Identifying Obstacles to Sustainable Professional Development of Iraqi Teachers and School Administrators in Order to Provide a Model for Overcoming Obstacles

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Abstract

Introduction: Professional development of school administrators and teachers is essential to fulfill the role of educational leadership and improve student learning. This research aimed to identify the obstacles to sustainable professional development of teachers and school administrators in Iraq in order to provide a model for overcoming the obstacles

Methodology: In terms of nature, it is a qualitative research conducted using the content analysis method. Potential participants included teachers, school administrators, and university professors in the fields of educational sciences in Iraq, who were selected purposefully based on a number-based criterion based on the theoretical saturation rule. The data collection tool was a semi-structured interview. The data analysis method was in the style of the Atride and Stirling model.

Findings: The results showed that the obstacles to sustainable professional growth and development in Iraq include: knowledge obstacles (weakness in specialized knowledge, weakness in technology, and weakness in educational content knowledge); The following were the ethical or moral barriers (personal ethics and organizational ethics), the practical or communication barriers (interpersonal communication, organizational communication), the policy-making barriers (strategic weakness and inattention to change), the organizational barriers (weakness of organizational justice, weak supervision, and weak support), and the organizational learning barriers (weakness in knowledge creation participation, weak documentation, and weak knowledge sharing).

Conclusion: Consequently, according to the results of previous research, it can be said that creating strong strategic plans, supporting changes and creativity, paying attention to the individual needs of principals and teachers, and strengthening content knowledge and professional ethics are among the measures that can help strengthen the sustainable professional development of principals and teachers in Iraq.

Key Words: obstacles, professional competency, teachers, Administrators.

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Introduction

Professional development of school administrators and teachers is essential to fulfill the role of educational leadership and improve student learning. This is achieved by familiarizing them with modern educational research, improving monitoring and evaluation skills, mastering effective learning strategies, and using educational technologies. Administrators should acquire the ability to design and implement educational quality improvement programs through ongoing training and participation in specialized workshops and courses. This development not only improves school management, but also contributes to the academic growth of students and the empowerment of teachers by creating a more favorable learning environment (Harper, ٢٠٠٨).

Researchers have identified elements in the design of professional development programs that appear to maximize principals' and teachers' learning, including a strong focus on content, research-based learning methods, participation and collaboration, and alignment with school curricula and policies.

It is essential that principals and teachers continually update and develop their professional knowledge and skills to keep pace with this process of change and development.

Principals and teachers also have the responsibility to teach students, manage classrooms and student behavior, understand different teaching strategies, and possess specialized values. Therefore, professional development is a fundamental factor for principals and teachers to be able to perform their duties well. (Eroglu & Danmaskaya, ٢٠٢١)

If managers and teachers have a high level of knowledge and ability, they can apply the best educational methods and approaches and actively participate in the education and training process. By being up-to-date in their field of expertise and familiar with current information, they will be able to transfer new concepts and skills to students. Using modern terminology, it can be said that the development of any society and environment depends on the knowledge and skills of its specialists, and managers and teachers, as people with high knowledge and ability, play a very important role in this process. By being up-to-date in their field of expertise and familiar with current information, they can apply advanced educational methods and approaches and, by being active in the education and training process, contribute to the development of society and the education of young generations. (Ramesh and Krishnan, ٢٠٢٠).

They should apply more creative and efficient educational methods by using advanced technologies and modern educational tools. Also, mastery of ICT skills is essential for administrators and teachers to be able to operate in the digital society of everyday life and to guide students towards learning and developing technological skills. (Exarchou et al., ٢٠١٥). This development is in line with the changing times that are taking place among today's generation who

have the potential to grow into ideal talents at a global level (Le, Andrew, & Hedda, ٢٠٢١). Pedagogical skills are seen as a sufficient indicator of the ability to use professional knowledge and educational tools. Pedagogical competence, in turn, is a part of pedagogical competence, as it includes the use and mastery of important professional knowledge, skills, and personal qualities that have reached a high level of perfection. (Mizambao & Baymirzayev, ٢٠١٩).

