

## Teachers' Collegiality: A Professional Development Tool for Algerian Novice Teachers

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### **Abstract:**

**Introduction:** This research aims to discover the role of collegiality, as one of the internationally recognized tools for continuous professional development, in the professional growth journey of both novices and experts to give an insight into how effective, forming and maintaining healthy positive relationships, is to novice teachers per se.

**Methods:** The research used a mixed-method approach to investigate the research questions. It included 18 teachers from the Department of English, Blida2 University; 8 novices, and 10 experts. The research used two questionnaires; one dedicated to novices to discover the role of collegiality in their professional development and the second one to experts to investigate the contribution of collegiality in their journey of professional growth and skill development.

**Results:** In line with the data gathered, the results indicate that teachers' collegiality is reasonably favorable by novices and highly recommended by expert teachers.

**Discussion:** Novices tend to maintain positive relationships in the workplace as they believe they would expand their knowledge and skills repertoire and help them cope with the exhaustive emotional turmoil of stress and discomfort the new profession's burden unfolds on them. Expert teachers, despite expressing not having benefitted particularly from collegiality in their professional development journey, tend to support and advocate for it for novice teachers today. They also tend to see themselves as responsible for the various pedagogical and psychological help they provide for novices to facilitate the challenging journey they face.

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**Limitations:** Despite its general concern among all teachers from different fields, the research was limited to a convenient sample from the Department of English, Blida2 Lounici Ali University.

**Conclusions:** The research on collegiality adds to the literature on continuous professional development tools and is informative to teachers of all levels to invest in their collegial relationships for the pedagogical and psychological accompaniment of novice teachers per se.

**Key words:** collegiality, continuous professional development, positive relationships, novice teachers, expert teachers.

## **Introduction**

Teaching is one of the most challenging and stressful professions. Novice teachers tend to resort to using different continuous professional development tools to keep themselves updated with knowledge and skills as well as motivated enough to endure the hardships of the profession. Collegiality has been one of the most acknowledged social and interactive tools in professional development that has an impact on novice teachers. Some scholars would favor collegiality as an effective and enjoyable social means for learning and development over other tools (Smith, 2015). The forming of relationships among individuals in the same workplace is inevitable and a socially primitive need within humans; however, taking those relationships to a professional level to benefit from them both pedagogically and psychologically requires that such a tool is systemized so that it could target the professional development of individuals. Therefore, the present research attempts to discover through the experiences of both novices and expert teachers in the English Department of Blida2 University the role of collegiality as a professional development means. It aims to discover the impacts of both positive and negative relationships on the journey of novices in the aspiration to become effective teachers. While novices are expected to provide their current experiences with collegiality, expert teachers are also approached on the same encounter to reflect on their past journey from being novices to their current state of expertise and how collegiality contributed to their professional development; this is to give an insight on the relevancy of collegiality from the past to the present from the experiences of Algerian teachers.

## **1 Literature review**

### *1.1 Novice teachers and professional development*

Teaching is the backbone of the educational system. Teachers have a multifaceted responsibility to fulfill. They are expected to apply both techniques and methods to impart knowledge to students, and they are also to be role models for them. With this in mind, teaching becomes a relatively difficult job. Halford (1998) describes teaching as “the profession that eats its young” (cited in Fantilli & McDougall, 2009, p. 814), implying that its intricacy gets the worst out of its beginning teachers.

Novices, or beginning teachers, are those who are newly recruited, or those who have been in the profession for up to five years (Michel, 2013). They are usually characterized as those who are followers and not leaders; they follow rules strictly as they are. Thus, Berliner (1988, p. 2) has described novice teachers as “rational, relatively inflexible, and tend to conform to whatever rules and procedures they were told to follow”. Berliner emphasized the fact that being a novice is a stage of learning and acquiring experience at the heart of practicing the profession. Novice teachers tend to find the first initial years as the most critically difficult, deterministic, and shocking (Veenman, 1984; Zhukova, 2018).

Novice teachers may confront difficulties on varying pedagogical and psychological dimensions, including classroom management issues, dealing with administrative papers, and preparing for the class (Bickmore, 2013). In addition to difficulties in keeping students motivated and handling parents' involvement (He & Cooper, 2011). Furthermore, teachers have to deal with the emotional stress and burnout that accompany the workload and failure to handle pedagogical issues (Gavish & Friedman, 2010; Lindqvist, 2019). Thus, various challenges faced by novice teachers stem from issues deeply rooted in the multifaceted nature of the teaching profession. Therefore, beginning teachers can only be seen as both emotionally and practically unprepared for teaching (Koca, 2016).

To survive the profession of teaching, beginners tend to engage in continuous learning to keep updating their skills and knowledge to find practical solutions to cope with the constantly occurring challenges. Continuous professional development known as CPD is an ongoing learning that incorporates the use of different methods and activities that allow teachers to discover new knowledge and learn different skills to apply in the teaching practice (Collin et al., 2019). As a consequence, the relevancy of engaging in ongoing learning is prevalent among teachers, especially beginning ones who seem to face various challenges.

