



TAMAM التطوير المستند الى المدرسة في البلدان العربية
School-based Reform in Arab Countries



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University
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الجامعة الأمريكية في بيروت



Action research Entitled:

Teachers teaching teachers: An investigation into the impact of professional days on the professional growth and school climate at Hariri High School II, Beirut, Lebanon

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School:

Hariri High School II

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Introduction

Hariri High School II, established in 1986 by the former Prime Minister Rafic Hariri, is a private, co-educational Lebanese Anglophone school situated in Beirut. HHS II has been working diligently to fulfill the educational needs of the middle-class community under the supervision of the Directorate of Education at Rafic Hariri Foundation.

HHS II accommodates more than 1200 students who attend classes from Nursery to Grade 12. As far as the secondary cycle is concerned, the school prepares students for the Lebanese Baccalaureate, the official certificate in three tracks: Sociology and Economics, Life Sciences and General Sciences. More specifically, the school curricula covers not only learning objectives set by the Lebanese ministry of Education but also other objectives that prepare students to join local/foreign universities.

In the past years, teachers at Hariri High School II used to attend workshops outside the school and disseminate later the information gained to their colleagues with little input on their part and in the absence of systematic follow-ups from their coordinators. In other words, teachers were only transferring the information acquired rather than thoroughly digging for the material and collating it to present a good workshop.

In addition, teachers expressed that they benefited from in-house workshops administered by their colleagues far more than they did when attended workshops administered by external agents and professionals. They attributed this to the fact that such activities were more relevant and suitable to their instructional context. Such an experience enables them to give and receive feedback immediately within a context of cooperation and collegiality. On the other hand, teacher trainers also noted that the benefits they gained from conducting in-house workshops were innumerable and considered them to be one form of professional growth that allows them to play a leadership role at school. In fact, teacher trainers were hinting on distributed leadership without naming it explicitly.

One of the professional development opportunities offered at HHS 2 that allow for the what has preceded are the professional days offered by the Center for Research & Training (CRT).

A Professional Day (PD) is a long educational day comprised of a large number of in-house workshops (30 workshops on the average) taking place in three sets over three time slots. All these workshops are conducted by teacher trainers. In addition, PDs encompass two key-note speeches that are often conducted by local university professionals.

Although teacher trainees who attended the professional days reported that they have learned so much from their colleagues, but no empirical evidence existed to prove this.. They claimed that a probable reason for such benefit could be that the instructional techniques and strategies appropriately focused on the school curricula and teachers' needs. An added benefit is that many of the sessions allowed teachers from different levels/cycles to come together. This in turn helps raise the level of cooperation and collegiality among teachers and more importantly develop leadership skills.

As part of TAMAM activities, a team of three worked towards gaining empirical evidence for the gains of teachers from professional days. In addition, the team worked also on the impact of those PDs on the overall climate of the school.

The research questions we focused on as a team were :

- 1- What is the impact of the professional days on the professional growth of all teachers participating in it, whether teacher trainers or teacher trainees?
- 2- What is the impact of the professional days on the school climate of HHS II?

Methodology

Sources of Data

The team members agreed that the teachers trainers and students are the main sources of data. Consequently, table 1 indicates the various sources of data along with a description.

Table 1: Sources of Data

Source of Data	Description	Remarks
Teacher Trainers	Teachers who deliver workshops to their colleagues during professional days	Workshops delivered by teacher trainers are not replicas of what they attended outside the school, but are rather prepared from A to Z by these teachers.
Teacher Trainees	Teachers who attend workshops delivered by their colleagues during professional days	During the same day, a teacher could act out as a trainer (by delivering a workshop) and then as a trainee (by attending a workshop prepared by a colleague).
Student Ushers	Students from High School who provide various services during professional days, including guiding attendees to their destination workshops, delivering handouts, helping teacher trainers during their workshops, aiding trainers in operating computers and other technological devices, etc...	-

Data Collection Tools

Tools employed for data collection purposes are enlisted in table 2.

