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Qualitative Investigation a Model of Promoting Teachers' Cooperative Spirit: A Grounded Theory Approach

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Abstract: Despite the paramount importance of fostering a spirit of cooperation within educational systems and recognizing the pivotal role of teachers in enhancing the quality of the teaching and learning process, there remain notable deficiencies and limitations in achieving this objective. Identifying these shortcomings and devising strategies for improvement and assurance has become an imperative necessity. In light of this, the present study was undertaken with the primary goal of conducting a qualitative exploration of a model aimed at enhancing the collaborative spirit among teachers. The research methodology employed in this study was qualitative, utilizing a grounded theory approach. The research sample comprised 19 individuals who were closely connected to the research subject, selected through purposeful sampling. Data collection was facilitated through semi-structured interviews. In the initial open coding phase, a total of over 195 preliminary codes were identified. After further refinement and consolidation of similar codes during the axial coding stage, 77 distinct codes were delineated. Subsequently, during the selective coding stage, these concepts were organized into a model designed to enhance group cooperation among school teachers, consisting of 12 components, 21 indicators, and 77 codes following further refinement. In summary, the resulting model highlights the central phenomenon of elevating the spirit of cooperation among teachers. Within this model, strategic factors encompass managerial and behavioral components, while causal conditions encompass social, personal, and educational components. Intervening conditions involve entrepreneurial and legal components, and the outcomes comprise components related to teachers' voice and communication. Contextual conditions encompass economic, environmental, and cultural components. These findings offer valuable insights for planning and designing interventions aimed at fostering a cooperative spirit among teachers.

Keywords: Spirit of cooperation, teachers, qualitative method, grounded theory

Introduction

The optimization of the collaborative spirit within groups is regarded as the most favorable, cost-efficient, and professional approach to motivating educational institutions to enhance their educational standing. This encompasses the collective endeavors of educators to resolve issues, refine teaching techniques, educational materials, assessments, and their active participation in the learning process of students (Schmoker, 2005). Devoting attention to the motivation of teachers within group work fosters a positive outlook towards their working environment. However, disregarding the motivation of teachers within group activities will result in detrimental repercussions for both teachers and students, leading to the depletion of human resources, job-related stress, and a decline in teacher effectiveness (Han & Yin, 2016).

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The significance of collaboration among educators arises from the obstacles encountered within the teaching profession and the escalating expectations of the public in terms of educational quality (Ganser, 2000). Numerous professional opportunities fail to yield long-term enhancements in curriculum plans and do not meet the societal needs of students (Henson, 2001). Augmenting the collaborative spirit within human resources is one of the fundamental responsibilities of organizational leaders (Shaw, Park, & Kim, 2013). Every organization aims to accomplish its objectives and optimally utilize resources by fostering a spirit of collaboration among its employees (Borman & Motowidlo, 2014). In essence, collaboration entails an array of job-related behaviors exhibited by individuals (Gomez-Mejia et al., 2014).

The professional development of educators plays a pivotal role in elevating the quality of teachers, educational programs, teaching methodologies, and student learning. However, there are invariably challenges and issues that may impede successful implementation, such as the excessive workload of teachers, ambiguity in pertinent policies, and hierarchical work structures (Hayrun & Tan, 2016). Consequently, emphasis should be placed on the crucial and influential elements within the problem-solving trajectory, which hold a comparatively higher level of importance (San & Zhang, 2021). Among these key elements, one that assumes a fundamental role in the expansion of education and training is teachers.

Consequently, the primary focus of professional development is centered upon teachers to enhance their performance within educational institutions. If progress is to be achieved within the field of education, those involved in teaching and training, especially teachers who have extensive interactions with learners, must undergo a transformation. Indeed, any substantial and fundamental improvement within schools and the education system must originate from teachers. There exists a meaningful correlation between school improvement and teacher performance; thus, their knowledge, information, attitudes, skills, and methodologies must undergo modification (Grogan, 2013).

Teachers are commonly perceived as catalysts for change in educational endeavors, exerting the most substantial influence. Consequently, it is imperative to direct attention towards the pivotal component of the educational system and foster the advancement of knowledge, attitudes, and skills (Safari & Abdollahi, 2017). Educational institutions designed to facilitate the growth of education, learning, and the augmentation of students' abilities heavily rely on the collaboration among teachers. Without such collaboration, the attainment of the institution's mission becomes a formidable task (Ambroz & colleagues, 2010). The amelioration of schools ought to commence with teachers. As a result, over the past decade, discussions concerning the quality of schools have increasingly centered around

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collaborative efforts among teachers (Richter & colleagues, 2011). Collaboration serves as the principal ingredient for the professional development of teachers and the enhancement of school quality (Safari & colleagues, 2019). Through collaborative endeavors, teachers experience growth within educational institutions, leading to heightened motivation, reduced work pressure, positive effects on morale, increased productivity, enhanced communication, improved technical skills, diminished individual isolation, and a multitude of other benefits, including an inclination towards educational strategies, a shift towards student-centered approaches, and the harmonization of the overt and covert curricula (Egodawatte & colleagues, 2011).