Nkundabakura et al. (٢٠٢٤) in a study titled "Effectiveness of Continuous Professional Development Training Program in the Training of Principals and Teachers of Mathematics and Science in Rwandan Secondary Schools" found that when principals and teachers continuously update their subject content knowledge, pedagogy and technology, they teach more effectively. Koranchi and Bampo (٢٠٢٣) conducted a study titled Continuous Professional Development for Public School Teachers: Benefits and Concerns. The study found that the participants found the CPD programs beneficial. These programs benefited them in various aspects of their work. However, the study revealed that the participants had concerns that if properly addressed by the stakeholders, would help improve the quality of subsequent programs to the benefit of the participants and the educational service. No research has been conducted to accurately identify the obstacles to the professional development of teachers and principals in Iraq, and there is not enough information to develop in-service training programs for teachers and principals. Therefore, this research is necessary to develop information-based training programs to empower teachers and principals in Iraq. Therefore, this research raises the fundamental question of what are the obstacles to the sustainable professional development of teachers and principals in Iraq and how to provide a model for overcoming the obstacles?

Methodology

This study used the qualitative content analysis method and the Atride-Stirling (٢٠١١) thematic analysis model. This method involves identifying and extracting codes and key points from the text. First, the researcher identified primary concepts by reading the text carefully and completely and selected them as basic themes. These basic themes represent the essential and important points in the data.

In the next step, the basic themes were transformed into organizing themes by combining and summarizing. In this step, the researcher reviewed the basic codes and put similar and related concepts together to form organizing themes. These organizing themes help to categorize the data and create a logical framework for analysis. Then, overarching themes emerged from the integration of organizing themes. These overarching themes are identified as the main and comprehensive themes of the text and have the ability to cover the entire research topic. The researcher, based on her diagnostic abilities and mastery, selected appropriate names for each category of codes and themes that

best represented the main and central concept of each category. This systematic process allowed the researcher to analyze the qualitative data in a deeper and more coherent manner and to present the results in a meaningful way that was relevant to the research objectives.

ed school principals, teachers, and university Potential participants includ professors in the fields of education in Iraq, who were selected purposively based criterion based on the theoretical saturation rule. -based on the number t principals, teachers, and The purposive sampling criterion in this study was tha years of teaching ١٠administrators had a master's degree or higher, had at least and management experience, and had at least a master's degree. The sample size he purposive was determined according to the theoretical saturation rule. With t sampling method based on the theoretical saturation level during the interviews, .interviews ٢١the researcher reached data saturation with

structured interviews were used to collect data. The questions for this -Semi interview were designed based on a review of the research literature and the uring the interview process, the interviewees results of qualitative studies. D were asked what their opinion was about the sustainable professional development of principals and teachers? What indicators does the sustainable bstacles are professional development of principals and teachers have? What o there to the sustainable professional development of principals and teachers? And the following questions were asked based on the participants' responses. minutes, and after ٧٥and ٤٥The duration of each interview was between sion from the interviewees, their voices were recorded, and obtaining permis .then the data were analyzed and coded

thematic analysis method, qualitative data (٢٠١١)Stirling -Using the Atride were analyzed until a network of themes was reached. In the first stage, parts of the interview texts were extracted and recorded in writing. Then, in the initial ding, the codes related to each section were placed in separate tables. In the co next stage, codes that were similar in terms of meaning were compared and basic themes were extracted. These basic themes were categorized based on sented as organized themes. Finally, the organized semantic similarities and pre themes were transformed into an abstract and comprehensive theme and a final table of theme classification was compiled. To ensure the accuracy and ators were used. indic (١٩٩٤)robustness of the research, Guba and Lincoln These two researchers believe that four main criteria are necessary to evaluate the scientific validity of qualitative studies: validity (acceptability, believability), trust and reliability, confirmability, and transferability. In this search, the emphasis was on two indicators of credibility and transferability, re which were used as criteria for evaluating the information presented in the .research

Research Findings

Using the interview content analysis method, an attempt was made to extract and categorize the content and themes of the studied pattern. Examples of iew statements are given in Tableinterv ١.