Table 2: Data collection tools

Tool	Number	Description	Targeted Research Q.	Construction of Tool	Validity	Data treatment (Carried Out by CRT)
Interviews	15	Semi-structured interviews have been conducted with all teacher trainers who have been involved in more than 50% of PDs conducted so far.	1 2	The interview schedule was constructed after a chat with 3 teacher trainers who were involved in all the PDs conducted by CRT by its second year.	Content validity was checked out by a pilot study	Interviews were transcribed thematically by NVivo 7.0
Trainees Questionnaire	101 (trainees only) + 29 (trainees & trainers)	A twenty-item questionnaire was administered to all teacher trainees.	2 1	Questionnaire items were constructed based on descriptors of positive school climates derived from international literature.	Content validity was checked out by a pilot study while internal validity was checked out via double check questions.	SPSS
Student Ushers Questionnaire	61	A ten-item questionnaire was administered to all students who participated as ushers at least once during PDs.	2	Questionnaire items were constructed based on descriptors of positive school climates derived from international literature.	Content validity was checked out by a pilot study	SPSS
Evaluation Forms	1931	Evaluation forms were distributed to all attendees of every single workshop of every PD aiming at assessing the benefits gained by attendees of every individual workshop.	Not used directly to respond to the stated research questions	Evaluation forms were constructed by customizing ready-made forms into the needs of HHS 2.	Content validity was checked out by a pilot study	SPSS These were used only to enhance teachers' performance from one PD to another

Procedure of Data Collection

It should be noted that CRT has so far conducted six professional days over three years. By the end of every individual workshop, evaluation forms were distributed to trainees and collected on the spot.

Interviews with teacher trainers were conducted just after the fourth professional day. Teacher trainees' questionnaires as well as student ushers' questionnaires were administered immediately after the sixth professional day.

The interviews were carried out Mrs. Amina Harbali . the questionnaires and interviews were prepared by the team members after many meetings.

Data was collected by team members themselves. For example, interviews were conducted by two members of the research team. Questionnaires were distributed and collected by two members and so on.

Data analysis was carried out with the help of CRT personnel.

Results

Research Question 1: *What is the impact of the professional days on the professional growth of all teachers participating in it, whether teacher trainers or teacher trainees?*

Teacher trainers considered the PDs to be a learning opportunity for themselves, thus enhancing their pedagogical and research skills and updating their knowledge.

“ I participate in PDs only for one reason; for my own sake and not for any single reason. You know, when you teach something you master it; so what I do is that when I hear about something new, I search for it, read about , but the best way to really learn it is to teach it to others, so the PDs act as a perfect place to do that . This is the real growth that experienced teachers need” (One of the teacher trainers)

In other words, PDs seem to be providing trainers with the opportunity to explore the most recent and up-to-date theoretical and practical issues regarding the teaching/learning process.

Teacher trainers valued professional days far more than teacher trainees did in terms of the role played by the professional days at impacting their professional growth. This is manifested through figures 1, 2 and 3 which show the responses from both trainers and trainees on the impact of the professional days on their professional growth.