Indeed, progress achieved through collaboration represents a novel model of teacher education, signifying an evolution in the field of education and training where teachers join forces to refine the teaching and learning processes (Shawvard, 2021). This form of learning possesses distinctive characteristics that set it apart from other forms of professional development, drawing teachers into groups that collaborate over time to enhance teaching and learning. As teachers work together and learn from one another, both their own work and student learning improve (Safari & colleagues, 2017). The significance of collaboration among teachers stems from the challenges encountered within the teaching profession and the mounting expectations of the general public regarding the quality of education (Ganser, 2000).

Many professional opportunities fail to result in long-term improvements in curriculum plans and do not meet the needs of students in society (Henson, 2001). The enhancement of teaching and learning in advanced countries' schools heavily relies on collaboration, particularly among teachers. Nonetheless, the significance of fostering a culture of collaboration among teachers becomes less prominent when considering education's emphasis on promoting collaborative activities among students (April & colleagues, 2021). The current non-collaborative relationship among teachers has had minimal impact on teaching methods, school organization, curriculum, and students' learning requirements (Diz-Maggioni, 2004). Despite the crucial role of teachers in improving the quality of the teaching and learning process, educational systems still face weaknesses and deficiencies in achieving this goal. Identifying these shortcomings and implementing measures to enhance and ensure quality has become an undeniable necessity.

In his research titled "Investigating the Relationship between the Quality of the Learning Environment and the Competitive-Collaborative Spirit with the Initiative and Educational Innovation of Elementary School Teachers in Yazd County," Doroudian (2020) discovered that the quality of the learning environment and its components, along with the competitive-collaborative spirit, significantly predict teachers' initiative and educational innovation. Thus, by enhancing the quality of the learning

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environment and fostering a competitive-collaborative spirit among teachers, education can partly promote educational innovation.

Sharqi (2019), in the study "Designing a Model for the Professional Development of Elementary School Teachers with a Futures-Oriented Approach," concluded that the current educational system necessitates a futuristic perspective on teachers' professional development. In an era where rapid technological advancements occur daily, the responsibility of the education system, especially teachers, has increased significantly in preparing the next generation to be self-sufficient for their future.

Najafi (2019), in the research titled "The Relationship between the Compensation Services System and the Promotion of Professional Skills of Elementary School Teachers with the Mediating Role of Perfectionism," highlighted the mediating role of perfectionism among teachers in the relationship between the compensation services system and the promotion of professional skills.

Abdollahi and colleagues (2017), in their research on "Exploratory Analysis of the Role of School Managers in Forming and Consolidating Professional Growth Groups Based on Teacher Collaboration," identified several key aspects of the school managers' role in forming professional growth groups based on teacher collaboration. These include preparation, organization, resource provision and support, continuous improvement, evaluation, participatory learning, creating a sense of collaboration and cooperative efforts, as well as the manager's ability, knowledge, and skills.

Chan and his colleagues (2019) conducted a study titled "Enhancing Team Cohesion in College Basketball Education" which concluded that by promoting team cohesion in basketball education, students can more effectively assimilate into communal life. This article provides a critical analysis of fundamental basketball education strategies in higher education institutions as well as the current state of team cohesion in basketball. The research employs literature review, expert interviews, and logical analysis as methods. Drawing upon Skinner's reinforcement theory, this article investigates the pivotal role of fostering team cohesion in university education. The findings demonstrate that basketball education serves as an efficacious approach in cultivating team cohesion among students. By means of behavioral reinforcement, students are able to successfully integrate into social groups.

To summarize, in light of the significance of teachers' collaborative spirit and its influence on their motivation and professional outcomes, this research employs a grounded theory (GT) approach to examine a qualitative model for enhancing teachers' collaboration spirit.

Material and Methods

This particular research is classified as a developmental study based on its objective, while the data collection methods employed are qualitative in nature. Consequently, a purposive sampling method was

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utilized to select 19 individuals who were relevant to the research topic. The chosen method for data collection was semi-structured interviews, with each interview lasting between 45 to 60 minutes. Saturation of extracted codes from the interviews was achieved after the 19th interview, and no further codes were added during subsequent interviews. Hence, the number of participants selected for the interviews was deemed sufficient. The data analysis process involved three stages, namely open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. For this study, the coding was carried out using version 8 of the *Atlas.ti* software. Before commencing the study, all participants were required to provide informed consent and were thoroughly briefed on the research objectives and their right to withdraw from the study at any point if they so desired.

Results

In this research, in short, the interviews were conducted with 7 questions about "How is the spirit of cooperation among school teachers?" were conducted (open interview) and also, two stages of open and central coding were used. An example of interview questions is: In your opinion, what are the necessary fields for cooperation between school teachers? What are the necessary inputs to improve the cooperation spirit of school teachers? What are the necessary things to form the spirit of cooperation among teachers in your school? What can be the facilitators (helpers) to cooperation in schools between teachers? In the first stage of coding (initial coding), a number of more than 195 preliminary codes were identified, and after refining and merging similar codes, 77 selected codes were identified. The concepts related to the design of the model for improving the spirit of group cooperation of school teachers were adjusted to 12 components, 21 indicators and 77 codes after study and refinement. In this research, in order to realize the validity of the tool in the first stage of the research, three methods have been used, including using two tools for writing questions, modifying the questions by experts and finally reviewing the questions by conducting two preliminary interviews; Also, based on the criteria provided by Yin (2003), the following measures have been taken to ensure the validity of the research:

Implementation by the members: Four knowledgeable managers in the field of educational sciences reviewed the final report of the first stage of the analysis process and the obtained categories. Their suggestions were applied in the axial coding paradigm.