The international average participation rate showed that teachers engage in activities, such as informal dialogue with peers, reading professional literature,

education conferences and seminars, professional development networks, individual and collaborative research, mentoring and peer observation and qualification programs (OECD, 2019). In correspondence with these results, nationally reported major CPD activities Algerian teachers engaged in are “coordination meetings of teachers, study days, conferences, debates and informal conversation with peers” (Missoum, 2015, p. 171). Of all these activities, it was reported that the most participated-in activity was informal discussions with colleagues with an average of 93% worldwide records (OECD, 2019).

### *1.2 Novice teachers and collegiality*

In the language of Physics, a lot of energy is produced when protons and neutrons combine to form a nucleus. This energy, called binding energy, gives a lot of stability to the atom. Similarly, when teachers bond together, great binding happens within the school community (Ghamrawi, 2013, p. 181).

In alignment with its widespread recognition as a CPD tool, collegiality was also praised for its significant impact on teachers' growth (Maciejowska et al., 2015). It is found that teachers resort to the relationship with their colleagues, alongside other tools, for the sake of developing professionally (Missoum, 2015; Wiegierová, 2017; OECD, 2019).

Teachers' collegiality is the mutual engagement with other colleagues in the workplace on different dimensions, intellectual, moral, political, social, and emotional (Jarzabkowski, 2002). It is the establishment of workplace relationships that are based on collaboration, supportiveness, and trust among its members (Dawson et al., 2022). Essentially, it is the absence of individualization in the workplace atmosphere and the presence of communities of practice, professional relationships, and individuals exchanging various forms of help and assistance for professional purposes among teachers.

In collegiality, teachers tend to help one another on different levels; pedagogical and psychological. Teachers reported engaging in the exchange of materials, discipline strategies, learning activities, individualization (learning problems of individual students), evaluation, methods, objectives, reinforcing, lecturing, questioning (when and how to ask appropriate questions related to the lesson), and room organization (Zahorik, 1987). In addition, positive and purposeful relationships affect aspects of well-being like reducing the consequences of painful and negative experiences and helping to create more positive ones (Zaki, 2016). On the emotional side, expert teachers assist their less knowledgeable peers through pieces of advice and encouragement (Jin et al., 2019). Learning from others can be manifested in the sharing of tangible and practical strategies, leading to a healthier positive teaching experience. Thus, positive relationships are prevalent among novices.

*1.3 The importance of positive relationships to novice teachers*

An environment filled with positivity is an environment that gives the image of healthy and productive surroundings. The importance of positive interaction between individuals is contagious; teachers, students, and even the institution benefit from teachers' positive relationships. McLaughlin & Talbert (1993), in their distinguished study with 900 teachers coming from 16 different high schools, mention that an environment full of positive relationships between teachers has reported high levels of efficacy, creativity, problem-solving, and a sense of responsibility toward updating about discovering the unknown in the matter of teaching profession. Colleagues working together and creating a supportive educational environment may decrease the levels of tension and pressures that come naturally with the teaching profession (Jarzabkowski, 2002). Collegiality calls for the involvement of many individuals in solving educational dilemmas together; thus, creating a sense of belonging in the workplace (Shah, 2012).

Collegiality is important as it yields various outcomes for novices per se as well. Knowing the challenges they face, novice teachers reported that among their coping strategies for teaching difficulties and tensions was relying on their significant colleagues' assistance (Pillen et al., 2013). Not only that but Shah (2012, p. 1243) mentions that positive relationships make teachers "avoid the sink-or-swim, trial-and-error mode that novice teachers usually face during the initial stages of their career". In this vein, collegiality becomes a crucial part of the professional development of novice teachers even more adequate and relatable than other CPD activities (Smith, 2015).

*1.4 The effects of negative relationships on novice teachers*

Not all environments filled with a positive atmosphere would promote growth. If positive relationships exist and have an influence on teachers' development, then the counterpart is present as well. Negative relationships can be defined as the type of relations that are characterized by disunity, conflict, disagreement, and detachment instead of uniting people and investing in their collective productivity. In general, such relationships are not welcomed in the workplace of any profession. The scholar Catana (2015, p.1) has claimed that negativity in the workplace results in displaying nervousness, unhealthy emotions, and decreased professional performance, she argued that "the conflicts negatively influence the personal image of some teachers, and even creates isolation for some of them; also, create demotivation and lack of interest for the school issues, nervousness and an unfriendly atmosphere in the teachers' room, manifestation of professional vanity, etc." Having negative encounters with colleagues not only harms the teacher himself, but it misdirects how discussions about school and learning issues are addressed among teachers. People who have to deal with

negative relationships, like animosity and conflicts in the workplace, are likely to demonstrate an attitude of refusal and dissatisfaction about the job they are in (Morrison & Nolan, 2007). In his study, Zahorik (1987) declared that 43% of teachers viewed the teaching profession as personal and private; therefore, discussion and sharing were seen as things that could work for one but not for others; so, each teacher should survive with his efforts. To this end, negative relationships among teachers seem to intervene with teachers' overall opportunities for professional growth and it stands as a barrier to any possible social activity that could add to their lifelong learning.