Figure 1: Impact of PDs on the professional growth of both trainers and trainees

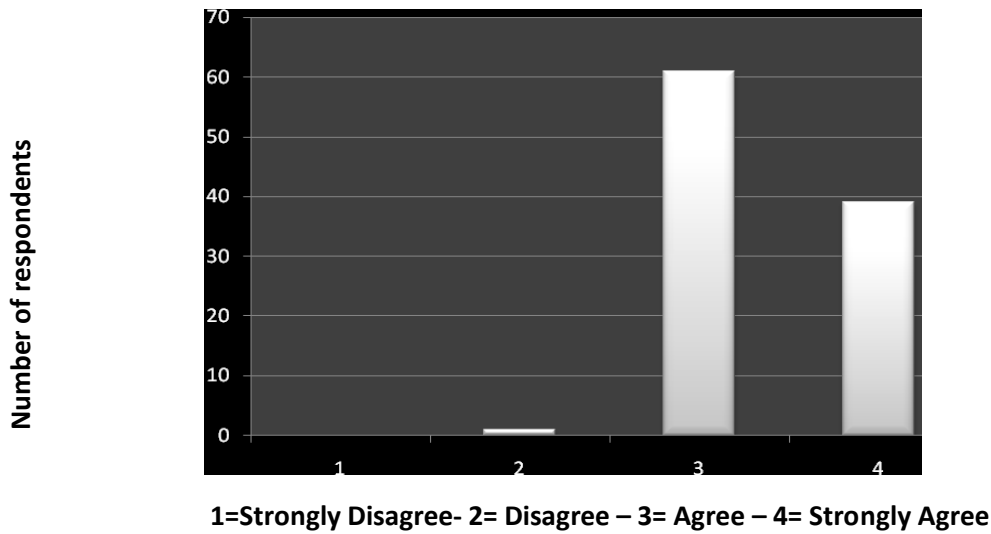


Figure 4: Impact of PDs on the professional growth of trainers

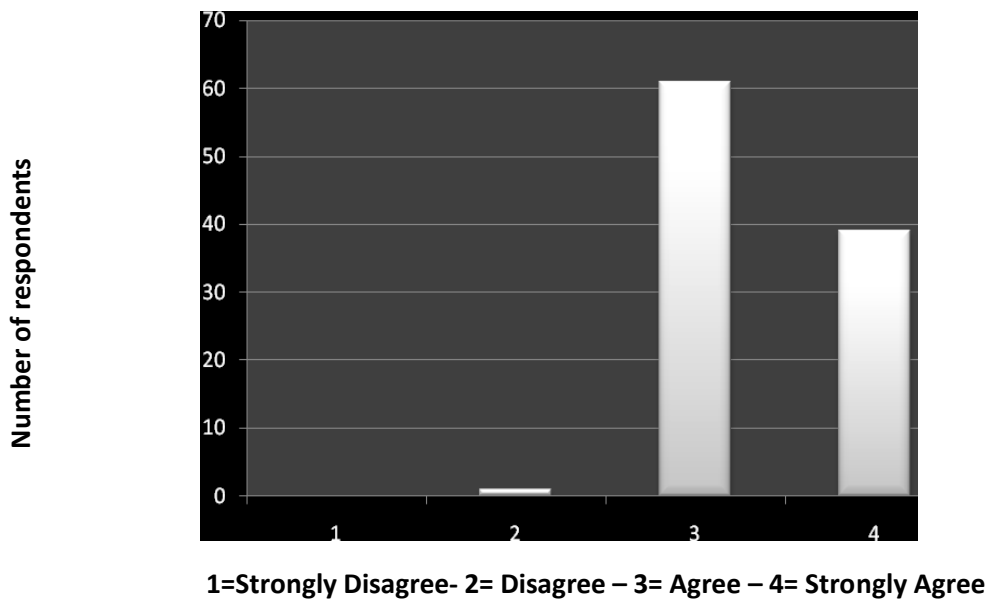
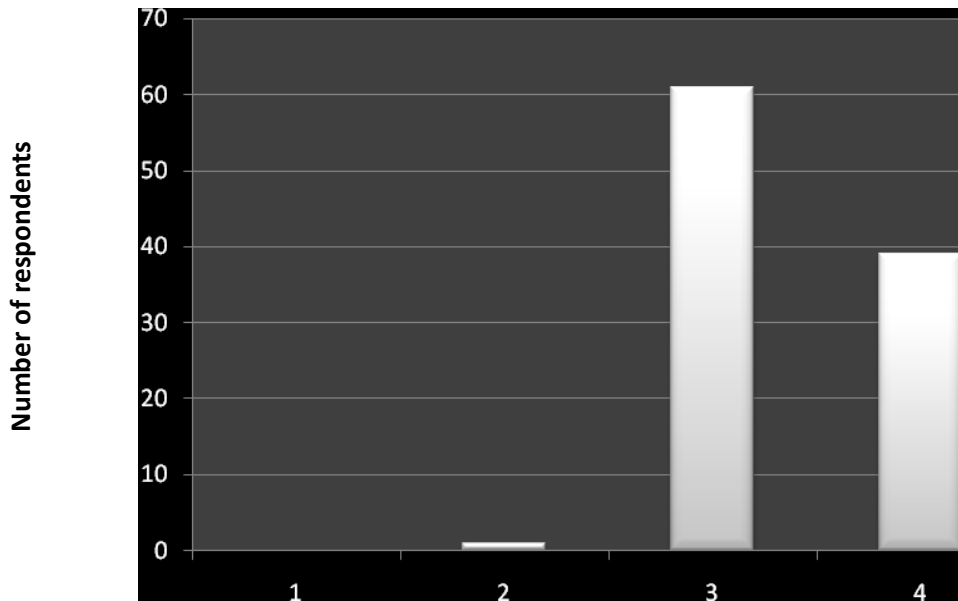