Parts of speeches and basic themes -١Table

ch fragmentspee	Basic theme
As an experienced teacher in Iraq , I have gained many experiences during these years . One of the main obstacles in the sustainable professional development of managers and teachers is our educational beliefs . If we students ' abilities are fixed and unchangeable , this belief can believe that I myself had lead to a reduction in our efforts to improve teaching methods . this belief at the time , but with the passage of time and experience , I realized ng diverse teaching methods , all students can that by changing and usi . progress	educational beliefs , knowledge of out of habit educational psychology , Knowing the practicing positive behaviors , audience Knowing the strategies and styles Knowing the goals of teaching and Edgy , eed to have knowledge of the the n curriculum in the direction of development established professional -A well
This The knowledge of educational psychology is very important for us . knowledge helps us to better understand the needs and behaviors of our student had a behavior problem students . I remember in one of my classes , a that caused disruption in my class . Using the knowledge of educational psychology and positive techniques , I was able to help this student to improve . his behavior and be more successful	
d to positive behaviors in my class. As There is always a desire to get use teachers, we have to constantly get used to positive behaviors in order to be positive role models for our students . One of my colleagues, who was used increase their to encouraging and praising students, was able to significantly confidence and make the classroom atmosphere more -motivation and self . positive	
Educating students can improve the process Knowing the details and styles ds One of my experiences in this field was using visual metho Please help . By using diagrams , for students who were interested in visual learning . pictures and teaching videos , I was able to simplify the understanding of . complex concepts for these students	
he curriculum is Knowing the goals of teaching and having knowledge of t also one of the things that helps in sustainable professional development . Accurate planning and sufficient knowledge of the content have helped us to teach in the best possible way . Managers and teachers who clearly understand Design the class and teaching materials in such a way ching goals cantheir tea that students can achieve these goals in the best way . For example , in designing my curriculum , I always pay attention to the fact that every activity student achieve one of the educational goals . In and content should help the the end , we must say that continuous trainings and institutional supports are very important for the professional development of managers and teachers . to educational beliefs , Training programs should include training related It knowledge of educational psychology , audience recognition and strategies Also , financial support and appropriate constructions should be is an edge . provided so that managers and teachers can update and develop their . rofessional skills in the best wayp	

terviews was Because the number of interviews was large, only one of the in given in table number one as an example. Next, by extracting the organizing and comprehensive subjects, a network of subjects was formed

Basic, organizing and inclusive themes -٢Table

Basic themes	Organizer themes	Overarching theme	The main theme
Inadequacy of knowledge on the subject of weakness in educational content , lack of regular training workshops , lack of conferences , weakness in teaching methods and valuable skills .	*Weakness in specialized knowledge*	Knowledge barriers	
Weakness in understanding technologies , incomplete understanding of social networks , weakness in using software and hardware. Little familiarity with new The need Little familiarity with virtual space , technologies and access to them . able platforms for technologiesto create suit	*Weakness in technology*		
from knowledge weak in educational psychology , false educational beliefs , Poor knowledge of the audience Inadequate getting used to positive behaviors , Inadequate understanding of teaching styles Edgy , knowledge of strategies and goals and the need to have curriculum knowledge in line with sustainable professional development .	*Weakness in content knowledge of education*		
patience of the teacher, The The lack of patience of the teacher, the insufficient teacher's lack of positivity , insufficient attention to sympathy and respect for regulation , Little -students and colleagues, weakness in perseverance and self positive spirit towards development professional established -A well	*Individual ethics*	Obstacles of the secretary	
Lack of attention to good manners, lack of mutual understanding, Paying little attention to the instructions and coordination with the manager , not paying To manage time in the voluntarily. no difference attention to doing the work direction of sustainable professional development	*Organizati onal ethics*		
The problem of good communication with students, disregarding student Being weak in giving , orientation , not paying attention to communication skills effective feedback , not paying attention to forgiveness and forgiveness, not considering problem solving in line with sustainable professional development .	*Interperson al communic ation*	Barriers to action	
departmental cooperation between -departmental and inter The absence of lack of research course managers and teachers. In order to teach participation , Interaction with the manager and executive staff , the need to use social , essional developmentnetworks in line with sustainable prof .	*Organizational communication*		