## **2 Methodology**

### *2.1 Research objective and questions*

The present research attempts to investigate, through the experiences of both novices and expert teachers, the role of collegiality as a CPD tool in the professional growth of novice teachers. It aims to discover the impacts of both positive and negative relationships on the journey of novices in the aspiration to become effective teachers as well as to investigate the relevancy of collegiality to expert teachers' journey of professional growth.

Considering the objective of the research, the research questions were formed as follows:

1. To what extent do novice teachers consider collegiality as a CPD tool?
2. How do positive relationships among teachers in the workplace affect novice teachers' professional development?
3. How do negative relationships among teachers in the workplace interfere with novice teachers' professional development?
4. To what extent did collegiality contribute to the professional development of expert teachers when they were novices?
5. What is expert teachers' perspective of collegiality as a CPD tool for novices?

### *2.2 Research participants*

The sample of the present research was drawn from the English Department at Blida2 Lounici Ali University. Initially, a total of 32 teachers were approached to participate in the research as the sample. However, only 18 teachers, including novices and experts, responded, resulting in a final sample size with a response rate of 56.25%. Convenience sampling was utilized considering the researchers' affiliation with the department, allowing for easy access to potential participants. Teachers were approached via email using Google Forms after a formal request for the teachers' professional contacts from a colleague in the department.

Novice teachers with five years of experience or less are approached to reflect on their current experience with collegiality and its impact on their professional growth. In addition, expert teachers with six years or more are also reached to reflect on their beginning years and the contribution of collegiality in their professional development journey.

### *2.3 Research instruments*

The present survey makes use of a mixed-method approach to analyze the data obtained from the research instruments. Two questionnaires were designed to address the research problem with teachers of different experience levels (novices and expert teachers).

The first questionnaire was conducted and submitted to the novice teachers via email using Google Forms. In a survey where participants' reflection on their teaching experience is needed, a questionnaire was seen as a more relevant and appealing tool to get data from novices. They are expected to reflect on their current collegiality experience and their perspective on positive and negative relationships in the workplace. The questionnaire consists of two parts. The first part included questions dedicated to positive relationships and their impact on novice teachers' quest for professional development. The second part included questions dedicated to negative relationships among teachers and their impact on novice teachers' overall growth and professional development.

The second questionnaire was designed to get the perspective of expert teachers on collegiality in the workplace, and how it contributed to their development. They would inform about the role of collegiality in their journey from novice to expert. The questionnaire consists of three parts. The first part is mainly a question about the years of experience of the participants. The second part is a set of questions to get data on experienced teachers' perspectives on collegiality. The third part is also a set of questions to reach the reflection of teachers on the role of collegiality in their development.

Since the exact number of novices and experts was unidentified, the researchers sent both questionnaires via email to the entirety of the sample, demanding that teachers with 5 or fewer years of experience complete the novice teachers' questionnaire and those with more than 5 years to answer the experts' related questionnaire. After three months, the researchers were able to collect 8 novice teachers' completed questionnaires, and 10 experts' completed questionnaires from the sample making it a result of 18 answers from 32 teachers in total.

### **3 Findings and discussion**

#### *3.1 Limitation of the research*

Before presenting and interpreting the findings, we would like to outline some limitations of the survey. In an attempt to reach an understanding of the issue of how collegiality is taken by Algerian teachers as a means of professional development, the research was conducted with a sample from the English Department at Blida2 Lounici Ali University. Since the research issue, at its core, is a more generalized concern among teachers, the selection of the sample from the English Department does not reflect any bias or prejudgment that collegiality is only related to teachers of English. It only mirrors the fact that the researchers want to understand this issue within the department to which they belong; therefore, a more generalized sample of teachers from different departments can be reached to understand further current perceptions of collegiality and its effects on all departments if possible.

#### *3.2 Presenting novice teachers' perceptions of collegiality*

##### **3.2.1 Novices' years of experience**

Following the method of administering the questionnaires, 8 teachers identified themselves as novices by responding to the online novice teachers' questionnaire about the effect of positive and negative impacts of collegiality on their professional development. The following table displays the number of years these novice teachers have in teaching:

Table 1

#### *Novice teachers' years of experience*

<u>Years of Experience</u>	<u>Number of Teachers</u>	<u>Percentage of Respondents</u>
2 years	5 teachers	27.77%
4 years	3 teachers	16.66%

These teachers served less than 5 years in teaching which makes them, according to Berliner's (1988) stages of skill development, novice teachers. Teachers with less than 3 years of experience comprise most of the respondents with an average of 27.77% participation. The percentage of novices comprises 44.43% of the total respondents.



