherent in this research.

3.1 The conceptual Framework

3.1.1 The philosophical paradigm

Generally, there are two main philosophical concepts often used to indicate chosen paradigms in research: ontology and epistemology. While ‘ontology addresses questions about what things are and their being-in-the-world […]’, epistemology is the study of the nature of knowledge – what counts as valid knowledge, and how it can be gained’ (Potter, 2006: 79). In other words, ontology is used to refer to the nature of reality and epistemology to how reality can be studied and/or understood. These two concepts constitute the foundation on which researchers base the guiding principles of their work (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). Hence, researchers’ positions play significant roles in considering what is to be known and in the attempting to know (or the knowing) process. In this respect, the philosophical paradigm governs the research study itself.
3.1.1.1 The adopted ontological stance

In social science, relativism is a philosophical view about reality which sees it as subjective (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). As advocated by Hoban (2002) relativism is ‘a world view that assumes there is no objective reality’ (p. 8) within the social world in that people with different experiences and knowledge may have different interpretations of the same phenomenon. This view also entails seeing social reality as context-based but not universal. Adopting a relativist ontological position is consistent with the purpose of this study which is to explore how TPD is conceptualised and implemented at different levels within the Senegalese ELT community. As a philosophical view, relativism is an appropriate stance to take in many cases of research in social science because of the natural complexity of human behaviour (both the researcher and the studied people included) and their social contexts (living and working contexts), which makes it very different from research about the physical world alone. In this respect, understanding phenomena requires to take account of both people and their ‘historical and social contexts’ (Boud and Hager, 2012). My understanding of undertaking social research is that it is about exploring realities, but it is not attempting to have a single and objective account of a given social reality.

In general, researchers’ positions in relation to these two ontological positions (relativism and realism) determine their epistemological approaches and the methods they use in their studies. Within social research, which Hammersley (2015) defines as ‘a whole range of kinds of inquiry devoted to understanding human behaviour and the institutions that this generates and within which it takes place’ (p. 9), many epistemological approaches are used but, in many recent studies, most researchers have taken a relativist ontological position (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). However, mention should be made that taking this relativist stance does not
mean that social science researchers are freed from using robust methods of inquiry in their quest to better understand and explain the social world.

In contrast to the relativist philosophical view, the realistic perspective sees the world as objective (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). This entails seeing reality as single, seeing truth as one. Such a perspective does not accord with most understandings of doing research in the social world in which each context is unique and has its own specific characteristics.

3.1.1.2 The adopted epistemological approach

Epistemologically, I contend that knowledge about the social world is embedded in social contexts and can be interpreted in various ways. Knowledge is co-constructed by the people who live and work in a context (Carlson, 1999), and, as such, it is ‘highly contingent on time and cultural location’ (Potter, 2006: 81). The subjectivist way of knowing (interpretive perspective) adopted here, which is in line with the relativist ontology, advocates that reality is not only dependent on the perceptions of both the researcher and the participants but also strongly linked to the research context in its broad sense (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). In this way, the social reality is an interpretation and, as such, can be multiple. What is of great significance with this philosophical position is the strong link between the social context and the understandings that people, as a group or individually, have of different phenomena within that context. Hence, my alignment with the sociocultural approach to explore teacher professional development within teachers' working contexts. I will come to that in more detail later in this chapter.

Undertaking research within the social world can be seen as incompatible with the rather opposite positivist epistemology. A positivist perspective ‘holds the belief that reality exists apart from the knower and can be captured through careful, systematic processes of data
collection, analysis, and interpretation’ (Ebadi and Gheisari, 2016: 2) because it ‘assumes that reality can be observed, explained, and predicted’ (Hoban, 2002: 8). To that end, a positivist epistemology relies on the use of scientific methods for ‘the testing of theories and hypotheses’ (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007: 6). Such a position seems to ignore or underestimate the complexity of the human nature and the significant role that context plays in shaping any social phenomenon, learning included. In the next section, I show how this study fits within the sociocultural approach.

3.1.2 Framing the study within the sociocultural approach

The sociocultural approach has been given much attention within educational research in recent years (Malderez and Wedell, 2007) though, in its broad meaning, it has existed for a long time. Often viewed as rooted in Vygotsky’s (1978) theory on human development and learning, ‘sociocultural theories recognise that knowledge is a construction between individuals or between members of a group of people’ (Wang et al., 2011: 300) and their participation in the community’s activities plays a key role in the process. This perspective is consistent with my relativist ontological position on reality in the social world of which teachers, their schools, and their wider context are part.

3.1.2.1 Learning understood from a sociocultural perspective

From a sociocultural perspective, as mentioned in Chapter One, learning cannot be separated from the social context of individuals in that it is within that context that it takes place and has a meaning (Edwards et al., 2002). With a focus on collective enterprise, learning is seen ‘as a process of becoming a member of a certain community’ (Sfard, 1998: 6) in which people have common interests. From this perspective, learning is considered as a part of all social activities,
inherent in human life, in which people get involved (Anderson et al., 2000; Boud and Hager, 2012). In this way, it may or may not be done consciously and does not necessarily need to be formally organised (Boud and Middleton, 2003; Wenger, 1998). This shows the significance of the notion of membership of a community (Wenger, 1998) which may give individuals a ‘sense of belonging’ to a group of ‘peers’. Membership of a community implies developing an identity which fits that community and learning is seen as becoming (Wenger, 1998), then linked to the notions of identity. Identity being constantly changing (Beijaard et al., 2004; Eyres, 2017), learning is an ongoing process. These views of learning do not see the individuals and their social context as two entities but consider them as being relational in that individuals shape, and are shaped by, their communities. Therefore, learning happens through the interrelations of people and their social context. In groups of teachers like the Senegalese PCs, teachers may learn from their colleagues through their formal and informal interactions and in their own classrooms.

3.1.2.2 TPD within the sociocultural approach

From a sociocultural perspective, teaching, as many other professions, is context-based in that ‘professionalism is itself a sociocultural production which is not contained within the confines of the classroom, but which includes broader networks beyond it’ (Edwards et al., 2002: 127). In this respect, teacher learning is seen as predominantly social and teacher knowledge and skills as dependent on what teachers are expected to know and are able to do within their specific social and professional contexts (Malderez and Wedell, 2007). Understood from this perspective, teacher professional learning is a matter of being part of the community of teachers of one’s context and participation in its activities. From this situated lens, learning and practice are not distinct; they are viewed as being inseparable (Anderson et al., 2000; Billett, 2000, 2002). Such an understanding is consistent with views of professional and vocational education
where practice itself is learning (Billett, 2002, 2004; Fenwick and Tennant, 2004; Solomon et al., 2006) since workers learn through doing, which ‘highlights the importance of social and contextual conditions for learning’ (Hoban, 2002: 56).

Most of the underpinning ideas related to CoPs and PLCs (as explored in Chapter Two) are consistent with what Edwards et al. (2002) called a ‘contextualist approach’ of learning in which teachers are not only seen as knowledge users but also as knowledge producers. Teachers are considered professionals able to identify their learning needs and find ways of catering for them. In this sense, TPD can take place in both formal and informal settings (Evans, 2014) because ‘teachers can learn from unplanned conversations with a colleague before or after teaching’ (Postholm, 2012: 406). As outlined in the previous chapter, this view of teacher learning resonates with the current move within educational research literature towards models of TPD that give central roles to teachers for their professional learning. However, as will be argued in Chapter Eight, such an expectation of teachers will require a shift of understanding of teacher professionalism in some contexts like that of Senegal and an enculturation of teachers into the practice of knowledge production.

3.1.2.3 Relevance of adopting a sociocultural perspective

In this research on TPD in the Senegalese educational context, I am drawing from a range of interconnected ideas on learning related to the situated learning perspective (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998; Hoban, 2002; Hager, 2004; Boud and Hager, 2012) which are based on sociocultural theories. Exploring TPD within the Senegalese PCs through this sociocultural lens is relevant since it sees ‘teacher learning as coming about through increasing degrees of participation in and membership of a culture of teachers in a given context’ (Malderez and Wedell, 2007: 14). As such, adopting this situated perspective, this study investigates how TPD
is conceptualised and implemented with actors at different levels. Taking such a perspective means seeing teacher learning as inherently linked to teachers themselves, their working contexts, and the wider community to which they belong. Hence, this study attempts to get insights on the understandings of TPD and the ways of implementing it within the studied DPCs and PCs. The next section explains the research design which I adopted.

3.2 Research methodology

3.2.1 Research approach

3.2.1.1 A short note on qualitative and quantitative approaches

Throughout the literature on research methodologies, a qualitative research approach is often seen as an antagonism to a quantitative approach. While a quantitative is considered to be in line with positivism, a qualitative approach is viewed as compatible with other epistemologies such as interpretivism and constructivism (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). In addition to their different underpinning epistemologies, the two approaches also tend to differ in the types of data they are interested in and the ways of collecting it. For example, while quantitative research is mostly associated with the use of numbers to be analysed statistically, the qualitative approach uses other data in other forms such as texts, audio, videos and images, among many others, and analyses them through various techniques (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2006). The scope of this thesis does not allow me to go into detail on the differences of these two approaches⁴ but those constitute their fundamental differences.

In the literature on qualitative research, there is no single definition which has in itself all that is meant with the term qualitative research, and definitions tend to be broad (Flick, 2004;  

⁴ Fraenkel and Wallen (2006) offered very detailed and useful descriptions of the two approaches.
Fraenkel and Wallen, 2006; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Hammersley, 2013). Thus, qualitative research is considered an umbrella term used for studies which attempt to give insights by focusing more on the depth of the studied phenomena than on their frequencies, which makes such approaches different from those that emphasise the quantification of their findings and draw conclusions on the basis of those. Nonetheless, Hammersley (2013) has given a definition which encompasses most of, if not all, the characteristics often found in the literature. For him, qualitative research is:

- a form of social inquiry that tends to adopt a flexible and data-driven research design, to
- use relatively unstructured data, to emphasise the essential role of subjectivity in the research process, to study a small number of naturally occurring cases in detail, and to use verbal rather than statistical forms of analysis (Hammersley, 2013: 12).

The research approach of the study at hand is consistent with this definition. Data was flexibly collected from a range of sources, a limited number of participants were studied in their own environments, interviews were semi-structured or unstructured, and almost all data is in textual and verbal forms (later made textual through transcription).

### 3.2.1.2 Adopting a qualitative research approach

Adopting a qualitative research approach is in line with a relativist ontological position (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Yates, 2004) which underpins the methodological choices that have guided this study. Informed by a sociocultural perspective, which does not separate individuals from their social contexts, I contend that exploring teachers’ professional development necessitates taking account of their working contexts, their communities, and their society at large.
As an example of exploratory research, whose ‘starting point is not usually a well-defined theory or a specific hypothesis but rather a much more general interest in a particular problem, issue, situation or group of people’ (Hammersley, 2015: 35), this study explored TPD at different levels in the Senegalese ELT community. More explicitly, it mainly aimed to get insights on how TPD is conceptualised and implemented at those levels, the studied teachers’ lived experiences of TPD through PCs, their different practices and attitudes within their PCs, and their interrelations with the schools where they work. In this sense, the findings (see chapters 4-6) are presented with as much detail as possible and areas for further research to build on this study are indicated in the final chapter.

The research design has not been straightforward since changes have been made through the course of the study. At the beginning, the study was designed as a qualitative case study which is a type of research that concentrates on a given object of research within its context, in order to explore it in detail (Silverman, 2005). More explicitly, the approach was what Hamilton and Corbett-Whittier (2013) call ‘collective case studies’ as I planned to study teachers of English in four PCs working in four different secondary schools in one region of Senegal. Collective case studies refer to a situation when research is carried through different cases but ‘with a similar general purpose’ (Hamilton and Corbett-Whittier, 2013:19). However, after my first fieldwork in the four selected secondary schools, due to a scarcity of the teachers’ PC meetings which I then considered the primary source of data for this research, I repositioned the study. I decided to include participants from the district and national levels (see section 3.2.2) to get views of TPD from people in a variety of positions. As widely accepted, change of design is not uncommon in qualitative research which is flexible in nature (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2006; Hammersley, 2013).

By including the three different levels of the organisation of TPD in Senegal in its design, the study has adopted what is known as a ‘vertical case study’ approach (Bartlett, 2014). As a
methodological approach, the vertical case study is commonly used in studies within comparative education to explore an aspect of education by looking at the local, national and international levels (Vavrus and Bartlett, 2006). One of the benefits of using a vertical case study is that it allows researchers to pay ‘simultaneous attention to and across micro-, meso-, and macro levels’ (Bartlett and Vavrus, 2016) in relation to what is being explored. Similarly, here, this approach is used to explore TPD within the Senegalese ELT community by considering three different levels of its organisation: the national, regional/departmental\(^5\), and the school level. Here, it is worth mentioning that this study does not include the international level which is often associated with the use of this approach in comparative education.

From a relativist ontological perspective, understandings of TPD from people at different levels are equally important because they are all part of the broader context (Edwards et al., 2002; Vavrus and Bartlett, 2006). In this respect, participants were selected at those three levels within the Senegalese ELT community. Using the vertical case study approach is appropriate for this study since it has allowed to get various understandings from the different actors of TPD within this community. In addition, examining similarities and differences of understandings and practices at those levels has permitted the formulation of strong recommendations for the improvement of TPD in Senegal and in other similar educational contexts, which is one of the two main objectives of this study (see Chapter Eight section 8.2).

Here it is worth mentioning that, at the school level, my approach to data collection may resemble an ethnography in many ways (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007) because I got involved in a variety of activities with participants within their working contexts during my fieldwork. The next subsection deals with the research sites and participants.

\(^5\) These two levels are combined in this study because almost all the activities of the regional teacher trainer are carried at the departmental level through the DPCs.
3.2.2 Research sites and participants

The targeted population of this study was secondary school teachers of English in Senegal and other actors in charge of TPD within the ELT community across regional and national levels. As frequently done within qualitative research, this study used what is known as purposive sampling which does not claim any representativeness of the population of which its participants are part (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2006; Palinkas et al., 2013).

3.2.2.1 At the national level

At the national level, participants consisted of the current and former national coordinators of TPD for English teachers, the advisor of the MoE in English teaching, and the president of the national committee for English (‘CNA’ in French) (see Table 3.1). The national coordinator works at the national directorate in charge of TPD at the MoE. The role implies collaborating with the in-service teacher trainers of the 14 regions of Senegal, the English teaching office at the MoE, and the foreign ELT partners in relation to teaching English in Senegal and the professional development of teachers. The technical advisor’s role is mainly to assist the MoE in decisions related to ELT and its relationships with ATES and the foreign ELT partners, such as the BC and the RELO. The ‘CNA’ is the national committee of the General Inspectorate of Education and Training (IGEF in French). It is composed of inspectors general, in-service teacher trainers, teacher trainers from higher education institutions, and seasoned teachers. This committee provides guidance on the whole process of the teaching of the English language in Senegal. For instance, they have authored the current national programme, recommend the
textbooks to use in public schools, and give guidelines on English assessment in the national exams for secondary school students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alphonse⁶</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>President of the national committee for English teaching and co-author of the textbook series titled ‘Stay tuned’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mansour</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Former national TPD coordinator and co-author of the textbook series titled ‘Stay tuned’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mariam</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Technical advisor on English teaching for the MoE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mustafa</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Current national TPD coordinator</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1 Participants at the national level

3.2.2.2 At the regional level

The selected region is geographically divided into three parts, known as ‘departments’ (equivalent of counties in the UK). The pseudonyms of Ngalam, Jamm, and Guindy are used to refer to those areas and Leeru to the whole region. Teachers working in the same ‘department’ belong to the same DPC (see Table 3.2 below for details on secondary school and teachers of English in the region). My choice of Leeru was based on information about the frequency of the TPD meetings of the English teachers provided by the current national coordinator of TPD for teachers of English when I was scoping for my study in February 2017. At that time, teachers of that region were considered to have been the most dynamic in terms of TPD activities in the recent years (personal communication with Mr Ngom at the MoE in March 2015 and February 2017).

⁶ Alphonse is a pseudonym. Similarly, the names of the region, its departments, the selected schools, and all the participants of this study are anonymised.
At the regional level, the in-service teacher trainer and the two DPC coordinators were selected based on their leadership positions (see Table 3.3 below). The regional in-service teacher trainer coordinates all the activities related to ELT in the region. Similarly, a DPC coordinator’s role is to coordinate all the TPD activities of the DPC he/she leads. Part of the role of these leaders is also to provide support to teachers, especially novice ones, and to follow up on the activities of their DPCs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department (DPC)</th>
<th>Secondary schools</th>
<th>Teachers of English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lower secondary schools</td>
<td>Upper secondary schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guindy</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamm</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngalam</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total in Leeru</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2 Public secondary schools and teachers of English in the region of Leeru.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diomaye</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Regional in-service teacher trainer and DPC coordinator of Ngalam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ndane</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>DPC coordinator of Jamm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tafsir</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>DPC coordinator of Guindy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.3 Participants at the regional/departmental level
Once in Leeru, I was guided by the regional teacher trainer of teachers of English. Through our several conversations about the research project on the phone and by emails, which we started while I was in the UK, he suggested to me a number of PCs of schools in the region which might be interesting to study. To get perspectives from a variety of teachers working in different contexts, my main criteria were schools where teachers’ PCs were meeting most frequently, where there were both male and female teachers with a range of academic and professional qualifications, routes into teaching, and teaching experiences. I also wanted to study teachers at schools in both rural and urban settings. Based on these criteria, my first fieldwork was done in four schools. However, as explained in more detail in 3.2.4.2, later when repositioning my study, I chose to maintain the two located in a city and a town as they yielded more interesting data than the other two. A first examination of data from the two schools indicated that there were similarities and differences between them and among the studied teachers, which might give interesting insights for this study about their PCs and their schools as workplaces. The following subsections describe the two selected secondary schools and their PCs.

3.2.2.3 At the school level

As explained above, at this level, two secondary schools were selected. The following subsections provide relevant information about them and the studied teachers.

3.2.2.3.1 The lower secondary school of Lehar

A short description of Lehar

Lehar is located in the northern part of the town of Jamm. All its classrooms are built with cement except for two which are temporary shelters made of branches, straw and other stuff (see pictures 3.1 and 3.2 below). The school also has a surrounding wall made of cement which
marks out its boundary. The headteacher and one part of the administration share the same building with the teachers, whose staffroom doubles as a meeting room for them. The other non-teaching staff have their office in a nearby building (see table 3.4 for more detail on the composition of Lehar’s staff).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Headteacher</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invigilators</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.4. Staff composition at Lehar school

Lehar is a typical public lower secondary school of the Senegalese education system. As such, its students continue their education from primary school and go through four different forms (levels) before they proceed to upper secondary school. The students of Lehar are placed in the school by the IEF (Inspection de l’Éducation et de la Formation) of the department of Jamm. The main criterion for allocating students to the school is for them to have been studying at the neighbouring primary schools. Lehar is a mixed secondary school with students aged between 13 and 17. In the school year of 2017-2018, the students were divided into 18 groups with the number of students per class ranging from 50 to 60 (see Table 3.5 for more detail on the composition of its students).

---

7 Within the Senegalese education system, these staff, known as ‘surveillants’, are in charge of most the non-teaching duties in schools (e.g. administrative matters of the students, their attendance records)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forms</th>
<th>Number of classes</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st Form</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>129 = 43%</td>
<td>169 = 57%</td>
<td>298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Form</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>109 = 45%</td>
<td>133 = 55%</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Form</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>116 = 45%</td>
<td>139 = 55%</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Form</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>105 = 49%</td>
<td>111 = 51%</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>18 classes</td>
<td>459 = 45%</td>
<td>552 = 55%</td>
<td>1,011</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.5 Student composition at Lehar in 2017-2018

The two pictures below were taken during my first fieldwork visit in 2018.

Figure 3.2: Picture of Lehar’s school yard after the morning classes have just finished
The English PC of Lehar

The PC of the English teachers at Lehar is composed as shown in table 3.6 below. As shown in that table, none of these teachers started their career with initial training, but they all have their professional teaching diplomas now. Three of these teachers (Mbaya, Ndane and Sedar) teach only English while the other two (Kine and Albouri) teach both English and French. Their teaching time at the school range from 16 to 18 hours per week. They have other duties such as planning lessons, designing and marking test papers, and participating in meetings. They also volunteer in other activities of the school. For example, during my first fieldwork visit, Sedar was helping the students to organise the activities of their ‘Gouvernement scolaire’ and

---

8 A board composed of student representatives from each class. By making students form this board, the Senegalese education system is giving them a voice and allowing them to take some initiatives related to their education. These students are also learning to carry out responsibilities collectively.
Mbaya was supervising the English club. The then coordinator of the PC, Ndane, was appointed the deputy headteacher for that year by the headteacher.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Academic Qualifications</th>
<th>Professional Qualifications</th>
<th>Number of years or Teaching Experience</th>
<th>No of schools worked at</th>
<th>Initial training</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mbaya</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>CAEM\textsuperscript{10}</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kine</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>BAC</td>
<td>CAE-CEM\textsuperscript{11}</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ndane</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>CAEM</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sedar</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>CEAM</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albouri</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>BAC</td>
<td>CAE-CEM</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.6: Teachers of English at Lehar

As a PC, they work together and base their teaching on a harmonised progression for each level at their school. They also design common tests for students of the same level. Lehar’s teachers of English have been reported by the regional teacher trainer to meet ‘regularly’ at their school. However, this was not the case during my first fieldwork visit. Then, I was told that teachers were instructed by their unions to boycott PC meetings as part of their industrial action. However, only one short meeting was held in my second fieldwork visit, despite there being no industrial action underway.

\textsuperscript{9} Like with other subjects, the English club is for students to improve their English by voluntarily participating in the activities organised by its members. It is also for them to explore the cultures of English-speaking countries around the world, especially the UK and the US.

\textsuperscript{10} CAEM: Teaching diploma awarded to teacher trainees with a BA degree after a one-year (initial) training programme.

\textsuperscript{11} CAE-CEM: Teaching diploma awarded to teacher trainees with a Baccalaureate degree after a two-year (initial) training programme.
3.2.2.3.2 The upper secondary school of Dialore

A short description of Dialore

Dialore is located at the Southern part of the city about three km from the centre of Ngalam. It is a relatively well-built school in a large site. All the buildings are surrounded by a concrete wall with a main gate which is opened and shut according to the school’s rules. It has many classrooms with most having the capacity to accommodate up to 100 students seated in twos at wooden desks (see pictures 3.3 and 3.4 below). Most of its administration’s offices are located in the same building. For example, the headteacher’s, the deputy headteacher’s and some other staff offices surround the teachers’ room under the same roof. The school also has laboratories for science and a library where students can borrow books. It also has an internet connection for the staff but not for students. The headteacher’s official accommodation is on the premises of the school (see Table 3.7 for detail on the composition of its staff).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Headteacher</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Headteacher</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invigilators</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.7: Staff composition at Dialore school

Dialore is a mixed upper secondary school with students aged between 16 and 23. The students are divided into 17 groups at the fifth form, 15 groups at the lower sixth form, and 13 groups
at the upper sixth form. The average number of students per group varies in accordance with
the levels and the streams (S or L, see chapter one). For example, while the number of students
can go up to 90 per group in the fifth form, the average number is between 60 and 70 in the
upper sixth form. Students in S stream are taught in much smaller groups. Table 3.8 below
shows the composition of the students at Dialore.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forms</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5th Form</td>
<td>576 = 46%</td>
<td>680 = 54%</td>
<td>1256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower 6th Form</td>
<td>455 = 48%</td>
<td>496 = 52%</td>
<td>951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper 6th Form</td>
<td>387 =53%</td>
<td>347 = 47%</td>
<td>734</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,418 = 48%</td>
<td>1,523 = 52%</td>
<td>2,941</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.8 Student composition at Dialore in 2017-2018

The two pictures below were taken during my first fieldwork visit in 2018.

Figure 3.4: Picture of one upper sixth form class at Dialore during a reading comprehension
lesson with Ngoor.
Figure 3.5: Picture of Dialore’s school yard just after students have finished their day

The English PC of Dialore

As shown in table 3.9 below, the English PC of Dialore is composed of nine teachers of English with teaching experiences ranging from 3 to 15 years. While five of them started teaching without initial training, four had completed pre-service training before they were sent to their first school. Now, they all have their professional diplomas. Out of the nine female teachers of the school, five belong to this PC. While they can be required to teach up to 21 hours per week these teachers have between 16 and 19 hours weekly.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Academic Qualifications</th>
<th>Professional Qualifications</th>
<th>Teaching Experience</th>
<th>N° of schools worked at</th>
<th>Initial training</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maty</td>
<td>41F</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>CAEM</td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tening</td>
<td>41F</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>CAES(^{12})</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Astou</td>
<td>36F</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>CAEM</td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alpha</td>
<td>36M</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>CEAM</td>
<td></td>
<td>09</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musa</td>
<td>39M</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>CAES</td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aram</td>
<td>27F</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>CAES</td>
<td></td>
<td>03</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheikh</td>
<td>34M</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>CAEM</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thioro</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>CAES</td>
<td></td>
<td>08</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngoor</td>
<td>43M</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>CAEM</td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.9: Teachers of English at Dialore

As a PC, teachers of Dialore hold formal meetings for which they decide the purpose and dates. As will be shown later in chapter six, these meetings can have different purposes, such as having exchanges on ways of teaching English and assessing their students learning at their school and organising their work within their PC. These meetings are organised either at the staff room, at the meeting room of the school or in an unoccupied classroom. Teachers can also meet informally during breaks at the staff room or elsewhere while having some refreshment.

3.2.3 Access

In social science research, access is not always a given (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007) and having access to the field does not necessarily mean that the needed data will be available.

\(^{12}\) CAES: Teaching diploma awarded to teacher trainees with an MA degree after a two-year (initial) training programme.
straightaway. This is partly due to the complex nature of human beings and the intricacies inherent of their social contexts. Hammersley and Atkinson, (2007) advocate that social science researchers need to take appropriate precautions when negotiating access and should be aware of the ethical processes that they might need to consider throughout the fieldwork. In this context, obtaining permission to the field is just a first step. Even once participants have given their consent, access requires constant attention so as not to be lost.

With this study, obtaining initial access was not difficult. As I said in the previous section, after having information from the current national coordinator of TPD of teachers of English, I got in touch with the ELT regional in-service teacher trainer of Leeru. It happened that we knew each other from when we were studying together at the English department of University Cheikh Anta Diop of Dakar and the reconnection was very easy. He facilitated my access to schools and encouraged teachers to participate in the study. At first, I requested and obtained permission from the gatekeepers, who are the school headteachers in this study. After that, all teachers of English of the selected schools accepted to participate in the project and handed their signed consent forms to me (see section 3.2.7.1 for more detail on this).

3.2.4 Data collection

3.2.4.1 Collecting data in qualitative research

In social science, which mostly aims at exploring and explaining human beings’ behaviours and the social contexts in which they live and work, using the term ‘data collection’ is not unproblematic (Hammersley, 2015; Haynes, 2012). What might be often thought is that data is provided by the participants. However, it is widely agreed that both the researcher and participants play active roles in the process of collecting data and, as such, may influence each other in some ways (Haynes, 2012). For instance, when interviewing a participant, whether in
a structured or semi-structured interview, the researcher is the one who decides which questions, follows up on them through probes, nodding and/or backchannelling to maintain the flow of the conversation. Similarly, the participant decides on how to answer the researcher’s questions. Also, when taking fieldnotes, the researcher makes decision on what is significant for his/her study and what is not. Even with questionnaires sent out to be filled in by respondents at their convenience, the questions are designed by the researcher. Thus, data is rather ‘generated’ (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007) through the active roles of both the participants and the researcher.

As shown in Figure 3.2, data for this study was gathered from different sources at the three different levels of the organisation of TPD in Senegal (see sub-section 3.2.4.3.3). At each level, participants were interviewed in person and available documents collected. DPC meetings were observed, observations notes taken, and two PC meetings were recorded. So, except for the documents (official policy documents, reports of PC meetings, and documents given by the schools’ leaders) which were collected, all the other data items were, to some extent, jointly generated by me and the participants. Hence, data collection is used to encompass both data items that were obtained and those generated.

3.2.4.2 Period and process of data collection

My data collection was done in two different periods. The first fieldwork visit was conducted from November 6th, 2017 to March 31st, 2018. In the first month of the first period, I was occupied mainly with gaining access to the schools, explaining the research project to teachers, and building rapport with them. After having got information about the different schools from the regional in-service teacher trainer, I visited the four selected schools. For each of them, I approached the gatekeeper (the headteacher), explained to them the project before giving them
a permission request (see appendix 3). They all agreed to grant me permission to visit the school and to do the research with their teachers of English. In the following four months, I visited the schools as often as possible to look for any data (e.g. purpose of teachers’ interactions in breaks) that might be relevant to the research.

My second period of fieldwork took place from November 1st to December 22nd, 2018. This was after I decided to include participants both at the district and the national level. At this moment, only the two out of the four schools initially selected were maintained for the study. This change was made after initial analysis of the data from the first fieldwork visit. For example, at School Four, there were no PC meetings during my first fieldwork visit and I was able to arrange interviews with only two out of the six teachers of English at the school. Data from School Three also was minimal because only one short meeting was held in that period. In addition, I judged that focusing on two schools would make the research more manageable for a single researcher and allow me to deepen my inquiry with the teachers. My activities at the two selected schools during the second fieldwork visit were similar to those of the first one. I asked additional questions to headteachers and teachers based on their answers in their previous interviews. It was during this second visit that I interviewed participants at the national and regional levels.

3.2.4.3 Methods of data collection

Central to qualitative research about human beings is the collection of data through communication with people under study, participating in their activities, and using documents relating to them (Flick, 2004; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Lüders, 2004). According to Fraenkel and Wallen (2006) qualitative researchers collect data mainly through ‘observing people as they go about their daily activities and recording what they do; conducting in-depth
interviews with people about their ideas, their opinions, and their experiences; and analyzing documents or other forms of communication’ (p. 440). As this study required generating various data on how TPD is conceptualised and implemented, teachers’ perspectives of their participation in their PCs, their perceptions as members of those cells, and the role their school cultures might play in their professional development, all those three major techniques were used, though in different degrees.

3.2.4.3.1 Interviews

In qualitative social science research, interviewing participants is one of the most frequently used data collection instruments (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2006; Jacob and Furgerson, 2012). When they are well managed, interviews can help the researcher generate much rich data (Hammersley, 2015). As often done with this type of interviewing, I used what Yates (2004) calls ‘initiating questions, probes, and follow-up questions’ (P. 165) with all my participants. As shown earlier, these participants consisted of four senior ELT officials (at the national level), the regional teacher trainer and the DPC coordinators (at the regional level), headteachers and teachers (at the school level).

Overall, I conducted 23 long interviews (between 45mn to 1h15mn) and 35 short interviews (lasting between 4mn to 20mn). All interviews were semi-structured. The long interviews with all participants were based on a list of questions I prepared beforehand (see appendices 7-10). With the short interviews, some were done after PC meetings when I wanted to get teachers’ views on what I had observed. For example, I had short interviews with teachers after their DPC meetings, asking them about what they found interesting during those meetings and how relevant the content and activities were to their classroom practice. Other short interviews,
which I conducted in my second fieldwork visit, were focused on getting clarifications and/or examples related to answers provided in their previous long interviews.

Though the interviews always revolved around TPD, the foci varied in accordance with the type of participant. In all the interviews, most of the questions were open-ended. These types of questions are used in social science research to get insights about what people take as their values, their opinions, their understandings of things, their lived experiences, and so on (Dörnyei, 2003). The four senior ELT officials were mainly interviewed on their understandings of TPD within ELT in general, ways of implementing it through PCs, their expectations of teachers’ activities in PCs. I also asked them their views on the current state of TPD in Senegal. With the regional teacher trainer, the interviews focused on his understandings of his job, relationships with the DPC and school PCs, recently used strategies/activities to implement TPD within the region and their main foci, and the challenges they face. Similar questions were put to the three DPC coordinators (the regional teacher trainer was doubling as the DPC coordinator of Ngalam). The two school leaders were interviewed on the values they promote within their schools, their strategies and actions for the professional development of their staff, the role of PCs within the schools, and their opinions on the English PC in their school.

All the teachers were interviewed in English on their experiences in participating in PCs: how they understand those PCs in relation to TPD, their perceptions of being members of the PCs, the challenges they may face, their learning experiences with their colleagues, who they often collaborate with and why, and the relevance of what is dealt with in DPC/PC meetings to their classroom practice and student learning. They were also asked to give their views on how supportive their schools were in relation to their teaching and professional development activities.
All the interviews were audio-recorded. I knew that participants were not used to being recorded but I always tried my best to make them feel at ease by not holding the recorder and rarely glancing at my questions in order to make it look like a normal conversation. Interviews were planned and done in accordance with participants’ availability. Apart from four teachers who preferred to be interviewed at their home, all the other interviews were conducted in the schools’ premises either in an office or in a classroom.

3.2.4.3.2 Meeting recordings and observations

Observation is often used in qualitative research when it is about investigating people’s experiences (Hammersley, 2015). As such, I observed and participated in teachers’ meetings to see how they were organised, what they dealt with, how decisions were taken, how participants talked to each other, and who played key roles. During my two fieldwork visits, I participated in and observed five PC meetings held at Dialore and two meetings at Lehar. However, I only recorded one at each school because the other meetings were about reading and assessing different proposed test papers and making changes when necessary. I also participated in five DPC meetings and attended a regional TPD event, at all of which I took notes. When I was in teachers’ meetings, I took the role of what Fraenkel and Wallen (2006) call a ‘participant-as-observer’. In that role, the researcher ‘participates fully in the activities of the group being studied, but also makes it clear that he is doing research’ (p: 441). This role allowed me to get the most out of these meetings without constantly reminding teachers that they were being observed. In the opposite role, ‘observer-as-participant’, the researcher mainly observes. The first role was more suitable for this study, especially in a context like Senegal.

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13 This was mainly because these teachers were at home when they were available for an interview, especially on days they did not have a class at the school. At the beginning of the fieldwork, I agreed with them that they could propose a time and place which were convenient to them as long as it was consistent with the ethical guidelines for this type of research.
where teachers are not used to being the subject of research. Due to my former role as an in-service teacher trainer, I knew that teachers might expect me to talk about my experience but, for the purpose of the research, I limited my contributions to the minimum to avoid influencing them. I only spoke a few times and very shortly during those meetings.

I also observed a few lessons and kept notes. However, those observations were not used as data sources and no information about students’ identities was taken. The purpose of the lesson observations was to be more familiar to the teachers and have a sense of their teaching approaches. Nonetheless, some notes which I made during my observations (e.g. choice of certain topics) were referred to during my interviews later. Throughout the fieldwork, observing was an ongoing activity for me whenever I was at the schools. Then, fieldnotes, which consist of all that the researcher writes about, whatever might be of interest to their study (Emerson et al, 2001; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007), were taken at times when I noticed something which I judged as related to my research. For example, I would write an observation note when I saw teachers having an interaction or sharing any type of documents in breaks.

3.2.4.3.3 Documents inspection

Documentary sources can be very useful in research with people in a setting such as an organisation (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2006; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Hammersley, 2015). For that reason, I gathered and consulted several documents related to TPD at various degrees. I consulted 14 official documents dating from 2005 to 2018. Those documents were chosen for this study since they constitute the main references for education in Senegal, TPD included (most of them were provided to me by Mustafa). They have several overlaps in them.

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14 In the reference list, these documents appear as ‘OffDoc01’, ‘OffDoc14’, etc. In the text, the year of publication is added to this code.
and they address TPD in generic terms – destined to teachers of all school subjects. I also inspected 12 DPC meeting reports, five PC meeting reports from Dialore and four from Lehár which are all dated within the last three school years. I also consulted the ‘Plan Stratégique pour l’Excellence’ of Dialore. Figure 3.2 below provides a summary of the composition of the participants at each level and the types of data collected.
LEVEL 1: National directorate in charge of coordinating the training and professional development of people working in education (DFC), the office for English teaching, the national commission for English (CNA).