Figure 5: Impact of PDs on the professional growth of trainees



1=Strongly Disagree- 2= Disagree – 3= Agree – 4= Strongly Agree

Research Question 2: *What is the impact of the professional days on the school climate of HHS II?*

Almost all trainees who were interviewed considered the professional days to be of great value in terms of strengthening relationships at school and promoting more collegiality and cooperation among all staff.

Moreover, trust has been considered by trainers to be the most important implication of their participation in the PDs.

“ When they [senior leadership] allow you to come and show your expertise to others ; when they ask you to help other teachers; this means that they value what you know and that they respect you and most importantly they trust you” (one of the teacher trainers)

The word trust was used and emphasized by almost all trainers who all valued it and considered it to be very motivating and contributes to their sense of belonging to school.

“...this is trust and it is the thing that makes me feel that I like to come to this school and it makes me feel very encouraged to improve myself in order to improve others” (one of the teacher trainers)

Another finding derived from interviews is that teacher trainers highly appreciated the opportunity, provided by CRT, to practice and develop leadership skills. This meant trust to them and increased their self-efficacy and motivation.

“ when you act out as a trainer you are also acting out as a leader, because you are leading your colleagues and impacting their learning and their teaching methods...this is the other face of the same coin; I mean it is a synonym to trust which [as I mentioned before] empowers me and raises my commitment to school and I feel more belonging to it” (one of the teacher trainers)

Trainers believed that collegiality in school improved by virtue of professional days allowing teachers from various departments and school levels to come along and learn from each other.

“I never thought before [the professional days] that teachers at the elementary school were doing all of that....now I have a totally different outlook towards what I should be doing with my students in my class”
(one of the teacher trainers)

In conclusion, trainers valued PDs high in terms of their potential at impacting school climate by increasing the level of commitment to school. Many aspects seem to be contributing to that such as distributing leadership and building trusting relationships.

On the other hand, both teacher trainers and teacher trainees emphasized the role played by the PDs in terms of enhancing the school climate. Figures 4 ,5 and 6 display teachers views (trainers and trainees) pertaining to the enhancement of school relationships by virtue of PDs.