strategic plan , lack of proper perspective in the direction of sustainable professional development , Absence of appropriate missions of the organization , lack of operational strategies and plans .	*Strategic weakness*	Weakness of politics	
lack of change plans , lack of sufficient support for changes in the direction of professional development , Lack of attention to the development of creativity and innovation , little attention to the individual needs of managers and teachers . Fear of change in officials , managers and teachers in the direction of sustainable professional development	*Ignorance of change*		
The lack of attention of officials and managers to individual and group development . Weakness in supervision and monitoring of sustainable professional development by officials . Ambiguous job path , little attention to the stigma of managers and teachers. The need for meritocracy in the education system in the direction of sustainable professional development	*Weakness of organizatio nal justice*	Organizational barriers	
lack of attention of officials and managers to clinical attention and supervision , lack of attention to the selection and recruitment of managers and teachers, lack of attention to the creation of a suitable reward and punishment system . Lack of scientific value of the professional development of managers and teachers in the direction of sustainable professional development .	*Supervisory weakness*		
The lack of attention of officials and administrators to the support of administrators and teachers. Insufficient access to resources, little attention to the path of growth and advancement of managers and teachers. Lack of sufficient financial resources for sustainable professional development	*Supportive weakness*		
Little attention to cooperative teaching , the inability of managers and teachers to acquire more knowledge about the content , little attention to action research and lesson research , little attention to group meetings to compile content , Little attention to the production of online and virtual content in the direction of sustainable professional development .	*Weakness in participatio n in knowledge creation*	Neglecting organizational learning	
The necessity of writing the experiences of managers and teachers in line with their professional capacity . The necessity of the recommendations of managers and teachers to the coder in the field of professional development . lack of knowledge of managers and teachers. Not paying attention to identifying the valuable information banks in schools, The lack of skills in writing reports and recording changes by managers and teachers in the direction of sustainable professional development .	*Weakness in documentat ion*		
The need to share experiences between managers and teachers in line with professional growth , little attention to the promotion of cooperation between managers and teachers . Weakness in creating magazines and bulletins for development by education officials. Inadequacy of teacher 's professional conference and meeting professional growth of managers and teachers , Inadequacy of teaching festivals in the direction of sustainable professional development	*Weakness in knowledge sharing*		