Peer review: Faculty members reviewed the axial coding and their comments were used in the development of the model.

Participatory nature of the research: the participants were simultaneously helped in analyzing and interpreting the data.

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Pluralism: Pluralism in this research includes the plurality of places and the plurality of participants in the research. The plurality of locations means that interviews were conducted with managers, staff and teachers of Qom schools. The plurality of participants means that interviews were conducted with people from different organizational levels such as managers, staff and school teachers. Finally, the basic themes were categorized with the help of software, which is shown in the table 1.

Table 1. The results of axial coding of codes

Category	Components	Selective code
Strategic factors	Management component	transformational leadership
		Collaborative management in schools
		Clarity of the role and duties of teachers
		Creating a suitable platform by management
		Providing an educational environment
		Improving the morale of teachers
		Management's trust in creative teachers
		Appropriate performance of school principals
		Formative and comprehensive assessment
	Behavioral component	Empathy and collaboration between teachers
		Promote helping each other
		Politeness in speaking by teachers
		Teachers' behavior with students
		Principals respect teachers
		The authorities' positive view of teachers
		Attention to the interests and needs of students
Causal conditions	Social component	Relying on religious issues
		Setting the stage for favorable social relations
		Creating social values for teachers
		Collaborative decision making
		The commitment of teachers
		Social participation of teachers in schools
		Skill-oriented and humanization
		Social Responsibility
	Individual component	Professional satisfaction
		Efficacy
		Active and effective listening
		Using teachers' experiences in teaching
		How to manage the class by teachers
		Flexibility among teachers
		Willingness to accept personal responsibilities in schools
	Educational component	Cooperation in entrepreneurial education methods
		Teachers' innovative learning from each other
		Curriculum being more creative
		Implementing appropriate solutions for interaction
		Encouraging creative education
		Sharing creative ideas
		Modifying teaching methods in a new style
		Counseling of administrators to teachers
		Updating textbooks in schools
		Holding entrepreneurship courses for teachers
Intervening conditions	Entrepreneurial component	Motivating teachers
		Team work spirit of teachers
		Forming a think tank for teachers
		Supporting students' ideas
		Innovative atmosphere in schools
		Identifying entrepreneurial opportunities in schools

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		Creating opportunities for each other
		Cultivating critical thinking
	Legal component	Rules and regulations governing the school
		Circulars and supporting regulations
		Law and order for teamwork
		Rules governing educational situations
Outputs	Teachers voice component	Providing appropriate solutions to issues and problems
		Attention to constructive suggestions of teachers
		A forward-looking vision for the improvement and development of schools
		Free expression of thoughts
		Honest talk about work injuries
	Comonicative component	Reducing isolation of teachers
		Constructive communication between teachers
		Ability to interact with each other
		Encouraging teachers to have external relations with other schools
		Increasing the relationship between schools and industry
		Strong networking outside of school
Contextual conditions	Economic component	Having sufficient salary
		Appropriate reward system for teachers
		Attention to the welfare of teachers
	Environmental component	Preparing creative platforms for students
		Providing a peaceful learning environment for students
		The existence of creative educational classes for students
		Schools compete with each other in attracting top students
		The reputation and brand of the school
		Gaining status by students outside of school
	Cultural component	Creating a suitable organizational culture
		Having common beliefs
		Having intercultural skills
		Cultivating the spirit of partnership and cooperation
Central phenomenon	Improving the cooperation spirit of teachers	Development of education and learning and empowerment of students
		Increase the quality of work
		Better interaction with managers

Discussion

The primary objective of the present study was to conduct a qualitative investigation into the conceptual framework aimed at enhancing the collective collaboration dynamics among educators within the school environment. Based on the extensive research conducted in the realm of fostering group cooperation among teachers, a comprehensive model was developed, encompassing a total of ten key components and an impressive seventy-seven optional codes. Initially, the research team identified and extracted the primary codes, subsequently eliminating any duplicate codes to distill the essence of the phenomenon under study. Ultimately, the core codes were established, meticulously incorporating the valuable insights and perspectives of esteemed faculty members and subject matter experts. To ensure a meticulous representation of the identified components, Atlas T8 software was employed to visually map out the various indicators associated with the model. It is noteworthy to emphasize that the fundamental aim of this research endeavor revolved around the creation of an innovative model specifically tailored to enhance the spirit of group cooperation among school teachers. The research

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methodology employed in this study encompassed a series of in-depth interviews conducted with diverse groups of faculty members, administrators, and teachers. The resultant model emerged as a culmination of the insights garnered from these interviews, which were subsequently reviewed and validated by esteemed faculty members, advisors, and experts well-versed in this particular field of study.

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