Figure 4: Impact of PDs on relationships between teachers of the same department

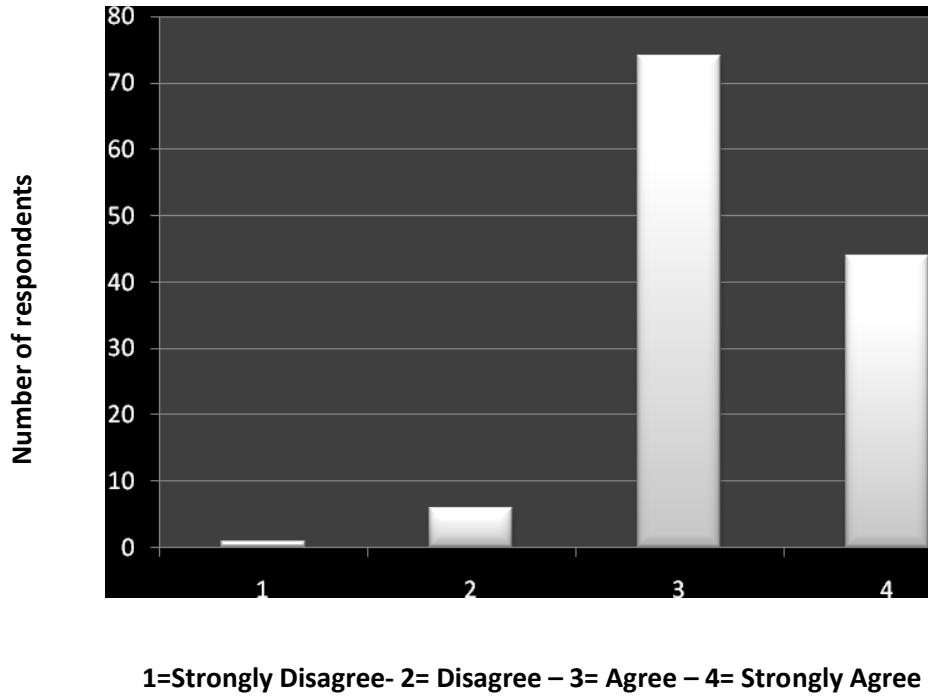


Figure 5: Impact of PDs on relationships between teachers of the different department

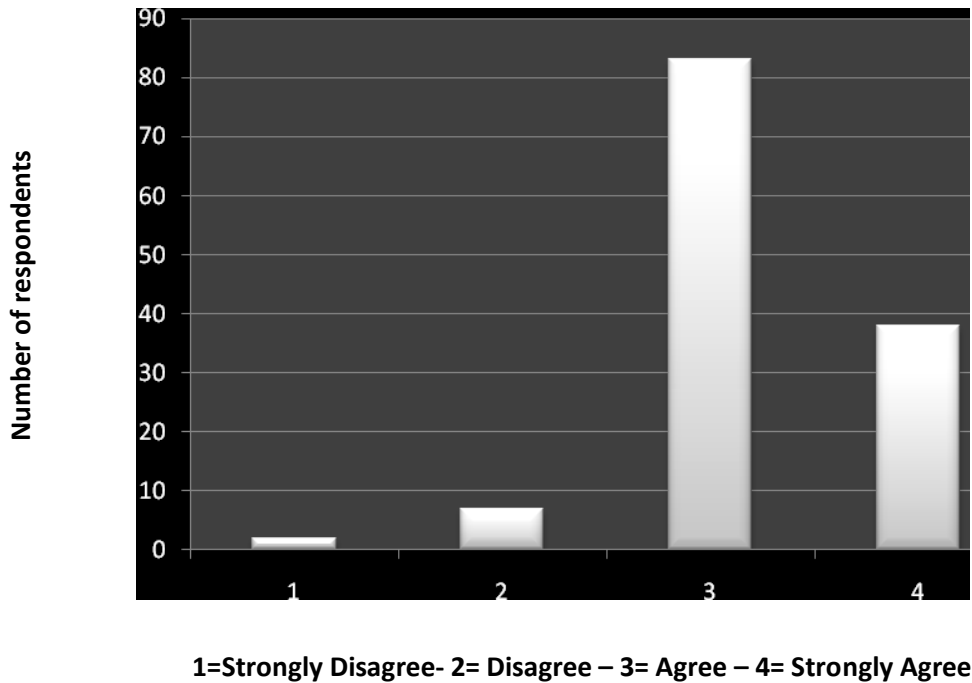
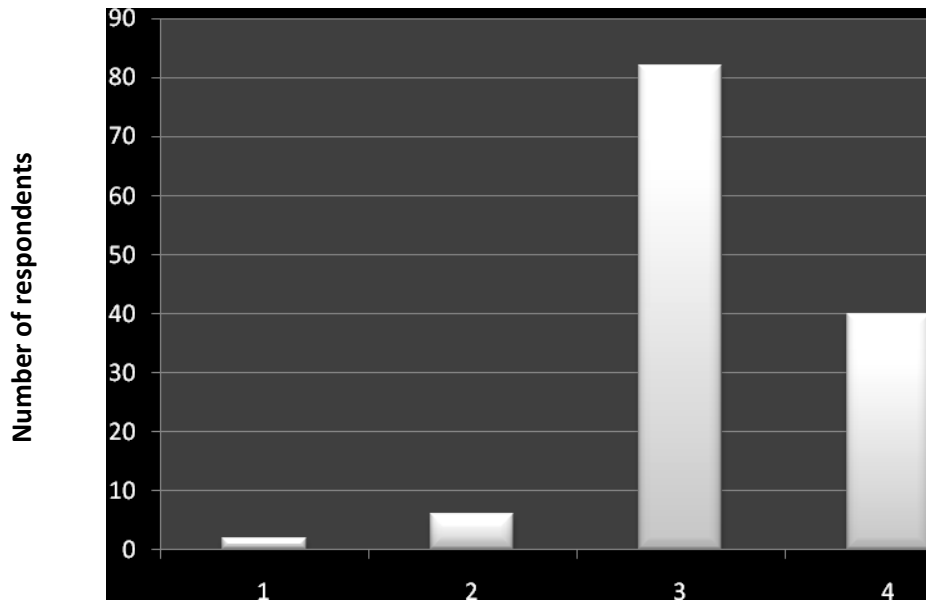