As can be seen in Table ٢ after reviewing and eliminating the basic recurring themes, ٧٧ basic themes, ١٥ organizing themes, and ٦ overarching themes were ultimately extracted. In the next step, the theme network was drawn.
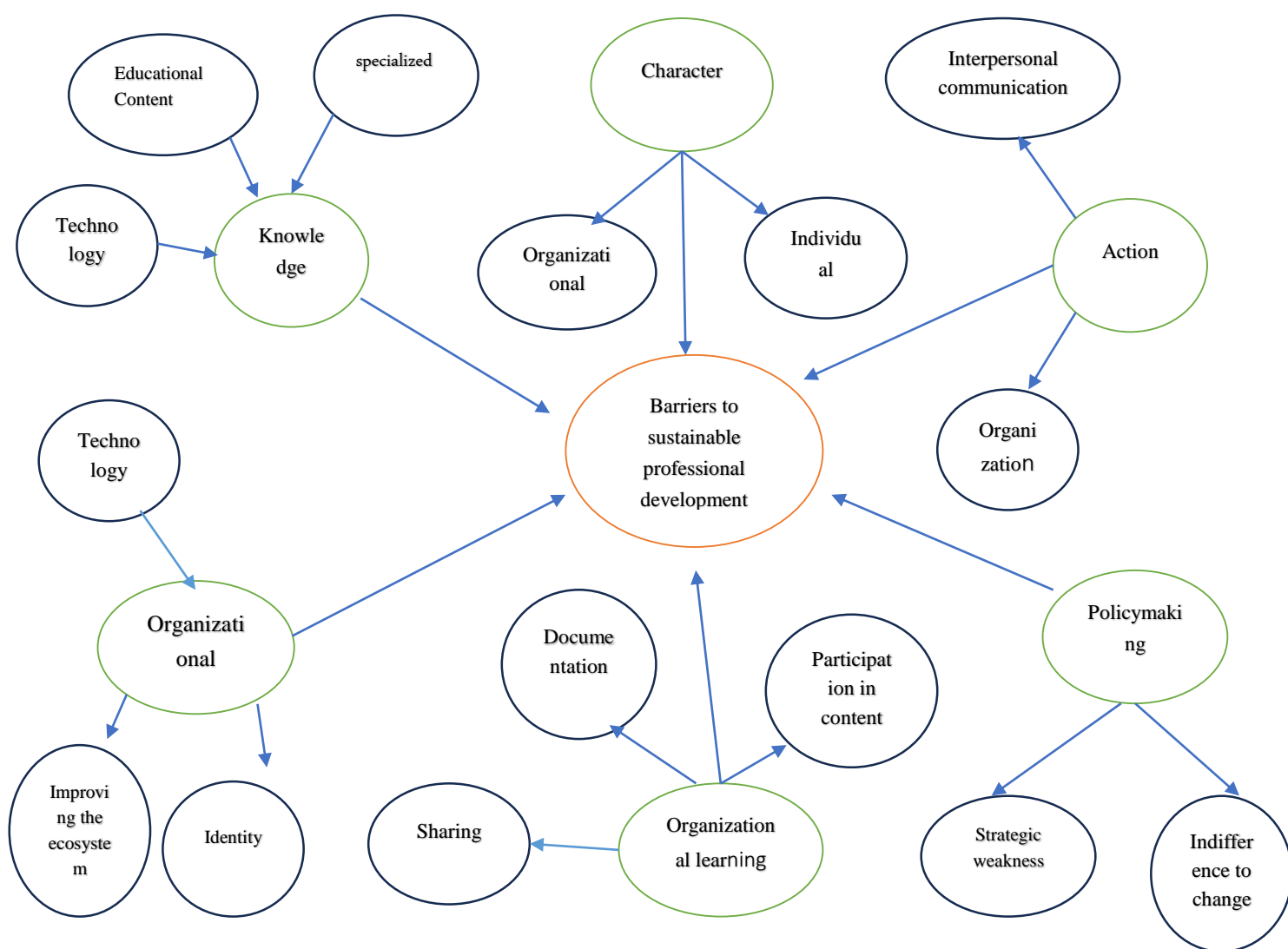
Figure ١- Thematic network of components of obstacles to sustainable professional development of principals and teachers in Iraq
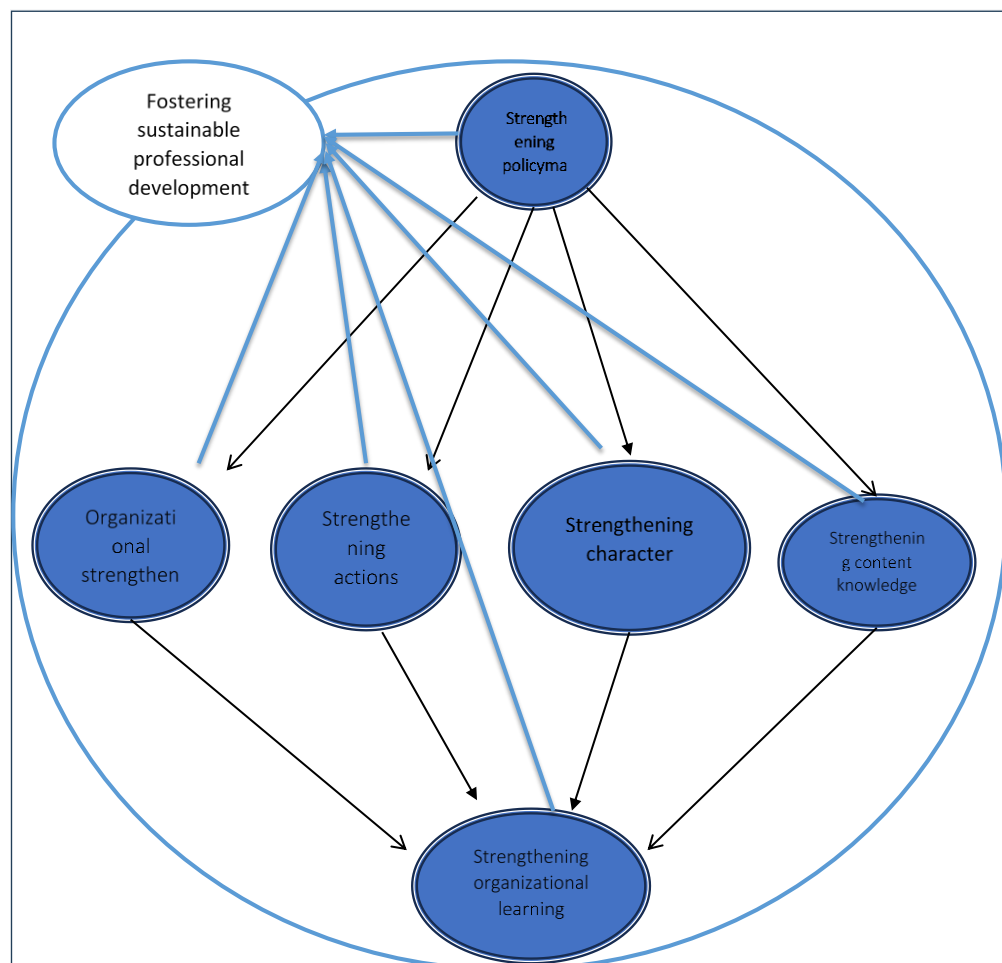
Figure ٢: Model for promoting sustainable professional development of principals and teachers in Iraq