### 3.2.2 Novice teachers' perspective on positive/ negative relationships

Regarding the inquiry into whether teachers form workplace relationships within their teaching department, all novice teachers unanimously confirmed that such relationships are indeed established among teachers. This shows that relationships exist and that the workplace to which these teachers belong is not an isolated atmosphere. Do teachers see a link between this acknowledged collegiality and their own professional development? This question was addressed to delve deep into understanding the dimensionality of collegiality. Most of the respondents affirmed seeing a link between the two aforementioned variables and few others have demonstrated how that is practically possible as one said *“building teachers’ collegiality imposes exchange of knowledge and experiences and thus leads to professional development”*. Another participant mentioned, *“It helps in collaborative works such as lesson designs”*. From the previous answers and comments, we can discover that establishing relationships in the workplace is not only a socially primitive need within individuals just to get to know each other, but it also incorporates a need to develop professionally and enhance work-related requirements and teachers seem to realize this dimension in collegiality; that it adds to one’s repertoire of knowledge and experience, and that it provides an environment for collaboration. This result from our research conforms with other studies in this field which see that collegiality is of both psychological and pedagogical relevance to the teachers (Zahorik, 1987; Zaki, 2016; Jin et al., 2019).

Since professional development tools are numerous and various, teachers seem to make use of different tools during their development like those which were mentioned by the researcher Missoum (2015) in his investigation of the activities Algerian teachers engage in which included “coordination meetings of teachers, study days, conferences, debates and informal conversation with peers”. In line with Smith's (2015) claim that collegiality is more adequate and relevant than other tools, participants were asked about their opinion concerning how effective they see collegiality in comparison to other tools they used. All teachers responded that they perceive collegiality as very important, yet none gave a detailed comparison between collegiality and other tools. While this result does not clearly and accurately draw a line between collegiality and other CPD tools like the research conducted by Smith (2015) which distinguished collegiality as the most prevalent and effective tool, it still informs of its high value and importance to teachers’ professional growth. Ergo, some respondents illustrated how the two concepts relate as one stated, *“Building friendly relationships based on collaboration and interaction among teachers allows... to acquire new skills, become more effective in teaching, and learn from each other’s experiences, which help... promote... professional development.”* Another one mentioned, *“a dynamic sphere of teaching can open the door to innovative ways of teaching as*

well as developmental methods and techniques to deal with students' needs". From the above responses, we can infer that teachers indeed find collegiality effective; especially when it concerns creating an atmosphere of support and help within the workplace.

Despite this insightful feedback on collegiality and its effect on professional development, only one participant, with anticipation, raised a deeper issue regarding the nature of the relationships being the motive behind professional development as he said, "*Professional development depends on healthy relationships among teachers.*" Thus, we understand that even if teachers form relationships and benefit from them on some level, it only depends on whether the relationships are healthy or not.

This result transfers the discussion from talking merely about the effect of collegiality and professional development to going deeper to discuss the nature of relationships themselves. A question arises whether the type of relationships established in the workplace affects the outcomes of professional development in a way. Thus, teachers are initially asked how positive and negative the relationships are within their workplace. The following diagrams demonstrate teachers' responses in this regard.

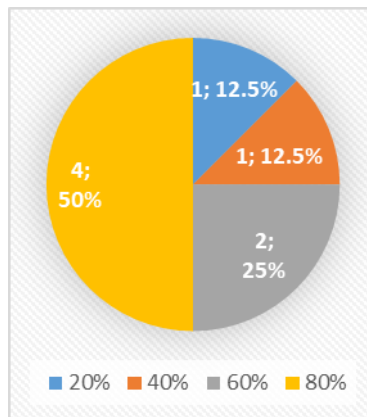


Figure 1. Teachers' positive relationships.

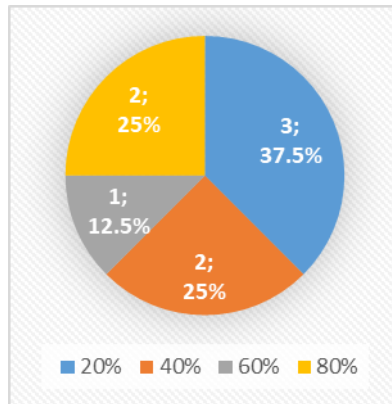


Figure 2. Teachers' positive relationships.

Figures 1 and 2 illustrate teachers' perceptions of the relationships within their workplace. When interpreting percentages, with 20% and 40% considered as low percentages for either positive or negative relationships, and 60% and 80% considered as high percentages for either positive or negative relationships, it becomes apparent that a significant majority of teachers believe the relationships in their workplace are characterized by positivity rather than negativity. On average, 75% of respondents reveal that their relationships are 60 % to 80% positive, while 37.5% of respondents reveal that their relationships are 60% to 80% negative.