- Interviews with two national coordinators of TPD of teachers English, the technical advisor for English at the MoE, and the president of the ‘CNA’.
- Policy documents on TPD (especially on TPD through PCs).

LEVEL 2: Regional/departmental (CRFPE)

- Interview with the regional in-service teacher trainer of teachers of English,
- Interview with the three DPC coordinators,
- Observations notes when attending TPD events organised at this level,
- DPC meeting reports.

LEVEL 3: Schools and PCs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dialore upper secondary school</th>
<th>Lehar lower secondary school</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- School’s statistics of students and staff</td>
<td>- School’s statistics of students and staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- PC meeting recording</td>
<td>- PC meeting recording</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Interviews (head, deputy, and teachers)</td>
<td>- Interviews (head and teachers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- PC meeting reports</td>
<td>- PC meeting reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Fieldnotes</td>
<td>- Fieldnotes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- School’s Plan for excellence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3.6: Participants and data sources at the different interconnected levels of TPD
3.2.5 Data analysis

As shown in the sections above, a variety of data was collected for this study, which is often the case in social science research (Hammersley, 2015). The data analysis method known as ‘thematic analysis’ (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Hammersley, 2015) was used because of its appropriateness to this study. Thematic analysis, which is frequently used in social science research, is ‘a theoretically flexible method that organises, describes, and interprets qualitative data’ (Crowe et al., 2015: 618). After processing all the collected data, I followed the different stages of thematic analysis from ‘familiarising myself with the data’ to ‘producing the report’ (Braun and Clarke, 2006):

**Familiarising myself with the data**

In this first step of the analysis, I went through the different types of data which I gathered or generated during my fieldwork. I can say that this familiarisation started as soon as I began my data collection. Since my data set consisted of a variety of items collected at different moments, I always tried to familiarise myself with them as soon as they were collected. For example, I examined the policy documents and meeting reports that I received at the earliest opportunity. At this early stage, I highlighted the passages related to my research questions. Transcribing the interviews offered numerous opportunities to familiarise myself with the different views expressed by the participants. Following the same procedure, notes taken during meetings were read again afterwards and edited while things were still fresh in my mind. This allowed me to write detailed descriptions of meetings, such as those of the two DPC meetings provided in Chapter Five.
Generating initial codes

The second stage of my analysis consisted in assigning codes to the different parts of my data. The interviews transcripts, meeting reports, and official documents were printed and each one coded manually. The first codes aimed at capturing what was expressed in the passages which were related to my research questions. For instance, I used codes such as, ‘learning from colleagues’, ‘sharing ideas’, 'sharing documents’, ‘updating one’s knowledge’, ‘improving teaching and/or learning’, ‘improving one’s English’, ‘inviting external partners’, ‘changing attitudes/practice’, and many others. It is worth mentioning here that these codes are my own creation, arising from the intersection of what my participants said and my research questions. This approach was applied to the whole data set to allow me to identify different patterns and organise the data into broader themes and sub-themes as expressed in the next phase.

Searching for themes

In this third step, I tried to merge the different codes into themes and sub-themes. For example, the codes ‘taking account of students’ ever-changing needs’ and ‘learning new things from the literature’, which were expressed by many participants, were merged into ‘the need to update teacher knowledge’. All the preliminary themes were put in a table showing the three different level of the organisation of TPD in Senegal. These themes were constantly reviewed for improvement in later stages of writing the thesis.

Reviewing themes

Reviewing the themes was not a simple task since some data would fit two themes and I had to decide where they would be more appropriate in terms of addressing the research questions.
My main concern was to intensify the focus on themes through which the research questions would be answered and where the supporting data would fit appropriately. I grouped the themes in a table to allow me to have a clear view of the different findings at each level and the relationship between their manifestations at the different levels. I could see that some themes were present across the three levels and others were not. For example, while a PC is conceptualised as ‘a space for sharing’ by almost all the participants, seeing it as ‘a space for reflection’ was expressed by the senior ELT officials only. During this phase, I also scrutinised the different themes to checked that all my findings were well supported by the data.

*Defining and naming the themes*

At this point, I had arrived at an almost complete set of themes which would be the basis of my analysis. After naming the themes, I used Nvivo 11 (a software often used in qualitative research) to organise the data from the teachers’ interviews by putting extracts together with the corresponding themes. Relevant passages from printed sources (e.g. PC meeting reports, official documents) were highlighted or underlined with themes written on the margins. At this stage onwards, I used the data from the printed sources and the data organised with Nvivo concomitantly to make sure that I referred to both relevantly in writing my findings chapters.

*Producing the report*

Like the production of the other chapters, writing the findings consisted of drafting and redrafting throughout the analysis of the data. The different themes were put in three findings chapters: each one focusing on one of the three different levels of the organisation of TPD within the Senegalese educational context as shown in figure 3.2. I wrote these chapters by constantly trying to show what was expressed in or could be inferred from the data and to retain
my own voice. Following these principles, extracts from the transcripts of the interviews and other data sources were inserted and fieldnotes included where appropriate within those chapters in the form of descriptions, which is one of the frequent ways of presenting data in an ethnographic approach (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). Here, it is noteworthy that having each theme and the evidence extracted from the transcripts in a word document was very helpful in writing these chapters.

As it is often the case in social science research, analysing the data of this study has not been straightforward. Swann (2001) draws our attention to the complexity of data analysis by pointing out that ‘when interpreting the talk you collect you will need to take account of the effect of your own presence, and the way you carried out the observations, may have had on your data’ (pp. 324-5). Considering this fact is all the more relevant when doing research in a context and on a topic with which one is familiar (see subsection 3.2.6 below). I acknowledge that my background as a teacher of English and an in-service teacher trainer cannot be neutral to the whole process of this research and my interpretations of the collected data. However, I always remained aware that my ‘initial ideas and background assumptions must be prevented from operating as a strait-jacket’ (Hammersley, 2015: 37) in all the processes of the study. I took account of all these issues throughout the study, especially during my fieldwork and when analysing the data. The next subsection talks about my positionality in this study.

3.2.6 Positionality of the researcher

In social science, the researcher’s familiarity or unfamiliarity with the social context, often dealt with through the binary terms of insider/outsider (Hammersley, 2015), may not result in a clear-cut position. My position in the study at hand can be seen as both. On the one hand, as a Senegalese who moved from being a student to an in-service teacher trainer through being a
teacher in the same Education system, I can consider myself an insider in many ways. As I said earlier in Chapter One, I have been involved in TPD in Senegal for some years as a member of both school and inter-school PCs, and an in-service teacher trainer at a regional level in charge of coordinating TPD activities. Thus, both the area of study and the social context in its broad sense are not unknown to me. On the other hand, I have never been to the region where the study took place for professional matters. When arriving in Leeru, I did not know much about how TPD is implemented through their DPCs and PCs. When I first stepped into my research sites (schools), I did not know the people who were working there. In that sense, to some extent, I saw myself as an outsider in those settings though most of the practices are very familiar to me. Nonetheless, I also understood that most participants would see me as an insider and, maybe, an authority figure, which might influence what they were saying and doing in my presence.

This notion of positionality also relates to the notion of reflexivity which is related to the possible effect of the researcher’s biases throughout the research process. Being aware of my own ones, I constantly monitored myself so as not to lose my researcher identity by reminding myself that I should always take a certain distance from what was happening and critically reflect on it in relation to my research, which may be challenging when one is an insider of the studied context. However, this does not take away the subjective aspect of this study which runs through it from beginning to end. Absolute objectivity is not my aim in doing this research since, as Hammersley (2013) advocates, ‘data and any influences from them, are always shaped by the social and personal characteristics of the researcher’ (p. 13). In addition to that, due to the subjective nature of social science and the possible filtering of both the researcher and the participants, in qualitative research ‘what is produced reflects a transaction between the two perspectives, rather than a simple representation by researchers of other people’s viewpoints and experiences’ (Hammersley, 2013: 55).
Based on these considerations, this thesis should be read as a product of the participants’ perspectives and my interpretations of both literature and the generated data. My background as a Senegalese, a teacher, an in-service teacher trainer, and a researcher has shaped this thesis as a whole. In the next subsection, which complements this one in many ways, I describe the ethical processes throughout this study.

3.2.7 Ethical processes

This study was guided by the BERA’s ethical guidelines of 2011. As a requirement before starting fieldwork, I successfully applied for ethical approval from the Open University’s Human Research Ethics Committee (see memorandum in appendix 1) prior to my first visit to Leeru. All the recommendations of the committee were attended to throughout the study. In the following sub-sections, I give more detail on the main ethical measures taken, and the strategies applied, during my fieldwork.

3.2.7.1 Voluntary participation and informed consent

As I mentioned in section 3.2.3 above, I first requested and obtained permission from the headteachers of the selected schools (see appendix 3). Before starting to collect any data from people, my main concern was to make them know about my study and understand the reasons of my fieldwork. All the participants were given enough information about the research during the briefing meetings I held with them either in groups or individually. I clearly told them that their participation in the research was voluntary and, until the completion of my fieldwork, they had the right to withdraw if they wished to do so without any problem at all. Then all the data collected from withdrawing participants would be destroyed. After those meetings, an informed consent form (see appendices 2-5) was handed to each participant to read and sign as
a proof of their agreement to participate in the research. Since this procedure was new to most of them, I had to explain to them that this was part of the requirements of the OU otherwise their verbal consent would have been sufficient. I also gave them enough time to decide whether to participate in the study or not. The signed consent forms were returned to me few days later. All my participants were adults, so I did not need to get permission from anyone other than themselves apart from that of the headteachers to carry out the study at their schools which had already been granted to me.

Throughout the fieldwork, I did my best to respect my participants’ choices. I let them choose the suitable time for the interviews. As indicated in my permission request to the headteachers, I made sure that no participant’s professional activities were disturbed nor was the teaching and learning process within the selected schools affected in any negative way. All participants were accorded equal respect regardless of their differences, such as academic qualifications, gender, religion, and ethnicity.

3.2.7.2 Rapport with participants

In social science research, it is of paramount importance to have good rapport with participants (Hamersley and Atkinson, 2007). As of the beginning of my fieldwork, I did my best to build and maintain good rapport with all my participants. Although having access was easy, I had to constantly maintain good rapport with them. I did not want teachers to see me as an authority figure. All the way through my fieldwork, I always asked teachers to consider me their colleague, not a trainer. I always sat with them when I found them in the staffroom. I frequently spent time with them and had informal conversations with them as often as possible in order to build trust with them. From time to time, I would call some of them for greetings and asking about their work. At some point, I felt that I succeeded in being very close to the teachers and
I can say that this had facilitated my data generation. I could see that teachers had no difficulties talking to me during our several interviews.

I was introduced as a teacher trainer and a researcher to other teachers during the first meeting I attended at each DPC. During those DPC meetings, I would avoid sitting with the in-service teacher trainer even though I had just travelled to the school with him. Instead, I would sit among teachers and join their groups when they were asked to work together. Nevertheless, I tried to keep my participation to the minimum since I did not want my views to influence theirs. Most of the times, I would just listen (while taking a few notes) and add a little bit after others had already spoken. However, in one of the DPC meetings of Jamm (see section 5.2.2.1), a teacher requested my point of view as a trainer, but I told him that I was there just as a teacher. I understood that many would want me to talk more. To my knowledge, the way I participated in those meetings did not have any negative impact on my rapport with the participants.

3.2.7.3 Confidentiality and data storage

In line with The Open University’s requirements, no participant’s personal information was shared with others nor were the views they expressed in their interviews. Audio recordings from the interviews and meetings were transcribed and the transcriptions sent to participants individually to check their accuracy. Only two participants at the national level slightly edited their transcripts. When storing the data, each interview constituted a file with the name of the participant and the date on which it was conducted. To avoid confusion, folders were created for participants from the same school. All the electronic data were stored in the encrypted USB key provided by the University and saved on my computer at the OU. Though, there were no sensitive documents, hard copies were stored in a locked safe place.
As asserted by Fraenkel and Wallen (2006), ‘unless otherwise agreed to, the identities of all who participate in a qualitative study should always be protected; care should be taken to ensure that none of the information collected would embarrass or harm them’ (p. 433). To this end, when processing the data, participants and schools were anonymised and data was treated with confidentiality. However, I am aware that the participants at the national level may be identifiable because of their positions. Here it is worth mentioning that these participants did not see it as a problem for me to put their real names. Nevertheless, as required by the OU, I told them that all names would be anonymised.

The following chapter, the first one of the three on the findings of this research, focuses on the conceptualisations of TPD at the national level in Senegal based on the official policy documents consulted and the views of the four senior ELT officials who participated in this study.
CHAPTER FOUR: Conceptualisations of TPD at the national level in Senegal

4.0 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I presented the conceptual framework underpinning this study and described the different methodological choices which guided the research. As I stated there, using the vertical case study has allowed me to collect data from the different levels of the organisation of TPD in Senegal. TPD being mainly implemented through PCs, this chapter focuses on how those are specified in the policy documents consulted, what types of knowledge they are to support, and how they should operate. It then compares these understandings with the views of senior ELT officials to understand how they expect PCs to operate and what they expect to see teachers doing within ‘good’ PCs. The analysis draws on data from several policy documents on education issued by the Senegalese government from 2005 to 2018 and the interviews conducted with four senior ELT officials. Key emerging themes from data at the national level are the necessity for all teachers, as professionals, to update their knowledge and skills, the need to TPD activities to student learning, the usefulness of reflection through collaborative activities, the need for consistency of practice in teaching English in Senegal, and the significant role that external actors (e.g. in-service teacher trainers) play in TPD.

This chapter is divided into four main sections. The first section, divided into three subsections, describes how TPD is conceptualised in the policy documents consulted for this study. While the two first subsections of it respectively relate TPD to the idea of quality education and its necessity for all teachers of all curriculum subjects across both primary and secondary schools, the third one highlights the different foci of the implementation of TPD through PCs. The second section of this chapter focuses at how TPD for secondary school teachers of English is
understood by the four senior ELT officials who participated in the study (see Subsection 3.3.2 for details). These ELT officials have conceptualised TPD through PCs in terms of the need for all teachers to continue learning whilst in service, the usefulness of collaboration to teacher learning, the significance of developing teachers’ pedagogical content knowledge by focusing on the CLT approach, the importance of training and the potential of learning through reflection. Each of these five themes is addressed in a subsection. The third section of this chapter draws together conclusions from the findings presented in here and the fourth ends it with a summary of its different sections.

4.1 Official conceptualisations of teacher professional development

An examination of the 14 official documents consulted indicates that TPD is considered as one of the key elements for the improvement of education in Senegal (OffDoc01, 2005; OffDoc05, 2011; OffDoc11, 2015; OffDoc14, 2018). TPD is mainly understood as the continuous engagement of all teachers, both novice and seasoned, in professional learning activities geared to the improvement of their practice and their students’ learning. The extract below is illustrative of such a view. Here, TPD is defined as consisting of:

all the actions in which teachers get involved [...] to acquire better performance, greater productivity and a wider range of skills in their professional practice to adapt themselves to the socio-educational environment which evolves with time (OffDoc08, 2014:12) (my translation).

This definition of TPD by Senegalese educational authorities clearly shows that teachers are expected to constantly improve themselves through the process of catering for their students’ needs. As those needs are understood as dynamic and dependent on the students’ context,

15 Most of these documents are general educational policies. This study focuses on their parts that relate to teacher training and professional development.
teachers must continue learning throughout their careers. In other words, these authorities understand that teacher professional learning goes alongside teaching.

A close analysis of the official documents has shown that the educational authorities’ views of TPD have principally been consistent over the recent years. TPD is conceptualised in reference to three main elements: its significant role for the improvement of educational outcomes (student learning), the necessity for all teachers to continue learning while in service, and the teachers’ collaboration within their PCs and their participation in the different TPD activities. The three next sections elaborate on how TPD is conceptualised in relation to each of these elements.

**4.1.1 Teacher professional development for quality in education**

As outlined in chapter one, Senegalese educational authorities have made important decisions to achieve their domestic objectives consistently with commitments to international goals in favour of Education. Mention should be made here that, in Senegal, the success of actions taken to improve the quality of education is mainly measured through the performance of students in the national exams, and schools with a high percentage of success are often considered good ones. Within the consulted documents, a concern about quality and a need to respond to the dissatisfaction with the low performance of students in national exams have been consistently expressed (OffDoc07, 2014; OffDoc13, 2016; OffDoc14, 2018). For example, in 2019, the national success rate for the BAC (see chapter one section 1.4.2) secondary education exam was 37.22% (Office du Baccalauréat du Senegal, 2019). This rate is in keeping with the trend of the past decade which has been around 38% since 2011 (OffDoc10, 2014:103).

Within the official documents consulted in this study, one of the recurrent themes is the stated commitment of Senegalese educational authorities to improving the quality of education in all
parts of the country and the crucial role that TPD plays for that endeavour to be successful (OffDoc08, 2014; OffDoc13, 2016). Senegalese educational authorities believe that ‘les enseignants bien formés et conscients de leurs responsabilités sont la clef de voute de tous les systèmes éducatifs performants’ ‘well-trained teachers who are aware of their responsibilities constitute the keystone of all the effective education systems’ (OffDoc13, 2016:37) (my translation). Having qualified teachers with a high sense of duty is a great preoccupation of the authorities in charge of education in Senegal. This is because they accord a central role to teachers in children’s education.

Analysis of the official documents shows that the widely shared belief in the link between improved quality teaching and effective TPD within SSA (see chapter one section 1.2 for more on this) is at the heart of the conceptualisations of the latter in Senegal. Throughout these documents, Senegalese educational authorities have recurrently emphasised the significance of implementing TPD throughout the country (OffDoc08, 2014; OffDoc13, 2016) as a way of improving teaching. Views expressed within policies suggest that involving teachers in professional learning activities will positively impact on their students’ learning. In this respect, these educational authorities see professional development as a necessity for all the staff working in the education sector, especially teachers whom they consider as playing a pivotal role in it. The next sub-section focuses on this view of TPD.

4.1.2 Teacher professional development as a necessity

A scrutiny of the history of the organisation of TPD in Senegal, as described in OffDoc07 (2014), indicates that the educational authorities have always considered it necessary for all

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16 From this point onwards, except where otherwise stated, all translations from French are my own. All the official documents consulted are in French. The two headteachers and the deputy headteacher of Dialore were interviewed in French as well.
teachers. Such a view has been recurrently expressed in the consulted documents throughout the years (OffDoc01, 2005; OffDoc05, 2011; OffDoc08, 2014; OffDoc09, 2014; OffDoc13, 2016). These authorities relate their conception of TPD to an understanding of teaching which they consider as a profession like any other. This view is illustrated in the following statement:

L’enseignement est une profession qui s’apprend et s’améliore au fil du temps. C’est la raison pour laquelle, il est important d’assurer à tout enseignant avant d’exercer sa fonction, une formation initiale, conséquente pour une durée adéquate. Cette première formation doit être suivie d’une formation continue (OffDoc13, 2016 :37).

Teaching is a profession to be learnt and improved in the course of time. That is the reason why it is important to provide every teacher with an adequate initial training for the required duration before they start their job. That initial training must be followed by continuous professional development.

Continuously learning is seen as an important element of being a professional teacher. However, as will be discussed later, in Chapter Seven, some teachers may consider themselves as fully accomplished professionals after obtaining their teaching diplomas, which may be related to people’s understandings of teacher professionalism in Senegal.

A close examination of the official documents has shown that these authorities link the necessity of TPD to the ever-changing understandings of the teaching profession. Throughout these official documents, there is a sense that TPD is understood as a useful and logical enterprise for all teachers because both the students’ needs and the methods of teaching evolve with time. The following extracts illustrate such a position:

Since initial training is not sufficient, the importance of continuous professional development is undeniable with regard to the evolutions of the context and the teaching methods (OffDoc13, 2016: 36).

[Every teacher] must update his/her knowledge on a regular basis and constantly question his/her teaching methods and procedures (OffDoc09, 2014: 55).
Clearly, through these extracts, it is evident that these authorities give much consideration to teachers having much pedagogical knowledge and sufficient content knowledge of the subject they teach. It is worth mentioning here that mastery of content knowledge is a prerequisite for all people who aspire to become teachers in Senegal (OffDoc09, 2014). This need for teachers to update their pedagogical knowledge is stressed in several documents. However, since many teachers have not had formal initial training, it seems that these authorities are also aiming at helping teachers to compensate that lack of initial training through their participation in TPD activities.

Following their logic of considering TPD as a necessity, Senegalese educational authorities have made it mandatory for all teachers to attend and participate in all the activities of their PCs and attend any other events organised for professional development to which they are invited. Under this policy, school leaders are responsible for ensuring that teachers of their schools meet within their PCs on a regular basis. They also have to facilitate their teachers’ participation in their DPCs’ activities (OffDoc04, 2011). Nonetheless, as will be shown in the next chapter, those TPD activities are under the control of teacher since they have the freedom to decide on the agenda, time, and venue of their meetings. The next section highlights how TPD through PCs is conceptualised in the consulted documents.

4.1.3 TPD through pedagogical cells

Analysis of the official documents has revealed that the Senegalese educational authorities rely considerably on collaboration among teachers of these PCs as a mechanism to make TPD a reality throughout the country. Through their conceptualisations, PCs are spaces for sharing and exchanging ideas and good practice. They are also understood as ways of facilitating
collective reflection among teachers within the same school and schools located in the same area.

4.1.3.1 Creating a space for sharing and exchanging

An examination of the official documents reveals that Senegalese educational authorities have consistently given much importance to the notion of sharing among teachers. In the two most recent decrees issued by the MoE on the organisation and functioning of PCs (OffDoc03, 2009; OffDoc04, 2011), there has been much focus on sharing ideas and good practice. A PC is considered a mechanism for teachers to engage in professional development activities initiated by themselves (OffDoc04, 2011; OffDoc07, 2014). As such, as ‘a framework for consultation, exchanges, and propositions, the PC is the first place for the continuous development of teachers’ (OffDoc04, 2011: 1). By creating these PCs, Senegalese educational authorities intend to put into practice a vision of TPD at the grassroots through teachers’ collaboration with their colleagues at both school and inter-school levels (OffDoc11, 2015).

Through the conceptualisations of PCs in the consulted documents, teachers are expected to exchange ideas related to various aspects of their job. Those discussions could be on their understandings of ideas underpinning teaching and learning in general, their teaching approaches, and the assessment techniques they use to evaluate their students’ learning (OffDoc01, 2005; OffDoc04, 2011). These authorities hold the view that teachers, as professionals in service within the same education system, need to harmonise their understandings of teaching and their classroom practice. With the implementation of TPD through PCs, these authorities are guarding against the isolation of teachers and, at the same time, promoting a strong connection between the seasoned teachers and the newly recruited ones (OffDoc07, 2014; OffDoc08, 2014). As shown in chapter two, this mutual engagement
plays an important role within a community of practice. However, nurturing CoPs will not be without obstacles in the Senegalese education system where a sense of hierarchy is well-rooted among actors and may be much present within groups of teachers. The issue of hierarchy among teachers will be discussed in Chapter Seven and recommendations will be made in reference to it in Chapter Eight.

Based on these documents, as a structure for TPD, the PC is put in place to ensure that all its members share ideas, good practices, and discuss different aspects of their work (OffDoc08, 2014; OffDoc13, 2018). As clearly indicated by Senegalese educational authorities, another key element in implementing TPD through PCs is for teachers to reflect together on their practice for the improvement of their students’ learning. The following section focuses on that.

4.1.3.2 A way of promoting collective reflection

Senegalese educational authorities give much importance to learning from collective reflection. In the latest ministerial decree on the organisation and functioning of PCs (OffDoc04, 2011), it is clear that they place reflection at the heart of their expectations of teachers’ activities within PCs. The decree stipulates that:

The pedagogical cell aims at promoting curriculum subjects and improving the professional performance of teachers. It organises within itself **reflection** (emphasis added) on the programmes, teaching methods, formative/summative assessments and proposes remedial actions in accordance with official policies (OffDoc04, 2011: 1).

The objectives shown in this extract suggest that educational authorities expect teachers to initiate TPD activities by themselves. They need to reflect on the adopted curricula, their teaching methods, and their different types of assessment techniques. Furthermore, they are expected to make propositions to improve their students’ learning in a continuous manner (OffDoc04, 2011; OffDoc08, 2014). In other words, these authorities want teachers to be active
learners who base their TPD activities within their PCs on the issues related to their working contexts (OffDoc08, 2014). They consider the PC as ‘a space for experimentation, development, production, and circulation (sharing) of documents and teaching materials in accordance with current laws [on education]’ (OffDoc04, 2011: 1). What seems to be clear here is that teachers are considered capable of becoming knowledge producers, not just its consumers. More explicitly, these authorities expect teachers to produce and/or adapt appropriate teaching materials based on their understandings of teaching and the specific needs of their students. Such a view emphasises the significance of taking account of the teaching context in TPD initiatives. The idea of expecting teachers to be reflective practitioners and knowledge producers within the Senegalese education system will be discussed in Chapter Seven. There, it is argued that making reflection a reality within teachers’ PCs requires more than a rhetoric since it needs to be integrated in their professional practice.

Mention should be made here that, so far in this chapter, the findings are drawn from the official documents consulted. These findings are on how TPD is conceptualised for all teachers regardless of the subject they teach. The next part of this chapter outlines how TPD is understood by the four senior ELT officials who participated in the study. It does so by drawing on the views they expressed in their interviews.

4.2 Teacher professional development within the ELT community

TPD of teachers of English in Senegal, which this study explores, is framed within the cross-curricular orientations as expressed in policy documents (OffDoc04, 2011; OffDoc08, 2014). The policy concern geared to the improvement of quality in the Senegalese education system is shared by all the senior ELT officials who participated in this study. For example, the current national coordinator of TPD for secondary school teachers of English states that ‘our main
concern today and preoccupation is the quality of education. Today, when we are talking about quality of education, we talk about the teaching and learning process’ (Mustafa: Int1. 23/11/18). An examination of the interviews with four people occupying senior positions within the ELT community in Senegal (see section 3.3.2) shows that they conceptualise TPD, at both school and inter-school levels, in relation to a variety of elements. I have organised their views, which are consistent with most of what is expressed in the official documents, according to five different themes which the following sub-sections address in turn.

4.2.1 The need to update teacher knowledge

Analysis of the interviews with the senior ELT officials has revealed that, as consistently expressed in the policy documents, they all share the belief in the necessity for teachers to continue to learn while in service. They all consider professional development as part of teachers’ responsibilities. For instance, Mansour advocates that ‘every worker needs updating on a regular basis because of changes taking places’ (Mansour: Int. 08/12/18). As outlined in section 4.1.2 above, they advocate that, as a profession, teaching necessarily evolves with time. Alphonse was particularly adamant that keeping pace with the latest ideas and practices in the field of ELT is an important aspect of professional development for all teachers of English. He asserts that such a preoccupation is all the more relevant within an EFL and low-resource context like Senegal where some teachers may find it difficult to be abreast of the latest developments in the field. This point will be discussed later in Chapter Seven in the section on the types of knowledge valued by participants in this study.

Similar to what has been found in the consulted documents, these senior ELT officials also link the necessity for TPD within the ELT community to the lack of initial training for many teachers who are currently in service. Mansour believes that those teachers need to participate
actively in TPD activities alongside their more experienced colleagues to learn the basics of teaching from them, since many ‘don’t even understand what education is or what teaching is’ (Mansour: Int2. 08/12/18). Like Mansour, the other senior ELT officials see PCs as structures which can offer different learning opportunities involving interactions between seasoned and novice teachers. They believe that experienced teachers can play a determinant role in helping their newly recruited colleagues to learn the necessary skills in the first years of their careers.

These officials have also emphasised the importance of helping teachers to understand the significance of continuous learning within the teaching profession. For them, teachers need to understand the importance of developing themselves and to be ready to participate in TPD activities. This understanding of TPD seems to be the reason why they are ambivalent about the decision to make attendance of TPD activities through PCs mandatory for all teachers, which is stipulated in the latest ministerial decree on PCs (OffDoc04, 2011). Most of them have asserted that such a policy was not necessary, but they also have acknowledged its possible usefulness. Mariam thinks that the desire to learn and grow professionally should come from the teachers themselves. She observes:

Maybe it should not be mandatory, maybe it should. What I mean is that it is something that the teachers themselves should feel they should do, based on their needs and the lots of changes and innovations that keep happening in the world. Teachers themselves should be convinced that they need to acquire professional growth or stop teaching, if I may say so (Mariam: Int. 31/12/18).

Similarly, the former national coordinator of TPD also has an undecided position. Although he has asserted the necessity of TPD for all teachers, he does not believe that imposing a requirement to attend will necessarily yield the expected outcomes – better understanding of teaching and improved classroom practice. He is in favour of using other strategies to motivate teachers rather than making attendance compulsory for them. He explains:
Why should it be obligatory? I think that incentives like rewards might induce many into working harder. At the local level that is a teacher of the year, a prize for an effective teacher, etc. Those kinds of things, recognition of teachers’ work even promotion from one level in their career into the other [...] then you don’t need to punish anybody or to make it formal, you don’t need to [...] However, if some teachers don’t have the required knowledge, making it mandatory seems to be plausible (Mansour: Int. 08/12/18).

In the same vein, the current national coordinator advocates that such a measure can be helpful because ‘if we don't oblige people to work together, some might be working alone, and if you work alone you won’t know if you are on the right track or not’. Nonetheless, he also recognises that it is not a perfect measure since ‘you can oblige teachers to attend but you can’t oblige them to participate’ (Mustafa: Int1. 23/11/18). Arguably, one can also say that the obligatory participation in TPD activities may make teachers to understand the worthiness of taking part in them. As shown above, these officials see TPD as necessary for all teachers of English but they also believe that the latter need to have a clear understanding of its purposes and be willing to learn by themselves within their PCs and DPCs.

### 4.2.2 Collective learning within PCs

Analysis of the interviews with the four senior ELT officials who participated in this study indicates that, consistent with the understandings of TPD within the official documents, they consider PCs a means to create a culture of learning together within the community of teachers of English. They see the existence of PCs as a way of promoting learning through relationships among teachers working within the same locations. For these officials, professional bonds are expected to result from the range of activities that teachers get involved in together. The current national coordinator has underscored the significance of all teachers working collectively for effective TPD since they are teaching the same subject and have common goals. In Mustafa’s words, ‘we should not forget that whatever we do, we should do it with our colleagues, in
community’ (Mustafa: Int1. 23/11/18). His preoccupation is widely shared by his other colleagues. Commenting on what teachers should do to develop professionally, Alphonse enumerates what they need to focus on while in service and links all of it to their PCs. He states that:

first, I expect colleagues to get as much information as possible. They need information on the literature, CLT literature. Second, to be regular attendants of pedagogical cells […] to share their own experiences because they may do something good in class that the others don’t know. If they come to the cell, they can exchange, give and take, with the main focus being improving learning and teaching conditions and improving the students’ capabilities. That’s very important (Alphonse: Int1. 28/12/18).

As shown in the excerpt above, Alphonse is referring to increasing teachers’ knowledge through reading and discussing ideas within their PCs. Such a view is in line with the idea of creating a space for sharing and exchanging as expressed in the official documents. Following the same vein, Mustafa holds the view that TPD within a community is all the more important as it allows teachers to share what they do with their colleagues and get feedback and help from one another whenever needed. He comments:

A pedagogical cell is a framework, a place where teachers meet to exchange their experiences in terms of the learning and teaching process, helping one another to improve, to overcome some difficulties, to help others who are lagging behind in order to have the same level as far as teaching and learning are concerned (Mustafa: Int1. 23/11/19).

Mustafa’s view is also a reminder of a possible negative perception that authorities may have of some teachers whom they see as being in need of help, which may explain his focus on training (see section 4.2.4 below). These authorities see working together as an effective way of providing support which teachers may need at some points in their careers, especially the newcomers.

From the views expressed by these senior ELT officials – who all have been teachers, in-service teacher trainers, and members of PCs – there is convergence on underscoring the importance
of working as a community. According to them, not only do teachers need to deepen their knowledge about teaching and learning but they also need to exchange with their colleagues on their teaching practices. In other words, they invite teachers to learn collectively. As stated by Mariam, exchanging ideas, and sharing of ‘best practices, success stories, things that worked in their classrooms, even one small activity on a regular basis’ (Mariam: Int. 31/12/18) need to be the main PC activities. Taken together, these senior ELT officials see the creation of an atmosphere conducive to collaboration between all teachers as vital for the improvement of ELT in Senegal. Throughout their interviews, these senior ELT officials have often stressed the importance for teachers to constantly develop their pedagogical content knowledge with a focus on the CLT approach. The next section describes how they view TPD in relation to that focus.

4.2.3 Focusing on pedagogical content knowledge

The Senegalese senior ELT officials interviewed have consistently stated their belief that a key strategy to improve the teaching of English is to make the development of pedagogical content knowledge a preoccupation for all teachers. As CLT is the recommended approach to teach English in Senegal, they hold the view that TPD should have that approach as its main focus. As asserted by Mustafa, ‘most of our activities turn around CLT, even though CLT is very, very broad, but everything turns around CLT’ (Mustafa: Int1. 23/11/18). This need to focus on CLT in the activities of PCs is shared by the other senior ELT officials. In this respect, TPD should aim at increasing teachers’ understandings of this language teaching approach and developing ways of its implementation in classrooms since all its activities are for the improvement of the teaching and learning process.
Throughout their interviews, it is evident that these senior ELT officials also see the TPD activities of English teachers as a way of allowing them to discuss and work towards common practice. To this end, they stress the need for teachers to harmonise their understandings of CLT and ways of implementing it within the Senegalese context through various learning activities and assessment techniques. In this sense, teachers of the same PC are expected to teach and assess their students in similar ways. This concern is well-captured in the following extract from Mustafa’s first interview:

The rationale behind this [coordination of TPD activities] is to harmonise the work, meaning whatever someone, very far [remote areas], is doing, to enable him [or her] to be connected with the others because our learners are submitted to the same examination, we have just one national exam. So, if people don’t work in collaboration, […] it means some will have the privilege to have the latest strategies, the latest methodologies, etc. while others will be lagging behind and in terms of equity, we need to do things at the same level. That’s why we really want to share everything at the same time and do it in the same way (Mustafa: Int1. 23/11/18).

They all believe that teachers should have a clear understanding of the recommended teaching approach. Mustafa emphasises that all teachers need to understand that teaching English in accordance to the CLT approach requires them to go beyond teaching the English language per se; not just by focusing only on its grammar, vocabulary, and its other linguistic elements. Teachers need to teach English in a way that will help students to become communicatively competent in English – to be able to use the language in real life situations appropriately. In the same vein, Alphonse and Mansour state that, when writing the series of textbooks ‘Stay Tuned’ some years ago for the seven levels of secondary school in Senegal, they aimed at helping teachers to implement the CLT approach. It is worth mentioning that though there is an objective of having a certain conformity in teaching English in Senegal, teachers are free to choose their teaching materials which they judge as appropriate to their students’ needs.
4.2.4 Teacher professional development through training

Analysis of the interviews with the senior ELT officials reveals that they accord much significance to training for all teachers. They all see providing training sessions to teachers as a good strategy for the improvement of teaching English in Senegal. Such a concern is in line with the views expressed by the educational authorities who underscore the necessity of having enough in-service teacher trainers (OffDoc14, 2018). Those people’s role within the organisation of TPD is to guide all teachers, especially those who are experiencing difficulties with their classroom practice. As outlined earlier, Mansour believes that many teachers, particularly those who started without initial training, need to be shown the way by in-service teacher trainers or their more experienced colleagues. This importance they give to training seems to be related to the fact that these senior ELT officials have acknowledged that teachers’ collaboration within their PCs may not be enough for the improvement of teachers’ practice.

These officials all have made clear their belief that in-service teacher training can help to improve students’ learning. This is because they expect the improvement of students’ learning to be the result of the teachers’ improved practice. Thus, providing effective training for teachers is all the more significant within the Senegalese ELT community because students’ scores in English in the two national secondary school exams have been declining over the last few years. Mustafa observes:

   English teachers are working very hard in the field, […] but the problem is, in spite of this hard work, in spite of these unremitting meetings and stuff, the learners’ performances are going lower and lower […] I think that we should increase the number of [in-service] trainers (Mustafa: Int1, 23/11/18).