Figure 6: Impact of PDs on relationships between teachers and student ushers

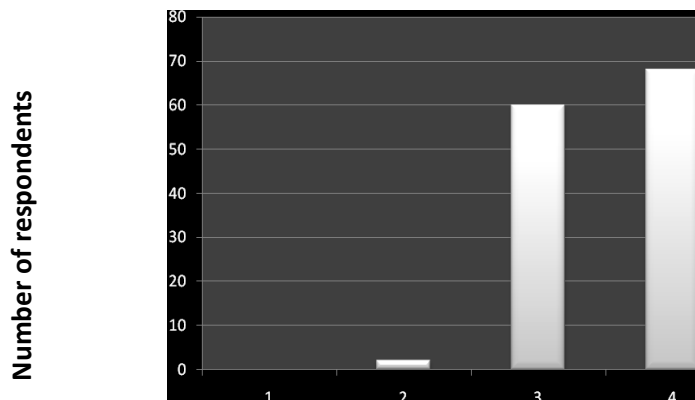


1=Strongly Disagree- 2= Disagree – 3= Agree – 4= Strongly Agree

The above figures imply that the majority of teachers believed that PDs did really shape school relationships positively, whether within departments, across departments or with students.

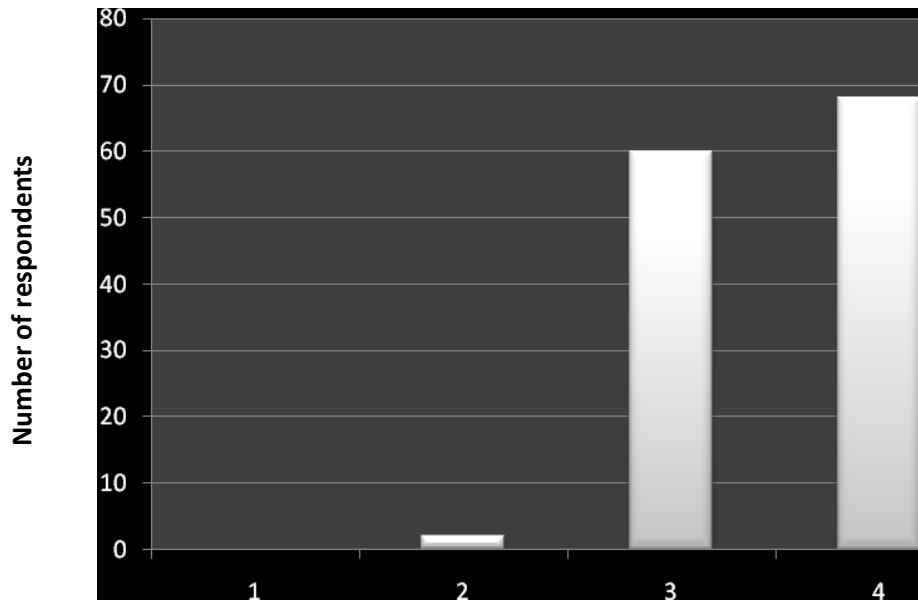
Professional days seemed to be playing a positive role at increasing the sense of belonging of teachers to school (Fig. 7). Not only this, but even the sense of pride in the school seemed to be enhanced (Fig. 8).