Figure ٢ shows a model for overcoming obstacles to sustainable professional development for Iraqi school administrators, teachers, and principals. This model consists of ١٥ organizing concepts and ٦ overarching concepts. The obstacles to sustainable professional growth and development in Iraq include: knowledge obstacles (weakness in specialized knowledge, weakness in technology, and weakness in educational content knowledge); clerical or ethical obstacles (personal ethics, organizational ethics); action or communication obstacles (interpersonal communication, organizational communication); policy-making obstacles (weakness in strategic communication and inattention to change); organizational obstacles (weakness in organizational justice, weak supervision, and weak support); and organizational learning obstacles (weakness in knowledge creation participation, weak documentation, and weak knowledge sharing).

Discussion and conclusion

Based on the research results and identified barriers, the first step in strengthening the sustainable professional development of principals and teachers in Iraq is to strengthen policymaking. Previous research has also shown that strategic planning can play an important role in improving educational processes and the professional development of principals and teachers. In this regard, Collinson et al. (۲۰۰۹) found that the transformation of education in the ۲۱st century depends on the support of educational policies through increased participation of principals and teachers in educational policymaking, greater coordination of government policies across institutions, and collaborative and differentiated models for lifelong professional development. In many studies, it has been emphasized that the development of visions, strategies, long-term and short-term plans can serve as the backbone of the professional development of principals and teachers. These plans should be targeted and implementable in order to meet the educational and professional needs of principals and teachers. Also, officials should pay special attention to changes in the education system and support change programs, which is consistent with the results of Mabley et al. (۲۰۲۳).

Supporting creativity and innovation in the educational environment can also help improve the quality of teaching and learning. By creating an environment where administrators and teachers can implement their new ideas and methods, their motivation and job satisfaction increase. Paying attention to the individual needs of administrators and teachers is also of great importance. Each teacher has his or her own conditions and needs that must be considered. Another important dimension is strengthening content knowledge and developing individual and organizational ethics. Previous research has shown that administrators and teachers with strong content knowledge and appropriate professional ethics can teach in the best possible way and have a positive impact on student learning. Also, strengthening the actions and communications between administrators and teachers, managers, and other school staff can help create a harmonious and supportive work environment. Based on this research, paying attention to each of these dimensions and components can lead to improved organizational learning among administrators and teachers. Principals and teachers can produce the necessary content, benefit from each other's experiences, document these experiences and make them available to others. Various studies have shown that sustainable professional development of principals and teachers not only leads to improved quality of education, but also increases motivation and job satisfaction of principals and teachers. This, in turn, can have positive effects on overall school performance and student academic outcomes.

In this regard, the results of the study by Isa et al (۲۰۲٤) showed that the quality of principals and teachers is related to their professionalism, and qualified principals and teachers can create high-quality educational processes. Consequently, according to the results of previous research, it can be said that creating strong strategic plans, supporting changes and creativity, paying attention to the individual needs of principals and teachers, and strengthening

content knowledge and professional ethics are among the measures that can help strengthen the sustainable professional development of principals and teachers in Iraq.

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