Although Mustafa has expressed positive expectations of teachers’ working together within their PCs, he is not satisfied with the present situation of ELT in Senegal since the TPD activities have not resulted in an improvement of students’ scores in the national secondary
school exams. In other words, as pointed earlier, the officials consider that PCs are not sufficiently helping teachers to improve their practice. In this respect, they believe that training sessions led by in-service teacher trainers may play a significant role in the enhancement of teachers’ professional learning.

Mustafa also links the usefulness of the interventions by people outside the schools to one of the main current preoccupations of the MoE which is to provide quality education nationwide. Furthermore, he thinks that some control over what teachers do in their classrooms is needed. He explains:

> If we want quality to come true in our system, we need to recruit more inspectors and have more trainers because those people will be able now to observe teachers, to supervise them, and help also improve their teaching methods and strategies. If we don’t do that, maybe it will be very hard to bring the situation under control because some teachers are where they are and they are doing whatever they want […] but if you feel that there is an eye coming from somewhere and that can, at any time, have a look at what you are doing [that will be different] (Mustafa: Int1. 23/11/18).

As illustrated in the extract above, Mustafa has a strong belief in the necessity of having in-service teacher trainers to observe some teachers’ lessons and the positive impact it may have on the latter’s practice. Nonetheless, as will be discussed in Chapter Seven, there is a tension between having some control over what teachers do and letting them take initiatives by themselves and learn collectively within their PCs to improve their practice.

Following the same trend, the senior ELT officials consider the national network for TPD (see Figure 1.2) as useful for training since it allows the system to reach almost all teachers of the country. Within the ELT community, this network has been used to facilitate training, especially through the cascade approach. Expressing this possibility, the national TPD coordinator explains that:
you have a kind of representatives in each region. So, what you can do is you call on those representatives ...share with them some approaches, some strategies [...] and let them go and share with the teachers they are supervising (Mustafa: Int1. 23/11/18).

The example of training sessions on formative assessment is an illustration of using the cascade model in Senegal. In 2010, a module on ways of implementing formative assessment in English lessons was run all over the country. The design of the module was led by Mansour, the then national coordinator of TPD in ELT. He stated that he took the initiative with the belief that teachers’ use of diverse formative assessment techniques in their lessons would improve their students’ learning. The training went from the national coordinator of TPD to teachers through regional in-service teacher trainers and PCs coordinators. At the regional level, the training sessions, led by in-service teacher trainers, were in the form of presentations followed by group discussions. Going through the module, it is noticeable that each session consisted of an exploration of ideas on formative assessment before the introduction of techniques that teachers could use to implement it during their lessons. For example, one technique called ‘traffic lights’ was about making students use red, amber or green cards to indicate their degree of understanding during lessons. ‘Red’ was used by students to mean that they don’t understand, ‘amber’ to signal a need for more explanation and ‘green’ to show total understanding (Module de formation, 2010). To some extent, this way of implementing TPD seems to be informed by a top-down approach to TPD, since teachers learnt about the techniques from in-service teacher trainers and were expected to apply them in their classrooms. Nonetheless, teachers were also expected to adapt those techniques to the realities of their own classrooms, which they could discuss within their PCs.

Referring to in-service teacher training, all the senior ELT officials have also underscored the significance of collaborating with foreign partners in TPD initiatives for the improvement of ELT in Senegal. As mentioned in chapter one, those partners are the British Council and the American embassy through its RELO. Mustafa has expressed positive views of this partnership
and sees it as significant because ‘the RELO, for instance, one of their jobs is promoting ELT, the BC is also doing the same, and apart from this there is this part of financial stuff’ (Mustafa: Int1. 23/11/18). He also seems to give much importance to the fact that those ELT specialists are native speakers of English. Mariam’s examples in the extract below are illustrative of this fruitful partnership:

> We organised, in 2017, an outreach workshop for [English] teachers of the regions of Matam and Louga […] thanks to the RELO of the American Embassy and thanks to the British Council. Through a new programme known as English Connects, we gathered all the INSET trainers nationwide for a session in Thies. There were also two training sessions in Accra, Ghana, this year: one for practising teachers and one for INSET trainers. Both lasted two weeks. And this is an opportunity to thank once again the American Embassy and the British Council who are our partners of all the times (Mariam: Int1. 31/12/18)

This long-lasting relationship with the Senegalese ELT community has resulted in many training sessions both at local and national levels led by these foreign institutions and a variety of programmes through which a number of teachers have been offered scholarships to study non-degree and degree awarded courses abroad. As pointed out in chapter one, teachers of English can also benefit a lot from many professional development events organised by ATES throughout the country in partnership with these foreign institutions. For examples, they both participated in the annual ATES conventions which I mentioned above. Their support in ELT, particularly during those events, has been acknowledged and appreciated by the leaders of that association (FN: 08/12/18).

These senior ELT officials also give much credit to learning from reflection which teachers are expected to do within their local PCs. The following sub-section brings in their views on this learning perspective.
4.2.5 Learning through reflection

Although the senior ELT officials have mentioned a need for training by people external to schools, they have also stressed their belief in the teachers’ capacity to learn and develop themselves through their PC’s activities. They think that teachers have to be active professional learners rather than waiting for teacher trainers to take initiatives for them. As expressed above with reference to the consulted documents, they hold the view that teachers need to reflect on the effectiveness of their teaching practice. Giving her position on what is currently needed on the part of in-service trainers at the regional level, Mariam states that they have:

...to do their best for the best development of continuous professional development: focus on educating teachers to have a questioning culture, questioning themselves, let them not believe that they know everything, or this is the end of learning, [...] develop in them a belief consisting in saying there is little I know. So, there is much more I have to learn (Mariam: Int. 31/12/18).

Mariam’s view resonates with what is expressed in the official document on the functioning of PCs (OffDoc04, 2011) which emphasises the need for all teachers to reflect on their practice in a collective way. Similarly, the other senior ELT officials have stressed the significant role that teachers need to play for their own professional development and advocated that it is necessary for teachers to reflect on both their teaching methods and assessment techniques. The current national coordinator has emphasised the importance of instilling an inquiry culture within the ELT community. He remarks:

...if you know that at the end of the year 50% of my students made it. The other 50%, what happened? What were the different stumbling blocks? What didn’t work? What can I do to remedy the situation? These are the questions they need to put to themselves and also try to adapt and adjust’ (Mustafa: Int2. 08/12/18).

As illustrated above, these officials want to see teachers reflect together on the issues that are specific to their teaching contexts and provide appropriate responses to help their students improve their learning. Mansour believes that teachers can learn in the process of trying to rise
to the challenges they may face within their schools. For that, they need to have an inquiry-based learning strategy within their schools in which all teachers are involved. He explains his position as follows:

You are a PC, do the work of a PC, which is look at your situation to see the issues. I don’t use the word problem. I don’t like it, look at the issues you are facing, the challenges and see what you can do to solve them. You may not be able to provide a 100% solution, but you may go very far into that direction, which means, in one particular school, there may be issues related to shortage of materials, overcrowded classes etc. What is it that you can do? Provide a working plan with objectives, an implementation plan, implement, assess, and you will see. Did you produce results? What results did you produce? Didn’t you produce results, why not? What would you do, what should you do next? That’s how I see it [work in a PC] (Mansour: Int1. 08/12/19).

Clearly, Mansour’s view of learning is related to learning through reflection, especially by doing action research. He believes that teachers can solve issues inherent to their teaching contexts by themselves through a systematic way of asking questions, finding possible solutions, and taking adequate actions. Nonetheless, as argued in Chapter Eight, it is necessary to support teachers for them to practise action research within their schools.

Following the same trend in giving more responsibilities to teachers, Mustafa believes that teachers can also overcome teaching obstacles through peer-observation, which is a way of reflecting on one’s practice with the help of colleagues. He notes:

Whatever the problem teachers are facing, or a teacher is facing in a school the teachers, the cell should be able to solve the problem and through classroom observation. For instance, I am a teacher in a school, I am undergoing [experiencing] some difficulties in teaching communicative grammar. I can invite my colleagues to come and observe me. I teach and then I have their feedbacks, or I can ask another teacher who is comfortable in teaching grammar […] and observe him do it. I think that if we do that, we will solve the problem. Unfortunately, most of them are scared of being observed (Mustafa: Int1. 23/11/18).
As shown above, this call for teachers to take initiatives has consistently been made throughout these senior ELT officials’ interviews. They all regard it as part of the responsibilities of teachers to reflect on the effectiveness of their teaching and find ways of continuously improving their practice. However, as will be shown in the following chapters, many of their expectations are different from what was observed within the studied PCs. As I will be recommending in chapter eight, reflection needs to be nurtured in both initial teacher education and TPD activities.

4.3 Concluding remarks

Based on how TPD is conceptualised in the consulted documents and the views of the senior ELT officials expressed in their interviews, it is evident that Senegalese educational authorities are trying to respond to the widely shared dissatisfaction among the stakeholders with the current state of education in general (OffDoc10, 2014), especially with the students’ scores in national secondary school exams (OffDoc12, 2015). These endeavours suggest a belief that improvement of TPD will impact positively on student attainment.

As indicated in the sections above, TPD is seen as being an integral part of the evolving teaching profession, which makes continuous professional learning a necessity for all teachers. The creation of PCs can be seen as based on a situated approach to TPD since teachers can take their own learning initiatives in relation to their teaching contexts. As such, teachers can work together to increase their content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge and improve their teaching practice. Within these PCs, teachers are also expected to reflect collectively on their practice and take appropriate actions for the improvement of their students’ learning. In this sense, they are considered as professionals who are able to learn by themselves through careers in various ways.
However, some aspects of these conceptualisations of TPD seem to be based on conflicting ideas in relation to learning in general. For example, there is a possible tension between, in the one hand, expecting teachers to collaborate and reflect on issues related to their working contexts and, on the other hand, a belief in the necessity of providing training run by people external to schools and aiming at a certain conformity of teaching practice throughout the country. As training is often informed by a theory application approach to TPD, mostly seen as being top-down, its compatibility with an expansive view of teacher professionalism, which gives more freedom to teachers in taking initiatives for professional learning and practice, is not unproblematic. In addition, by making attendance to PC meetings mandatory, Senegalese educational authorities seem to promote a perspective of learning which understands it as happening more in formal settings than informal ones. These points will be discussed further in Chapter Seven.

4.4 Chapter summary

This chapter has shown how TPD is conceptualised in the consulted official documents issued by the government of Senegal. It has also brought out the different understandings that the interviewed senior ELT officials have on TPD through PCs and DPCs in relation to teaching English in Senegal. Within these two broad sections, the chapter has highlighted the different elements which are taken account of in those conceptions of TPD in relation to understandings of the teaching profession within the Senegalese education system. This was followed by a few concluding points, albeit briefly introduced here, drawn from those conceptualisations. The next chapter focuses on how the actors of TPD for secondary school teachers of English at the regional level understand and implement it through their DPC activities. It does so by drawing on interviews with these actors and providing descriptions of what has been observed.
in the process of implementing TPD at the regional and departmental levels of one region of Senegal during my two fieldwork visits.
CHAPTER FIVE: Teacher professional development in the region of Leeru

5.0 Introduction

Building on the previous chapter which highlighted how TPD is conceptualised through the official documents consulted and the views expressed by the four senior ELT officials who participated in this study, this chapter focuses on how TPD is understood by the coordinators of the three DPCs of English teachers in one region of Senegal (Leeru) and how it is implemented within those DPCs. Compared to the conceptualisations of TPD by actors at the national level, there are similarities of views related to the necessity for all teachers to update their pedagogical knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge, the consistency in practice in terms of both coverage and methods, and the usefulness of input from external actors. The chapter also shows that the studied teachers are at the centre of their TPD activities from design to implementation and the DPC coordinators see it as important to lead with much flexibility. Nonetheless, although the importance of reflection on classroom practice was stressed by actors at the national level, its presence within the DPC activities was found to be minimal.

This chapter consists of four main sections. The first section describes how TPD is understood by the three DPC coordinators of the region of Leeru: Diomaye, Ndane and Tafsir, (all pseudonyms, see Chapter Three section 3.2.2). That description is briefly done since their views mostly resonate with those of the senior ELT officials presented in the previous chapter. The second section explores how TPD is implemented in Leeru by providing accounts on topics selection, DPC meetings, focus on pedagogic knowledge, consistency in teaching and assessment practices, the leadership approach within DPCs, collaboration with foreign ELT experts, and follow up on activities. The third section brings in the DPC coordinators’
understandings of school PCs. The last section concludes the chapter by summarising the main points dealt with in it.

5.1 The DPC coordinators’ understandings of TPD

Analysis of the interviews with the DPC coordinators has indicated that they have expressed views similar to those of the senior ELT officials as shown in the previous chapter. Throughout their interviews, it permeates that these DPC coordinators consider TPD as a necessity for the improvement of the teaching of English in Senegal. They believe that TPD is important for all teachers, both novice and experienced ones. Such a view is consistent with what is expressed in the official policy documents. Nonetheless, the DPC coordinators feel deeply that many of the teachers who were recruited without initial training are in need of support with much acuity.

Diomaye, the regional in-service teacher trainer, understands that a number of those teachers may not know how to teach English as required in Senegal. He thinks that this specific reality of the Senegalese education system – the fact of having recruited many teachers without initial teacher training – must be taken account of in their TPD activities. He explains that:

> in our system, many teachers lack initial training and they are given classes to teach English [...] How are you going to teach English without initial training? It’s very difficult for those teachers. So, it is our duty to help them to be trained through professional development (Diomaye: Int3. 13/12/18).

Although Diomaye thinks that teachers have different learning needs, he does not mention any separation among them (e.g. teachers who had initial teacher training and those who did not) in the planning and implementation of their TPD activities in the region of Leeru. Neither was there any separation between them during the DPC meetings which I observed during my two fieldwork visits. The two other DPC coordinators, Ndane and Tafsir, have also mentioned the significance of supporting the newly recruited teachers. They say that they give much attention
to teachers who are in the first years of their careers. Tafsir asserts that ‘each year we have fresh teachers [especially those without initial training], so we have to help them’ (Tafsir: Int2. 13/12/18). He believes that some of the TPD activities have to be conducted with an objective of helping newcomers to solve the problems they may encounter at the beginning of their job.

For all the three coordinators, TPD initiatives in the region are opportunities for teachers of English to deepen their understandings of teaching the English language and to improve their classroom practice.

Similar to both of the views of the senior ELT officials and those expressed in the official documents consulted, the coordinators also see the teaching profession as evolving, and therefore, teachers need to continue their learning while being in service. For instance, Diomaye sees that the main role of the regional in-service teacher trainer and the DPC coordinators is to support all teachers to keep pace with the evolution of approaches in the field of ELT.

Like the educational authorities, they also link the significance of TPD to the positive impact that it may have on students’ learning. In this respect, they have unanimously expressed their belief in the usefulness of organising events through which teachers exchange ideas and share teaching experiences with the purpose to learn from one another. It is noteworthy that none of them has emphasised the development of teachers’ proficiency in English during those activities. Their focusing more on pedagogy than proficiency may be based on the knowledge that teachers already have the required academic qualifications (and the assumption that this means their English is good enough for teaching purposes) or from observing them in practice. Interestingly, as will be shown in the next chapter, teachers themselves are interested in both developing their proficiency in English and improving ways of teaching it.
Generally, these DPC coordinators’ understandings of TPD are consistent with both the senior ELT officials’ views and the main orientations of the current policies on TPD in Senegal which stress the necessity for teachers to collaborate to improve their students’ performance in all school subjects (OffDoc04, 2011; OffDoc13, 2016; OffDoc14, 2018). These understandings of TPD seem to guide the different DPC activities organised in the selected region. The following section describes how TPD for teachers of English is implemented in the region of Leeru.

5.2 Implementing teacher professional development in the DPCs

An examination of the data from the regional level shows that the three DPC coordinators and the teachers of English in the region of Leeru are engaged in many activities to implement TPD in that locality. The coordinators’ activities mainly consist in organising inter-school TPD meetings (DPC meetings), coordinating the design and administration of common English summative tests at the regional level, and observing some teachers’ lessons. All the three coordinators assert that teachers of their localities meet mostly on a monthly basis for their professional development. For them, the implementation of TPD consists in creating opportunities for all teachers to increase their knowledge – mainly general pedagogical knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge – and, consequently, improve their classroom practice. They hold the view that those learning opportunities need to encompass both ideas on language learning and teaching and practical activities to be tried out in classrooms. More explicitly, ideas from the knowledge base of the ELT field which they explore need to be exemplified through classroom activities. They have also insisted on the importance of creating conditions for teachers to gather and share their knowledge and teaching experiences. Thus, they give much credit to teacher collaboration within both their school PCs and DPCs. The next subsections explore the different elements related to the implementation of TPD in this
region by providing accounts from interviews with the DPC coordinators and descriptions based on my observations during my two fieldwork visits. They cover its whole process from the selection of topics to the follow up of DPC activities.

5.2.1 Topic selection process

Analysis of the interviews with the three DPC coordinators has shown that they all assert that the topics which are explored in the events they organise are proposed and selected by teachers themselves. They believe that if TPD is meant for teachers, the topics they are exploring need to come from the teachers who know best the realities of their classrooms. They all state that teachers play a central role throughout the process of their TPD enactment, right from the start to the end. These DPC coordinators explain that at the beginning of each school year they convene all teachers to meetings to establish a yearly plan of their activities, and the choice of topics is based on teachers’ interest. Talking about the selection of topics to deal with within his DPC, Ndane remarks that every year ‘when we are doing the yearly plan, we ask colleagues to suggest some topics’ (Ndane: Int5. 14/12/18). Similar assertions are expressed by the other coordinators. Tafsir states that ‘teachers are in their classes and they are meeting some difficulties, that’s why […] we ask them to give us what they would like to be talked about’ (Tafsir: Int1. 14/11/18). Following the same vein, Diomaye clearly explains that the selection of topics:

is based on their personal needs as teachers. If teachers say that we need to be equipped with a particular topic or to be reinforced with a particular topic, I think that it can be helpful inside their classrooms. It also reflects the needs of their students because once a teacher is well equipped, I think he will have a good teaching in his classroom (Diomaye: Int2. 15/12/18)

As illustrated in Diomaye’s extract above, the topics need to come from the teachers and be related to issues encountered in their classrooms. Through this excerpt, it is also apparent that
his view of teacher learning seems to be informed by the learning as acquisition perspective since he seems to champion the provision of knowledge to teachers. Together with similar views expressed in the previous chapter, this understanding of learning will be discussed later in Chapter Seven.

In my second fieldwork visit, I attended three meetings of these DPCs organised in mid-November 2018 for the establishment of their yearly plans. The regional in-service teacher trainer, Diomaye, led each meeting together with the coordinator of the DPC concerned. During those meetings, the selection of the topics was done in two phases. There were some topics which had been selected for the previous school year (2017-2018) but which, because of teachers’ strikes, had not been dealt with. I was told by the coordinators that all of them had been proposed by teachers. As those topics were still considered relevant by the group, they were maintained. The second phase consisted in adding new topics. I could see that some teachers made proposals which were adapted by the group. However, there were not many discussions about the rationale behind the proposals that those teachers made, nor were there any contradictory arguments on the choices. After agreeing on the topics, the regional teacher trainer invited teachers to volunteer to prepare a presentation on each of them. In most cases, teachers from the host school volunteered to deal with the chosen topic. At the end of each meeting, a yearly plan with topics, dates, venues, and presenters was established. As facilitators, all the coordinators felt satisfied with the outcomes of their meetings since most of the teachers of their DPC participated in them, and they were able to have yearly plans established in a consensual way (FN: 13, 14 & 15/11/18). This description is illustrative of the topic selection process as explained by these DPC coordinators.

The coordinators also emphasise that TPD topics are not only chosen by teachers, but they are also explored by the latter. They state that teachers often volunteer to prepare and share their ideas with their colleagues. My inquiries, through my conversations with some teachers, about
the choice of topics in previous years revealed that they were proposed by teachers and agreed upon consensually. However, there was no mention of a link between the chosen topics and possible issues identified through systematic classroom observations. As will be discussed later, these teachers’ proposition of topics may be based on personal interest or expertise in that area, which may not enhance their professional learning since they might be confined in their comfort zone. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that analysis of the DPC reports reveals that there has been a variety of topics explored in the last three years.

Throughout their interviews the coordinators consistently state that teachers are at the centre of all the professional development activities they organise. Diomaye explains that the main way to address the selected topics is through presentations and workshops. However, during my fieldwork, the sessions I attended and observed mostly took the form of presentations. The following subsection focuses on this way of implementing TPD, as observed within the studied DPCs, in a detailed manner.

5.2.2 Teacher-led professional development sessions

Analysis of the DPC reports which I consulted indicates that there is a pattern in the ways of implementing TPD within the three studied DPCs. All the TPD sessions described in these reports took the form of a presentation. In these reports, the general formula is that the presenters start by providing explanations of the topic (based on the ELT literature) through PowerPoint slides. This first stage is followed by discussions during which the other teachers share their understandings of the topic. The third part of the event usually consists in examining examples of practical activities which are meant to showcase what teachers could do to implement the explored ideas in their own classrooms. This way of running a professional development event seems to have been prevailing for the last three years at least. Here it is
worth mentioning that these TPD sessions are in English and, as such, could also be opportunities for these teachers to develop their proficiency as English speakers. In the following part of this section, I am bringing detailed descriptions of two DPC meetings of the five which I observed during my fieldwork. I haven’t included a meeting from the DPC of Guindy because the only meeting that I could attend there was on establishing a yearly plan. Nonetheless, compared to what has been identified in the meeting reports, these two can be considered typical TPD sessions within all the three DPCs of the region.

5.2.2.1 A TPD session of the DPC of Jamm

On January 17th, 2018, the DPC of Jamm held a meeting to explore ‘content-based learning (CBL) in language teaching’. This TPD event was hosted by a senior high school located in that area but, due to an unavailability of classrooms, it finally took place in the townhall’s meeting room. It started at 11:30am and ended around 4:30pm with a break from 2pm to 3pm. The topic, which had been chosen the year before by teachers of that DPC, was introduced by two presenters: Ndane and another teacher from a senior high school located in the town of Jamm. Using PowerPoint slides, they first explained to the group what the concept of CBL meant and related it to language teaching and learning. They also drew their colleagues’ attention to the importance of considering their specific contexts when designing and teaching lessons based on content-based learning principles. This first stage of their session, which lasted for about an hour, was not interactive: the presenters talked through their slides while the others listened.

The second stage of the session, which lasted around one and half hours, was for teachers to give their views on the presentation they had just followed. Several of them took the floor for
different purposes, all of whom started with positive remarks about the explanations of CBL provided by the presenters. Some clarification questions on the meaning of CBL were asked by teachers and the presenters provided answers to them. There were also some contributions to the topic of the day, especially on similarities between CBL and Task-Based Learning (TBL) and a sharing of ideas on teaching in general. For example, one of the teachers drew his colleagues’ attention to understanding that teaching needs to be done incrementally, particularly when it comes to introducing new grammar points. In other words, he emphasised the importance of guiding students through the different steps of their learning: from encountering new language items to using them to communicate with people in various contexts. On that note, Diomaye remarked that the different moves of teaching based on CBL known as ‘Into-activities, Through-activities, and Beyond-activities’ are similar to the process of teaching informed by the CLT approach. He gave the example of stages known as ‘Pre-reading activities, While-reading activities, and Post-reading activities’ when teaching English through a reading comprehension lesson based on that approach (Diomaye: Jamm DPC meeting, 17/01/18).

One participant of this DPC meeting cast his doubts on the effectiveness of the recommended teaching approach (CLT). He made his case by advocating that students who were taught through other methods, such as the grammar translation and audio-lingual methods, seem to be far better in English than their current counterparts. As will be discussed later, such a view is also shared by other participants of this study. Giving his opinion about the use of that approach, Diomaye reminded the audience that teachers were not obliged ‘to stick to CLT and they are free to navigate through the different approaches’ as long as the latter allow them to reach their objectives. Another teacher deplored that presentations during those TPD events were ‘too theoretical’ and he believed that the focus should be on practical activities ready for use in classrooms. Sedar invited his colleagues to cultivate critical thinking in their students’
learning activities. In other words, he made his point that students do not have to accept everything at face value, and this needs to be nurtured in them throughout their education.

During those interactions, each participant was given time to make their point and listened to without interruption. Although there were different foci and a certain discontinuity in their discussions, I did not observe much disagreement among teachers. Most of the teachers were adding to one another’s views without critiquing them (FN: 17/01/18). As will be discussed in Chapter Seven, this attitude may be related to teachers’ understandings of learning within their PCs.

In the third part of the session, the focus was on ways of implementing the CBL approach in classrooms through practical activities designed by the presenters. For instance, one of the activities the presenters proposed was project work for which students from the fourth to the upper sixth forms would be asked to work in small groups of five or six, to find out the different types of pollution that exist in general and their main causes. They could do this task through reading or putting questions to other students or by approaching their teachers of science subjects. Once they know the different types of pollution, students are asked to go around their towns or villages to identify the different types of waste that exist there and link them to a type of pollution. They are then requested to propose context-based ways of disposing of the identified waste without impacting negatively on the environment. When they finish their work, they will present it in class in front of their peers. Throughout this activity, students are required to use English while communicating among themselves, which is a way of developing their proficiency in the target language.

Teachers were asked to form groups sitting with colleagues from different schools to exchange views on the appropriateness of the three proposed activities and ways of adapting them for their classrooms. After working for about half an hour, each group reported what they had done
and their views on the proposed activities. All the proposed activities were considered appropriate for students at secondary school level, but teachers underscored the importance of taking account of the proficiency level of students and the need to guide them throughout the process. Beyond its possible teaching benefits in increasing students’ communicative skills, the project work was considered very interesting as it may allow students to be able to sensitise other people of their locality on the importance of preserving their environment. Such a preoccupation with raising students’ awareness of environmental issues is aligned with the national syllabus of English in Senegal which recommends ‘Environment’ as one of the main topics to be explored with students in almost all forms (OffDoc02, 2006). It also resonates with the views of the current national coordinator of TPD in ELT who stressed the significance of going beyond teaching the English language as a school subject.

Many teachers expressed their satisfaction with the types of activities the presenters proposed. For example, Mbaya from Lehar school, with whom I had a short interview just after the meeting, found that the proposed activities were all interesting particularly the one which required students to propose ways of solving problems related to waste in their towns and villages. She also felt that she was ‘really satisfied because whenever me meet our colleagues, it is beneficial because you will absolutely learn something you didn’t know before. So, it is worth coming’ (Mbaya: Int1. 17/01/18). Seemingly, implementing CBL through that project work for students related to the environment was new to her. The same satisfaction with the event was expressed by Ndane and Kine during their short interviews with me. As mentioned earlier, some teachers also expressed their wish to see more focus on examples on how to implement concepts often dealt with in DPC meetings in their actual classrooms. Others appreciated the event by relating their views to teaching which they see as a profession whose practice needs to be based on a clear understanding of ideas underpinning it. Nonetheless, some teachers emphasized the importance of finding a balance between theory and practice in their
DPC activities and called for more flexibility towards teaching approaches for the interest of their students (FN: 17/01/18).

At the end of that DPC meeting, the regional teacher trainer summarised the different points explored through the whole session. In his conclusion, he also highlighted the significance for teachers to ‘focus on problem-solving activities as teaching needs to go beyond the classroom and relates to real life’ (Diomaye: Jamm DPC meeting, 17/01/18). He then invited everyone to invest more in their learning as professionals. He added that, with the new information and communication technologies, learning is become easier and easier since teachers can read much on teaching and find inspiring examples online. He also encouraged teachers to observe one another and to discuss issues related to ELT within their local PCs in the same way as it was being done at that DPC meeting (FN: 17/01/18). However, no peer observation took place within the two studied PCs during my fieldwork.

5.2.2.2 A TPD session of the DPC of Ngalam

The DPC of Ngalam organised a TPD event on cooperative and collaborative learning on January 16th, 2018. The event lasted from 11am to 4:30pm with three different stages like those of the DPC meeting of Jamm described above. This DPC meeting was hosted by a junior high school in a village located around seven km from the town of Ngalam, and it took place in a classroom. All the different sessions of the event were run by the teachers of Dialore. Throughout their talks, the presenters provided explanations of the meaning of cooperative learning and collaborative learning. They related their ideas to teaching and learning English in the Senegalese EFL context. One of their emphasises was the importance of making their students collaborate in their teaching activities. Through their interventions, the teachers of Dialore advocated that pair work and group work needed to be encouraged in classroom
activities and in extramural ones. For them, students must discover the usefulness of learning together through the process of engaging in it. To make their message easier to retain, they borrowed a well-known acronym ‘TEAM’ (Together Each/Everyone Achieves More!) often found in online forums to refer to the practice of exchanging ideas within groups in various contexts. Similar to the DPC of Jamm, after the first part which was on the ideas underpinning the topic, a number of teachers intervened to make contributions or ask questions.

In the third part of the event, the presenters proposed three different activities which could be used in lessons. They consisted of listening to a speech and answering questions at different stages of the activity, listening to a song and filling in gaps of the lyrics and answering questions, and a jigsaw activity between two students with each one having to ask questions to find out missing information which is held by the other. Each activity was done by teachers either individually or in pairs as instructed by the presenters. Then, in groups, they exchanged their views of the appropriateness of the proposed teaching activities in relation to their contexts. At the end of the meeting, many teachers expressed positive views on the event, especially on the three practical activities which presenters proposed as exemplifications of implementing the topic through classroom activities (FN:16/01/18).

5.2.2.3 Synthesised notes on these two DPC meetings

Throughout the sessions, it was observable that there were not many differences of views among teachers, and none of them showed a lack of understanding related to any aspect of the topics after the presentations. However, during the DPC meeting of Ngalam, there was a little disagreement on terms to use to refer to teaching vocabulary in the first stage of a listening comprehension lesson. After few exchanges between Maty and another teacher, the audience seemed to have understood their explanations. Both teachers were referring to the same thing;
they were just using two different terminologies. Referring to that disagreement, Maty told me later on that day that she is open to criticism ‘as far as it is not something personal’ (Maty: Int2. 16/01/18). As pointed in the next chapter, discussions on the inappropriateness of words to use show these teachers’ preoccupation with using English properly and talking about teaching methods correctly. This attitude may explain their interest in increasing their knowledge of the English language and their sharing of documents on its grammar and vocabulary.

While observing the teachers’ interactions throughout the meetings, it was apparent that it was not a culture for them to critique one another’s views. Though the DPC coordinators do appreciate teachers’ participation, this scarcity of contradictory views does not resonate with learning within a group where a variety of perspectives is needed for a co-construction of knowledge to take place. The consistently expressed interest in practical activities by teachers in both meetings also shows their great concern with having examples of teaching activities. Such an interest may indicate that they still feel the need to be shown the way of doing things by others or they are interested in having a variety of teaching techniques in their repertoires. Similar to teachers, the DPC coordinators also underscore the importance of showcasing examples of activities to implement theoretical knowledge in classrooms. For them, focusing on both theories and practical classroom activities is of great importance since it can help teachers a lot when planning and delivering their lessons, especially those who are in their first years of teaching without initial training.

As mentioned earlier, a close look at the DPC meeting reports, some of which date back to 2016, shows that the same presentation format has been prevalent for some years. The same steps as those of the two examples above are described in all those DPC reports on previous professional development events organised at the departmental levels (DPC reports of 2016, 2017, and 2018). In almost all of them, it is evident that most of the time was spent on theoretical aspects of topics (about 2 hours) and less time on discussing the appropriateness of
the practical activities proposed by the presenters of those sessions (around 30mn). This is an indication that teachers do not spend much time to reflect on how to implement new ideas in their classrooms and discuss issues which might arise when they are trying them out. Chapter Seven will discuss this way of implementing TPD in relation to the policy intentions in Senegal as outlined in the previous chapter.

One of the overarching characteristics of those TPD events, as expressed in the consulted reports, is that they tend to aim at increasing teachers’ pedagogical content knowledge, of which CLT is at the heart within the studied ELT community. Now, I turn to this in the next subsection.

### 5.2.3 Focusing on pedagogical content knowledge

Analysis of data from the region of Leeru has revealed that, similar to the senior ELT officials’ views on the purpose of TPD, the DPC coordinators aim at increasing teachers’ pedagogical content knowledge by exploring several aspects of the CLT approach. For instance, Diomaye reiterates the significance for teachers to keep learning about the evolution of the understandings of learning and teaching English. The same preoccupation with increasing teachers’ knowledge is shared by the other coordinators, Ndane and Tafsir. They all hold the view that each teacher needs to understand the rationale behind his/her classroom activities and behaviours with students. As such, since it is about teaching English, they believe that TPD events should be opportunities for teachers to be abreast of the innovations in language learning and teaching, especially about ways of implementing the CLT approach. The table below provides examples of topics explored in the three DPCs in the three past school years.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of DPC</th>
<th>Topic explored</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guindy</td>
<td>Developing writing skills through communicative approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guindy</td>
<td>Teaching vocabulary in EFL through communicative approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guindy</td>
<td>Content based learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guindy</td>
<td>Reading comprehension in large Classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamm</td>
<td>Content-based learning in language teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamm</td>
<td>Teaching vocabulary through listening and reading comprehension communicatively</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Jamm        | 1. Communicative grammar through task-based instructions  
|            | 2. Teaching English through pictures |
| Jamm        | 1. Lessons from nothing  
|            | 2. Teaching the strategies for communicative writing |
| Ngalam      | Effective listening comprehension through communicative learning |
| Ngalam      | Teaching communicative writing |
| Ngalam      | Managing large classes in an EFL context |
| Ngalam      | Teaching communicative grammar |

Table 5.1: Examples of TPD topics explored between 2017 and 2019.

As shown in this table, almost all the topics, which are all chosen by teachers themselves, relate to the CLT approach. Here, it is worth reminding that the CLT approach has been recommended to teach English in Senegal for more than 25 years now. This focus on increasing teachers’ knowledge of this approach during DPC meetings has been consistently stated by all the three DPC coordinators. Diomaye’s words below are illustrative of such a view:
It is better now to be exposed to the new trends, the new ways, the new methods or the new approaches. So, what we do is to help those teachers of English to have more information about CLT because, as you know, it is the recommended approach in Senegal […] we provide them with information, with knowledge, and help them to be more equipped. I think that that will build in them the capacity to teach properly the language and help students to improve their way of learning (Diomaye: Int4. 20/12/18).

From this extract, it is evident that there is much more focus on helping teachers to learn about CLT than to reflect on their knowledge and usage of it. In addition, it appears to be assumed that most teachers just need to learn about innovations, and they will automatically apply them in their classrooms. Such an assumption points to the need for rigorous evaluation of the effectiveness of these DPC activities to teacher learning. As will be discussed in Chapter Seven, this way of implementing TPD – getting teachers to know about ideas and teaching practice from the literature – is much based on an understanding of learning as happening through a transmission of knowledge. Nonetheless, teachers’ discussions on ideas and classroom activities during their DPC meetings can be seen, to some extent, as being consistent with learning within communities of practice.

According to these DPC coordinators, focusing on CLT during TPD events in the region of Leeru is not synonymous with a total adherence to the approach. Compared to the four senior ELT officials, who all champion the use of CLT to teach English, these coordinators hold different views in relation to language teaching and have expressed divergent opinions about the effectiveness of the recommended approach. For example, throughout my interviews and conversations with Diomaye during my fieldwork visits, he consistently asserted that CLT may not be the best approach within the Senegalese EFL context:

I remember when we were young, we did not learn English through CLT, we learnt English through the audio-lingual method based on repetition drills, grammar and vocabulary teaching, that was wonderful! But today, maybe, due to learner-centredness, they say that we should avoid repetition and we should teach less grammar and focus on communication (Diomaye: Int1. 18/12/17).
CLT is for native speakers [people learning the language in English speaking contexts]. Remember we weren’t taught English through CLT, we were taught through the audio-lingual method and today if you draw a comparison between those who were taught through the audio-lingual method and the CLT method you can easily see the difference. We are more equipped than those who are taught through the CLT approach (Diomaye: Int3. 13/12/18).