Teachers were also asked to interpret the positivity, if any is or could be so, with its contribution to professional growth. Most teachers advocated that positive relationships are a force for wellness and improvement. One participant mentioned *“The positive atmosphere between colleagues helps me feel comfortable in doing my job and to engage myself in new experiences to develop myself. This positivity is also a source of motivation leading novice teachers to develop themselves professionally even better. Gaining more experience in the workplace is also a result of positive relationships among teachers.”* The comment indicates that positivity in collegial relationships yields significant benefits, as it leads to increased motivation, comfort, engagement, and accumulation of experience among individuals. This result aligns with Jarzabkowski’s research (2002), which proposed a correlation between positivity among colleagues and a decrease in the levels of tension and pressure felt by teachers. Another teacher stated *“My first experience as a novice teacher, I was responsible for four groups from different levels. Yet, the pieces of advice I received along with productive feedback, empowered me to push further to*

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*aspire and prosper more and more. This is all due to the positive impact sprung from my workplace relationship with doctors and professors.”* From the participant’s comment, we can infer that positive relationships in the workplace reduce the burdens of workload on novice teachers. This observation resonates with the findings of Pillen et al. (2013) in their study on coping strategies among novice teachers, emphasizing the reliance of these individuals on support from their more experienced colleagues. Other respondents held on to very short comments like “*crucial*”, or “*yes, it contributes*” without any further details on the matter.

Teachers were also approached to comment on the possibility of relationships being negative and how could that interfere with their professional development. All novice teachers confirmed that negativity among teachers in the workplace plays a vital role in hindering their capacities to develop or hope for development or any change. One participant concluded, “*It hinders one from being optimistic about any positive change that might possibly take place. Therefore, it reduces the degree of engagement and productivity.*” From his comment, negative relationships block the possibilities of positive change and create an atmosphere of disengaged and unproductive individuals. Another teacher commented on negative teachers who instead of supporting others, encourage bad behaviors and advise novices to some unethical practices “*Many teachers take the learning process as something forsaken and unvalued. Some teachers went to the extent of advising me to perform less and keep the students on their toes where they do all the work for me. Of course, I disagreed with this and I was forced to avoid these types of conversations. This led me to be uncomfortable in the workplace where I had to change my way if I encountered certain teachers. As novice teachers, we are new to teaching; therefore, we were expecting to be guided by teachers we thought were our role models especially if we were already taught by them. Unfortunately, the amount of negativity and bare minimum responsibility have led me to somewhat lose faith in the establishment. That being said, it is best to avoid such teachers and focus on the positive ones and be the best version of oneself.*” The extent to which negative relationships affect novices’ enthusiastic desire for positive change and faith in their colleagues is threatening, especially since the requirement for collegiality to serve as a professional development tool is to provide a climate of collaborative work and promote shared goals among the members. From the comment above, we can see that negativity also creates a state of isolation in which teachers feel uncomfortable to pursue with such relationships. Another teacher confirmed this isolation when she said “*I have never allowed the negative relationship to affect my profession as a novice teacher. Rather, I try to find solutions or distance myself if things get serious. However, I believe that the negative relationship at the workplace causes stress and less self-confidence, lowers the teacher's motivation, and makes it difficult to*

*improve academic performance, or professional development.”* One of the solutions this teacher resorted to is distancing herself from negative relationships, which could be practically considered a good solution; however, it also demonstrates how negativity disengages teachers from one another and makes the possibility of benefiting from the experiences of others unreachable. She also mentions that negativity among colleagues causes psychological deterioration like low confidence, more stress, demotivation and difficulty in developing or growing professionally. This result conforms with Catana's (2015) research which displayed negativity among teachers as a major source of isolation, discomfort, and an unfriendly workplace environment. Another respondent stated, *“Novices are likely to stop at a given point of development as a result of the absence of a positive atmosphere in the workplace.”* This comment implies that as much as positive relationships push new recruiters to develop professionally, negative relationships could impede possibilities and opportunities of development. In this vein, negativity is unwelcome among teachers in the same workplace to avoid its damaging effects on novices. The ultimate solution novice teachers resort to when facing negative relationships with their colleagues is isolation; thus, displaying and developing antisocial behaviors that would probably prevent them from seeing that interacting with colleagues is an opportunity for growth.

According to novice teachers, the nature of relationships significantly influences the course of professional development; as positive or negative relationships have the power to either sustain a teacher's enthusiasm and resilience or lead to disengagement and unproductivity. Engaging in positive relationships seems to make teachers more comfortable and motivated working on such a stressful job as teaching, benefiting from the experiences of others, applying them to one's practice, and reducing the burdens of workload. On the other hand, negativity among colleagues tends to trap teachers into psychological deterioration as they lose hope of positive change in the educational system or hope to develop as novices. It also prevents the educational and professional environment of the institution from productivity and engagement of its members. It could ultimately lead to a state of isolation among teachers and dismantle all opportunities for collaborative and supportive group work. Novices tend to develop professionally from collegial relationships only if they create an atmosphere of encouragement and positivity for them.

### *3.3 Presenting expert teachers' perspective on collegiality*

In this research, expert teachers were also approached so that their perspective on the impact of collegiality on their professional development adds value to the literature on collegiality, and provides a look into past experiences with collegiality to current novice teachers.

### 3.3.1 Expert teachers' years of experience

Following the method by which participants of the research were approached, 10 respondents identified themselves as experts by completing the questionnaire targeted towards teachers with more than 5 years of experience seeking to look into their perspective on the contribution of collegiality to their journey from being a novice to their current level of expertise. The following table shows the number of years these expert teachers have in teaching.

Table 2

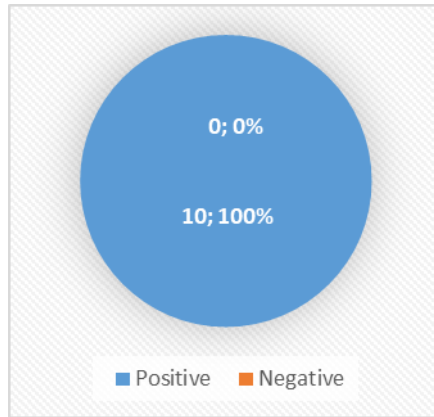
#### *Expert teachers' years of experience*

<u>Years of Experience</u>	<u>Number of Teachers</u>	<u>Percentage of Respondents</u>
6-10 years	5 teachers	27.77%
11-20 years	4 teachers	22.22%
21-30 years	1 teacher	5.55%

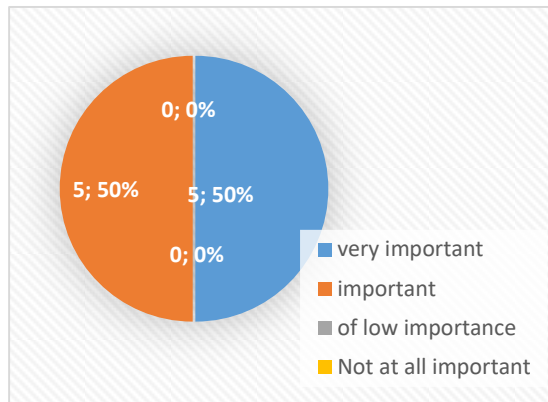
It seems evident from Table 2 that the majority of participating teachers have around 10 to over 20 years of experience in the teaching profession. The teacher with the least experience has served for 7 years, while the one with the most experience has served for 27 years. Expert respondents constitute 55.54% of all participants in this study, indicating a slightly higher presence compared to novices.

### 3.3.2 Expert teachers' perspective on collegiality

In what concerns teachers' experience of positive or negative relationships in the workplace, teachers were asked about the nature of their current professional relationships. Not only that but they were also asked how important collegiality is to the continuous professional development of teachers. The following figures display the answers of expert teachers on the two questions.



*Figure 3.* The nature of the relationships.

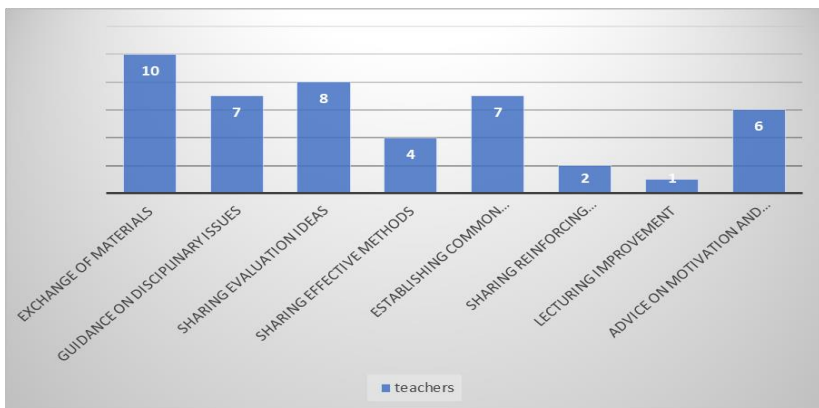


*Figure 4.* The importance of the relationships.

Following the results demonstrated in Figures 3 and 4, expert teachers seem to be experiencing well-mannered positive relationships, as none claimed to have a negative relationship in the workplace. In addition, teachers advocate for the relevance and importance of collegiality to teachers' CPD. It could be due to the belief that collegiality is significant; expert teachers tend to maintain healthy positive relationships with their colleagues.

Given the extensive experience of the respondents and their recognition of the relevance of collegiality, the research also seeks to examine whether these experts assist their less knowledgeable colleagues and in which specific areas they offer help. All respondents affirmed their assistance to their fellow teachers. This affirmation indicates that the level of expertise of teachers transcends their duty from merely classroom-based and student-related to embracing broader responsibilities, where they also help novices overcome challenges and develop professionally.

The following figure displays the different areas in which expert teachers provide help. It includes 8 areas of assistance.