As shown in the excerpts above, Diomaye is not satisfied with the use of this approach and he seems to still believe in the effectiveness of methods such as the audio-lingual method through which English was taught to students of his generation. He advocates that CLT for people who learn a language within a context where that language is spoken, which is very different from the Senegalese EFL context where English is hardly used in public life.

Such views are shared by Ndane who also has noticed that the level of their learners’ attainment in English has been declining in the past years. This observation set him to having doubts about the effectiveness of the CLT approach for their students. He expresses his view as follows:

I don’t know what the matter is, when we teach English communicatively and students are worse and worse at English […]. Sometimes, I say that the former method is better than the new one. We were taught how to write, how to read in isolation and many of us just learnt to speak English at high school or at university (Ndane: Int5. 14/12/18).

This extract illustrates that Ndane is in favour of a focus on literacy at the early stage of learning English before focussing on oral communication later. Nonetheless, he has yet to know the definite cause of the decline which he has noticed and thinks that ‘we need to continue our investigation to know exactly where the problem is […] we [teachers] should evaluate as we teach’ (Ndane: Int4. 13/11/18). As shown through the extracts above, both Ndane and Diomaye have doubts about the effectiveness of the CLT approach. They seem to attribute the low performance of students in English to its current use in the Senegalese education system. However, it must be understood that their views are based on their personal experiences of learning and observations as teachers, not on evidence gathered in a systematic way. So, it may
be too simplistic an analysis to blame the CLT approach which many teachers of English in Senegal have yet to understand fully, let alone to implement properly.

Unlike Ndane and Diomaye, Tafsir thinks that the CLT approach is appropriate since a language is meant for communication and, as such, should be taught communicatively. He advocates that ‘English is a language and the best way to learn a language is to practise it. So, we cannot learn a language for example by manipulating rules only, but we use a language for the purpose of communication’ (Tafsir: Int1. 13/12/18). He holds the view that the CLT approach fits his understanding of language teaching which needs to be done in an integrative manner because ‘language is a whole: language is culture, language is grammar, language is vocabulary and so on and so forth’ (Tafsir: Int1. 13/12/18). In addition, contrary to his colleagues, Tafsir doesn’t impute the students’ current perceived low proficiency in English to the use of the CLT approach. Instead, he believes that there is a general trend of low level of students within the Senegalese education system. As a former primary school teacher, he may see this issue as starting as early as while the students are at their first years of education.

Despite the differences in these coordinators’ opinions about the effectiveness of applying the CLT approach in Senegal, they all agree that teachers of English must teach according to its principles. However, as reminded by Diomaye at the DPC meeting of Jamm and stated in the national syllabus, teachers have no obligation to teach only through one single method since, as professionals, they are expected to be eclectic in their use of teaching approaches. To some extent, though they have not expressed it in their interviews, Diomaye and Ndane must feel compromised in promoting an approach in which they do not strongly believe.

Another preoccupation of these DPC coordinators is a consistency of practice for all teachers of English in the region, especially with regards to coverage of the syllabus throughout the school year and the organisation of summative assessment. The next subsection focuses on that.
5.2.4 Consistency in curriculum coverage and assessment practice

Analysis of data from the DPC coordinators of the region of Leeru reveals that they give much importance to consistency of practice within their ELT community. The three DPC coordinators state that they work with teachers to have harmonised progressions of their teaching throughout the academic year. In other words, at the end of the school year, students at the same levels are expected to have covered similar learning items especially in terms of grammar, topics and vocabulary, and language functions. Though the national syllabus for English gives indications on what to cover for each level, the DPC coordinators and teachers of Leeru decide what to focus on in their region. For example, this point was part of the agenda of the three DPC meetings held in November 2018 when coordinators made propositions of curriculum coverage which were adapted by the teachers. It is noteworthy that teachers from each school were also expected to discuss ways of covering what was agreed upon within their school. For the DPC coordinators, this harmonisation is also a strategy to promote collaboration among teachers since it creates opportunities for teachers to discuss what they teach and ways of teaching it in relation to their schools’ realities. However, these kinds of discussion were not observed with the two studied PCs.

Throughout their interviews, the DPC coordinators assert that common achievement tests are organised at the regional level at the end of the first and second semesters for students at the last two forms of lower and upper secondary education schools. All the regional tests are designed and proposed by teachers within their local PCs and the DPC coordinators make the final choices. Diomaye highlights the usefulness of organising common tests and refers to it as a strategy to make teachers to work harder for their students to succeed in those tests. He explains that:
If we organise common tests and common exams, it means this will force teachers to progress together because when I am hiding there doing what I want, one day there is a common test. If I haven’t done anything or if I were just cheating that will reflect on my results [students’ scores in those tests]. Those who have taught normally will have good results and those who were cheating will not have (Diomaye: Int3. 13/12/18).

As illustrated in the extract above, Diomaye believes that organising common tests can be a source of motivation for teachers to continue learning and enhance their classroom practice because no teacher would want his or her students to have low marks in them. Similar to the regional level, teachers of the same school are encouraged to organise common progress tests as often as possible to promote consistency in assessment practice among teachers and prepare their students for the large-scale ones. As pointed earlier in this chapter, this focus on testing is a reminder of one of the characteristics of the Senegalese education context where quality teaching is mostly measured through the results of students’ performance in national exams.

However, Tafsir holds an ambivalent view as far as this practice is concerned. On the one hand, he asserts that he does not believe in obliging teachers to focus on the same things in their lessons. In addition, he is not convinced that all teachers of the region need to give the same end-of-semester achievement test to their students. His lengthy comments on this is as follows:

If I were given the chance to change, I would stop it [organising common test] because I believe in teaching what you test and testing what you teach. Unfortunately, people are testing for the sake of testing, that is a problem. For me, it would be better to give more freedom to teachers to test what they have to test [what they taught] because we all spend our time asking them [students] to write, we forget to test orally, and we have some problems a teacher may say ‘I haven’t covered this chapter on question tags’. As I said, at the beginning language is a whole, for me it is not the best option. At the school level they might have a common test if the teachers of the school agree on that it would be easier but sometimes it’s very difficult to have that agreement at a regional level (Tafsir: Int2. 13/12/18).

Tafsir defends his position by indicating the fact that teachers may not progress with the same pace and, as such, it would make more sense to organise tests at the school level only. He also
deplores the absence of speaking in those common tests. Here, mention should be made that students have to take a speaking test in English when they sit for the two national secondary school exams (one at the end of junior high school and the other at the end of senior high school). On the other hand, he also recognises that this practice may have a positive effect on some teachers because those ‘who are a little bit lazy might be trying to do their best knowing that sooner or later their students will be tested as the other students. I think that this is a benefit as it will help them move forward and do better’ (Tafsir: Int2. 13/12/18). This possible positive outcome is also recognised by Ndane, the coordinator of the DPC of Jamm, who sees the practice as a way of encouraging teachers to be more collaborative with their colleagues of the same school.

As shown above, data from the three DPC coordinators indicates that they agree to the positive impact that this organisation of common summative assessment may have on teachers. Not only do these coordinators see having harmonised progressions in teaching and organising summative common tests as a way of promoting consistency in assessment practice, but they also consider it a strategy to motivate teachers to improve their teaching. For them, organising common tests at the regional level familiarises all the teachers with the format of testing they promote and may foster collaboration within PCs at the school level through the process of designing and proposing test papers since it creates opportunities for sharing ideas and good practice on assessment. As will be discussed in Chapter Seven, the effectiveness of such a strategy to improve teachers’ professional learning is doubtful since putting consistency at the heart of the teachers’ practice may not encourage them to take their own initiatives nor to teach according to the particular needs and potential of their own group of students. Hence, the compatibility of consistency in teaching and testing practice with promoting teachers’ creativity is questionable. In their endeavours to implement TPD in Leeru, the DPC coordinators also promote a certain leadership style. I explore this in the next subsection.
5.2.5 The leadership approach within DPCs

From observations and interviews with the DPC coordinators, it is evident that they promote a less hierarchical leadership style. Before going further into this, it is worth reminding that, within the Senegalese education system, being nominated a DPC coordinator implies that one has a very good reputation as a teacher. A such, the coordinators’ position gives them a certain authority within the community of teachers they belong to even though they are not the line managers of the latter. Despite this perceived power, the studied coordinators state their choice for a less hierarchical way of leading their groups of teachers. They want to be considered just as facilitators of TPD activities within their localities.

The dynamism of the English DPCs of the region of Leeru is praised by the national TPD coordinator who receives reports from all around the country. According to the regional teacher trainer, they have owned this reputation thanks to the DPC meetings that they have been holding on a regular basis for some years now (FN: 06/11/17). Diomaye seems to be linking this success in gathering teachers to the less hierarchical leadership style which he and his collaborators have been implementing in their relationships with teachers. For him, being close to teachers and making them see these DPC coordinators as their colleagues is a key factor in building that community. He advocates that the success of their work is much dependent on having a good rapport with teachers. He explains this by giving his own example as follows:

I am the coordinator, let me say between brackets that I am their boss, but I don’t want to be that. What I am is I’m just a teacher of English and what I show them every day is that I am part of you, we are the same, be it coordinator or a trainer. I am a teacher of English. […] I know that if you want to be close to them you have to go next to them, be amongst them, discuss with them, share information with them (Diomaye: Int3. 13/12/18).
Ndane and Tafsir also express similar views in their interviews. They assert that they do not position themselves within their DPCs in any way other than colleagues to other teachers. All the time I was with the DPC coordinators during my two fieldwork visits, I did not notice any of them imposing anything on teachers. In the DPC meetings which I attended, there was no visible show of hierarchy. I could see that these coordinators invited everyone to participate and they never imposed their own views to the group. The regional teacher trainer, Diomaye, who doubles as the DPC coordinator of Ngalam, says that he does not want to influence the teachers’ choice of topics to explore in TPD events. He consistently says that ‘the way we select our topics is from bottom to the top, the ideas don’t come from myself’ (Diomaye: Int2. 15/11/18). For all of them, showing any sort of power would be inappropriate in their collaboration with the other teachers, especially when it comes to choosing topics for TPD sessions. As mentioned earlier in section 5.2.1, they contend that topics must not be imposed at all since they need to be based on the teachers’ learning needs.

This promotion of a ‘horizontal’ management style accords with the view of the president of the national committee for English, Alphonse. He makes it clear that a show of hierarchy in TPD initiatives might hinder its expected positive results on teachers’ practice, and as such, has never been accepted within the Senegalese ELT community. Nonetheless, it should be understood that people in positions of leadership, who are expected to have much knowledge of and experience in ELT, have a certain authority within their community.

Interestingly, despite his promotion of less hierarchy among teachers, Diomaye also believes that people in a position of leadership should establish their authority whenever needed. For example, he is a strong supporter of the MoE’s decision to make attendance of PC activities mandatory to all teachers. He champions that measure because he believes that attending those meetings can help teachers to exchange ideas, good teaching practices and useful documents.
with their colleagues of other schools, which may not happen frequently otherwise. He observes:

What I hate most is being a teacher of English and not sharing with anyone, isolating yourself, being at your corner thinking that you are a good teacher while really you are not because good teachers are teachers who are sharing with others. This is what I believe. I think that what we need today is having a community within which people are sharing what they do because today we are in a world which is a village. Information should be shared in terms of teaching and learning [...] I think that if you do not go to PC meetings you will not have the opportunity to share with others (Diomaye: Int3. 13/12/18).

The above excerpt shows Diomaye’s dismissal of isolation in teaching and the great importance he accords to sharing among teachers, which is consistent with the rationale behind the creation of PCs (Offdoc04, 2011). Nonetheless, as will be argued in Chapter Eight, the scope of understanding sharing within PCs needs to be broadened to make it more beneficial to teachers’ professional learning.

In addition to their less hierarchical leadership style, these DPC coordinators have also asserted their full commitment to their job despite the many challenges they have to face. In the time I was there, I could notice that Diomaye, with whom I travelled to different schools, was doing his job with much dedication. On those days, we paid our own transportation fees and contributed, as the other teachers, to the collective lunch. On some occasions, I was told that the coffee breaks were offered by the schools which hosted the events. He also said that he used his own phone credit to call teachers while coordinating meetings (FN: 13 & 14/11/18).

Talking about challenges they are facing in their work as coordinators, Diomaye emphasises the lack of practical and material support but also stresses their strong determination to do their job, which helps them to overcome some of the difficulties. He remarks:

You have to sacrifice yourself, your energy and then your own money to serve people. So last time, I was with you and you could see how many people attended the departmental cell, around 73 participants. These are the kind of activities that really make me feel that I
have to continue this way. I have decided to be a trainer, I was not forced to be a trainer. I know that there is no incentive, but I accepted the job. As I accepted the job, I have to put my money to satisfy those who are supposed to be served (Diomaye: Int3. 13/12/18).

This commitment is also expressed by Tafsir and Ndane who do not expect much from the local educational authorities. Tafsir does not hesitate to use his own means for the benefits of his society through his involvement in TPD activities. This is clearly illustrated in the extract below from one of his interviews:

We are doing it for free. We have no support, we don’t have a financial support, we don’t have a material support. We are just trying to do it because we love to do it. Sometimes, I spend my money to obtain [achieve] my objectives but it’s a kind of volunteering for your community, for your country. Sometimes, I use my own car, my own fuel and the risk whatever, but it’s part of the game (Tafsir: Int2. 13/12/18).

The dedication of the teachers of English to participating in TPD events is also confirmed by the two headteachers and the deputy headteacher who took part in this study. More on these school leaders’ views on teachers’ activities within their PCs will be shown in the next chapter.

Apart from the status that they may enjoy and the consideration of the role as that of responsibility (seniority) within the Senegalese education system, it can be said that these coordinators do not have any other incentives. Unlike Diomaye, who works at the regional teacher training centre, the coordinator role does not prevent Ndane and Tafsir from teaching normally as the other teachers; they just have fewer hours per week. However, the regional teacher trainer did not hide his pride of receiving positive response from the educational authorities of the region (at the district) and from the national coordinator of TPD. He gives his reasons below:

I am satisfied because this kind of activities are only done by the English pedagogical cells [DPCs] […]. The regional Inspector can testify it, he is saying that what is being done with the English subject hasn’t happened with the others. So, it’s really an honour for us to be seen, let’s say to be judged positively by the Inspector (Diomaye: Int1. 18/12/17).
As shown in the extract above, Diomaye seems to relate his satisfaction to a frequency of DPC meetings, not to an improvement of students’ performance in English in the region. Although it is important for teachers to meet on a regular basis to collaborate, what is being promoted through the ways the meetings are organised is also of a paramount significance for them to learn collectively. Arguably, it is not sufficient to base the effectiveness of TPD solely on the frequency of teachers’ meetings.

In the pursuit of success with their job, these coordinators are also integrating new technologies to facilitate communication within the community of teachers they have been nurturing for some years now (FN: 13/12/18). As the coordinator of the DPC of Jamm, Ndane was inspired by the existence of WhatsApp groups, of which he is a member, to create one for their DPC. Not only does he see it as an efficient way of communication for whatever they do together, but he also regards it as a useful means for professional learning as teachers can exchange ideas and share documents easily. He explains how he came up with the idea and the possible benefits of this application to teachers of their DPC as follows:

The idea came from…, I belong to many WhatsApp groups which are not for professional development […]. With that inspiration, I thought that it's really important for our DPC to create it […]. I have seen that, at the time being, all people are using WhatsApp, […]. It is first for sharing as far as professional development is concerned. We can share some documents; we can have a debate about a topic […]. One may have some problems in teaching writing, reading, and the WhatsApp group can be an opportunity to solve many pedagogical problems (Ndane: Int4. 13/11/18).

Ndane strongly believes that it is now time to use new technologies to facilitate exchanges among teachers and give them opportunities to learn from one another without having to travel from one place to the other. Similarly, after creating a Facebook group to facilitate communication between teachers of English at whole region in 2016 (Ngalam DPC report: 25/01/17), Diomaye has also recently created a WhatsApp group for the DPC of Ngalam. As a member of those two WhatsApp groups, I can see that in addition to getting information about
the DPC on time, teachers are sharing a lot of documents on the English language and ELT through this application but, no discussion related to classroom practice has been observed. As will be recommended in Chapter Eight, WhatsApp groups could be used to follow up on DPC meetings. At the time of leaving the field, this trend of using this application had yet to be followed by the DPC of Guindy.

Throughout their interviews, all the DPC coordinators have stressed the significance for teachers to work together and stated their efforts in building communities within their DPCs. They also give much consideration to collaboration with foreign ELT specialists to improve TPD in their region. I now turn to that in the following subsection.

5.2.6 Collaboration with foreign ELT specialists

Analysis of data from the region of Leeru shows that the value given to partnership with external ELT experts from the US or the UK emphasised by the senior ELT officials is echoed at the regional level. They all believe that such a collaboration can be very fruitful to teachers of English. During my first fieldwork visit, Diomaye managed to invite an American specialist in ELT, who came to Senegal for the Annual Convention of ATES, to deliver a talk to the teachers of Leeru on two topics: Enhancing learners’ speaking skills and enhancing learner autonomy. The event was given a great importance and all the teachers of English in the region were convened (FN: 16/12/17). It took place at a high school in the city of Leeru. On the day, teachers came in big numbers (around 160) and most of them showed a lot of interest in the topics of the talk. The two topics were dealt with in the form of an interactive presentation. The presenter went through his slides and stopped at times to get teachers views on what he was talking about. For each topic, he gave some theoretical underpinnings and proposed practical activities. As a specialist in ELT with much experience from various places around the world,
he also related his talk and activities to the Senegalese EFL context. While observing, I could see that teachers showed much interest in his talk and much enthusiasm in participating in the session. Some of them asked questions to the presenter and other gave their views on the importance of making their students practise the target language in classrooms (FN: 16/12/17).

Several teachers, with whom I had short conversations after the session, expressed their satisfaction with the event. They related the usefulness of the meeting to the fact that the presenter also proposed some practical activities that they could adapt in their classrooms and gave ‘tips’ to motivate their students to speak during lessons. They all found it interesting both in terms of content and delivery process. For example, according to Thioro from Dialore, the most interesting aspect was the way the presentation was done. She remarks that ‘it was a good way of presenting, making a presentation because he was not doing a kind of lecture, but he was asking people to contribute, asking questions and from the answers he was giving more explanations and bringing new things’ (Thioro: Int1. 18/12/17). As illustrated in Thioro’s voice, the interaction between the presenter and the teachers all the way through the session is one of the most appreciated characteristics of the event in the eyes of the latter. Nonetheless, some deplored the fact that all the teachers of the region had to come to one place on the same day; which probably prevented many of them from making it.

Analysis of the short interviews I had later with the other teachers of Dialore reveals their great satisfaction with the event. Not only do they appreciate having a native speaker of English, but they also contend that the activities he proposed are relevant to their teaching practice. For example, Maty asserts to have decided to change the time to teach speaking during a reading comprehension after attending the presentation. She is convinced that this way is better than what she used to do. She explains:

> I used to ask students what they think about, for example, if the text is about corruption, I ask them “what do think about corruption?” and we could have 15mn debate, from now
However, Maty does not mention an impact of her change on her students’ learning. Although Aram asserts her happiness with the presentation, she believes that teaching practices are much linked people’s culture and teachers need to take account of that. She also thinks that native speakers may have their own ambition in promoting the teaching of the English language in other countries like Senegal. In my follow up interview with her after the meeting, she notes that ‘they [native speakers] want to spread their culture [...] the most effective way to do it is to get people involved in the language and it is also good for us because getting in touch with native speakers is always positive for someone who wants to speak their language’ (Aram: Int1. 16/12/17).

Similar to these teachers, Diomaye states that he was both satisfied with the attendance of teachers and the quality of the presentation itself. According to him, it was very important to invite such a presenter who has much knowledge in ELT and many years of experience working in various African countries. He comments:

I really appreciate the fact that he is not only a native speaker but someone who devoted himself in ELT because he is still a trainer for the peace corps service, and he knows exactly what we need because he has toured many African countries. He knows the problems and their needs as far as English teaching is concerned. Really if we have this kind of personality in our regional pedagogical cell, it’s something really very helpful (Diomaye: Int1. 18/12/17).

Later on, in another interview, he gave me an example of a successful TPD session organised by the DPC of Guindy and to which two Americans teachers, who were visiting Senegal, had been invited. He recalled:

the meeting was a bit particular[different] because we didn’t have presentation like that we used to have like lecturing. We had a workshop. What was more important in that cell meeting was that we had new people in the group because they were native Americans the way they speak and what they presented it was something very new. They talked about
new trends in English language teaching, it was really fruitful to have them in our cell meeting. This can be seen as a particular one (Diomaye: Int4. 20/12/18).

As expressed above, it is evident that the regional teacher trainer has a very positive view in drawing on the expertise of native speakers whenever possible. Based on the different views obtained from these participants, it seems that they link the knowledge and ability to support teachers of English to a good proficiency in English. This might imply that these teachers believe that native speakers know more about how to teach their language as they speak it perfectly. At the same time, this positive appreciation can also result from a good knowledge of ELT that those native speakers may have shown to teachers.

As shown up to here in this chapter, at the regional level, the TPD of English teachers is mainly being implemented through meetings for them to learn from one another, share good practices, and develop professional bonds. Nonetheless, following up what teachers do after attending TPD sessions seems to be a great challenge in the region of Leeru. The next subsection focuses on this.

5.2.7 Follow up on the DPCs’ activities

Throughout their interviews these coordinators have expressed their satisfaction with their TPD activities in the region and the number who attend them, but they have provided little evidence of following up these activities in the schools. These coordinators seem to be assuming that those teachers are benefiting from their DPC meetings and implementing what they have learnt during the latter. Although Diomaye believes in the positive impact on TPD events on the teachers’ classroom practice, he acknowledges that this assumption may not be true with all of them. He states that:
what we can do is that when we are in a cell meeting, we learn from the presenter and after that we want people to implement what is learnt from the cell. We want it to be from the cell into the classroom. Most of the time it is very difficult frankly speaking to know whether this is really produced as you want in the classrooms. Maybe some are doing their best to implement what they have learnt (Diomaye: Int3. 13/12/18).

Diomaye is not sure whether teachers are trying out the ideas that were introduced in DPC meetings. In all the DPC reports which I have consulted, he always deplores the lack of transportation for him and other DPC coordinators to follow up on TPD activities by visiting teachers at their schools. The region of Leeru has many schools in rural areas where public transport is not reliable at all. He believes this would allow them to know more about challenges that teachers are facing in classrooms.

All these coordinators have acknowledged that they have not been observing many teachers. Apart from one occasion mentioned by Tafsir when he was invited by a teacher who was implementing ways of teaching listening dealt with in a previous DPC meeting, these coordinators have not given any examples of follow up activities. Diomaye told me of a few classroom observations he did during my first fieldwork visit. However, those observations were mostly for teachers who were working to obtain their professional teaching degrees through the distance learning programme offered by the University Cheikh Anta Diop of Dakar\textsuperscript{17}. As such, those classroom observations were not solely to follow up on what had been explored in DPC meetings. In addition, these DPC coordinators assert that some teachers are not willing to be observed even by their own colleagues. Commenting on this issue, Ndane remarks that:

\begin{quote}
    generally there is a kind of reluctance as far as teachers are concerned. It \textit{[classroom observation]} is something that demands humility, flexibility, and something like that, and
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{17} With that teacher training programme, while the University provides theoretical knowledge to teachers online or in presence on campus, the regional in-service teacher trainers are in charge of coaching the candidates through classroom practice and inspecting them later.
many of us don’t want to be observed when they are teaching. Maybe they want to hide their weaknesses, the way they do things it is correct or incorrect?’ (Ndane: In5. 14/12/18).

Ndane states that he only goes to observe teachers who invite him, which had not happened for some time: ‘as for classroom visits, it’s been a long time that I haven’t visited a colleague’ (Ndane: Int5. 14/12/18). Similarly, Tafsir says that classroom observations are not that frequent within his DPC since they are done ‘most of the time, once a month, sometimes we can stay two months without visiting a class because we just want to observe our colleagues when they have expressed the need to be observed, we do not want to be like policemen’ (Tafsir: Int1. 13/12/18). What they all recognise is that most teachers do not show much desire for classroom observation.

During my two fieldwork visits, I could not observe any follow up activities led by the DPC coordinators or by the teachers themselves. I attended one classroom observation during which Diomaye was the observer, but the lesson was not related to the previous DPC topic on collaborative learning. The teacher was at the third school which, as explained in Chapter Three, I initially selected but decided to drop later. The lesson was followed by a feedback session which Diomaye split in three stages: firstly, he focused on what he thought was well done in the lesson, then he indicated where improvement was needed before ending with possible alternatives. After the session, he told me that he always tried to focus on positive aspects of lessons to help teachers to have the confidence to improve themselves (FN: 28/02/18). This scarcity of classroom observation shows that, as ELT leaders of their localities, these DPC coordinators may find it difficult to play their role effectively since many teachers may have a negative view of such a practice. This point will be discussed later in Chapter Seven when I will be exploring ways of learning valued in the studied ELT community.

These DPC coordinators have also expressed their understandings of school PCs and what their teachers’ activities should consist of. The next section brings in those views.
5.3 The DPC coordinators’ views of school PCs

Based on the interviews with these coordinators, it is apparent that they expect the school PCs to mirror what is being done at the departmental level; to discuss their understandings of teaching and relate them to their school context. They want members of each school PC to work together to solve the difficulties they might encounter within their schools. Like the other coordinators, Diomaye thinks that the PCs have a big role to play for the improvement of ELT in Senegal. During the DPC meeting of Jamm, he strongly recommended his colleagues to collaborate and find solutions for issues that their students may be having in learning English in their schools. This understanding of TPD through school PCs is aligned with the views of the interviewed senior ELT officials since its ultimate goal is the improvement of student learning.

All the three coordinators have similar understandings of TPD through PCs. However, they have slightly different foci in what they expect from teachers. Tafsir seems to be focusing on the affective aspect. For him the most important element within a school PC is for teachers to get along well because this will facilitate their collaboration in their endeavours to improve their students’ learning. He believes that good social relationships among teachers is vital for them to succeed in any undertakings. He explains his view in this way:

    I think that a functioning PC at the school level is a school where teachers just love to be together, to share experience, and to compete positively in terms of results, in terms of producing a good language learner. This one is my student he or she has the command of the English language. A good PC is a cell where teachers love to be together (Tafsir: Int2. 13/12/18)

As for Diomaye, he stresses the importance of working together as professionals. For him, teachers of a school PC need to harmonise both what they teach and how they assess their
students’ learning. As such, he expects them to work and develop themselves collectively. He comments:

A pedagogical cell at a local level is a kind of community of teachers […]. We do not need someone isolated […]. It is better to share what you are designing, what you are implementing in your class with other colleagues. This is the rationale behind setting up PCs at the school level. They design common tests and if you want to design common tests you have to progress together […] They have to make class visits among themselves […] they can even conduct workshops at the school level (Diomaye: Int3. 13/12/18).

As illustrated in this extract, Diomaye thinks that teachers need to take their own initiatives within their school PCs. He considers peer observation as a useful practice and encourages teachers to do it as often as possible. However, this practice was not observed at the selected schools during my fieldwork. This absence of classroom observation suggests that it is necessary to help teachers to start it and nurture it within their schools. Some of the studied teachers’ views on peer observation are shown in the next chapter.

As for Ndane, he focuses less on TPD at the school level than on teachers’ responsibilities to help their learners progress. He thinks teachers of a PC need to work together to help one another but, most importantly, they should strive to help their learners to improve their proficiency in English. In this respect, he highlights the usefulness of setting English clubs at schools and giving extra time to students, which he sees as the best way to promote the English language. He advocates that members of PCs must:

Work very hard in the English clubs to make students know that it was harder before. Many people [teachers] succeeded it setting up English clubs, making meetings more frequent. Now with the new technologies, we can even project something with a video projector. English club is part of their job. Their job is not coming to school only, you have a number of hours to teach and then you go but you have to set up English clubs and, if possible, make some sacrifice in order to take again what we have already lost [good proficiency of students] (Ndane: Int5. 14/12/18).
All these coordinators expect teachers at the school level to take initiatives on their own to improve their learning and that of their students. They hold the view that teachers need to follow up on what they are doing at the DPC meetings by trying to adapt ideas and practices to the specific realities of their schools. As will be argued in chapter eight, these DPC coordinators need to understand that they have a role to play in helping teachers to follow up on DPC activities within their PCs.

5.4 Summary of chapter

Throughout this chapter, it has been shown that most of the understandings of TPD, as expressed in the consulted official documents and by the senior ELT officials, translate through how TPD is seen and implemented at the region of Leeru. All the DPC coordinators consider it a necessity for all teachers to be abreast of the evolution of the understandings of learning and teaching. As such, focusing on some aspects of these teachers’ knowledge (pedagogical knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge) and on ways of implementing ideas in their classrooms has been considered a positive way of implementing TPD. As pointed earlier, by implementing TPD in this way, they seem to believe that an increase of pedagogical knowledge for all teachers would result in the improvement of their teaching, and consequently, of their students’ learning. In this respect, they are in line with the main purpose of TPD as expressed in the consulted official documents which consider it a strategy to improve student learning. However, of importance to mention here is that any causal relationship between TPD and the improvement of student learning is based on assumptions within the Senegalese context since there is no study which has established it with evidence. Also there seems to be no attempt to test these assumptions within the system as currently operated.
The chapter has shown that the prevalent way of conducting TPD sessions in the region is through presentations through which topics chosen by teachers are explored. The main format is that the first part that introduces theoretical underpinnings of topics is followed by two others during which teachers discuss those ideas and the proposed classroom activities. As will be discussed in Chapter Seven, this way of implementing TPD may be mostly informed by a transmission model of learning which seems to still linger in the Senegalese educational practices though there is an aspiration for active learning. It has also been mentioned that inviting foreign ELT specialists to share their expertise with the teachers of English in Leeru is well-appreciated by all the participants.

Much satisfaction with most of the current state of TPD in their region has been expressed by the DPC coordinators. However, it seems to be mainly based on the great numbers of teachers (around 85%) who regularly participate in TPD activities. As such, they seem to link success of TPD activities to teachers’ presence at meetings, which is not a guarantee to improve their learning, a matter that needs to be proved with evidence. The chapter has pointed an absence of follow up on what teachers are doing at the school level in relation to the DPC activities and a lack of classroom observation within PCs.

Though reflection on classroom practice is given much consideration by the senior ELT officials, its presence within the DPC activities is minimal. Apart from the discussions on the appropriateness of the proposed practical activities, which can be considered as collective reflection to some extent, there was not much questioning on the effectiveness of teachers’ classroom practice. For instance, the low performance of students in English in national exams was mentioned in the five DPC meetings which I attended, but just very briefly. In addition, there was no plan for collective reflection on finding ways of improving students’ scores in English at the regional level.
Findings indicate that there is also a yearning for consistency in practice in terms of both coverage and methods. Nevertheless, as will be argued in the next chapter, promoting common practice among teachers may be problematic since it is not compatible with the notion of creativity which is at the heart of understanding active learning. In addition, it does not encourage the teachers to cater for the specific needs and potential of their students.

The next chapter explores the two selected secondary schools as workplaces, the studied teachers’ understandings of learning and working together within PCs, their experiences of participation in TPD activities, and their perceptions of membership of their PCs.
CHAPTER SIX: The schools and pedagogical cells

6.0 Introduction

Building on the two previous chapters which presented the findings at the national and regional levels, this chapter completes them by focusing on the school level. It shows the significance of the teachers’ working contexts for their professional learning within their PCs, the importance they accord to their participation in their PC activities, and the sharing of documents and exchanging ideas related to learning and teaching the English language. These teachers also give much importance to certain values and behaviours which are conducive to learning within a group. The chapter also highlights the presence of a lifelong learning philosophy in the discourse of the studied teachers. However, little reflection through group discussions was observed and there was no focus on content pedagogical knowledge during the meetings of their PCs.

This chapter has five sections with the first presenting findings on the two schools as workplaces, relating these to their cultures. The second section then proceeds by examining the studied teachers’ views and experiences of learning through their PCs’ activities and relationships with their colleagues. In that section, the teachers’ understandings of their PCs, their perceptions of learning, their experiences in participating in PC activities, the focus of their learning, their views of peer support within their PCs, and the presence of collective reflection within their small communities are all looked at in subsections. The third section explores these teachers’ perceptions of their membership of their PCs by focussing on their sense of belonging and the values they promote in their professional relationships. The fourth section focuses on these teachers’ views of leadership within their PCs and the final one summarises the main points dealt with in this chapter.
6.1 Dialore and Lehar: cultures and practices

Schools, as working places, have their cultures. A school’s culture encompasses almost everything, both physical and non-physical, that exists and is nurtured within it. In the following subsections, I explore factors within the two selected schools which are relevant to this research: the schools’ objectives, the leadership approach of their leaders, their working and learning conditions, their teachers’ status, and the place of professional learning within them as institutions.

6.1.1 The schools’ main objectives

Analysis of data from the two schools shows that their leaders both have clear objectives. The leaders of Dialore, the headteacher and his deputy, assert that excellence is at the core of his school’s ethos. This objective is clearly stated in the ‘strategic plan for excellence (SPE) 2017-2022’. Consistent with the general understanding of excellence in the Senegalese education system, these leaders aim at improving their students’ attainment in the different grades within their school and, above all, increasing their percentage of success in the national exams. The SPE stipulates that the school’s ambition is ‘to position itself among the “top 5” upper secondary education schools in Senegal both in terms of results in the Bac exam and the “Concours General”’18 and be the leader in the region’ (Dialore PSE: 4). Here it is worth mentioning that the school has a ‘normal’ intake of students from lower secondary schools located in its vicinity.

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18 The ‘concours general’ is a national contest organised for students of the sixth form and upper form in subjects, such as French, maths, English, history and geography, philosophy and others.
Similar to Dialore, an analysis of the interviews with the headteacher of Lehar indicates that her main objective is to improve its students’ learning at all levels. This is consistently stated in her interviews. She considers the school’s latest results (averaging 35%) in the national end of lower secondary education exam (BFEM) as very low. She states that much work needs to be done to improve the teaching and learning process and believes that each one at the school has an important role to play. At the time of my first fieldwork visit, she was still new in the position and said that strategies were to be developed as she got to know more about her new role as headteacher and the various challenges of her school.

Though having a clear and well-known objective is an important element of a school’s culture, there are other significant ones. The following subsection explores leadership within these schools.

### 6.1.2 Leadership approach within schools

Analysis of data from the two schools has shown that their leaders assert to have adopted an inclusive way of running their institutions. In that endeavour, they declare that they are striving to include all the people of their schools in their various undertakings aimed at improving their students’ attainment.

At Dialore, the headteacher states that he and his staff promote a participatory approach of management. They believe that all the different actors of the school should be included in the way of running it and each one needs to take responsibility for the achievement of their common objective. Throughout their interviews, both the headteacher and his deputy consistently stress the importance of getting all the staff committed to the improvement of their school, especially the teachers. Dialore’s leaders believe that their approach has positively impacted on the social atmosphere within the school and that has created a synergy among
teachers, non-teaching staff and students. They base their opinion on the fact that many people at the school, among both teachers and others, attribute the increase of the school’ results in the Bac exam in the recent years (44% in 2015; 60 % in 2016; 56% in 2017) to that good social atmosphere. Mention should be made here that, Dialore has had a good reputation for many years thanks to its results in the Bac exam which have always been among the best in the region.