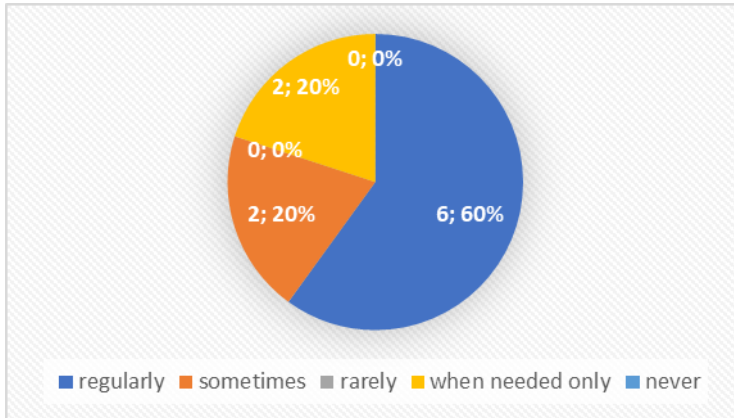


*Figure 5.* Expert teachers' areas of assistance to colleagues.

Through Figure 5, we can see that most expert teachers provide help in five major areas; exchanging materials, sharing evaluation ideas, guiding other peers on disciplinary issues, establishing common objectives, and giving advice on motivation and emotional experiences. The previous reveals, on the individual and personal level, that expert teachers seem interested and engaged in cooperative actions (exchanging materials, sharing evaluation ideas, and establishing common objectives), considerate, and understanding (guiding other peers on disciplinary issues and giving advice on motivation and emotional experiences). The latter illustrates an existing diverse range of areas where teachers appear to recognize the varying pedagogical and psychological needs of their colleagues, and actively strive to address them.



Understanding the types of help provided is essential and since the previous figure proved that teachers do indeed help in different areas, research is also interested in how often help occurs among colleagues.



*Figure 6.* The frequency of help among teachers.

Figure 06 shows that most teachers provide help regularly. This highlights the fact that expert teachers are not in service of other colleagues only when called to. The help then does not happen because of a need but because of a necessity. The situation of expert teachers being aware of the importance of establishing collegiality for professional development and of their role in the process of novices' learning seems to contribute to the deliberate and constant provision of help and the state of 'being there' to others.

3.3.4 Reflections on the role of collegiality in the journey from novice to expert  
A look into the role of collegiality in the professional development of these expert teachers and how it contributed to them evolving from the novice state to their current expertise state is also required in this research. To understand their past experiences with collegiality, expert teachers were asked to what extent they saw collegiality as effective in comparison to other CPD activities that they used. Over half of the respondents expressed that collegiality was not as effective as other tools with two who denied any effect at all. This suggests that historically, collegiality was not widely seen as a successful practice among teachers. The following question was whether these teachers received help when they were novices from other teachers or not. More than a half claimed having indeed received help from other teachers. Although many of the respondents previously

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reported the ineffectiveness of collegiality in their experiences, they now seem to refer to the existence of their colleagues' assistance. This could indicate that while experts may have found other tools more appealing in the past, they still acknowledge the support provided by their peers.

On the account of the last claim, teachers were asked whether collegiality helped in any positive way, in their journey from novice to expert teachers. Some teachers acknowledged several benefits that collegiality had on their journey and others excluded collegiality from their professional development. One teacher claimed, *"It quite helped in putting me on the track to getting aware of the nature of the courses presented to students and the approaches followed in teaching them."* Another teacher stated, *"When I was a novice teacher, my former teachers and experienced colleagues helped a lot by sharing effective teaching strategies, classroom management techniques, and instructional methods.... I could benefit from this knowledge and adapt it to my own teaching style...this support could foster a growth mindset and a willingness to adapt to the evolving educational landscape. Besides, my teachers and colleagues offered empathy, a listening ear, and a sense of camaraderie that helped me cope with stress and maintain my enthusiasm for teaching."* This indicates that forming relationships with colleagues is an opportunity for growth. The result reflects an existing correlation between novices' needs and experts' assistance. Collegiality between the novice and the expert seems to contribute to the emotional and pedagogical repertoire teachers get and this is a practice that has not witnessed change between the past and the present.

Another teacher said, *"I got materials, ready-made lectures and this was helpful 20 years ago when the internet sources were not yet available."* Besides the aforementioned benefits of collegiality which both novice and expert respondents affirmed, this comment is particularly informative on how human interaction could be powerful, especially since other tools which are now more advanced and available, were only transmitted by teachers face-to-face from one generation to another. It means when a teacher makes an effort to prepare materials, lectures, and so on... they understand their responsibility to share it with other novices who do not have access to materials and this is to make their practice easier. This sort of help, especially with the conditions of no accessibility to the internet in the past, has contributed to making novices feel more at ease and engaged in a community of collaboration and shared goals. What the internet serves now for professional development was achieved by forming social networks in the workplace between colleagues.