The headteacher claims to have learnt much in terms of management after having worked as a deputy headteacher and a headteacher in two different schools before joining Dialore. With that wealth of experience, he takes prides in having made a number of decisions since he took office in 2015. For example, he made himself more accessible to all the staff and shows his availability to receive suggestions from them\textsuperscript{19}. To that end, he moved the secretary, whom people had to go through to talk to his predecessor, to another office to allow people to meet him easily and make suggestions whenever necessary. He explains:

\begin{quote}
I can talk to everybody; my door is open to all. When I stay a whole day without someone [a teacher] coming to my office, I go to the staffroom, I find them there, I discuss with them about any question and I come back. Just to show that the same way as I come to you, you also can come to me (Dialore HT: Int2. 23/03/18).
\end{quote}

While I was there, I could see that he was trying to reduce the distance which most people associate with positions of authority within the rather hierarchical Senegalese Education system. Even during my first interview with him, we had to lock the door of his office to avoid being disturbed by others who might want to see him (FN: 19/12/17). This easy access to school leaders seems to be the norm at Dialore. The deputy headteacher’s office is also very accessible. During my fieldwork, many a time, I saw people, both students and teachers, entering his office,

\begin{footnote}
\textsuperscript{19} The headteacher’s making his office easily accessible to everyone is not to be neglected in the Senegalese context where many of his colleagues may have secretaries who arrange appointments for them. However, currently, there is a tendency to reduce this bureaucratic procedure in many schools.
\end{footnote}
and sometimes talking to him outside in the school yard. I also saw him coming to the staffroom, mostly for socialising with teachers for a few minutes during breaks.

Dialore’s headteacher also emphasises the importance of encouraging everyone within the school to take initiatives. He gives the example of the school’s SPE as an illustration of his approach. For instance, he states that the draft of that plan has been produced by members of staff. He believes that his school has people who are able to make propositions for its improvement. He remarks:

“There are currently four doctors in the group and half of them [teachers] have their Master degrees. I said a group like this must not always consume, they must be able to make propositions. That’s why, I took some of them, I told them: based on your intellectual level, you cannot stay here just to apply what you have been told, think about how we can make things progress (Dialore HT: Int3. 19/12/18).

He consistently stresses the important role that teachers need to play in both the conception of the plan and its implementation. As shown in the excerpt above, it also seems that he gives much value to high academic qualifications. However, as will be shown later, he does not profess any hierarchy among teachers.

During my second fieldwork visit, the SPE was still in the making by a committee of teachers and other staff and was known around the school. On further inquiry about the document, I was informed that most of the initial work was done by a teacher of physics and chemistry. Later on, that teacher told me that he was doing online courses for his professional development related to school management and he wanted Dialore to benefit from his knowledge. He stated that his initiative was very welcomed by the headteacher who saw it as an opportunity not to be missed (FN: 19/12/18).

In the same vein, the deputy headteacher asserts to give much significance to being close to everyone and getting teachers’ views in trying to overcome the challenges inherent of each
school’s functioning. He believes that problems are better solved when they are tackled by the administration, the teachers and the other staff together. Though he is the line manager of teachers, the deputy’s view of his relationship with them is not that of constantly giving directions. For him, teachers ‘are collaborators, not opponents, because anyone of them could have been in my place. Hence, I must carefully pay attention to what they tell [me]’ (Dialore DHT: Int1. 27/11/18). The deputy headteacher understands that the relationship between the leaders and the teachers is delicate and needs to be well-managed for the benefits of the school’s functioning and its students’ learning.

At Lehar, the same leadership approach is professed by the headteacher. With a 25-year teaching experience working with several headteachers in her career, she considers collaboration as a key element of her way of managing the school. She asserts that her philosophy is to collaborate with all and to be less directive in her way of leading the institution. She observes that:

my first concern is to make the whole [school] function, is to be fair, is to treat everybody the same way according to their rank.... I talk to everyone softly, without showing authority. I myself, I do not like [showing] authority, I step aside. Right at the beginning, I told them that I cannot do anything without their collaboration (Lehar HT: Int1. 29/01/18).

As illustrated in the extract above, the headteacher wants to put inclusiveness at the heart of her management style. Like the headteacher of Dialore, she asserts her openness to suggestions from all the staff and students. In my visits at Lehar, her office was never locked, and people could enter just by knocking at the door. Her main expectation in trying to improve the school as a working place is to see positive change in their students’ performance in both formative and summative assessment.

As pointed in the previous section, she was in her first year in office during my first fieldwork visit. At that time, she said that she was in the process of building a good rapport with people
to facilitate her collaboration with them. Later during my second fieldwork visit, she acknowledged that she was still learning about her position, but she was satisfied with her first year at the school. She believed that her approach was working because ‘I did not consider myself a boss, I told them I am your collaborator, you are my collaborators, I am reaching out to you, together we work for the good functioning of the school’ (Lehar HT: Int2: 14/12/18).

Unlike at Dialore, there was no specific document showing a plan for the improvement of their students’ attainment in the coming years.

6.1.3 The schools’ working and learning conditions

Analysis of the data from the two schools shows that both the leaders and the teachers give much importance to their schools’ working conditions. As part of his plan to achieve better results for Dialore’s students and in accordance with his management principles, the headteacher asserts have improved people’s working conditions in the school. He is of the view that everyone needs to enjoy being and working at the school. For instance, talking about actions which he has taken to improve the working conditions of the non-teaching staff, he recalls:

> With the surveillants, I found very old computers when I arrived here. Not only did I pay for new computers [desktops] for all of them but for the line managers, they all have laptops. Added to that, I have made sure that all surveilants have Internet connection […] We are doing our best to make people be eager to come to work. For example, one of my administrative staff, used to be missing. When I realised that she was missing a lot I told myself that I will make her office better so that she will like coming there. I put an air conditioner, an interior toilet, and now she comes regularly (Dialore HT: Int1. 19/12/17).

The administrative staff of Dialore have decent offices equipped with solid desks and comfortable chairs. Each office has a computer connected to the internet and Wi-Fi is available for all the staff. The headteacher emphasises the significance of his efforts in making sure that
all his staff work comfortably, especially the teachers. Concerning the teachers of English, he observes:

Currently, we have done all that is possible for the English pedagogical cell to have all their expressed needs satisfied [mostly teaching materials]. There is, you can check with them after, no request from them on my table which is not satisfied yet […] My objective is to do everything I can to make teachers be committed. I always say that the school can only be what teachers make of it (Dialore HT: Int1. 19/12/17).

Almost all the interviewed teachers of Dialore hold positive views of their school as a working place. They consider the school’s administration as supportive in many ways. They all agree having witnessed positive changes since the arrival of the current headteacher. For example, they state that he was making a real difference in providing teaching materials, such as listening equipment which they had always requested from the previous ones but in vain. Ngoor, who has worked with four different headteachers at the school, acknowledges to have noticed much improvement in the recent years. He remarks:

He [the current headteacher] is the fourth [of whom he has worked with]. He is the best because he does all his best to make us in comfortable situations of teaching. This is what we expected from the previous heads and we did not have it. This year he has given us an equipment for teaching listening comprehension. We have never had it (Ngoor: Int1. 18/02/18).

However, crowded classrooms (up to 90 students) and an insufficiency of video projectors (the school has only one at the time of the fieldwork) are mentioned as challenges by these teachers. Except for Thioro who praises more her colleagues’ commitment than the school’s administration’s efforts, all the other teachers hold positive views of the management of the school.

Like Dialore’s leaders, the headteacher of Lehar gives much significance to the working conditions of her school. She believes that good working conditions play an important role for the improvement of the teaching and learning process. She thinks that:
for quality to be a reality the required conditions have to be in place. I think if people, the students and teachers, are not in good working conditions, we will not have quality. Therefore, to have quality we need good working conditions at first […] but in schools like ours, there are many conditions that facilitate the work which are not fulfilled, such as the insufficiency of classrooms, large classes, the insufficiency of teaching and learning materials, etc. There are really many shortcomings which do not favour quality (Lehar HT: Int2. 14/12/18).

The above excerpt shows the importance that the headteacher accords to having good working conditions. She is aware that her school has many challenges for quality education to become a reality within it. Nonetheless, she asserts to have taken positive actions in the little time during which she has been in charge of leading the school. She mentions her financial support to all the PCs of Lehar for their activities at both the school level and when teachers participate in external professional development events. This support was mentioned by the coordinator of the English PC in their meeting held on January 25th, 2018. She also expresses her pride to have facilitated the building of two new classrooms in her first year of leadership. Those two classrooms were mere shelters at the time of my first fieldwork visit.

Analysis of the interviews with teachers of Lehar indicates that most of them see the school as lacking much resource which they need to do their job properly. These teachers complain about insufficient textbooks, crowded classrooms, and lack of teaching equipment such as video projectors and listening equipment. When observing some teachers’ lessons, I could see that there were not enough books for students. For example, in one of Mbaya’s lessons with her third form class, I could see that up to 6 students had to share a book to do a reading comprehension lesson. In that way, students would re-position the book to allow each of the group member to read the text. In one activity, I observed that many students did not have the chance to read the text before the teacher started asking them to answer the questions. In addition, some students were sitting in threes on desks meant for two people (FN: 29/01/18). Although the classrooms are wide enough, the number of desks in many of them was not
sufficient for students. Albouri states that he cannot teach English through songs because of a lack of adequate listening equipment. He believes that teaching English through songs could be very motivating for his students, but the school does not have any equipment for that. He complains:

> English is a language, sometimes you want to teach English through a tape. Here we have no tape, listening is very important for students [...] I have a book with mini cassettes, but they have no tape [...] It’s very useful for the students and I also have songs in English, and we can practise with them. Sometimes you write it on the board but it is better to listen to it, making exercises for students so that they can understand the song and enjoy the song since they like songs [...] but here we have no tape [...] I think that that’s a problem in our School (Albouri: Int1. 21/03/18).

Similar to Albouri, Sedar also finds teaching at Lehar as very challenging but, he believes that teachers have to overcome those difficulties. The extract below illustrates his view:

> Here, there are so many shortcomings, you do not have the materials, you are not in the adequate infrastructures to do your job properly, but no one will come from another country to teach our kids. To myself, I do believe that we have a mission and however unimportant in the eyes of the commoner of man, our mission, we as teachers, I consider it something that is very important. So, I invest myself in it (Sedar: Int1. 13/03/18).

Under the previous headteacher, it appeared that there was a lack of financial support to the PCs. Kine deplores that ‘the administration doesn’t do anything for us because, if we go out, we go with our own means, but I think that maybe it will change with the new headmaster’ (Kine: Int1. 27/03/18). As mentioned earlier, her hope has become true as the new headteacher has decided to allocate funds to all the PCs of her school in her first year in office.

### 6.1.4 The teachers’ status within the schools

Analysis of data from both schools reveals that there are similarities and differences in the ways of treating teachers in relation to their status. Data from Dialore indicates that this school’s
leaders are not promoting any hierarchy among the teachers of English. For example, as the line manager of all the staff of the school, the deputy headteacher thinks that the way he deals with them is important for the stability and cohesion within the school. In his interview, he states that he trusts all the teachers of English and would make no discrimination when allocating the classes at the beginning of each school year.

In the same vein, data from teachers shows that there is a sense of equality among them. Though they have different academic qualifications (see 3.2.2.1), no show of hierarchy was observable among teachers during my fieldwork and none of them mentions it in their interviews. The choice of Maty as a role model by all her colleagues suggests that these teachers do not consider academic qualifications as a distinctive character in their relationships. While Maty has got a BA, others like Tening and Musa have obtained their MA (the highest academic degrees within the group) but are not considered as leaders. Based on her colleagues’ views, she is a leader because she epitomises the values promoted within the group (see section 6.3.2 below).

At Lehar, analysis of data indicates that there is a certain perceived inequality among the teachers of English. Though the headteacher does not support the notion of hierarchy among teachers explicitly, when giving her opinions about the English PC, she consistently names Ndane and Sedar as dynamic and exemplary teachers. A closer look at the data might suggest that these two teachers consider themselves as the best among their colleagues. In their interviews, both state that they consider each other as their first source of advice at the school while others, Albouri, Kine and Mbaya, say that they would request suggestions from all their colleagues. In terms of official leadership among them, Ndane says that ‘I was chosen by the headteacher, the former headteacher. Since then I have been the coordinator of this PC, since 2012’ (Ndane: Int2. 13/03/18). Albouri expresses his desire to be a coordinator and sees his membership as still at the periphery: ‘I am just a member because I have never been chosen as
a coordinator’ (Albouri: Int1. 21/03/18). He deplores that the former headteacher used to nominate all PC coordinators of the school and had never given him that position.

In addition to Albouri’s frustration, Kine also expresses negative feelings about how she has been treated in the school. In her interview, she talks about her disapproval of the fact that the former headteacher never gave her a fourth form class (the highest level at lower secondary school in Senegal) to teach them English. She states that ‘I asked him [the former headteacher] to give me a fourth form […] he said that he can’t give this form to us [Albouri and her] who have only a Baccalaureate while there are guys like Sedar and Ndane who have a BA’ (Kine: Int1. 27/03/18). At that time, she said that she felt discriminated against and thought that she had not been trusted enough by that headteacher. Data from her interview also seems to indicate that she feels that she had to learn from others not the other way around. This feeling might be the reason why she kept quiet almost all the time during their PC meeting which I attended. Another possible explanation of her quietness in that meeting may also be related to her proficiency in English, which is given much importance for teachers of English in Senegal. In my interview with her, I could see that she was hesitating a lot when speaking20 and making a few mistakes as well. With the new headteacher’s leadership, Mbaya has become the coordinator of their PC but Kine has not been given a fourth form class for her to teach them English. Though the new headteacher asserts making positive changes, the legacy of her predecessor is still present in some ways.

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20 She was given a choice of language for the interview, but she chose English.
6.1.5 Professional learning within schools

Data from both schools indicates that their leaders say that they give much importance to professional learning. From the interviews with the leaders of Dialore, it is evident that they promote continuous learning for all their staff. This view is reiterated by the headteacher who consistently expresses his strong belief in continuous development. To illustrate his point, he gives the example of a training which he facilitated in the previous year for the school’s non-teaching staff to improve their skills in using computers. As for teachers, he understands that their professional development mostly takes place through their participation in their local PC and DPC meetings, and he claims to provide support for that. The deputy headteacher also expresses his belief in promoting TPD within the school and thinks that learning through collaboration is the main rationale behind the policy of putting teachers in PCs. As such he asserts that ‘professional development is an excellent thing because in life we are continuously learning, everyday everybody learns. As we say, if we stop learning we must stop teaching’ (Dialore DHT: Int1. 27/12/18). He also holds the view that teachers would benefit from observing one another, which is one of the missing practices of their PC. Nonetheless, he does not indicate having taken any actions to facilitate it. Dialore’s leaders state that part of the practices within the school is to make everyone’s competence beneficial to others. To that end, ‘we try to gather our internal forces because within both teachers and the non-teaching staff, there are some who have competences outside of their daily tasks” (Dialore HT: Int3. 19/12/18).

At Lehar, the headteacher says that she is a strong supporter of professional development for all, especially for teachers. She sees as it a must for teachers to continue learning while in service for their own benefit and that of their students. Her understanding of teacher learning is that ‘it has to be always continuous’ (Lehar HT: Int1. 29/01/18). She asserts that she always
encourages teachers to work together and learn from one another’s experience and knowledge. Her view is that teaching is not a job to be mastered once and forever, which is very different from many Senegalese people’s understanding of being a teacher. The conception of teachers as people who should know everything about their subjects will also be challenged in Chapter Eight. There, in the section on recommendations, I will be arguing for a necessary shift in understanding teacher professionalism in Senegal. The next section focuses on the studied teachers’ views and experiences of learning within their PCs through their different activities and professional relationships.

6.2 The two schools’ PCs: activities and teachers’ views

Analysis of data from the studied PCs has revealed interesting insights on these teachers’ views of professional learning and experiences within their PCs. More explicitly, these are organised here in relation to the teachers’ understandings of their PCs, their perceptions of professional learning, their learning experiences within PCs, what they focus on when learning, peer support within those PCs, and the presence of collective reflection in their activities.

6.2.1 Teachers’ understandings of PCs

Responses and observations from schools suggest that, similar to the views of the senior ELT officials and the DPC coordinators, these teachers understand their PCs as spaces for them to exchange ideas about teaching and share documents, lesson plans and good practices. Throughout their interviews, they recurrently mention the idea of sharing within their PCs. At Dialore, most of the teachers have emphasised the sharing aspect of their collaboration with their colleagues. A close look at the data indicates that this idea of sharing concerns giving
each other teaching materials, ideas related to pedagogy, and documents on the English language. For instance, sharing teaching materials is mentioned by many of them as one of the key elements of their collaboration within their PC. The excerpts below are illustrations of their understanding of sharing:

A PC is just for a collaborative work of colleagues and it is very important to ask colleagues to meet, to collaborate […] It is always very important to share ideas. Whenever you collaborate with colleagues, it’s important to share ideas, to share problems, to share books, materials (Alpha: Int1. 11/02/18).

We also share documents. For example, one of my colleagues, last time he gave me some very interesting tests and lessons. So, we share lesson plans, we share tests, we also share knowledge (Aram: Int3. 10/02/18).

As shown in these extracts, sharing is seen as one of the main elements of these teachers’ professional relationships within their school PC. On one of my visits at Dialore, I saw Alpha sharing a film in English with his colleagues. He was telling them that the film has subtitles and might be very useful for teaching purposes. On that day, he asked Maty and Aram who were in the staffroom at the break time to bring their flash drives to copy it from his laptop (FN: 28/02/18). Dialore’s teachers have shared many documents through their WhatsApp group (e.g. lesson plans and tests from other schools, documents on passive voice, technical English vocabulary, word derivation, journal extracts in English, etc.). They have also shared audios for listening comprehension with possible activities and shared short videos of their students using English in classes (Dialore WhatsApp: 20/02/19). As shown above, sharing is at the heart of these teachers’ activities. Nonetheless, as will be argued later, this may not be much beneficial to these teachers’ classroom practice if they just share ideas or teaching materials without discussing their effectiveness to students’ learning.

The idea of exchanging is also present across these teachers’ views of working together in their PC. For them a PC is a space to discuss what to focus on from the different parts of the national
syllabus during each semester. They say that they always discuss topics to teach at different levels in their first meeting each school year. For instance, they have chosen texts on ‘children in the streets’, ‘development and corruption’, ‘breast cancer’, ‘migration to Western countries’, ‘domestic violence’, among others, for their upper sixth form to study in 2016/2017 and the following school year (Dialore: PC Meeting Report: 15/10/16). These teachers seem to consider those discussions as opportunities to learn how to link their teaching to their students’ context. As a response to what guided their choice, Thioro asserts that they relate their teaching as much as possible to their students’ social and cultural realities. For example, children in the streets of Ngalam is considered an issue by most teachers of their PC. Referring to this idea of exchanging, Musa considers a PC as:

A kind of centre for exchange in which you collaborate with your colleagues […]. It is a centre in which we prepare the lesson plans because first we need resources for the lesson plans […]. Through the PC we can settle many problems before we go to classrooms because if we discuss we will find solutions before we go to the classes. It is a centre of exchange, collaboration, solidarity, and things like that (Musa: Int1. 08/03/18).

As illustrated through Musa’s voice above, teachers of Dialore understand that their PC is a mechanism for them to work together and benefit one another. The same view is found throughout other teachers’ interviews. Ngoor sees that working together within their PC allows them to exchange ideas on teaching and learning through their discussions in meetings. He also considers these exchanges as opportunities for teachers to harmonise their practice within their school. He observes:

When we say pedagogical cell, for me at the local level it is a way to create an environment in which teachers exchange through their work, the teaching and learning process and also to think about the ways and the tips to use in order to teach in the same way. Since we have students at the same school, we need to have teachers teaching the same way (Ngoor: In1. 18/02/18).
Convergent views of exchanging ideas are also expressed by Aram and Thioro who emphasise the importance of sharing knowledge, teaching experience, teaching materials and techniques. Nonetheless, while Aram links the importance of those exchanges to the fact of getting various perspectives from others, Thioro thinks of them not only as occasions to share ideas but also opportunities to put their practices and ideas for questioning by their colleagues, which is a type of collective reflection. She remarks:

A pedagogical cell is just a context [a space] for teachers for sharing knowledge and experience about teaching and also it will be an opportunity for them to look in the mirror, to look at the ways of teaching, listening to others to see if it is good what I am doing in class or not. Should I change? Should I improve things? I think that is what it is about (Thioro: Int3. 21/02/18).

As shown in the extract above, Thioro relates her view of a PC to the idea of collectively reflecting on their practice. However, as will be pointed later in this chapter, little collective reflection was observable within the studied PCs. Recommendations in relation to this scarcity of reflection will be made in the final chapter.

Similarly, analysis of data from teachers of Lehar reveals that they also see the notion of sharing as part of their principles and practices within their PC. All of them relate their understandings of working within a PC to the idea of sharing documents and ideas related to their work as teachers. For example, referring to this practice of sharing within Lehar, Mbaya describes:

We share everything. Anytime we have a meeting, for example, we come with our mobile phones, tablets or something like that. We share together the different documents that we have. If someone is interested in a document, we share it with him. We talk together always because we know that teaching is sharing. When you stop sharing, you stop teaching. So, whenever we meet, we bring all the documents we have, we don’t hesitate to give a piece of knowledge (Mbaya: Int3. 01/12/18).

Similar ideas about the notion of sharing are expressed by other teachers. In many parts of their interviews, these teachers associate their relationships with their colleagues with the idea of
giving and receiving documents and/or ideas. For instance, Sedar emphasises the give-and-take principle of their collaboration:

    We exchange, we work together in harmony, in efficiency. We are exchanging also in good practice. The good practice consists in what I am successful with my students, I share the experience with you. You might be coming in my class and observing me, and I might come to your class to observe you. We can sit together and make a series of exercises for students (Sedar: Int1. 13/03/18).

In the same vein, Albouri says to have received interesting documents from both Sedar and Ndane. It is worth mentioning here that one of the documents he is referring to is on the different types of irregular verbs, and he considers it very useful for himself and his students. As will be discussed in section 7.3, these teachers give much importance to learning about the English language.

Contrary to Maty from Dialore, Sedar is happy to share his success stories. In their PC meeting held on January 25th, 2018, though this was not part of the agenda, he explained to his colleagues shared how he taught a lesson on family tree with his first form class:

    I am in unit 3. There, I did some new things, very new things because I asked students to take a flipchart paper and design their family trees and come to the class and explain students how their family trees are composed. Then, after that, they write a text to introduce themselves, to introduce the members of their families with having in function writing about jobs. [For example] my father is a doctor, my mother is a housewife. And then I take those texts and give them as reading comprehension exercises. I had two very interesting texts written by students and in terms of grammar point, I dealt with the genitive case. I also dealt with possessive adjectives, ‘my, your’ and personal pronouns. For the time being, I’m going to deal with adjectives to describe people (Sedar: Lehar PC meeting. 25/01/18).

Through the extract above, it is evident that Sedar was trying to show to his colleagues what he successfully did with his first form class. That example was appreciated by other teachers but no other one shared another success story on that day (FN: 25/01/18).
As mentioned above, during my fieldwork visits, I witnessed teachers sharing documents, such as lesson plans, texts for reading comprehension, and documents on the English grammar. Nonetheless, I could not see evidence of discussing how to use those documents in their different classes, which could have been valuable opportunities for learning. This lack of discussions on ways of using their teaching materials in their classroom suggests that they understand sharing in teaching the same way as the notion of solidarity. This way of understanding and practising sharing within these PCs will be critiqued in Chapter Seven in section 7.4.

6.2.2 The teachers’ perceptions of professional learning

Analysis of data from teachers in both schools reveals that they all assert to see continuously learning as an integral part of being professionals. In their interviews, they consistently state their commitment to learning throughout their careers. Though all of them have already achieved their teaching degrees, none sees that successful achievement as the end of their learning journeys. Like the senior ELT officials and the DPC coordinators, many of these teachers consider it necessary to continue learning while being in service. Such a view is often linked to their conception of the teaching profession as evolving and their students’ needs as ever-changing. Astou’s remark below is an illustration of that understanding:

I think that, as a teacher, we should not stop learning. He who stops learning should stop teaching because we always discover new things. When we stop learning, we cannot go further in teaching. We should always make [do] research, exchange with colleagues to discover new things because teaching is something that we should always improve (Astou: Int1. 16/03/18).

The same view is echoed by Sedar who highlights the complexity of teaching, which makes it necessary for all teachers to always learn since it is never mastered perfectly. He believes that:
teaching and learning go along [hand in hand]. Whoever stops learning should stop teaching. I don't see myself as an expert. I can exchange with anyone because what we are doing is not something like 1 + 1 equals 2. So, you need every time new tips, new clues (Sedar: Int1. 13/03/18).

Convergently, Ndane thinks that ‘what we teach, we should improve it frequently. The way I taught last year mustn’t be the way I teach now. So, we have to read, we have to acquire new knowledge in order to educate new learners’ (Ndane: Int2. 13/03/18). Other teachers also believe that teaching has to be improved throughout teachers’ careers. In their interviews, it is consistently underscored that teaching and learning are inseparable. In other words, these teachers assert to have adopted a lifelong learning philosophy. Nonetheless, as will be pointed later, there seems to be a mismatch between this professed philosophy and the observed realities in their PC activities.

In addition to considering themselves as lifelong learners, these teachers also think that they should take learning initiatives collectively, not individually. In this sense, as clearly expressed in the official documents (see section 4.2.2), their conceptions of TPD through PCs are consistent with the rationale behind the creation of the latter which is mainly to facilitate collective learning among teachers. In the next subsection, I am bringing the teachers’ experiences of learning within their PCs.

6.2.3 The teachers’ learning experiences within PCs

Analysis of teachers’ interviews from both schools has shown that, though in various degrees, they all have expressed accounts of learning through their PC activities. At the school of Dialore, most teachers assert that their participation in PC activities has resulted in an improvement of their teaching practice and of themselves as people in many ways. Here practice is understood as encompassing teaching in classroom and all the other professional
activities in which teachers engage. Change of behaviour has recurrently been mentioned. For instance, Tening asserts to have become closer to her colleagues after being a reserved person at the beginning of her career. She explains:

I have learnt to be more humane, to be close to others in working because when I started teaching, I was just alone. I was shy, I didn’t have enough courage to get close to the others but I have learnt that it is not a normal attitude, and I have changed a lot because of my participation in cells (Tening: Int1. 08/03/18).

What is evident from the abstract above is that Tening believes that her participation in PC meetings has made her a better teacher because she has become a better person. Accounts of this type of change are echoed by other teachers. Astou takes pride in her improved character thanks to her collaboration with her colleagues and participation in PC meetings. She asserts that ‘it [participation in PCs] has changed me a lot. I used to be very shy, now I am a bit less shy, and I used to be someone who would easily go up the wall. It’s no longer the case. Now, I am better tempered, particularly with the students’ (Astou: Int1. 16/03/18). Similar to Astou, Maty thinks that not only has she made some changes in her teaching practice, but she has also improved her ways of behaving with her students. She remarks:

When I started teaching, I was not that motherly, I would just stick to the rules. I did not use to make them work in pairs […] everybody worked for himself and that’s it, the conventional way. But after I found that it is better if they worked together in groups or in pairs (Maty: Int3. 11/02/18).

Thioro also states that she has become more careful now about what she says in front of her colleagues as they would not hesitate to criticise her and bring more plausible arguments. She appreciates this attitude within their group as it may cause members to deepen their understanding of the ideas which they are putting in discussions. However, arguably, this may also refrain others from stepping out of their comfort zone in fear of being criticised unless questioning one another’s view has become a culture within the group. Musa acknowledges
that he is no longer behaving the same way as he used to at the start of his career. He recalls that:

at the beginning, for example, I used to send out many students, I threatened them with minus [taking some points from their marks] even if I did not do it. But now, I try to understand students, try to be in their inner lives, try to understand them, that’s why I try to be more flexible (Musa: Int1. 08/03/18).

He believes that this shift is caused by a better understanding of classroom management which he has been developing through his participation in PC meetings.

Analysis of data from teachers of Lehar shows that they also have positive views of their participation in PCs and made changes thanks to it. Although a fewer example than those from their counterparts of Dialore are found in these teachers’ interviews, they all assert having learnt from their colleagues of the same school through their PC activities. Albouri asserts that he changed his way of doing formative assessment when teaching the irregular verbs based on a suggestion of Sedar. He states that ‘with the irregular verbs, I gave a list to students and ask them to learn them and do exercises. Sedar told me another way to do exercises about that [through] gap filling’ (Albouri: Int1. 21/03/18). This excerpt shows that Sedar’s suggestion favours learning English verbs within a context rather than learning a list of verb forms by heart and regurgitate them later, which Albouri seems to have been doing up to then.

Like Albouri, Mbaya consistently asserts having learnt about pedagogy and made some changes in her practice by taking ideas from her colleagues through PC activities. She recalls:

At the beginning of my teaching, I did not feel at ease to make group work. Every day when I came in my class, I was here in front of my students doing my lesson […]. Before attending cells, I used to teach my students according to my own knowledge, my own experience, according to what I know. But now, when I teach my students, I use, I can say, everybody’s something (Mbaya: Int. 21/03/18).

As illustrated above, Mbaya asserts to have enriched her teaching knowledge and skills by taking ideas from the other teachers. Similarly, Ndane has acknowledged to have learnt much
from his colleagues at Lehar but has not given concrete examples. As will be argued in Chapter Seven, the difficulties that some teachers have in giving examples of learning does not necessarily mean a total absence of learning.

By and large, as shown above, most teachers from both schools assert to have enhanced their practice thanks to their professional relationships within PCs. Nonetheless, although all these teachers link their changes to their participation in their PC activities, it can be argued that an experience of some years in classrooms may teach an attentive practitioner much of what they are referring to here. Hence, these accounts may be insufficient to champion school PCs as perfectly functioning TPD mechanisms. As will be recommended in Chapter Eight, more actions need to be taken by teachers to make PCs reach their fullest potential as expressed in the official documents.

6.2.4 Teachers’ focus of learning within PCs

Analysis of data from both schools has shown their teachers’ focus of learning within their PCs is different from that of the DPC they belong to. Though it is expected that teachers hold meetings to continue exploring the topics dealt with in their DPC meetings, some of which were related to their pedagogical content knowledge, such a practice was rarely observable during my fieldwork. Notwithstanding, teachers show a manifest interest in teaching in accordance with the CLT approach.

At Dialore, there was a constant reference to CLT throughout their meetings. These teachers believe that English is not to be taught just as a school subject but as a means of communication, and that view needed to be reflected in both the contents of their lessons and the procedures of teaching the latter. For example, in their PC meeting held on January 10th, 2018, which was on teaching listening through cooperative learning and collaborative learning, the teachers relate
their ideas to this approach. While introducing the two concepts, Thioro advocated that the topic fit in the CLT approach. In the extract below, she explained that:

> Here we want them to focus on why they [students] are listening and build the skills that they will need in real life situations. Because we say communication is important but how do you communicate if you are not able to listen to others? […] It means not listening for the sake of listening but listening to learn how to communicate in real life situations (Thioro: PC meeting. 10/10/18).

In the extract above, Thioro is trying to show the communicative aspect of teaching listening comprehension through cooperative learning. She links the topic to real life situations where listening is part of communication. She holds the view that by creating opportunities for students to collaborate in listening activities, teachers are abiding by the principles of teaching English through the CLT approach. In the other meetings during which the teachers of Dialore were examining test papers designed by some of them, they would also refer to this language teaching approach. Though most of their changes were very minor, a few of them were meant to make some activities more communicative. For example, in one test paper, they suggested including a situation in which students would imagine a dialogue with open-ended questions. They believe that this would make the activity more authentic as students would have a freedom of choice in their ways of answering questions, and various answers would be then possible as in real life situations (FN: 02/02/18).

At Lehar, teachers think that they need to increase their understandings of the CLT approach. Although references to the approach could be found a few times in teachers’ interviews, it was only Sedar who did so during one of the two PC meetings that took place during my fieldwork. This was when he talked about designing a multiple-choice activity in a test and when he shared an activity which he had done with one of his classes (FN: Lehar PC meeting 25/01/18). Apart from few cases, data from Lehar does not show a presence of the recommended teaching approach within the school’s English PC.
Taken together, all the interviewed teachers attest some sort of learning from their colleagues within their PCs but most of them have given examples of learning about the English language (e.g. a grammar point, a new vocabulary item). For instance, Cheikh felt that getting correction from his colleagues is of a significant importance. He explains that ‘English is not our mother tongue. Even if we are teachers of English, everybody can make mistake but if you make a mistake, they will correct you. I prefer a colleague of mine seeing my mistake than going to class and making mistakes in front of my students’ (Cheikh: Int1. 16/03/18).

As shown above, contrary to the regional level, there were no meetings solely organised on developing the teachers’ pedagogical content knowledge at the school level. In general, analysis of data suggests that these teachers are much more interested in learning about the English language than exploring topics related to pedagogy among themselves, which makes their PCs fall short of the expectations of the senior ELT officials. These teachers have also talked about their experiences of peer support within PCs. The following subsection is on that.

### 6.2.5 Peer support within PCs

Another activity within the PCs, the significance of which has been emphasised by many, is the support that teachers, especially newly recruited ones, get from their seasoned colleagues. Although at the time of my fieldwork these teachers were no longer newcomers to the job, most of them acknowledged having received support from the experienced teachers they found in their schools at the start of their careers. For instance, Astou, who started teaching without initial training in another school, claims to have benefited a lot from the support she got within that school’s PC. She felt that the support could be equated with a training and has made her the teacher she presently is:
There are lots of advantages in having deans \textit{[teachers with many years of experience]} particularly deans who are available, ready to help because I myself I was shaped by those deans. As I told you at the beginning, I came into teaching without receiving any prior professional training. It’s those deans who helped me. I did not even know how to plan a lesson, let alone the different steps, etc. (Astou: Int1. 16/03/18).

This is also the case with Mbaya who still recalls her first days in teaching and the peer observations organised by her former school’s PC. She believes that those peer observations sessions are more effective for teacher learning than the presentations which prevail in their TPD events. She explains:

\begin{quote}
At the very beginning of my teaching, I did not receive any kind of training. Just after university, I was directly sent at the classroom to teach students. […] There were more experienced teachers. While sharing with them ideas and concerns, I came up to improve my teaching […] it is very different from what we are used to doing now: one teacher doing a presentation. At the very beginning, there was classroom observation. The teacher was there doing the activities and we were behind and observing. At the end, there was a feedback and we had to point the good ways of teaching and we asked him or her to improve this or that. That’s how I learnt to teach (Mbaya: Int3. 01/12/18).
\end{quote}

As illustrated above through Mbaya’s extract, these teachers consider peer observation as very useful to them, especially for the newcomers. It allows newcomers to see how others teach and to get feedback from their colleagues after teaching their own lessons, all in a collegial atmosphere. Mbaya also talks about getting pedagogical support from her colleagues at Lehar. She gives an example of one day when she requested Sedar to help to facilitate her students’ understanding of a concept she found difficult to explain to her third form students. She recalls that ‘I told him my problem. I told him that I want to give a definition of “temptation” to my students. How would you define temptation? He gave me his point of view and I went back to my class’ (Mbaya: Int2. 21/03/18). Arguably, this mutual support can only happen when teachers have built positive professional relationships among themselves.
The other teachers also assert to have learnt much through the classroom observation organised by PCs at the beginning of their careers. They state having benefited from their colleagues’ support either by observing their lessons or being observed and given feedback on their performance. However, there was no peer observation either in Dialore nor in Lehar during my fieldwork. A few possible causes of the current absence of peer observation have been indicated by some participants. Alpha thinks that ‘here people don’t have time to observe each other, that’s what the problem is. In town, people don’t have time to observe anybody’ (Alpha: Int2. 19/12/18). However, it is interesting to note that all the interviewed teachers from both schools except for Kine and Astou were teaching classes in private schools in the period of the fieldwork. In Senegal teachers often do other activities to increase their income. On one occasion, after observing one of Aram’s lessons, she told me that she was rushing to a private school where she had her next class. This lack of time mentioned by Alpha may be a result of such additional commitments. Other than a lack of time, Ndane and Mbaya mention the fear of being observed by one’s colleagues that may be encountered widely in their community of teachers. They remark:

Many of us don’t want to be observed when they are teaching. Maybe they want to hide their weaknesses, the way they do things. Is it correct or incorrect? (Ndane: Int6: 01/12/18).

The problem is most of the time many teachers don’t want to be observed. Perhaps they find it boring or embarrassing to be observed, perhaps they find it stressful (Mbaya: Int3. 01/12/18).

These extracts show that they are referring to the negative emotional aspects which teachers may associate with classroom observation. In addition, Ndane has also pointed out another possible hindrance to peer observation which is that ‘generally, when a teacher succeeds his professional degree, he becomes lazy or maybe he thinks that he has reached his aim. Now these teachers don’t feel the need of observing or being observed. Really, this is the case’ (Ndane: Int2. 13/03/18). As will be discussed in the next chapter, the absence of this practice
may be related to a certain understanding of teacher professionalism in Senegal. As will be recommended in Chapter Eight, it is also worth underscoring that classroom observation needs to be part of the practices of a school to embark all its teachers on it. The next subsection explores reflection in the studied PCs.

6.2.6 Reflection within PCs

Analysis of data from both schools reveals that, although reflection on teaching contents, teaching approaches, and almost all the other aspects of this job is expected of teachers by the senior ELT officials, very little collective reflection was observable within these PCs. There were only few cases which might be considered collective reflection with the PC of Dialore. For instance, the teachers of this school discussed the appropriateness of activities to implement cooperative and collaborative learning with students at different levels (Dialore PC meeting1: 10/01/18). In that meeting, they also had discussions on sensitive topics, especially those related to religion, which seemed to be of interest to all of them. They exchanged views on whether those topics should be introduced through lessons or not. Differences were expressed but all of them agreed on the importance of dealing with topics that might help students to be more open-minded (FN: 10/01/18). The extracts below illustrate that discussion:

**Astou:** I think the best is to try to avoid this kind of songs.

**Tening:** Yes.

**Astou:** Songs which are talking about religion or something like that. Just avoid it because we’ll always have some frustrations. Here, the students are not, most of them, are not open-minded.

**Aram:** But you know, the problem is once they go to college [university] they will be in touch with that [dealing with sensitive issues]. They will do it by force […]. I think we should do it and tell them that it’s not a matter of religion and tell them to be more open-minded […] that is what I think.
Maty: And when you learn a language, you learn a culture, that’s it.

Thioro: And also, I want to propose something. For example, if we take that song of Bamba [an outstanding Muslim leader in Senegal] we can have the listening activities on that song. Then after why not have a kind of post-listening phase where we can put them into groups of Christians, Muslims […]? We ask them to choose one religious leader and to make a portrait of that religious man, the values, etc. […]. What is important is what we learn from those religious men.

Maty: Nobody is going to be frustrated.

Aram: If you compare, for example, the two religions, we might come to a consensus that we are all working for peace, the values are the same. I think it will be a kind of unification rather than, I don’t know [a division].

Maty: This is peace education.

(Dialo PC meeting1: 10/01/18)

Through this short discussion, it is observable that teachers are trying to convince Astou with different arguments. They all want her to see the importance of introducing sensitive topics to students despite the uneasiness of the task. As shown above, while Aram focuses on its impact on social cohesion and the need to prepare students for their future studies, Maty associates learning the English language with being open-minded. In other words, Maty seems to be saying that open-mindedness is a typical characteristic of English-speaking societies. Similar to Aram, Thioro wants her colleague to see the positive impact that teaching sensitive topics may have on the students as citizens. After the meeting, Astou was convinced of the importance of raising students’ awareness on the issue and, at the same time, she was also reassured because her colleagues had decided to continue introducing those topics in their classes (she told me later about her change of view). As will be argued in the next chapter (section 7.4.1), discussions of this type can be good opportunities for learning since it may bring changes to teachers’ understandings of teaching and their classroom practice.
However, apart from this particular occasion, these teachers were discussing the appropriateness of tests papers in the other meetings (Dialore PC meetings 2, 3 & 4). This cannot be considered proper reflection because it was just about proofreading those papers and making sure that all questions were well formulated. As such, no systematic reflection on teaching methods and assessment techniques was observable in these teachers’ activities. Contrary to Dialore, no instance of collective reflection was observed nor found in the PC meeting reports of Lehar.

Nonetheless, data from these teachers in both schools reveals that they do engage in some reflection at an individual level. Throughout their interviews, they express their concerns with continuously improving their classroom practice by asking themselves questions on the effectiveness of their teaching. Recommendations in relation to practising collective reflection within the Senegalese PCs are made in Chapter Eight. The following section looks at these teachers’ perceptions of their membership of PCs.

6.3 Teachers’ perceptions of membership

Data from the studied teachers shows that their perceptions of membership of their PCs are related to a sense of belonging and the promotion of certain values in their relationships.

6.3.1 Sense of belonging

As mentioned in Chapter One, within the Senegalese education system, once teachers are posted at schools, they automatically become members of the PC of the subject they teach. Without the existence of these PCs, it can be said that each teacher could teach in isolation and individually report to their headteachers and deputy headteachers. As shown in Chapter Four,
the rationale behind the creation of PCs is partly to fight against such an isolation. Throughout their interviews, teachers from both schools express a strong sense of being members of their current PCs.

As pointed earlier in this chapter, at Dialore, all teachers express positive feelings of being members of their PC. Maty states that ‘it’s a pleasure to be a member of that community, we know that we’re in a community of people teaching the same thing, having the same objectives’ (Maty: Int3. 11/02/18). The other teachers also assert their attachment to this small community they are part of. Aram and Cheikh consider their belonging to their PC as a source of strength. They describe it as follows:

I feel that I am, I belong to something. You know whenever you are a member of a community, you feel stronger. And that’s the way I see things (Aram: Int3. 10/02/18).

I feel very strong, I feel at ease when I am in a group. They are my colleagues. We work in collaboration (Cheikh: Int1. 16/03/18).

Similarly, Thioro feels that she is not alone in doing her job as her colleagues are there whenever she might need support. She observes that ‘this [membership] makes me feel that I am not isolated. As a teacher, not to feel isolated and then to feel that there is help from the others, you can rely on the others. This is really important’ (Thioro: Int3. 21/02/18).

These teachers assert that, in the years they have been together at the same school and working within their PC as teachers of English, they have succeeded in developing strong ties between themselves. Some of them do not hesitate to see their colleagues as brothers and sisters. Astou asserts that a PC ‘is first a family, a family between brackets. We all know what it means. In a family, there are brothers and sisters’ (Astou: Int1. 16/03/18). The same feelings are expressed by other teachers. For Aram, ‘now it’s no more a group of teachers, it has become a family’ (Aram: Int3. 10/02/18). In the time I spent with them in my two fieldwork visits both inside and outside the school, I noticed that these teachers always showed much enthusiasm in being
together. This was observable during PC meetings and breaks (FN: 05/01/18). This sense of belonging seems to be strengthened by the fact that the members have common goals. Aram states that ‘here, [at Dialore] we are teaching English. And what we are always trying to do is to find ways to make the language we are teaching more attractive’ (Aram: Int3. 10/02/18). The same view is shared by Maty who thinks that their main objective as teachers of English is ‘uplifting the English language in Senegal, that’s our objective’ (Maty: Int3. 11/02/18).

Data from Lehar also indicates that teachers have positive feelings of being members of their group. For them, they are linked by their job as teachers and their working context. A strong sense of belonging is expressed. Like their counterparts of Dialore, many use the word ‘family’ to refer to their PC. For example, Mbaya consistently refers to this sense of togetherness within their PC:

We form a family since we are in good terms since we have the same interests, we are all English teachers. When we meet, we consider that we are in our second family. So, we are at ease to talk together, settle problems and try to find solutions in order to better our teaching and learning processes (Mbaya: Int2. 21/03/18).

We have the same interests we are all teachers of English and we all want to better our teaching and learning process we consider ourselves that we are in a family because I think that in a family when all the members are in good relations, you want always the best for the other ones (Mbaya: Int3. 01/12/18).

Albouri follows the same trend by saying that their PC is ‘a kind of family we form, […] if you are a family, you share the same things […]. Every time, we help each other because this is the main role of the local cell’ (Albouri: Int1. 13/03/18). Sedar adds a friendship dimension in his way of perceiving his membership of the English teachers’ community and sees it as encompassing the whole region or even further into the country. For him, this community of teachers of English is ‘a kind of family, it is not a kind of colleagues who meet occasionally to discuss pedagogical theories only but now I am a friend, I have a friend in everywhere now in Leeru’ (Sedar: Int1. 13/03/18). As for Kine, though she thinks that her former PC was more
dynamic in terms of meeting than her current one, she considers the latter as a family she belongs to. She thinks that she is close to her colleagues, especially Mbaya, with whom she does not hesitate to talk about almost anything. On that note, she comments:

It [a PC] is just a kind of, I think that in our school, a small family that we have formed there, most of the time, we were talking about our problems and finding some solutions…It is something where, we teachers, we can talk freely as a colleague, you can talk freely, to find solution (Kine: Int1. 27/03/18).

As shown above, the teachers of Lehar are strongly linked to their PC. The significance of seeing themselves as a group and working together is consistently mentioned by all of them throughout their talks. However, in my visits to their school, these teachers were rarely seen together though they said that they often had informal talks. Many would leave the school just after finishing their classes. In the breaks during which I was at their staffroom, they were not frequently there at the same time.

Data from these two schools seem to indicate that the implementation of the concept of PC has created strong professional and social bonds between teachers. Nonetheless, this sense of belonging was more observable among the teachers of Dialore than those of Lehar. The following subsection explores the values which teachers promote through their relationships within their PCs.

6.3.2 Values promoted within PCs

Throughout their interviews, all teachers assert that they feel at ease to be members of their PCs because of the values such as respect, trust, open-mindedness, solidarity, and equity that prevail within their small groups. Although these values may not be unique to PCs, they consider them the keystones of their relationships. In both schools, teachers stress the significance of positive behaviours among themselves and with their students.
At Dialore, although the teachers have different academic qualifications, there is no hierarchy of opinions as ‘all the points of view are important’ (Thioro: Int3. 21/02/18) during discussions regardless of who gives them. Cheikh emphasises that they recognise each one’s difference both in terms of qualifications and experiences, but it does not make anyone more important than the others. He states that ‘there is no boss in a PC. We are teachers with different levels [academic degrees], maybe different experiences but anyway we are the same. We are teachers, we collaborate, we negotiate, not impose’ (Cheikh: Int1. 16/03/18). Ngoor also believes that discussions within PCs are impersonal as ‘it depends on what he or she says really. It does not depend on the person who is speaking but it depends on what the person is saying if it is relevant or not’ (Ngoor: Int1. 18/02/18). Most of these teachers recurrently state that all the members’ views are equally important.

As for Alpha, he has a nuanced view in relation to the importance of some people’s views. He believes that ‘everyone’s view counts but there are some people who are more interesting because there are some who are more involved than others. If you are generally willing to involve yourself, you give relevant ideas’ (Alpha: Int1. 11/02/18) but he does not give names of those whom he sees as more interesting. He seems to say the points of view of those who are really committed to the PC’s activities are the most taken account of.

For these teachers, equality and collegiality prevail in their ways of behaving within their PC. For instance, Tening feels that ‘everybody’s views are important […] we are so free in cells. Sometimes you can say something that hurts but people don’t mind it. We laugh, we joke, we work at the same time’ (Tening: Int2. 08/03/18). The other teachers of Dialore also hold the views that they all show respect to one another regardless of whatever might make them different.
Talking about how she was welcomed at Dialore as a newcomer, Aram says that she ‘found there very comprehensive [understanding] people and very simple people because they could have said she is new, she does not know much […] but they were very open and very kind to me, frankly’ (Aram: Int3. 10/02/18). This made her integration into the group very smooth and she is currently among the most dynamic members. In all the meetings I participated in at Dialore, everyone was respectfully listened to and the decisions were reached through discussions. These teachers also underscore the significance of trust among their colleagues. For instance, referring to this trust, Thioro observes that:

we know that we can rely on the others. If we have problems in our classes maybe […] designing a test even if there are some problems or a lesson plan. Those who are close to you in your PC, they can tell you that this is not good. I think the way they are going to do it, you’re going to accept that it is not a problem for you [alone] (Thioro: Int3. 21/02/18).

In the same way, data from Lehar indicates that teachers work in harmony and they always promote values similar to those of teachers in Dialore. Mbaya believes that all opinions are welcomed within their PC. She says that ‘we have the ability to listen to any suggestion from any teacher. If you want to speak you are listened to […] if you decide to speak, to give your opinion, we will take it into account (Mbaya: Int2. 21/03/18). Ndane, who was the coordinator during my first visit, holds the view that everyone has to participate for the PC to be successful. In their PC meeting of January 25th, 2018, I noticed that he was encouraging Kine to give her views throughout the meeting as she tended to be quiet. He considers their PC as ‘a space for sharing. Each one has to tell what he thinks and then we will see what is better and choose it’ (Ndane: Int2. 21/03/18). As pointed out earlier, within the PC of Lehar, there seems to be some perceived hierarchy within members though it is not explicitly expressed.

Sedar emphasises the importance of respect but he also does not want the latter to prevent his colleagues from being critical when it is needed. The excerpt below illustrates his view:
We need to share but also, we need to look ourselves eyes to eyes and tell the truth. As I say, I don’t mince matter. If I have something to tell you, I give my piece of mind whatever comes. This is how I proceed, and this is how I am every time. I want things to move […] It is just a kind of intellectual meeting. What prevails is accuracy and the relevance of your arguments, it is a kind of battle of ideas (Sedar: Int1. 13/03/18).

Nonetheless, during the two meetings I observed in Lehar, there was no battle of ideas. Maybe, this was because the two meetings observed were just technical ones; planning progression and common tests, reporting on a meeting with the school administration, and sharing views on a test paper.

No teacher from either school has expressed a dislike for their PCs but it was observable that some were more active than others in the meetings I attended. I could also see that Maty, Thioro, Aram, Ndane, and Sedar were playing key roles in those meetings. The next section explores teachers’ perceptions of leadership within these PCs.

6.4 Leadership within PCs

Data from the two schools reveals that, apart from the formal leadership role played by coordinators, some teachers are seen by others as playing leadership roles within their PCs. For instance, at Dialore female teachers are far more active than male ones. They all attended the meetings I observed. During those meetings, they always take the floor to give their views on each of the point which was being discussed. For example, when the PC had to present on collaborative and cooperative learning at their DPC meeting, all the sessions were led by women. Tening chaired the sessions, Thioro introduced the theoretical part of the topic, and Maty, Aram, and Astou led activities which could be done in classrooms to implement the concepts of cooperative and collaborative learning (FN: 16/01/18). Ngoor recognises the dynamism of his female colleagues in their PC. He remarks that ‘in Education, in Health, each
field you go, usually it’s like that. Men are more active than women, but it is not the case in our PC’ (Ngoor: Int1. 18/02/18).

Among these women of Dialore, Thioro and Maty are considered role models by the other teachers. Their colleagues mention behaviours that they see as very important to the professional relationships within their PC. Aram expresses strong positive feelings towards those two female colleagues for whom she has always had a big admiration. Aram strongly asserts that Maty ‘is generous, she is also very open-minded. That’s to say, she does not mind. She is not the kind of person who says ‘I am older than you’ […] , she does not call for respect, she incarnates respect’ (Aram: Int3. 10/02/18). While Aram admires her generosity and humility, Musa sees Maty’s dedication to the functioning of their PC. He states that ‘Maty is very devoted even she helps me in my task as a coordinator. She is very devoted and very regular. Also, she attends all meetings and she is ready to sacrifice herself for the benefit of the PC’ (Musa: In1. 08/03/18). Similar qualities are attributed to Thioro who is also seen as a leader by her colleagues. For Astou, Thioro is a role model from whom the other teachers can learn a lot. She comments:

I have seen in them many human qualities. As for her [Thioro], she is very available, and she always behaves as a sister. She is always willing to exchange, and she is really generous concerning sharing documents, sharing knowledge. I learnt a lot from her. As for Maty, she has a motherly character, she is really caring. As far as I’m concerned, she is always available, always ready to help, ready to exchange in many things as far as the teaching and learning process is concerned and social issues (Astou: Int1. 16/03/18).

At Lehar, though he has never held the role of PC coordinator, Sedar is seen as playing a leadership role. All the teachers acknowledge the key role that he has always played within their PC. One of Sedar’s initiatives was the creation of the Awards for students who excel in English from the different secondary schools within the locality of Jamm. Ndane, who has known Sedar for years, has stressed his commitment, availability, and capacity of taking
initiatives and pursuing them till completion. Albouri has emphasised the qualities he found in Sedar and the help had been getting from him. He describes him as follows:

Sedar is very available, very free to help you and he understands you. He’s a very dynamic guy, he likes teaching and if you ask him questions, he is ready to explain to you. If he has something, he comes and shares it with you. For example, last day he gave me many grammar points, many documents telling me “here are many documents you can check it”. I have never seen this kind of guy since I have been teaching in this school. Really, really he’s a very kind guy, very available (Albouri: Int1. 13/03/18).

These teachers stand out as leaders to their colleagues because they epitomise values, such as open-mindedness, sense of solidarity, respect, and devotion which are promoted within these PCs. The significance of these values within TPD viewed from a learning as participation perspective will be discussed in the next chapter.

6.5 Summary of chapter

Building on the previous chapter, this chapter has described the two selected schools’ as working contexts by focusing on five factors that may play an important role in fostering or hindering teacher learning. In that endeavour, the focus has been put on the schools’ main objectives, the prevailing leadership approach, their working and learning conditions, the relationship between the administration and the teachers and the latter among themselves, and the place of professional learning within them. As will be discussed in the following chapter, some of those factors seem to have made a difference between the two PCs’ activities and their teachers’ relationships. As such, this apparent fact has highlighted that the working environments of teachers may impact on the functioning of their PCs and, consequently, on their professional development.
Data have also shown that teachers say to have espoused a lifelong learning philosophy and they perceive to have learnt much through their participation in their PC activities. It has also been shown that teachers see their collaboration within PCs as sharing various types of documents and exchanging ideas of teaching, which seems to be much related to the learning as acquisition perspective. However, there was an absence of deep discussion on any of the artefacts which were exchanged.

Although these teachers say to have given much importance to learning continuously, they are not implementing peer observation, which many of them see as very effective to improve their teaching, nor did they practise collective reflection within their PCs as expected by the national authorities in charge of TPD. Hence, as will be argued in Chapter Eight, there is a need for some scaffolding for those practices to become realities within PCs.

Data from teachers also indicates that they have a strong sense of belonging to their PCs, they promote certain values which they consider as important to their relationships, and they see teachers who epitomise the latter as role models. The following chapter discusses the main points raised in the three previous chapters (4-6) in light of current thinking on effective TPD by mainly relating them to learning from a situated perspective.
CHAPTER SEVEN: Discussions of findings

7.0 Introduction

This chapter draws all the findings together in relation to the research questions and discusses them in light of the literature. It points out that the conceptualisations of TPD from the three different levels of its organisation in Senegal are informed by a mixture of ideas related to both top-down and bottom-up approaches. For instance, the senior ELT officials expect teachers to take their own initiatives within their DPCs but, at the same time, they also hold the views that there is a need for consistency of practice in teaching English in Senegal and some control over the teachers’ classroom practice by external actors of TPD, such as in-service teacher trainers. In other words, TPD activities can be initiated by both the educational authorities through the in-service teacher trainers down to the teachers and the teachers themselves within their PCs and DPCs. These ways of conceptualising TPD relate to certain valued types of knowledge and ways of learning. This chapter also discusses the importance of the teachers’ working contexts to their professional relationships and argues that the studied DPCs and PCs have certain features of CoPs and PLCs.

In chapter two, I reviewed the literature on teacher learning and professional development. I discussed the evolution of understandings of learning for professionals and the different approaches to teacher professional development based on them. I pointed out that most of the recent ideas about effective TPD converge towards understanding it through a ‘new paradigm’. From this paradigm, effective TPD puts teachers at the centre of all professional learning initiatives, promotes learning through collective reflection, is context-sensitive and implemented in a sustained manner. More explicitly, these understandings of TPD contend that teacher learning is embedded in and developed through practice and is better enhanced when
teachers take ownership of their own professional development through a collective endeavour. According to this paradigm, effective approaches to TPD see teachers as professionals who can identify their learning needs in relation to their working contexts; teachers who are agentive in mutual development of their practice. The chapter also showed that these understandings of effective TPD are consistent with approaches that promote teacher learning through collaboration within the concepts of communities of practice and professional learning communities. A few examples of such approaches were provided in that chapter as illustrations.

This chapter, which is divided into seven sections, discusses the findings presented in the three previous chapters in light of scholarship on TPD. The first section is a summary of the main findings presented in the three previous chapters. The second section discusses the conceptualisations and modes of implementation of TPD in Senegal which have been found in this research with reference to different approaches to TPD in educational research. In the third and fourth sections, I discuss the types of valued knowledge and the promoted ways of learning across the different levels that were investigated within the studied ELT community. The fifth section is on school factors that may impact on teachers’ relationships among themselves and their participation in and learning through their PC’s activities. Building on section five, section six shows, although tentatively, some features of the studied DPCs and PCs which mirror the concepts of CoP and PLC. The final section draws all these together into concluding points of this chapter.

7.1 Summary of findings

Embarking on this research on the basis that much on TPD in Senegal has yet to be investigated, this study has explored how TPD for English language teachers is conceptualised by different actors and implemented through the PCs and DPCs in one region of Senegal. Data was
collected from the national level, from the region of Leeru, and from two secondary schools located in that region. Key findings are summarised here before exploring themes from these findings.

Partially addressing my first research question, Chapter Four analysed how TPD is conceptualised in policy and understood by the interviewed senior ELT officials; the role that teachers and PCs are intended to play in the TPD ecosystem. The chapter identified that the Senegalese educational authorities see TPD as part of their current quest for quality education: TPD is held to be a necessity for all teachers and its purpose is to increase quality teaching. Findings in that chapter also show that PCs are understood as spaces for teachers to take ownership of their professional development activities themselves in relation to collective learning needs. Senegalese educational authorities conceptualise TPD within PCs as a way of promoting collective learning to increase teachers’ knowledge (with a focus on content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge) and to improve their classroom practice, which they see as strongly interconnected. This learning is expected to happen through sharing ideas and documents and reflecting on the effectiveness of their teaching methods to improve their students’ learning. However, findings in that chapter also reveal some elements of the top-down conceptualisations of TPD such as providing training by people external to schools, a preoccupation with consistency in teaching approaches and assessment methods within the Senegalese ELT community, and a need for the educational authorities to have some control over the teachers’ practice. For instance, much significance is given to the contributions of people external to schools, such as in-service teacher trainers, inspectors, and foreign ELT specialists.

In relation to my second research question, Chapter Five has presented findings on how TPD is understood by DPC coordinators and implemented through the three DPCs in the region of Leeru. With regard to the focus on increasing teachers’ knowledge and the necessity of TPD,
analysis of the data has revealed that the views of DPC coordinators are similar, in many ways, to the conceptualisations of the senior ELT officials and those expressed in the policy documents. However, the main dissonance is that while learning through reflection was consistently advocated by the senior ELT officials, it was rarely identifiable in the conceptualisations of TPD by the DPC coordinators.

The chapter has shown that TPD initiatives in the region of Leeru are geared towards increasing English teachers’ pedagogical content knowledge, especially on the CLT approach in the Senegalese context. Interestingly, the DPC coordinators have expressed doubts about this approach’s effectiveness, though all of them thought that teachers needed to focus on this approach in their TPD activities. The chapter has also shown that TPD is mainly implemented through sessions in the form of presentations from teachers to their peers that are followed by discussions on ideas and related classroom activities. In the region of Leeru, teachers play a central role from the design to the implementation of their professional development events, Nonetheless, collaboration with foreign ELT specialists is much valued within TPD initiatives.

Data from that region suggest that communities of teachers of English are being formed within the three DPCs of Jamm, Ngalam, and Guindy. However, a lack of follow up on TPD activities within the DPCs has been acknowledged by the coordinators. As such, except from the teachers’ self-reported change of practice after attending TPD activities, there was no other evidence of a connection between those sessions and their classroom practice. In addition, very little reflection took place in the observed DPC meetings nor was there any collective plan to try and find ways of improving their students’ low scores in English in the national exams.

Chapter six, which mainly relates to my third research question concerned with teachers’ experiences. Data from teachers at the two studied schools suggest that the culture nurtured within each institution may impact on their teachers’ collaboration within their PCs and,
consequently, on their professional learning. For example, while the promotion of equality among teachers within Dialore has made them closer to one another, a perceived sense of hierarchy seems to have resulted in an almost absence of informal interactions among their counterparts of Lehar. Data from teachers’ interviews indicate that they all see continuous learning as part of their professionalism and their participation in PCs as useful for that. However, at the school level, they seem to be much more interested in learning about the English language and sharing documents (e.g. lesson plans, documents on English grammar and vocabulary) than discussing pedagogical content knowledge, reflecting collectively on the effectiveness of their teaching, and organising peer collaboration activities such as classroom observation. The chapter also pointed out that teachers, especially those of Dialore, have expressed a strong sense of belonging to their PCs and a promotion of values, such as open-mindedness, trust, equality, solidarity and respect which they consider as important to their relationships within PCs.

In the next section, I synthesise the data across these different levels of the TPD ecosystem of the studied ELT community around key themes which emerged from the data and which relate to my research questions.

7.2 What are the underpinning principles of TPD in Senegal?

As shown in the previous three chapters (4-6), findings suggest that the conceptualisations of and ways of implementing TPD are informed by two contrasting approaches to teacher learning within the Senegalese ELT community. On the one hand, there are understandings of TPD which see teachers as more closely linked to their own practice and able to learn without external input by drawing on expertise from within their PCs. From this perspective, teachers are at the centre of their professional development activities. Such conceptions are in line with
the rationale behind the concept of the PC within the Senegalese context and with the learner-centred pedagogy for students which has been promoted in the country for some years now (OffDoc07, 2014). On the other hand, TPD is also understood as being driven by people external to teachers’ PCs, such as teacher trainers and foreign partners in ELT. Working within this conception of TPD, the senior ELT officials contend that there is a need for ‘training’ by teacher educators, observation by in-service teacher trainers or inspectors, and a certain uniformity in teaching English throughout the country. The following two subsections discuss these findings.

7.2.1 The centrality of teachers in professional development initiatives

The need for teachers to play a driving role in their own TPD was stipulated in the ministerial decree on the creation and functioning of PCs and could be seen in many of the other policy documents consulted in this study (section Chapter Four section 4.1.3). In addition, most of the views expressed by the senior ELT officials are also in line with such understandings of TPD since these officials expect teachers to undertake learning initiatives collectively through their PC activities. These views accord with understandings of effective TPD which emphasise the vital role that teachers need to play collectively in all their professional development initiatives (Farrell, 2013; Hayes, 2019; Kennedy, 2005; Ravhuhali et al; 2015; van As, 2018; Wabule, 2016). In other words, teachers must be actively involved at all the stages of TPD initiatives, from design to implementation.

Understanding TPD in this way means to consider teachers as professionals capable of identifying their learning needs (Malderez and Wedell, 2007) and to find adequate ways of increasing their knowledge and improving their practice. In this respect, by putting teachers at the centre of the design and implementation of their professional development, Senegalese
educational authorities are allowing them to focus on their own priorities for the improvement of their practice (Hipp et al., 2008; Louws et al. 2017; Smith and Padwad, 2017; Waters and Vilches, 2012). These educational authorities are also aligning with a view of professionalism which recognises the ability of the profession to attend to its professional learning (Sachs, 2001, 2016). By considering teachers as active learners, these authorities are also promoting what Gurney and Liyanage, (2016) call ‘a strong sense of professionalism’ (p. 53). For these authors, such a professionalism ‘centralises the teacher as an active agent both within and outside the classroom’ (p. 53). Through these conceptualisations, teachers have the freedom to take initiatives for their professional development in relation to their working contexts: the realities of their schools, their contexts, and their students’ learning needs. Arguably, when teachers take ownership of their professional development, the issue of relevance, which is often associated with models that favour external expertise, especially in SSA, when TPD initiatives are sponsored by international organisations (Akyeampong et al., 2011; Frazier, 2009; Kelani and Khourey-Bowers, 2012; Kuchah et al., 2019; Tabulawa, 2013), can be solved since teachers will be able to decide on their learning priorities. As will be discussed in the next section, for the senior ELT officials, it must also be understood that putting teachers at the centre of TPD does not necessarily mean an absence of intervention from educational authorities.

As shown in the findings presented in Chapter Five, the teachers of English in Leelu can be considered as playing active roles in their professional development activities. The English teachers of the three DPCs of Jamm, Ngalam, and Guindy choose the topics of their interest to be explored in each school year. In addition, the presentations are designed and given by teachers and the discussions on the appropriateness of classroom activities to exemplify ideas also led by teachers themselves. Arguably, teachers of these DPCs are at the centre of the organisation of those professional development initiatives from the planning to the actual
events, which is one of the characteristics of effective TPD (Danielowich, 2012; Hayes, 2019; Lin and Beyerlein, 2015; Ravuhali et al, 2015). As discussed in chapter two, this way of designing and implementing TPD initiatives, which gives teachers the freedom to decide on what they want to explore, is consistent with current thinking on effective ways of enhancing teacher learning and practice (Darling-Hammond and Richardson, 2009; Opfer and Pedder, 2011; Smith and Padwad, 2017).

Nonetheless, the topic selection process itself was not unproblematic. Although the teachers of these DPCs have the freedom to choose their topics of ‘interest’, the selection which I observed could have been more relevant to their shared expressed objective of improving students’ learning if it had been based on issues consistently encountered by many teachers of those DPCs. This would probably make the topics more interesting to the whole group or most of its members. Without evidence of teachers’ learning needs, some teachers may propose topics they are personally interested in. They might also base their choice of a topic on their knowledge about it which they would like to share with their colleagues genuinely or just for them to acquire a better image within the group. Unless their choices of topics are based on classroom issues, the exploration of these may not necessarily result in a change of practice and an improvement of their students’ learning.

As pointed in Section 4.1.3, with PCs seen as spaces for teachers to take their own learning initiatives from design to implementation, it can be argued that such a way of conceptualising TPD is informed by a bottom-up approach which favours a starting at the grassroots and gives teachers a central role in their professional development activities (Farrell, 2013; Hayes, 2019). This conception is also consistent with what Sachs (2001) calls democratic professionalism, through which teachers are viewed as agentive people who can make their own decisions in relation to practising their job and fulfilling their professional learning needs. Here, it is noteworthy that this bottom-up approach is more visible in the conceptualisations of TPD by
the different actors than observable in its implementation within the studied DPCs and PCs. However, by expressing a need to control teachers’ actions, make attendance at PCs mandatory to all teachers, and promote a uniformity of approaches to teaching and assessing English throughout the country, some of the senior ELT officials’ conceptions of TPD have many features of what is known as a top-down approach to TPD (Farrell 2007; Gurney and Liyanage, 2016). As discussed below, controlling teachers’ practice seems to be in contradiction with the promotion of teachers’ ownership of their professional development. Furthermore, it does not accord with an expansive view of teacher professionalism (Sachs, 2016).

7.2.2 The contributions of teacher trainers to TPD

As stated earlier in section 7.1, much importance is given to the role of the in-service teacher trainers by Senegalese educational authorities and the senior ELT officials who participated in this study. The creation of the regional centres, which are in charge of training the different staff working in the education sector, mostly teachers, is a sign that these authorities strongly believe in intervening and directing TPD activities, which can be positive in many ways in the Senegalese context. For instance, input from expert people who know the teachers’ contexts can be an effective way of enhancing their professional learning. The significance accorded to organising training sessions indicates that, in addition to the teachers’ activities within their PCs and DPCs, the senior ELT officials strongly value formal TPD activities. Consistently with the main understanding of training as expressed in the policy documents, the term is used here to refer to TPD sessions with input brought by people from outside the schools, such as the training on the use of formative assessment in English lessons run by in-service teacher trainers (see Section 4.2.4).
As pointed out in Chapter Two, if training consists in introducing skills and techniques to be applied in classrooms straightway by teachers, it implies a view of the latter as technicians (Christie et al., 2004; Malderez and Wedell, 2007). This way of conceptualising TPD views teachers through a deficit lens since it depicts them as lacking the capacity of learning by themselves and ‘as being inefficient and obsolete, having had limited training, or not being up to date’ (Christie et al., 2004: 171). In addition, as argued by Farrell (2013), the term may convey a ‘misleading sense of completeness’ (p. 21) since many teachers might consider themselves as accomplished after successfully finishing a training programme. Hence, by emphasising the necessity of training, these authorities seem to consider teachers as simple technicians or unaccomplished professionals who need to be taught how to improve their job by other more highly skilled people. As discussed in Chapter Two, implementing TPD through the training model has been criticised by many researchers because of its ineffectiveness to teacher learning (Borko, 2004; Hargreaves, 2000; Hayes, 2000; Guskey, 2002; Opfer and Pedder, 2011; Power, 2019; Waters and Vilches, 2012). For these authors, this is mainly because through the training model both the input and the ways of running sessions are often decided by other people.

Nonetheless, in the context of this study, it is relevant to signal that transmission of knowledge may still be seen as an effective way of teaching by many stakeholders of the education sector and a great number of Senegalese teachers might consider training as the most appropriate way of professional learning. Also, of great significance to understand here is that a training session can promote both active learning and passive learning depending on how it is run and the role that teachers play in it. So, as an approach to TPD, training can be done in multiple ways. For instance, it can be used to model active learning (e.g. reflection in group discussions) and, hence, promote it amongst the different participants who may apply it later on their own. In the next section, I argue that these two approaches can complement each other, especially in the current Senegalese educational context.
7.2.3 Complementary approaches to TPD

It is evident from the data here that Senegalese educational authorities are in favour of mixing approaches to TPD. As such, rather than relying only on teachers’ activities within their PCs for the improvement of their professional practice, they also see it as necessary for teachers to get input from teacher educators and other experts. Such an option may be relevant in many ways. For example, foreign specialists may introduce practices prevalent in other contexts or recent research findings, hitherto unknown to Senegalese teachers, which these practitioners can adapt in their teaching contexts. As most participants of this study have asserted, newly recruited teachers can also get much of the support they need from their colleagues at the same school. In this way, implementing TPD through a mixed approach may be more appropriate for teachers with different learning needs. In addition, Senegalese educational authorities bear the responsibility for overseeing TPD activities instead of leaving all of it to teachers themselves, particularly in this time when achieving quality education constitutes their main objective. Nonetheless, fulfilling such a responsibility should not curtail the active role that teachers are able to play in the process of designing and implementing TPD for it to be effective (Hayes, 2019; Smith and Padwad, 2017).

These two approaches can coexist within the same education system and can be understood as complementary to each other instead of being considered as mutually exclusive, especially in the SSA context of education characterised by having many unqualified teachers (Akyeampong et al., 2011; Buckler, 2011; Thakrar et al., 2009), many of whom may need to be guided to grasp the underpinning ideas of the teaching profession and ways of practising it. In such a context, discussing ideas on teaching and learning through professional education sessions led by people with much expertise in education is important for their professional learning. In
addition, colleagues in schools may not have the time or expertise to facilitate all aspects of these teachers’ professional growth.

However, it is worth underscoring that this coexistence of two approaches to TPD within the same context may cause some confusion to the different actors. For instance, in-service teacher trainers, such as Diomaye may think that they need to always give input to teachers instead of also encouraging them to learn through collective reflection within their PCs. Similarly, teachers may think that professional learning only takes place through training sessions led by more competent people external to their PCs, which may prevent them from taking their own initiatives. For instance, the studied teachers did not focus on increasing their pedagogical knowledge during their meetings at the school level. As such, it is important to find a balance in ways of designing and implementing TPD by creating a synergy among the different actors. The next section explores the types of knowledge valued within this case study.