Aside from some teachers counting the benefits they got from collegiality in their past experiences, other teachers have discussed through answering the same question the difficulties of the conditions in the past which prevented any interaction from occurring successfully among teachers for their benefit. One

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teacher gave a historical account stating, *“It is difficult for me to remember what happened more than 20 years ago. Those years were difficult in Algeria. The 1990s were years of political turmoil and socio-economic hardships. People were struggling to survive. So, continuous professional development was not a priority, and trust and collegiality were hard to be expected in those circumstances. But I am certain I must have learnt from those experienced colleagues with whom I interacted.”* This commentary gives a general overview of the state of continuous professional development in the 1990s in Algeria. Teachers were not economically, socially, and politically stable enough to engage in CPD. Teaching was a mere job of surviving in life. Others gave very short, unelaborated answers like *“I didn’t receive any help”*, and *“I just relied on myself.”* The previous claims indicate that teachers were not aware of the role of collegiality in their professional development, and it seems that even professional development itself was not a priority to teachers considering external factors that did not allow targeting developing skills or gaining knowledge.

Along with understanding the nature of relationships among teachers in their past experiences, teachers were asked to reflect on the idea of negative relationships if they have experienced any in their journey, and how it intervened with their development. Most of the expert participants accounted for negativity among teachers being a disappointment and miscommunication for them. Some just revealed that they had no negative relationships in their career journey, and others stated that they would avoid negative colleagues and negative behaviors from others if they occurred, which, to their claim, were very rare. Few respondents related negativity to the absence of help. Some justified this absence as either coming from fear, selfishness, the difference of opinions over teaching and collegiality, or reluctance. As all the aforementioned reasons contribute to the attributes of personalities of teachers, we can say that one of the main obstacles to collegiality as a professional development is not lack of resources or lack of interactions between individuals; it is rather some personal qualities that deter that positive wanted interaction among members.

The expert participating teachers were also approached to see their perspectives on whether they encourage engaging in collegial relationships for the sake of professional development. All teachers seem to wholeheartedly and undoubtedly support such activity despite a few of them previously claiming that they have not had good relationships or that collegiality was not more effective than other tools. One teacher stated, *“Collegiality is very important for novice teachers as it enriches their understanding of pedagogy and deepens their knowledge as far as practice is concerned...”*. Another one said, *“I usually go towards new colleagues, welcome them, and offer them my assistance in any possible way. This at least creates a good positive atmosphere which is conducive to mutual*

*learning and support.*” This highlights the fact that experts not only encourage collegiality as a claim or a stance but also through practical behaviors as they initiate the interaction with their peers and offer help before it is even demanded. Unlike novices, expert teachers’ journey from being beginners to being where they are now, did not involve the impactful contribution of collegiality. Most teachers in the past did not seek professional development as much as it is emphasized now, yet they would, to some extent, find their colleagues as a source for ready-made lectures and materials in times when internet accessibility was almost impossible. The efforts of others would be transmitted to novices so they apply, add, and transmit them to others as well. Despite most expert teachers not recalling any strong effect of collegiality on them, most of them would agree now that they see one of their roles, as more knowledgeable others, is to provide help to novices; thus, they try to maintain healthy relationships with others in the workplace. Experts tend to be cooperative and a source of motivation to younger peers to keep them on a psychological scale of readiness for the job, by avoiding negative emotions like stress, isolation, and workload burdens.

Novices today are likely to get access to the internet more than their peers twenty years ago, and they are likely exposed to numerous ways of learning and finding materials and techniques on how to excel in teaching. However, expert teachers seem to be great advocates for collegiality and building a positive social network within the same workplace. Experts believe that workplace collegiality is a powerful tool for establishing a sense of belonging to others, for sharing effective methods, and for coping with the profession’s difficulties. Therefore, we find that most experts do encourage the establishment of positive and healthy camaraderie among colleagues especially for the benefit of novices and their continuous professional development.

## **Conclusions**

The current research investigated one of the most internationally common tools in teachers’ continuous professional development; collegiality. The latter is an interactive, collaborative, and social tool for skill development. It involves the investment in the human force. When people of the same work interest engage in collaborative work, support, and exchange of knowledge and skills, they could likely see the development of the members on pedagogical and psychological levels. This is the core of collegiality. In this research, it was investigated how teachers view the role of collegiality and its effects on the professional development of novice teachers. The research concluded that both novices and experts in teaching tend to see collegiality as a powerful continuous professional development tool, which could yield various pedagogical and psychological benefits for all teachers and for novices per se.

Research on collegiality among university teachers is informative to the body of literature concerning teachers' continuous professional development in the sense that it provides insights into how human force can be invested in to maximize the benefits for teachers in their quest for effective means to grow. This also implies that teachers should, to a great extent, create and engage in healthy collegial relationships in the same workplace so that they contribute to the pedagogical and psychological accompaniment of their peers. Not only that but also to avoid and reduce the hardships and burdens of the profession on novice teachers by facilitating their access to a within-reach professional development tool. Collegiality could to a great extent contribute positively to the professional journey of all teachers at all times.

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