7.3 The valued types of knowledge

As described in Chapter Four (Sections 4.1 and 4.2), both the views expressed in the policy documents and those of the senior ELT officials emphasise the need for the teachers to update their knowledge and skills. More explicitly, the findings indicate that these officials consider TPD through the PCs of English teachers a means for them to keep pace with the developments in language learning and teaching, with a focus on the CLT approach, for the improvement of their practice and, consequently, that of their students’ learning. Similarly, at the district level, as presented in section 5.2.3, findings show that there is a focus on increasing teachers’ knowledge of approaches to language teaching and practical activities to apply those in their classrooms. The two examples of DPC meetings described in 5.2.2 are illustrations of that preoccupation. However, the lack of follow up, on what was being discussed within those DPC
meetings either by coordinators or teachers themselves, through peer observation or by prolonging discussions at the school levels, was perhaps a shortcoming in linking TPD activities to teachers’ classroom practice. This is discussed further in the recommendations in relation to these issues in the next chapter.

By stressing the importance of the development of teachers’ pedagogical content knowledge in their ways of conceptualising and implementing TPD, these actors’ views and actions are in line with many understandings of teacher learning in educational research. Arguably, it is relevant for the studied teachers to increase their knowledge of language learning and teaching in general and particularly of teaching English in an EFL context like Senegal. Nevertheless, at the school level, findings show that these teachers seem to give much more value to learning about the English language than to discussing pedagogical issues. This scarcity of discussions on teaching approaches seems to be resulting from a commonly held belief among these teachers that those discussions should be reserved for the DPC meetings.

These teachers’ preoccupation with improving their language proficiency can be understood as relating to a sense of professional identity which may be influenced by how other people see them (Lasky, 2005; McLure, 1993; Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2013). Within the Senegalese context, mastery of content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge is given much value in the teaching profession. Hence, this may explain why the teachers of English in Dialore are concerned with their PC having a good image within the ELT community in the region of Leeru.

Most teachers from both schools have expressed their desire to learn about activities which they could adapt in their classrooms, which, as advocated by Darling-Hammond and Richardson (2009), are very important to include in TPD sessions to enhance teacher learning. Several times during interviews, when asked to give examples of learning through their
participation in TPD activities within both PCs and DPCs, many of them provided examples related to learning about the English language (e.g. grammar, vocabulary, language functions, etc.) or teaching techniques which they had learnt during a DPC meeting or from a colleague.

In addition to these valued types of knowledge, it was significant to explore the ways of learning which are valued within this ELT community and how they relate to understandings of TPD. I turn to those in the next section.

7.4 The valued ways of learning

Findings from the chapters Four to Six indicate that two ways of learning are consistently present within the views of the different participants of this study: learning through collective reflection (within PCs) and learning from people external to schools (e.g. ELT experts). Nonetheless, these actors of TPD give importance to each in various degrees. I discuss these in the following two subsections.

7.4.1 Learning through collective reflection

As shown in the summary of findings above (7.1), learning through reflection is valued both in the policy documents consulted and by all the ELT officials who participated in this study. All the ELT officials advocate that teachers must look critically at their own teaching practices and be ready to tackle their weaknesses together within their PCs, the main rationale behind the creation of PCs (OffDoc04, 2011). In conceptualising PCs as nexuses for teachers to learn collectively through reflection on their practice, Senegalese educational authorities are promoting ‘an essential tool in professional learning’ (Burton, 2009: 300) within these groups of teachers. Those PCs are considered by these authorities as spaces where teachers question
the effectiveness of their practice with an objective of improving their students’ learning. As such, their stated understandings of reflection concur with Boud’s (2009) perspective of learning through collective reflection.

However, significant to mention here is that these authorities’ understandings of learning through reflection have yet to be fully translated in the activities of the DPCs and school PCs studied in the current research since very little reflection was observable during the fieldwork. Arguably, the senior ELT officials need to give clear guidance on how teachers are expected to reflect within their PCs and provide support throughout the process. At the regional level, few instances of discussions could be considered collective reflection and, only, in a tentative way. At the school level, analysis of the data from both schools revealed that most of the cases of reflection mentioned by teachers occurred individually. They consisted in reflecting on whether classroom activities were successful or not. Such a type of reflection is what Larrivee (2008) calls, ‘surface reflection’ which she sees as a low level of reflection. For Larrivee (2008), through their professional growth, teachers need to go towards the critical level which invites them to ponder over the impact of their actions on the society they are serving. She also observes that not every teacher reaches that level in their careers. At Dialore, though this was hardly observable during my fieldwork visits, the discussion of teachers during one of their meetings (see extract in section 6.2.6) on introducing sensitive topics in classrooms can be considered, though very tentatively, an instance of emerging reflection on how their action might impact on students’ behaviours within society. Although that discussion was short, it has shown the potential influence of collective reflection in helping teachers towards improvement of practice (Boud, 2009; Farrell, 2013). Arguably, Astou’s change of decision in relation to teaching sensitive topics would have probably been less likely to happen had she reflected alone on the matter.
In this study, there are a number of possible explanations for this scarcity of collective reflection at the regional and school levels, such as a possible absence of this practice among the different activities during initial training, a lack of scaffolding for teachers to reflect on their practice while in service, and a need for more guidance on what teachers are expected to do within their PCs. As argued in educational research, teachers cannot be expected to develop as reflective practitioners without some scaffolding being provided by those responsible for their professional development since reflection itself is to be learnt through practising it (Ryder, 2012; Servage, 2008; Shabeed and Akkary, 2014). In other words, reflection has to be nurtured within the teachers’ practice. Teachers will need to be familiarised with the discourse of reflection (Reed et al., 2002), initiated in it, and supported through its process for them to engage in effective reflection (Bean and Stevens, 2002). Similarly, support is needed for them to do action research, which can be considered as a type of reflection on practice, in a collective way and benefit from it (Burns, 2003).

7.4.2 Learning through presentations and reading

Earlier in this chapter (section 7.2.2), I pointed out that the running of out-of-school professional learning events has been referred to as a useful model for TPD within the Senegalese ELT community. Such a view is the rationale behind inviting ELT experts to lead professional development sessions. The latest one in Leeru was on ways of enhancing students’ speaking skills in English and was conducted by an American ELT specialist. Interestingly, what teachers appreciated the most about that session was the interactive way in which the speaker ran it, which aligns with the view of many scholars (Darling-Hammond and Richardson, 2009; Smith and Padwad, 2017; Zhang and Pang, 2016) who see it as very important to give active roles to teachers in TPD activities. These teachers’ reactions may imply that most of their TPD sessions are not interactively run. This type of session also
indicates the value of inviting foreign experts in the journey towards more participatory ways of both teaching and implementing TPD in Senegal since they may introduce new ideas and practice to teachers. The session seemed to have impacted on teachers’ practice since Maty and Aram self-reported integrating some of the ideas into their classrooms.

With the significance given to knowledge from the literature on language learning and teaching in the conceptualisations of TPD within the ELT community, learning through reading is important to teachers. Teachers’ sharing a range of documents (both on the English language and ways of teaching it), which is frequently done within these DPC and PC meetings and WhatsApp groups, is a sign that these teachers value learning through reading. Nonetheless, unless teachers discuss their reading with their colleagues, this type of learning is an individual endeavour and may foster isolated understandings of teaching. The next section discusses some factors of the two studied schools which might impact on their teachers’ professional relationships within their PCs.

7. 5 School factors important to TPD

Analysis of data from the school level has revealed that there are a number of factors present at the two selected schools which may impact on teachers’ professional development. Each one has specific elements that form its culture. Here culture is understood as ways of understanding and doing things in a particular context (Deal and Peterson, 2016); the norms that shape people’s behaviour and actions within that place (Hipp et al., 2008). As working contexts, the two schools have similarities and differences. On the one hand, there is an indication that significant elements of the culture of Dialore promote inclusive leadership, excellence and collaboration among all people within the school, supported by the provision of necessary resources, equality among teachers, and space for continuous professional learning for all its
staff. On the other hand, findings at Lehar show that the school has a clear objective to improve its students’ learning through an inclusive leadership and better working conditions. Nevertheless, that there is a perceived hierarchy among teachers and a lack of teaching resources was echoed by teachers of that school who see the latter as a real obstacle to their classroom practice.

As shown in the previous chapter, all the five school factors explored are part of the school cultures and, arguably, may impact, directly or indirectly, on teachers’ professional learning. In attempting to make everyone at the school know that their main objective is to keep improving their students’ performances in the coming years, the leaders are enriching their schools’ cultures (Deal and Peterson, 2016) as they have established a new goal. By professing and implementing an inclusive leadership approach and supporting teachers’ initiatives in working together, these leaders are creating the conditions for collaboration among people working in their schools, which can also increase people’s motivation since they may feel more valued. In addition, the provision of enough resource can play a determinant role in enhancing the teachers’ classroom practice. For example, the listening equipment provided by the headteacher of Dialore is a way of allowing teachers to try out what they have learnt, which may be a source of motivation to them (Deal and Peterson, 2016).

The consideration given to one another among teachers as colleagues and by the school leaders play an important role in forming their group and facilitating collaboration among them. For instance, Aram, the youngest teacher in Dialore and the one with the shortest teaching experience (3 years), asserts to have joined the group smoothly. She felt welcomed as a member in her first days and has always been at ease to give her opinions during discussions. Aram attended all the PC meetings which I observed during my fieldwork and she was among the most active participants. As such, it can be argued that she was granted legitimacy which Wenger (1998) considers a significant element for newcomers to become full members of their
communities, a process through which learning takes place (Lave and Wenger, 1991). In my second fieldwork visit, she became the coordinator of their PC for the school year 2018-2019 and created their WhatsApp group. Based on the findings, no teacher at Dialore was marginalised in any visible way, which may foster good relationship and learning among them (Chen and Wang, 2015; Hairon and Dimmock, 2012) through their formally held meetings and informal interactions.

Conversely, as shown in 6.1.4, some sort of hierarchy among teachers on Lehar is felt by Kine and Albouri. Arguably, giving Kine a fourth class to teach with the support of others could have been a huge learning opportunity for her and made her feel equal to others. Similarly nominating Albouri a coordinator might boost his commitment to the improvement of the school as a whole. By understanding learning as becoming (Wenger, 1998), it can be said that Albouri and Kine are restricted from some aspects of their group’s practice, which may impact on their relationships with others and on their professional learning within their PC.

As discussed above, all these factors are important for the professional development of teachers working in these schools. There is no doubt that a perceived hierarchy among teachers may result in some of them hiding their shortcomings and continuing to teach the same ways for a long time. For instance, teachers like Kine may not be ready to talk about their difficulties in teaching in fear of being belittled, especially when the other colleagues might be judgemental. Like other working contexts (Billett, 2004), schools are not neutral places to the learning of people working within them (Hutchinson, 2008), teachers included. As shown above, in terms of physical and non-physical affordances, schools can be either catalysts of or hindrances to teacher development (Darling-Hammond, 1996; Opfer and Pedder, 2011; Mann, 2005). For teachers to collaborate and learn as a community, there is a need for them to be in an environment conducive to that. They need to be in contexts where they feel included and treated as equals (Chen and Wang, 2015; Wenger and Wenger-Trayner, 2015), in supportive
environments where they feel safe to expose their shortcomings and with opportunities to try out new ideas (Malderez and Wedell, 2007; Waters, 2005). As shown in the previous chapter, the school of Dialore was being more successful at promoting learning within the PC than the school of Lehar. In addition, it was observable that the teachers of Dialore were closer to one another than those of Lehar. The next section discusses the studied PCs in relation to understandings of learning communities.

7.6 Can the studied PCs be related to the concepts CoP and PLC?

Wenger (1998) and other scholars (Gurney and Liyanage, 2016; Putman and Borko, 2000; Wenger and Wenger-Trayner, 2015), emphasise that for a group of people to be considered a community of practice, its members need to be interacting regularly on common interests through shared ways of understanding of their practice. Most importantly, learning needs to be at the centre of those people’s goals and values conducive to collective learning should be promoted for the community to thrive.

7.6.1 Mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire

Important to underscore at the beginning of this section is that claims are more tentatively made here than elsewhere in the thesis. Analysis of data at the regional and school levels shows that small communities of teachers are being formed through DPCs and PCs. The studied teachers are involved in a number of TPD activities which may favour their collaboration and learning collectively. As discussed earlier in chapter two, for a community to be seen as a CoP, there is a need for three elements: ‘mutual engagement’, ‘a joint enterprise’, and ‘a shared repertoire’ (Wenger, 1998: 73).
Data from the region of Leeru show that teachers of the three DPCs have been involved in many TPD initiatives in the past three years and have attributed some learning to their participation in those activities. Many elements of the data indicate that these teachers have the same goals. They aim at constantly improving their practice of teaching English to young Senegalese, which they see as a way of participating in their education in accordance with the broader educational goals of the country. Not only do these teachers want to help students develop communicative skills in English and to succeed in their exams, but it is also part of their objectives to help them to grow as responsible citizens. As shown in section 5.2.2, they organise DPC meetings to discuss ideas about language learning and teaching and ways of implementing those in their classrooms. They have also created WhatsApp groups through which they share documents and information related to their job.

Based on the findings from data on DPC meeting reports and interviews with coordinators, it can be argued that by participating in those meetings (although these were not frequently held during the fieldwork period), choosing their topics and proposing teaching activities that exemplify ideas, sharing documents both in paper or electronically, these teachers are building a repertoire of common ways of talking about teaching and learning the English language. For example, by proposing classroom activities to raise students’ awareness of environmental issues to exemplify the theoretical knowledge on content-based learning during the DPC meeting of Jamm, not only were these teachers sharing and discussing those activities but they were also building common understandings of the educational goals in Senegal which mainly converge towards helping young Senegalese to become good citizens (Thiam, 2013).

To some extent, with teachers discussing ideas and sharing documents, lesson plans and teaching techniques through their mutual engagement, these DPCs of Ngalam, Jamm, and Guindy, can be seen as shaping communities of practice within the larger ELT community in Senegal. Although this needs to be seen as tentative, these teachers are in ‘mutual engagement’,
they have a ‘joint enterprise’, and they are building a ‘shared repertoire’ of teaching English in their localities. Most of what they do within these DPCs concurs with a situated learning perspective (Hoban, 2002; Wenger, 1998). However, it can be argued that the building of a shared repertoire of practice with the studied teachers is in a very early stage since they need more actions, such as group reflection and peer observation sessions with an objective of collectively improving their practice.

Findings also indicate that there are elements of practice that are favourable for the shaping of a CoP in Dialore. By discussing and choosing the topics they see as appropriate for their students, teachers of that school are sharing understanding on the purpose of teaching. These teachers see it as important for their students of the upper sixth form (the highest level at upper secondary school in Senegal) to explore topics like ‘breast cancer’, ‘corruption and development’, ‘children in the streets’, ‘domestic violence’ and ‘immigration’. In doing so, not only do teachers help their students learn English through different ways but they are also sensitising them about what they see as important to be aware of as young Senegalese. This shared concern in improving the society they serve as teachers can also be a bond that links them as a small community (Wenger, 1998). At Dialore, through their ‘proofreading’ sessions (as they called them), teachers assess the appropriateness of both the form and content of the internal progress tests proposed by their colleagues before administering them to their students. By taking the necessary time to read through the tests proposed by their colleagues and commenting on those, they are creating small opportunities for each teacher to learn from the group through their interactions on test design. The most interesting aspect here is that teachers may learn through the interactions with their colleagues.

Contrary to Dialore, based on data collecting at Lehar, there is no indication of a constant mutual engagement among teachers. Only two PC meetings were held in that school during my
fieldwork and data do not show frequent informal interactions among teachers. Hence, it is impossible to argue for a shaping of a CoP within their PC.

7.6.2 Learning within PCs

As shown in Chapter Six, most of the teacher participants of this study assert to have made some changes to either their ways of teaching or behaving with students. For instance, at Lehar, Mbaya states to have changed her ways of teaching by taking ideas from all members of their PC while at the beginning of her career she used to base her teaching on how she was taught as a student. Albouri also asserts to have taken ideas from others (especially from Sedar) and used them in his classes. Kine echoes the same since she had learnt a lot from her colleagues. Similarly, at Dialore, Astou asserts to have become more tolerant towards students and Musa to be more flexible in his ways of dealing with discipline thanks to getting his colleagues’ views during PC meetings. Maty also talks about having changed the sequences of teaching reading comprehension and has started giving students more time to speak in her classes than before. All these examples of change are attributed to the teachers’ participation in their PC and DPC activities.

As advocated throughout the literature on CoPs and PLCs (Lee et al., 2011; Stoll and Louis, 2007; Trevethan and Sandretto, 2017; Vescio et al., 2008; Wenger and Snyder, 2000; Wenger and Wenger-Trayner, 2015), one defining characteristic of learning communities (i.e. CoP and PLC) is moving deeper into practice. Arguably, the teachers of Dialore can be seen as starting to move deeper into practice through their various interactions. Mention should be made that, during their interviews, these teachers asserted to have learnt through their collaboration with their colleagues, yet most of them were not able to give examples straightaway. This inability to give examples of learning does not necessarily mean an absence of learning at all. As argued
by Hager (2004), despite people’s awareness of their learning, they are not always able to talk about it in explicit terms, which may be the case of many of the teacher participants in this study.

7.6.3 Values promoted within PCs

Data from teachers revealed that there are a number of values which they see as important in their relationships within PCs. For instance, throughout their interviews, most of the studied teachers emphasised the importance of being open-minded. When talking about their relationships with their PCs, teachers tended to refer to their group as a ‘family’ in which a culture of sharing prevails. In describing their PCs as families, these teachers were showing a strong sense of belonging, which is very significant to learning within a group of people (Malderez and Wedell, 2007; Wenger, 1998). To some extent, this sense of belonging may bring collective accountability within PCs and help teachers to improve their classroom practice and their students’ learning. Data have also revealed that there was an emphasis on respect and inclusion. Teachers at both schools say they believe that everyone in their group deserves to be included in their activities and listened to, whatever their opinions are, and each one’s ideas are amenable to criticisms. Trust was also considered very important within these teachers’ PCs. Since ‘the quality of interpersonal relationships is crucial’ (Kennedy, 2005: 243) for learning with a group, it is arguable that the promotion of these values within PCs is important for them to be spaces for effective TPD. Unless there is trust among teachers, many will be reluctant to share their weaknesses. Collegiality (having good relationships among themselves) was also a significant element within the group. From a situated learning perspective, the promotion of these values is important for the establishment of the social conditions and professional relationships which are conducive to collective learning within a
community (Lee et al., 2011; Vescio et al., 2008; Wenger, 1998; Wenger and Wenger-Trayner, 2015). Nonetheless, it is worth mentioning that Albouri and Kine have expressed feelings of being less included in their PC sometimes (see section 7.5 above).

Equally important is also to mention that these small communities have inside them leaders whose influences may be significant in their ways of functioning. As shown in 5.2.5, the DPC coordinators have adopted a horizontal approach of leadership, which fits in with the notion of learning within communities where hierarchy among members is not seen as helpful (Chen and Wang, 2015; Stoll et al., 2006; Zhang and Pang, 2016). In terms of leadership at the school level, teachers also emphasise qualities such as availability to help, commitment to the PC, resourcefulness (in form of both documents and ideas), and open-mindedness.

As shown through the previous three subsections, to some extent, the studied DPCs and PCs could be considered as having the potential to become fully functioning learning communities (CoP or PLC). As discussed in 2.6.2, for these groups of teachers to be considered PLCs, as defined by Stall et. al (2006), there is a need to develop a culture of collective systematic reflection on teaching issues within these group of practitioners. I will come back to this point later in Chapter Eight (section 8.1) when making recommendations for the improvement of TPD in Senegal.

7.7 Concluding points

Throughout this chapter, I have discussed the main findings of this research as presented in Chapters Four to Six. A number of points are of importance in relation to the exploration of TPD through PCs within the Senegalese ELT community. Analysis of the different ways of understanding and implementing TPD has revealed that there are different elements which can be grouped in relation to the top-down or bottom-up approaches.

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On the one hand, when the senior ELT officials underscore the contributions of others to TPD, teachers are perceived as in need of external input. These officials stress the need for interventions through training sessions, for control over what teachers do through classroom observations, and for consistency in teaching and assessing the English language in Senegal. Such a view of TPD can be related to valuing ways of learning which promote getting input from ‘experts’ or from the literature and, as such, is in line with the theory application model of teacher learning and, to some extent, to the ‘learning as acquisition’ perspective (Sfard, 1998). Arguably, getting input about theories on learning and teaching is important for all teachers. However, just being informed about ideas and practices on teaching developed in the literature is not sufficient to improve teacher learning (Christie et al. 2004; Hoban, 2002; Opfer and Pedder, 2011) since they may be disconnected with the actual realities of the teachers’ classrooms (Borko, 2004; Louws et al. 2017).

On the other hand, with PCs conceptualised as spaces for reflection, teachers are considered as agentive professionals who are expected to identify their learning needs based on their working contexts, to learn through collective reflection and, consequently, to improve their classroom practice. As such, their valued ways of learning concur with learning through reflection and the ‘learning as participation’ perspective (Sfard, 1998). These understandings are consistent with what is widely championed as effective TPD and an expansive professionalism within educational research. This type of understanding of TPD requires a shift from seeing learning as just reading the literature and implementing ideas in one’s classroom. This is because, through reflection, these teachers can learn and create knowledge which is appropriate to the uniqueness of their contexts.

However, these conceptions of TPD, in particular the ideas of reflective practice, were not found to be operationalised at regional or school level. Although there were some instances which could be tentatively called reflection, the necessary two-way movement from classroom
practice to collective discussion and back to classroom again was not observed within the studied teachers (see my recommendation on this through Figure 8.1). For instance, there was no evidence that topics were based on classroom issues and the DPC coordinators were following up on what was explored in their meetings at the schools. Thus, the questioning culture and inquiry-based learning approach expected of teachers of English by the senior ELT officials are not yet part of the realities of the studied DPCs and PCs. As shown in Chapter Five, it seems that teachers are not trained to reflect on their practice in a systematic way.

Through the inclusive leadership approach at the district and school levels, the promotion of certain values within schools, it can be argued that the foundations of learning communities of teachers are being laid within the region of Leeru. However, with the scarcity of systematic reflection, which constitutes the major weakness of these DPCs, there is a need for much improvement for these DPCs and PCs to be in their fullest potential to help teachers develop as professionals.

In terms of sustainability, it can be argued that the Senegalese organisation of TPD through PCs is in line with current thinking about ways of improving TPD, especially in SSA. As Moon and Boullón (1997) pointed out, TPD initiatives are likely to have more impact when they are organised ‘over a period of time, rather than one-off affair’ (p. 72). As such, engaging teachers in learning activities/opportunities within PCs is sustainable as it does not require much funding because teachers are expected to participate in those events as part of their professional duties. Nonetheless, it is too simplistic a view to think that teachers would automatically learn from those PC meetings let alone integrate what they have been presented/introduced to in their classroom practice. I will develop this point further in the final chapter when making recommendations.
In the next and final chapter, I will draw the main conclusions from this study by making recommendations for the improvement of TPD in Senegal and in similar contexts, showing what can be seen as its contributions to educational research, indicating its limitations, pointing out possible directions for further research, and finally giving a personal reflection on my learning journey through this research.
CHAPTER EIGHT: Conclusions and recommendations

8.0 Introduction

Drawing from all the previous chapters, in addition to showing this study’s contribution and its limitations, this final chapter argues for a shift towards a better understanding of teacher professionalism through which learning is seen as a lifelong endeavour for all teachers. It recommends an integration of collective reflection on classroom practice within PCs’ and DPCs’ activities with an objective to improve student learning. Additionally, practising peer observation to foster collaboration and reflection among teachers could be a useful way of enhancing the teachers’ professional learning. The chapter also stresses the significance of nurturing a learning culture within the teachers’ working contexts, schools. Furthermore, to build on the current research, the chapter proposes areas for further research, such as studying collective action research, the link between DPC meetings and the teachers’ classroom practice, peer coaching, and doing a similar study with more schools and teachers of other subjects in Senegal.

The present research has investigated how TPD is conceptualised and implemented by the actors at the three different levels of its organisation in Senegal. Data was collected within the Senegalese ELT community with a variety of sources from the national, regional, and school levels. The findings on the conceptualisations of TPD by actors at different levels, the ways of implementing it in one region of Senegal, and the lived experiences of the studied teachers at two secondary schools in that region were presented in Chapters Four, Five and Six. The first research question of this study, on conceptions of TPD within the Senegalese ELT community, was answered by drawing from data at the national, regional, and school levels. In general, understandings of TPD and practices within the studied group can be considered as hybrid. Notwithstanding, in Section 7.2.3, I argued that the mixture of bottom-up and top-down
approaches to TPD is relevant to the context (both historical and cultural) of Senegal. This is because the educational context of Senegal can be considered as currently being in a transition from teacher-centred approaches to learner-centred ones. As such, these two approaches may complement each other. These understandings seem to have resulted to certain types of knowledge and ways of learning being valued by the participants of this study.

Findings related to the second research question, presented in Chapter Five, indicate that teachers of the three DPCs of Leeru are at the centre of their TPD initiatives, from design to implementation. However, I also pointed that the main dissonance between conceptions of TPD within PCs between actors at the national level (on the one hand) and those at the district and school levels (on the other) is that there was very little collective reflection on practice in the latter’s views and actions, although this was expected by the officials. In addition, there was no visible link of the TPD activities to the teachers’ professional learning needs nor to those of their students based on a formal or informal diagnosis. In response to this, I make recommendations in Section 8.1 below on ways of enhancing collective reflection within teachers’ PCs. Although in a tentative way, I argued that the studied DPCs can be seen as having the basic features of CoPs and PLCs.

In relation to my third research question, Chapter Six provided interesting findings on the studied teachers’ lived experiences of participating in their PC activities. The chapter has shown that the teachers’ working contexts (schools) may play a significant role on their PCs’ functioning and, consequently, on their professional development. It has also indicated that the studied teachers tend to share documents and ideas on teaching and to focus more on increasing their content knowledge than discussing pedagogy at the school level. The chapter also revealed that these teachers give much importance to certain values, such as solidarity, open-mindedness, mutual respect, and trust in their professional relationships as members of their
small communities. All these points have been discussed in Chapter Seven in light of the literature and in relation to the research questions and context of this study.

The first section of this concluding chapter makes recommendations on how TPD for teachers of English (and those of other subjects) could be improved within the Senegalese context and in similar ones. The second section focuses on the contributions of this study to educational research. In section three, I describe the limitations of this study before indicating possible areas of further research in the next one. This thesis ends with my reflections on this PhD research study as a learning journey.

8.1 Rethinking TPD in Senegal

One of the two main goals of this study was to better understand the conceptions and ways of implementing TPD in Senegal in order to make recommendations for its improvement in that country and in similar contexts across the world. As described in Chapter One and frequently referred to throughout the thesis, Senegal has a well-structured organisation of TPD, from the national directorate through the regional centres to the inter-school and school PCs. However, as shown in the previous chapters, though the studied PCs were considered as being among the most dynamic ones within the Senegalese ELT community (personal communication with Mr Ngom at MoE, March 2017), findings of this study indicate that what is professed in the official documents and expressed by the senior ELT officials at the national level does not always correspond to the realities observed within the field sites. Findings have revealed that much needs to be done for the PCs to function in their fullest potential to enhance teacher professional learning. In this section, I offer recommendations for the improvement of TPD through PCs in Senegal for teachers of all subjects. These recommendations are based on the main findings of this study and related to current thinking of effective TPD in educational research. They focus
on understandings of the teaching profession in Senegal, the inclusion of collective reflection in TPD activities at both district and school levels and the creation of school cultures favourable to teacher collaboration within PCs.

8.1.1 Shift in understanding of teaching

An important element of understanding teacher professionalism in Senegal is related to the achieving of a teacher diploma, such as ‘CAE-CEM’, ‘CAEM’ and ‘CAES’ (see Chapter Three Section 3.2.2 for the meaning of these) for secondary school teachers. Many teachers may think that being awarded that degree is the end of their teacher learning journey and start seeing themselves as accomplished professionals who do not need to be preoccupied with further learning. This was mentioned by Ndane who noticed that teachers, especially those who had started working without initial training, generally showed much interest in learning about teaching when they were preparing for their professional degree examination. In his capacity as a DPC coordinator, he realised that the relevant teachers in his area were eager to be observed by their colleagues during the years prior to their qualification but not after they succeeded in their professional exams. As I mentioned earlier in section 6.2.2, although all the interviewed teachers espouse a lifelong learning philosophy, their interpretation of this appears to be limited in relation to their professional practice. Arguably, if they strongly believe in learning continuously, they should be ready to critique one another’s ideas and be more open about their classroom practice, perhaps through using approaches such as peer observation. I will come back to this point later in this chapter.

Based on the findings of this study, I argue that there is a need to challenge current ways of understanding what it means to be a teacher in Senegalese society. Considering teachers as lifelong learners means that one of the widely shared understandings of the teacher - as
someone who knows almost everything of his/her subject and ways of teaching it - needs to change in a radical way. This current prevailing view tends to fit with a learning as acquisition perspective through which knowledge is understood as fixed and learning, as a mainly cognitive activity, happens through memorising facts (Hoban, 2002; Sfard, 1998). As such, it is not compatible with the promotion of reflective practice within teachers’ PCs as expressed in policy documents and by the senior ELT officials.

In this sense, this thesis identifies a need to shift in people’s understandings of being a teacher at all the different levels of education in Senegal. Both educational authorities and teachers could benefit from espousing an expansive teacher professionalism (Gurney and Liyanage, 2016; Sachs, 2001, 2016) which is consistent with the lifelong learning philosophy. If knowledge is understood as being in a constant evolution, learning cannot be completed at any given time. As such, teachers need to move towards acknowledging that not knowing everything (especially new ideas), questioning the relevance of their knowledge and skills and the effectiveness of their practice is part of being a professional teacher rather than threatening to it. Professionals always learn from experience through questioning their practice (Korthagen, 2017), which is all the more significant in teaching as the knowledge and skills needed by teacher evolve with time (Albakhshi and Dehvari, 2015; Hargreaves, 2007) alongside their students’ needs. As professionals, this stance also requires teachers to take ownership of their development but in ways which are focused on their professional learning needs directly linked to their classrooms. Promoting this way of understanding the teaching profession is more than necessary within the Senegalese education sector on which the country heavily relies for its development in the coming years. There is no doubt that improvement will not happen in any sector until people start questioning their current understandings and practice. The existence of PCs as TPD mechanisms in Senegal is a great asset to capitalise on to discuss the globally
evolving understandings of teaching and teacher professionalism within the different communities of teachers throughout the country.

This research revealed that some participants referred to teachers with longer teaching experiences as ‘deans’. This may be related to some culturally rooted considerations, such as respect for age and, by extension, experience. Here, one saying in Wolof often heard within the Senegalese society might give an explanation to that: ‘kula màg ëppla ay sagar’, which literally translate into English as ‘older people have more worn out clothes than younger people’. The generally understood meaning of it within the Senegalese society is that people with more experience in a field will have more knowledge and skills than people with less experience in that area. Such a view maybe a constraint to learning within a group of teachers because practice in a CoP is constantly evolving through the interactions across the community; between both its novice and experienced members (Wenger, 1998). With the rapid changes happening in today’s world and the use of ICT in teaching, novice teachers may know more about the innovations than experienced teachers. In addition, as younger people, the novice teachers might be more tuned to the interests of students as they constitute a closer generation to them. So, the lesser hierarchy is perceived and shown within the group of teachers, the better it is for the trust and open honest interactions needed within the PCs to enhance teacher professional learning.

This shift in understandings of teacher professionalism may cause teachers to be readier to challenge their colleagues’ views and accept feedback on their practice. Important to underscore here is that this critique needs to be based on professional understandings of practice, aim at improving student learning, and be done in a collective supportive manner. In this way, the discussions within PCs could become moments of knowledge co-construction. I turn to recommending the practice of reflection in the next subsection.
8.1.2 Putting reflection at the heart of the PCs’ activities

8.1.2.1 Collective reflection on practice

Throughout the thesis I have argued that reflection is understood by many researchers as an effective way of enhancing teacher professional learning, especially collective reflection which fits the conceptual framework of this study and the view of the PCs outlined in policy. However, although reflection is present within the senior ELT officials’ understandings of TPD, it was rarely observable within the activities of the DPCs and PCs studied in this research. One recommendation from this study is to move towards practising collective reflection within the Senegalese PCs as it will allow teachers to learn from one another in many ways far much interesting than just sharing ideas without questioning their utility in practice. As proposed in the figure below, a systematic reflection through a two-way journey from practice to collective reflection and back to practice could enhance the teachers’ learning and that of their students.
Here, I propose three different movements for collective reflection. In the first cycle of collective reflection, teachers discuss classroom issues within their school PCs, propose possible ways of improving their practice and implement them in their classrooms. After trying them out for a while, they come back together and assess the effectiveness of their propositions. This will need to be done continuously to integrate it in their PC’s activities and school culture.

At the beginning of implementing this practice, teachers can start with simple things. For example, they could start with trying to make their students speak English more frequently in classes (the issue of students’ reluctance to speak English was mentioned by teachers), propose classroom activities for that purpose, and assess the effectiveness of these activities later. The second cycle would be to discuss issues at the DPC level between teachers from different schools. After those discussions, teachers can go back to their school PC and exchange ideas on ways of adapting propositions to their schools’ realities first before trying them out in their
classes. The third cycle would be for teachers to go straight to their classrooms after discussions in DPC meetings and try out what is proposed by teachers from other schools and in-service teacher trainers. After a while, teachers can discuss the effectiveness of those propositions within their school PCs. It is worth underscoring that teachers can also get various types of input from people external to schools in both the PC and DPC meetings. For instance, national and international experts could lead discussions in a DPC meeting on issues identified by teachers themselves, thereby creating more coherence in the teachers’ TPD experiences or challenging the long-held, unquestioned ideas and practice, either way could have a positive impact on the teachers’ professional learning.

A key element of this proposition is that it links the teachers’ classroom practice directly to their PC activities. The classroom is the starting point of all the three cycles of reflection and the learning of their students. In other words, teachers need to gather evidence of issues from their classrooms before they discuss them in their groups. In this way, issues emanate from practice, proceed on to the PCs and/or DPCs for discussions, go back to the classrooms where possible solutions are tried out, and the reflection cycle keeps on going. This type of reflection concurs with Boud’s (2009) perspective of productive reflection since it anchors its purpose to the context and may foster the teachers’ engagement in the process because they will need a collective agreement on its main purpose and the different steps to follow.

The Senegalese PCs provide a strong mechanism for TPD through this type of reflection. However, reflection being a skill which requires much learning, teachers need to be scaffolded in this practice to become reflective practitioners. Arguably, the ideal way would be to start as early as possible in their careers. Teachers need to experience active learning through reflection during initial teacher training and throughout their professional development activities. More explicitly, teachers have to go through the uncertainty inherent in active learning, through the process of trials and errors in their learning-to-teach activities. Within the context of this study,
this reflection process can be done through these teachers’ DPCs and, more frequently, in their school PCs. Nonetheless, like in the piloting of TSG in the same country (Frazier, 2009), these teachers will need to be led by people with much expertise in helping teachers to practise collective reflection, especially through their initial attempts to implement that practice in groups. Teacher reflection can be supported by practising peer-observation, to which I turn in the next subsection.

8.1.2.2 Collective reflection through peer observation

Throughout my fieldwork, no peer observation session was observed within the two studied PCs. As pointed out in Chapter Five and Six, it seems that the studied teachers fear classroom observation and see it as only necessary for teachers who are preparing for their professional exams. This confirms findings from my previous study on the use of classroom observation as a tool for TPD in Senegal (Diop, 2014). Participant teachers of this study mentioned time as the main constraint but, interestingly, most were teaching in private schools for extra income at the same time. This raises the significance of sufficient renumeration which may make teachers feel that they are treated as professionals and hence take on behaviours associated with being a professional.

This thesis argues for the use of peer observation within the Senegalese PCs which is seen as having the potential to improve teachers’ classroom practice in many ways (Hobson and Malderez, 2013). By practising peer observation, teachers may feel more at ease because of the absence of the possible sense of power (Sheal, 1989) which may be present when observation is carried by teacher trainers (Diop, 2014). Without any perceived hierarchy among teachers, they may be readier to accept their difficulties and talk about them with colleagues they trust. However, one important thing they need to understand is to avoid being judgemental in
feedback sessions as this type of observation is to help one another to improve their practice but not meant for assessment (Hobson and Malderez, 2013). In other words, it is an observation which is meant for learning (Vacilotto and Cummings, 2007). As such, there is a need to establish trust between teachers (Hobson and Malderez, 2013) and to support them in learning how to give a constructive feedback instead of focusing on weaknesses alone.

With peer observation, teachers of the same PC can observe their lessons in pairs or in groups depending on their availability. It will require the involvement and support of the school leaders because timetables may need to be adjusted for teachers to observe one another without difficulties.

Implementing reflection through these types of activities would enable to make TPD sustainable in Senegal because PCs are already in place. In addition, little financial resource is required because it is part of teachers’ professional duties to participate in the activities of their PCs. Hence, the concept of PC, understood as a nexus for teachers of a variety of experiences, will thrive to its fullest potential through these practices. In this way, these PCs will contribute to the development of learning communities for teachers at both school and inter-school levels. Not only will meetings within PCs be give-and-take opportunities but they will also be moments to think of alternative ways to better cater for their learners’ ever-evolving needs.

The senior ELT officials and other educational authorities at the national level also have a role to play in the promotion of reflection and peer observation within the Senegalese education system. As pointed in Chapters Five and Six, this study has shown that there is a disjuncture between what is professed by the ELT officials and the realities in TPD activities within the studied teachers. Together with the in-service teacher trainers, the DPC coordinators and their foreign partners, these authorities need to make sure that teachers are initiated and scaffolded in the practice of reflection within their groups. They also need to give much more guidance
on what teachers are expected to do within their PCs in their policies on TPD. In addition, TPD actors at the national level can strengthen their relationships with teachers’ associations in Senegal and collaborate with them to promote ideas and practices related to group reflection and peer observation. For example, ATES could play a determinant role in changing the English teachers’ practice throughout the country. As advocated by Smith and Kuchah (2016), teachers’ associations can facilitate the sharing of success stories among their members and, consequently, the improvement of teachers’ classroom practice.

However, for teacher professional learning to be substantially enhanced, both teachers and their schools’ leaders need to play their parts. The next recommendation of this study is related to the necessity of creating school cultures favourable to teacher collaboration and learning.

8.1.3 Creating and nurturing school cultures

Senegalese educational authorities seem to limit the schools’ role in TPD to the facilitation of their teachers’ participation in DPC and PC activities. As has been drawn from the interviews with the school leaders, this facilitation is often understood as only consisting in providing teachers with resources (i.e. venues and equipment, making copies of handouts, granting them permission to attend TPD events, and giving them some financial support when possible). This study suggests that school leaders can expand the scope of their role by creating and nurturing a school culture conducive to learning for all, not just for the students.

As indicated in the literature review (see Chapter Two) and discussed in Chapter Seven in relation to the findings of this research, schools are not neutral places to the people within them. They can play crucial role in fostering or hindering teachers’ collaboration and professional learning. The example of Dialore has shown that the school’s promoted image can make a difference on how teachers perceive their professional identity and, consequently, impact on
their learning and commitment to the improvement of their school. Learning for staff, as well as students, needs to be at the heart of the school’s ethos and visibly promoted through discourses and activities within it. In other words, the school has to be a place where learning is understood as an ongoing process for all its people. By promoting learning for all within a given school, teachers will find it easier to express their shortcomings to their colleagues because they will understand that the acceptance of not knowing is the starting point of learning. This is a way of normalising learning among all teachers by making it part and parcel of the school’s culture.

In this respect, I argue that it is important for school leaders to work with all educational stakeholders in creating and nurturing school cultures conducive to learning for all. Arguably, creating an ethos and a social atmosphere favourable to teacher collaboration like that found in Dialore may foster teachers’ professional relationships and be beneficial to their students’ learning. The next section focuses on the contributions of this study to educational research.

8.2 Contributions to educational research

In addition to making recommendations for the improvement of TPD in Senegal (see Section 8.2 above), which was one of the two main goals of this study, this research also aimed at contributing to the global debates on TPD by bringing insights from this hitherto under-researched educational context. To that end, it has used a vertical case study approach to investigate how TPD is conceptualised and implemented within the PCs of secondary school teachers of English in one region of Senegal. In the following subsections, I am showing the different ways in which it has contributed to educational research.
8.2.1 Empirical contribution

This timely study has made an empirical contribution to educational research by bringing data from SSA, where education is considered as under-researched in many ways (Akyeampong et al. 2011; Bennell and Akyeampong, 2007; Buckler, 2015; Frazier, 2009; Miyazaki, 2016; Tabulawa, 2013). This scarcity of research is particularly acute in Senegal where very few studies, such as Frazier (2009) and Miyazaki (2016) which are directly related to teachers’ professional development, could be found. This shows that there is still little scholarship on TPD in Senegal. Hence, this study has made a contribution in terms of illuminating how TPD is understood at different levels within the Senegalese ELT community. It has also shown how TPD is implemented at the district level and brought insights about the operation of PCs at the school level.

This research has also used data which is different to that from studies which have been conducted previously in SSA. While other studies, such as Akyeampong et al. (2011), Christie et al. (2004), and Miyazaki (2016), to name a few, report on TPD programmes which are interventions driven by people external to schools, at district and school levels, this study explored TPD with actors who were taking their own initiatives. What was observed in the region of Leeru can be considered the normal course of TPD initiatives of the small ELT community working there. As such, the current study has brought interesting data to educational research since it is not based on TPD interventions led by internal or foreign organisations.

The study has used data from people at different levels of the organisation of TPD in Senegal. Throughout its chapters on findings, different voices of the senior ELT officials, the DPC coordinators, the teachers, and the studied schools’ leaders could be heard. As shown in those chapters, there are assonances and dissonances in those voices. The study has also shown that
while the idea of reflection is much present within data from the national level, it has not been taken up at the other levels and offered explanations for this dissonance. It has also indicated that the teachers are often more interested in increasing their content knowledge than improving their pedagogical practice at a school level, and they promote values, such as mutual respect, open-mindedness, trust, and solidarity within their school PCs. Using data from different levels has contributed to the originality of this study.

8.2.2 Methodological contribution

In terms of methodological contribution, the study has brought interesting aspects about conducting qualitative research. Applying a vertical case study approach (Bartlett, 2014; Bartlett and Vavrus, 2016) has enabled an exploration of the three different levels of the organisation of TPD in Senegal within the ELT community with a focus on one region of Senegal (Leeru) and two secondary schools of that locality. In selecting four senior ELT officials at the national level, one region out of the 14 of Senegal, and two secondary schools in the region of Leeru, the vertical case study approach has allowed me to get different insights on ways of conceptualising TPD at those levels. It has also permitted to see how TPD is implemented through the DPCs and to get views of the studied teachers on their experiences within their PCs and schools as working places. In this way, it was possible to observe assonances and dissonances of understandings and practices of TPD between these levels and to make recommendations accordingly.

The research methods used in this study have also shown the significance of using a variety of sources of data. The study has used interviewing, document inspection, observation of meetings, and various fieldnotes on schools. All these have contributed to what has been revealed in the findings. For instance, if I had only used data from the school level it would
have been more difficult to understand and offer explanations for what was happening at that level. In addition, getting data from the departmental and school levels through observations, reports, and interviews with DPC coordinators and teachers has allowed me to see that some of the views of the senior ELT officials related to reflection and action research are totally different from the observed realities.

In summary, applying the vertical case study has offered insights into the ways of conceptualising and implementing TPD from the national to the school level and the role that schools may play in teacher collaboration and learning within PCs. Although a case study from one single region of Senegal is still a very small case, the implementation of TPD through these teacher clusters (PCs) has its place within the array of ways of enhancing teacher professional learning in educational research. As research approach, the case study is not exempt of weaknesses (see Section 8.4 below), but it fits a small-scale study of this type. As consistently stated in the previous chapter, the findings of this research are tentative in some ways and the study has its limitations, which the next section focuses on.

8.3 The limitations of the study

As a case study, this research did not aim at giving conclusions that are generalisable (Hammersley, 2015; Yin, 2003), although they may be relevant to many settings around the world. This is because this approach often focuses on specific and relatively small cases (Hamilton and Corbett-Whittier, 2013; Silverman, 2005). Its objective was to give a window on how TPD is conceptualised and implemented through secondary school PCs within the Senegalese ELT community. It also aimed at giving accounts of teachers’ lived experiences of participation in TPD activities within those PCs and the role that their schools, as working places, might play in their collaboration and learning. This focused approach has involved
several interviews with participants (e.g. up to four interviews with one participant), inspection of various documents, visit to schools on many occasions, and attending meetings organised during the fieldwork period. Nonetheless, some aspects of it may be seen as limitations.

Arguably, exploring TPD within the Senegalese ELT community with this small number of participants is limited compared to the large numbers of teachers of English in the 14 regions of the country. More cases across the country would be needed to give a fuller picture of how TPD is understood and implemented within teachers’ DPCs and PCs of this ELT community.

Another limitation of this study is related to the duration of the fieldwork. As I explained in section 3.2.4.2, the first visit coincided with teachers’ industrial action. Teachers decided not to organise PC meetings shortly after I attended the first ones during the school year. As mentioned in Chapter Three, I attended six school meetings (4 at Dialore and 2 at Lehar), five DPC meetings and one regional TPD event. Observing more DPC meetings and school PC meetings might have given more insights on teachers’ interactions during those meetings, the link between their discussions to their classroom practices (if they do so). This would allow the research to establish with more evidence what types of learning opportunities are provided within PCs. In this way, it would be possible to establish more firmly the extent to which those PCs can be considered learning communities (PLCs or COPs). A longitudinal study would have the advantage to see how continuous or discontinuous the practices of these studied groups of teachers are throughout the school year.

Within the timeframe of this study, it was also impossible to see whether PC activities were having any impact on the studied teachers’ students’ learning. As a sole researcher, it was beyond my capacity to observe teachers in their classrooms to see if they were implementing what was being discussed in DPC meetings. Undertaking this study by a group of researchers
might have enabled observations teachers’ lessons to establish any link between TPD activities and their classroom practice.

The selection of the region of Leeru was based on the information I had from the national coordinator of TPD who considered its DPCs as the most dynamic in the country in that time. As an exploratory study interested in understanding TPD within DPCs and PCs, the frequency of meetings was the most determinant criterion. However, there might be other DPCs and PCs in the country with different types of activities and format. The national coordinator might not be fully aware of these other PCs or his recommendation might be based on his view of what constitutes a dynamic PC.

8.4 Areas for further research

In educational research, many studies on TPD have been conducted but mostly in the global North (Europe and North America). Clearly, there is much need for investigations in SSA. Research building on this study could be directed to areas as follows:

➢ One way of furthering our understandings of the value of these Senegalese PCs could be to do an intervention study to initiate and explore collective action research (Burns, 2003) through the Learning Circles approach (Hairon, 2017) with teachers within those PCs. In this way, teachers could be initiated to reflect collectively on the effectiveness of their teaching, plan lessons together, assess their students’ learning, and evaluate the whole process. Findings from such an inquiry would give insights of how teachers perceive themselves as researchers and how they value the knowledge they gain from their research. This type of research could be conducted with a group of teachers
teaching different subjects from one school or teaching the same subject but from
several schools located in the same area, such as the studied teachers in the current
research. As argued earlier, teachers would need to be supported throughout this
process. Findings from such a study could also bring interesting insights for both
teacher learning and in terms of understanding how to support teachers in learning to
do research.

➢ Another way of building on this study could be an investigation on how the teachers
are trying out the ideas and/or techniques which they explore in their DPC meetings.
Investigating the link between classrooms and TPD activities would help to identify the
possible challenges that teachers face in their attempts to improve their practice. As
such, it would bring interesting insights to the Senegalese ELT community in relation
to the suitability of ideas from the literature on ELT in the global North to this specific
EFL context. Although some researchers (Kuchah et al., 2019; Hussein, 2006; Reed et
al., 2002) have pointed out the possible inappropriateness of ideas imported from more
privileged contexts for many SSA countries’ classrooms, little is still known about how
the Senegalese EFL teachers grapple with ideas and techniques developed for other
contexts.

➢ As mentioned in the findings, peer support was seen by many participants as a useful
way of learning from their experienced colleagues, especially at the beginning of their
careers. Another study could be carried out through an intervention to implement ‘peer
coaching’ within these PCs. For example, newly recruited teachers could be put under
the mentorship of experienced ones. A longitudinal study on such a professional
relationship could reveal useful insights from the Senegalese educational context.
Knowing more about mentoring within this context would benefit both the educational research community and the Senegalese education system. This could be a way to uncover how good practices from experienced teachers can be adapted and passed on to the next generation, the possible challenges that newcomers may face and ways of overcoming them, and also how mentors (experienced teachers) might learn from mentees (novice teachers). With this relationship, it can be expected that practice will continuously be generated through the professional interrelationships between ‘newcomers’ and ‘old timers’ within PCs functioning as small CoPs (Wenger, 1998; Wenger and Snyder, 2000)

➢ As mentioned earlier, doing an interdisciplinary study at the school or district level could further our understandings of how TPD is implemented more widely. For instance, a study could explore TPD with all the PCs of a small numbers of school through a multiple case studies approach. Getting data from those different PCs would allow researchers to see a variety of perspectives on how teachers of different subjects conceive TPD and how they enhance their professional learning collectively. In this way, more good practices and issues might be discovered and shared for the improvement of TPD in the Senegalese education system.

8.5 Personal reflection

In this final section of the thesis, I am offering a short reflection on this PhD journey which has been a huge learning opportunity for me. I have learnt much in various ways through the formally organised training sessions and on other occasions.

Most of my learning in this journey has happened through my relationships with my supervisory team. Our numerous meetings have been the most useful learning opportunities.
Those meetings have been moments of very fruitful exchanges between my supervisors and me. There have been times when difficult questions were put to me and sometimes I was unable to provide clear answers straightaway. However, the outcomes were always a deepening of my understandings of TPD and many aspects of doing research. Those questions were very determinant to this work in that they caused me to profoundly think about the whole study on a regular basis. They helped me to be more critical of my own perceptions and assumptions. Through our discussions and the comments that my supervisors made on my drafts, they have taught me many important things related to several aspects of academic work. I have also learnt through their ways of encouraging me to do better and supporting me with any issue that has arisen throughout these years we have been working together.

I also learnt a lot from the different doctoral training sessions offered by the OU at both faculty and university levels throughout our studies. These were from developing a research project through reviewing the literature to writing up and submitting one’s thesis. Our work in progress (WIP) sessions at WELS were also great learning opportunities. These sessions were occasions to discover much about what other PhD students are doing. I also participated in internal and external conferences which have been very useful in many ways.

My informal interactions with my colleagues were also opportunities for learning. Like a ‘think aloud’ process, these were moments when you can exteriorise your ideas to you peers, talk about your uncertainties and worries in a collegial way. It was also on those occasions that they explained their research studies and we could learn from one another. On many occasions, my own ideas became much clearer to me after trying to explain them to others.

Conducting my fieldwork also provided moments of learning to deal with the realities of field enquiry: negotiating access, building rapport with a range of people, managing time, dealing with people who are not used to participating in research studies, and many others. I also learnt
much in the process of interviewing, translating, transcribing and analysing, and writing up this thesis. All this learning will be very helpful to me and to my collaborators in any roles which I hope to take within the Senegalese education system or within other contexts.
References

Agence Nationale de la Statistique et de la Démographie, available at :


Palinkas, Lawrence A et al. (2013). Purposeful sampling for qualitative data collection and analysis in mixed method implementation research. *Administration and policy in mental health and mental health services research, 42*(5), 533–544.


Sachs, J. (2016). Teacher professionalism: why are we still talking about it?, Teachers and Teaching, 22(4), 413-425,


(Accessed 19/08/19).


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List of appendices

Appendix 1: Research approval

Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC)

From                Dr Louise Westmarland
                      The Open University Human Research Ethics Committee Email
                      louise.westmarland@open.ac.uk

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extension</th>
<th>(6) 52462</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To</td>
<td>Dame Diop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project title</td>
<td>Investigation of the Senegalese pedagogical cells of secondary school teachers of English as a form of continuing professional development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HREC ref</td>
<td>HREC/2612/Diop</td>
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<tr>
<td>AMS ref</td>
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Memorandum

Date application submitted: 22/06/2017
Date of HREC response: 17/07/2017

This memorandum is to confirm that the research protocol for the above-named research project, as submitted for ethics review, has been given a favourable opinion by the Open University Human Research Ethics Committee.

Please note the following:

1. You are responsible for notifying the HREC immediately of any information received by you, or of which you become aware which would cast doubt on, or alter, any information contained in the original application, or a later amendment which would raise questions about the safety and/or continued conduct of the research.

2. It is essential that any proposed amendments to the research are sent to the HREC for review, so they can be recorded and a favourable opinion given prior to any changes.
being implemented (except only in cases of emergency when the welfare of the participant or researcher is or may be effected).

3. Please include your HREC reference number in any documents or correspondence, also any publicity seeking participants or advertising your research, so it is clear that it has been reviewed by HREC and adheres to OU ethics review processes.

4. You are authorised to present this memorandum to outside bodies such as NHS Research Ethics Committees in support of any application for future research clearance. Also, where there is an external ethics review, a copy of the application and outcome should be sent to the HREC.

5. OU research ethics review procedures are fully compliant with the majority of grant awarding bodies and where they exist, their frameworks for research ethics.

6. At the conclusion of your project, by the date you have stated in your application, you are required to provide the Committee with a final report to reflect how the project has progressed, and importantly whether any ethics issues arose and how they were dealt with. A copy of the final report template can be found on the research ethics website - http://www.open.ac.uk/research/ethics/human-research/human-research-ethics-full-reviewprocess-and-proforma#final_report.

Best regards

Dr Louise Westmarland
The Open University Human Research Ethics Committee
www.open.ac.uk/research/ethics/
January 2017
Appendix 2: Consent form for the regional in-service teacher trainer

The Open University
Walton Hall
Milton Keynes
United Kingdom
MK7 6AA

Research Student: Dame Diop

Department: CREET/WELS

Title of study: Investigation of the Senegalese pedagogical cells of secondary school teachers of English as communities for professional development.

Introduction

You are kindly invited to voluntarily participate in a research study on continuing teacher professional development/learning within pedagogical cells (PC). Your refusal to participate will not have any negative implications.

Please read this form thoroughly and ask any questions that you may have before agreeing to be in the study. Tick the box of each point to show that you have fully understood it.

Purpose of Study

This research project is for my PhD thesis at the Open University, UK. In this research project, I want to investigate teachers’ participation in and membership of their pedagogical cells as forms of professional development/learning. The study will explore different aspects of teacher professional development within those cells such as teachers’ experiences of participation in those cells, their perceptions as members, the different practices and activities in those cells and how they relate to teacher learning and practice. It will also investigate the school culture in relation to the studied teachers’ professional development.

Read and understood: ☐

Description of the Study Procedures

If you accept to participate in this study, I will have an interview with on the policies of your institution on teacher professional development, what you, as an in-service teacher trainer, are doing/have done to implement those policies on teacher professional learning at the school level, your relationships with pedagogical cells, your views on how the selected schools’ pedagogical cells function, your own strategies to support teachers, and the challenges that you (may) face when working with teachers within their PCs. During my fieldwork, I may have short interviews with you about things that I find interesting for my research. I will audio-record our interviews and transcribe them verbatim later for my analysis.

Read and understood: ☐
Risks of being in this Study

There is no reasonable expected risk in participating in this study.

Read and understood:  

Confidentiality

This study is anonymous and strictly confidential. No information about your identity will be used when analysing the data nor included in the report. Pseudonyms will be used for the school and for all participants.

Read and understood:  

Right to Refuse or Withdraw

Your participation is voluntary, and you can withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without penalty. You can withdraw from the project at any point up to the end of the fieldwork stage of the project (24/12/18) by informing me that you no longer want to participate. If you withdraw by then, you can request that any information you have previously given is destroyed.

Read and understood:  

Right to Ask Questions

You have the right to ask questions about this research study and to have those questions answered by me before, during or after the research. If you have any further information about the study, feel free to contact me at email: .......or tel:....... You can also contact my lead supervisor, Prof Freda Wolfenden, at email: ....... 

Read and understood:  

Costs and Compensation

Your participation to this study will not have any financial cost.

Read and understood:  

Consent

Your signature below indicates that you have decided to volunteer as a research participant for this study, and that you have read and understood the information provided above. You will be given a signed and dated copy of this form to keep, along with any other printed materials deemed necessary by me.

Read and understood:  

Participant’s Name: ____________________________________________________

School’s Name and address: ________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

Participant’s signature. __________________________ Date ________________

Researcher’s signature: __________________________ Date __________________
Appendix 3: Permission request letter and consent form for the Headteacher.

(A French version was provided).

The Open University
Walton Hall
Milton Keynes
United Kingdom
MK7 6AA
Research Student: Dame Diop
Department: CREET/WELS

Dear ……………….. (name of the headteacher),

I am writing this letter requesting a permission to conduct research in your school. I am a research student at the Open University, England, UK, where I am undertaking a research project on the continuing teacher professional development of teachers of English for my PhD thesis. In the process of collecting data, I would like to interview and audio-record your teachers of English, observe them in class, participate in and observe their pedagogical cell meetings from ……to ………., and consult their recent meetings reports and your school’s policy documents. I will record the cell meetings in which I participate as a teacher of English. I will have short interviews with teachers after meetings. The interviews will be conducted at times convenient to the teachers and when they are not supposed to be teaching. The classroom observation will not be recorded and no information about students’ identities will be taken.

The research aims at getting more insights about how teachers’ participation in their pedagogical cells as forms of professional development contribute or could contribute to their learning and practice. It will explore the pedagogical cell as a community of teachers and different elements that are related to teacher learning such as teachers’ personal experiences and perceptions, how they work within those cells (practices, strategies, activities, etc.), and how the school culture relates to their professional development and learning. I expect the research to contribute to the general debate on teacher professional development by giving insights from this under-researched context and to help the different actors (teachers, trainers, school administrators, educational authorities) to improve ways of designing and implementing teacher professional development in Senegal.

If you have any questions about the research, please feel free to contact me at email:…………….. or tel: …………. You can also email my lead supervisor, Prof Freda Wolfenden, at email: ..... Many thanks in advance.

Yours sincerely

Dame Diop
To whom it may concern

Permission to conduct research.

I the undersigned, the headteacher of …………, after having read the information provided in the permission request letter, hereby authorise Mr Dame Diop, research student at the Open University of England, UK, to conduct his research in our school from ……to……… This permission allows him to interview teachers of English who agree to participate in his study, to observe them during lessons of their choice, and to participate in the PC meetings held in the period of his study. He is also allowed to access and consult our policy documents of his interest and the English pedagogical cell meeting reports. He has ensured us that all collected data will be treated with strict confidentiality and stored with maximum security measures.

School’s Name: ____________________________________________

Headteacher’s Name: ____________________________________________

Headteacher’s Signature: ___________________________ Date _______________________  
(The school’s stamp will be added)
Appendix 4: Consent form for teacher participants

The Open University
Centre of Research in Education and Educational Technology (CREET)
Walton Hall
Milton Keynes
United Kingdom
MK7 6AA

Research Student: Dame Diop
Department: Faculty of Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies (WELS)

Title of study: Investigation of the Senegalese pedagogical cells of secondary school teachers of English as platforms of continuing professional development.

Introduction
You are kindly invited to voluntarily participate in a research study on continuing teacher professional development through pedagogical cells. Your refusal to participate will not have any negative implications.

Please read this form thoroughly and ask any questions that you may have before agreeing to be in the study. Tick the box of each point to show that you have fully understood it.

Purpose of Study
This research project is for my PhD thesis at the Open University, UK. In this research project, I want to investigate teacher learning and practice in pedagogical cells as forms of teacher professional development. The study will explore different aspects of teacher professional development within those cells such as teachers’ experiences of participation in those cells, their perceptions as members, the different practices and activities in those cells and how they relate to teacher learning and practice. It will also investigate the school culture in relation to the studied teachers’ professional development.

Read and understood: □

Description of the Study Procedures
If you accept to participate in this study, I will first conduct a recorded interview (about 1hour) with you to mainly talk about your experiences in participation in PCs, your views of teaching, learning and continuing professional development, how your participation in PCs contributes to your learning, your perceptions of being a member of a PC, and so on. After that, I will observe you in class to get to know more about how you teach. I will have short conversations with you from time to time during my stay in the school particularly after some cell meetings. I will audio- and/or video-record cell meetings.

Read and understood: □
Risks of being in this Study

There is no reasonable expected risk in participating in this study.

Read and understood: []

Confidentiality

This study is anonymous and strictly confidential. No information about your identity will be used when analysing the data nor included the report. Pseudonyms will be used for the school and for all participants.

Read and understood: []

Right to Refuse or Withdraw

Your participation is voluntary and you can withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without penalty. You can withdraw from the project at any point up to the end of the fieldwork stage of the project (to be indicated for each school) by informing me that you no longer want to participate. If you withdraw by then, you can request that any information you have previously given is destroyed.

Read and understood: []

Right to Ask Questions

You have the right to ask questions about this research study and to have those questions answered by me before, during or after the research. If you want to have any further information about the study, feel free to contact me at email: ………..or tel: …………………. You can also contact my lead supervisor, Prof Freda Wolfenden, at email: ……………………

Read and understood: []

Costs and Compensation

Your participation to this study will not have any financial cost. However, in case you come to school solely for the purpose of this study, I will refund your fare on public transport.

Read and understood: []

Consent

Your signature below indicates that you have decided to volunteer as a research participant for this study, and that you have read and understood the information provided above. You will be given a signed and dated copy of this form to keep, along with any other printed materials deemed necessary by me.

Read and understood: []

Participant’s Name: __________________________________________________

School’s Name and address: ________________________________________________

________________________________

Participant’s signature: ____________________________ Date __________________

Researcher’s Signature: ____________________________ Date __________________
Appendix 5: Additional consent form for teachers of English at Dialore

The Open University
Walton Hall, Milton Keynes
United Kingdom
MK7 6AA

Research Student: Dame Diop
Department: CREET/WELS

Title of study: Investigation of the Senegalese pedagogical cells of secondary school teachers of English as communities for professional development.

Dear All,

I am kindly asking you for a permission to use your WhatApps group as a source of data for my PhD research study in you agreed to participate (please refer to the consent I gave to you). If you agree to my request, I will look at your activities within that group in relation to teacher professional development through pedagogical cells. Please feel free to ask for more information if need be.

Once again, many thanks for your voluntary participation in this project.

Please write your name and sign below as an indication of your approval.

Members                                                                                           Signatures
1……………………………………                                        …………………………………..
2……………………………………                                        …………………………………..
3……………………………………                                        …………………………………..
4……………………………………                                        …………………………………..
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7……………………………………                                        …………………………………..
8……………………………………                                        …………………………………..
9……………………………………                                        …………………………………..

Date: ……………………………………………

Researcher’s Signature:
Appendix 6: An example of a DPC meeting report (identifying information deleted)

I- Compte rendu de CAP

Points forts

En ce jeudi 16 Mars de l’an 2017 la cellule anglaise d’animation pédagogique du département de … s’est réunie au Lycée de….. Les travaux de la cellule ont démarré à 11 heures 20 minutes. A la cérémonie d’ouverture, le coordonnateur de la cellule locale de l’établissement, Monsieur ……, a souhaité la bienvenue aux participants. Le coordonnateur de la cellule départementale et le formateur en anglais ont témoigné du dynamisme de la cellule locale et de la régularité des collègues de l’établissement aux cellules d’animation pédagogique. Ils ont aussi remercié l’administration du lycée à sa tête le Proviseur de l’accueil chaleureux qui a été réservé à la cellule. Le Censeur, Monsieur…… a, pour sa part, félicité la cellule départementale pour avoir choisi son établissement. Il a rappelé l’arrêté ministériel qui rend la participation aux cellules pédagogiques obligatoires pour sensibiliser davantage les collègues à participer à la formation continue. Il a enfin magnifié le dynamisme des professeurs d’anglais dans l’animation pédagogique avant de déclarer ouvert les travaux de la troisième cellule d’animation pédagogique du département de …..

Après la cérémonie protocolaire, le formateur a informé sur la possibilité d’organiser une cellule une seconde cellule d’animation pédagogique au niveau régional au mois de Mai prochain.

Après cette information du formateur, Monsieur ……. a délivré une présentation en PowerPoint sur le thème : « Skill-based Assessment in effective learning » pour une durée d’une heure 20 minutes (1h30mm) suivie d’une plénière et d’activités pratiques de 40 minutes.

A la cérémonie de clôture, le coordonnateur et le formateur ont remercié Monsieur…… de la qualité de sa présentation et de la pertinence du thème choisi. Le Proviseur a pour sa part félicité la coordination de la cellule départementale, remercié tous les participants et en leur souhaitant un bon retour avant de déclarer clos les travaux de la cellule d’animation pédagogique vers 15 heures 30 minutes.

Difficultés

Les principales difficultés sont :

Le refus de certains collègues de déférer à la convocation de la cellule d’animation pédagogique sans aucun prétexte valable.

Le retard noté sur l’heure de démarrage des activités de la cellule.

Le manque de moyens de déplacement du formateur pour assister aux cellules au niveau de (Guindy and Jamm).
II- Recommandations

Le formateur régional dans la discipline anglaise et le coordonnateur de la cellule départementale de Bambey recommandent aux autorités académiques:

De bien sévir pour forcer les enseignants à participer à la cellule d’animation pédagogique du département quel que soit le lieu d’accueil conformément à l’arrêté n° 003317 MEPEMSLN/SG/DEMSG du 15/11/2011 qui stipule que la présence des professeurs aux cellules d’animation pédagogique est obligatoire.

De gérer le déplacement du formateur pour qu’il puisse participer aux cellules de (Guindy and Jamm).

Le Coordonnateur de la Cellule

Le Formateur

Pièce Jointe : Liste des présents et liste des absents

Ampliation :

I.A
IEF
Archives
## Appendix 7: Interview Schedules for teacher participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of exploration</th>
<th>Interview Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-Participants’ motivation to become teachers</td>
<td>1. Tell me about how you became a teacher of English. What motivated you to choose teaching as an occupation and how do you find this job?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Teachers’ ways of teaching English (implementation of CLT, learner-centred pedagogy, etc.)</td>
<td>2. Can you describe a lesson that really went well? How did the students respond? Was that a typical lesson? Why did you teach it that way?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-The challenges that teachers face in their daily work and what they do to overcome them.</td>
<td>3. Is this how you taught when you started teaching? If yes, why is it always so? If no, what are the main things that have changed? What made you make such changes in your teaching?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Teachers’ attitudes in relation to reflection.</td>
<td>4. How does the system allow you to teach English the way you wish? Is the approach (CLT) Ok for you? the time allotted? its weight in exams? etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. As teachers we all face challenges sometimes, tell me about those you have ever faced in your career? Who/what did you resort to overcome those challenges? Obviously, teaching does not always go the way we like. Do you ever evaluate your lessons or talk to your colleagues about them especially when they are less successful? If yes, how? If no, why not?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. Can you describe what a pedagogical cell (as group of teachers working together) represents for you?

2. Tell me about your participation in pedagogical cells in your career. How do you find it?

3. Can you describe the most interesting activities to you amongst those you have attended/done in pedagogical cells and why?

4. I have noticed that you …/You said that…… Why do/did you choose (or are/were you given) this (that) role in PC?

5. Have you ever implemented what you learned from your PC in your classroom practice?

6. Tell me about when you find a discussion in a PC interesting to you. How often does it happen? Who do you usually talk to in your PC and why? Are everybody’s views important within the cell?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>7.</strong> As a teacher with many years/few years of experience, how do you see yourself within your pedagogical cell?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **8.** Has your participation in your PC made any changes in you as a teacher? Do you consider yourself as a different person, to some extent, because of working with other colleagues of your pedagogical cell?  
   - If yes, in which ways? Can you elaborate please?  
   - If no, why not? |
| **1.** What differences or similarities have you noticed between the different pedagogical cells you have been a member of so far? |
| **2.** Which school do you see as the most appropriate for teacher professional development and why? |
| **3.** As teachers, do you feel supported by the Senegalese society, your community, and your school?  
   Does this have any effect on you as a teacher (your motivation to improve yourself, your relationships with students, etc.?)  
   Can you elaborate please……….? |
| **NB: Follow-up questions will be asked throughout the interview whenever necessary** |
Appendix 8: Interview with the regional in-service teacher trainer

Area of inquiry: policies of your institution on teacher professional development, strategies/actions to implement those policies at the school level, your relationships with pedagogical cells, your views on how the selected schools’ pedagogical cells function, and possible challenges that teachers (may) face when working within their PCs.

Please tell me about your career: how you became an in-service teacher trainer, why you have chosen the position.

As you know one of the main current priorities of the Ministry of Education is quality teaching and they see teacher professional development as an important element for that. At your institution, what are your policies on teacher professional development?

What approaches do you use in your role of supporting teachers?

As an in-service teacher trainer, how do you work with teachers at the school level? What relationships do you have?

For you, what is a PC? What is it for?

What actions have you taken/are taking to encourage teacher collaboration within their PCs?

What types of activities do you encourage teachers to do within their PCs for a sustainable professional development?

You told me in our previous talks that the English PC of Dialore and Lehar are dynamic ones. On what do you base such a view?

Are there any challenges related to the functioning of teachers’ PCs that they talk about to you or that you have noticed while playing your role?

NB: Follow-up questions will be asked throughout the interview whenever necessary
## Appendix 9: Interview questions for the National Coordinator of TPD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of exploration</th>
<th>Interview Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Directorate in charge of professional Development at the Ministry of Education (DFC), general understandings and ways of implementing TPD. | - Tell me about your institution.  
- What are the main reference documents (e.g. policies, decrees, international commitment, etc.)?  
- How do you implement your teacher professional development policies? (at national, regional, and local levels). |
| 2. Background and role as the national coordinator for professional development of teachers of English. | - Tell me about your background.  
- How did you come to this position?  
- What are your main objectives?  
- What activities have you been involved in the past three years? |
| 3. Current challenges of the ministry of Education and measures taken to overcome those. | - What are the current challenges of the MoE?  
- What does quality teaching/learning mean to you?  
- How do you take this into account in your teacher professional development activities? |
| 4. Organisation of TPD | - What is the rationale behind this organisation?  
- What role do the different actors play in TPD? |
| 5. Pedagogical cells | - What does a PC mean to you?  
- What do you expect teachers to do in their inter-school PCs and school PCs?  
- How do you follow up on this policy of TPD through PCs? |
| 6. Issues within ELT in Senegal and actions taken | - Are there current issues in ELT in Senegal (e.g. more students’ taking it as LV2 in the BAC)?  
- What has your institution done in relation to this nationwide issue?  

*NB: Follow-up questions will be asked throughout the interview whenever necessary*  

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Appendix 10: Interview schedules with the deputy headteacher of Dialore

**Area of inquiry:** Values promoted within the school, management of teachers, School’s policies for teacher professional development, School’s plan for excellence, role of pedagogical cells in achieving the school’s ambitions, strategies to make teachers work together, challenges faced by pedagogical cells, recurrent elements in PC meetings reports, etc.

**Questions**

1. Tell me about how you became a deputy headteacher and why you have chosen this position.

2. What are the main values that your school promotes for everybody at the school, students included?

3. Tell me about your school’s policies for teacher professional development.

4. What have you done to implement those policies? What strategies have you used/are using to support teachers at your school? Have you face any challenges?

5. You have a plan for excellence in your school to be achieved by 2022, what role do the PCs of your school play for the achievement of your goals?

6. What do you do here, in terms of incentives, to promote teacher collaboration within their PCs?

7. As the line manager of teachers, you regularly receive their PC meeting reports, is there anything that is recurrently mentioned in them?

8. I have been with the English cell of your school for some time now, I have noticed that they do many things together, but they have mentioned a number of challenges such as a lack of resources, large classes and so on, what have you done to help them overcome those difficulties?

9. What are your views of the way the English PC is currently functioning?

10. In my interviews, some teachers have told me that they used to meet more frequently than now, what do you think explains this scarcity of meetings?

Etc.

*NB:* Follow-up questions will be asked throughout the interview whenever necessary