Figure 7: Impact of PDs on teachers' sense of belonging to school



1=Strongly Disagree- 2= Disagree – 3= Agree – 4= Strongly Agree

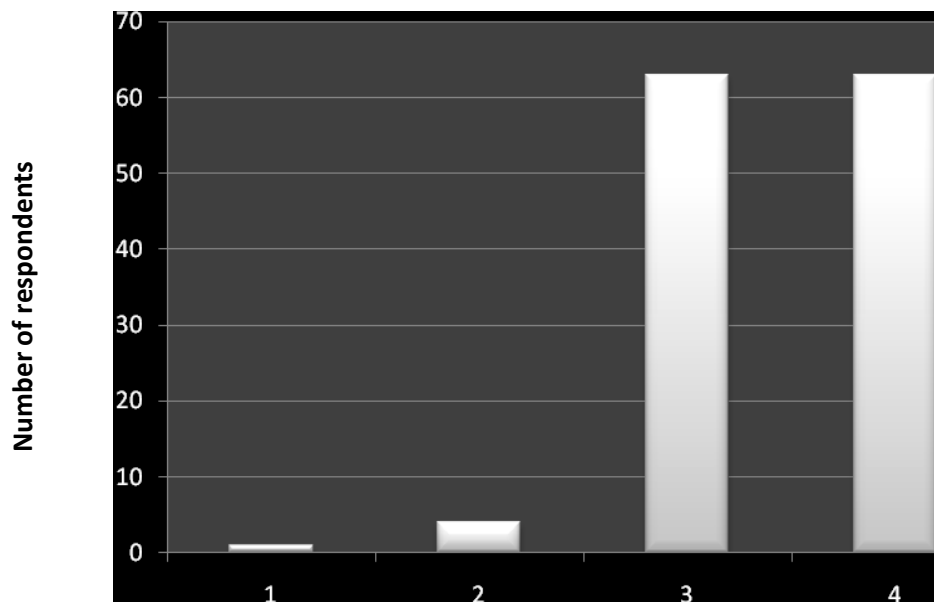
Figure 8: Impact of PDs on teachers' sense of pride in their school



1=Strongly Disagree- 2= Disagree – 3= Agree – 4= Strongly Agree

Figure 9 manifests the effect of PDs on promoting leadership skills among teacher trainers.

Figure 9: Role played by PDs at distributing leadership at school



1=Strongly Disagree- 2= Disagree – 3= Agree – 4= Strongly Agree

In conclusion, PDs seem to be positively impacting the school climate at Hariri High School II by building stronger relations whether departmental or cross-departmental as well as strengthening student-teacher relationships (students who act out as ushers during PDs). Moreover, a stronger sense of belonging and pride in school is established. PDs not only improve the school climate, but also allow for the practice of distributed leadership.

Data Derived from Student Ushers' Questionnaires

Student ushers expressed their pride in their school (Fig. 10) as PDs hosted home teachers and teachers from all around Lebanon. They believe this makes their school more reputable. As a result students assured that they felt that they liked their school more (Fig. 10).

Figure 10: Student ushers' sense of pride as a result of participating in PDs

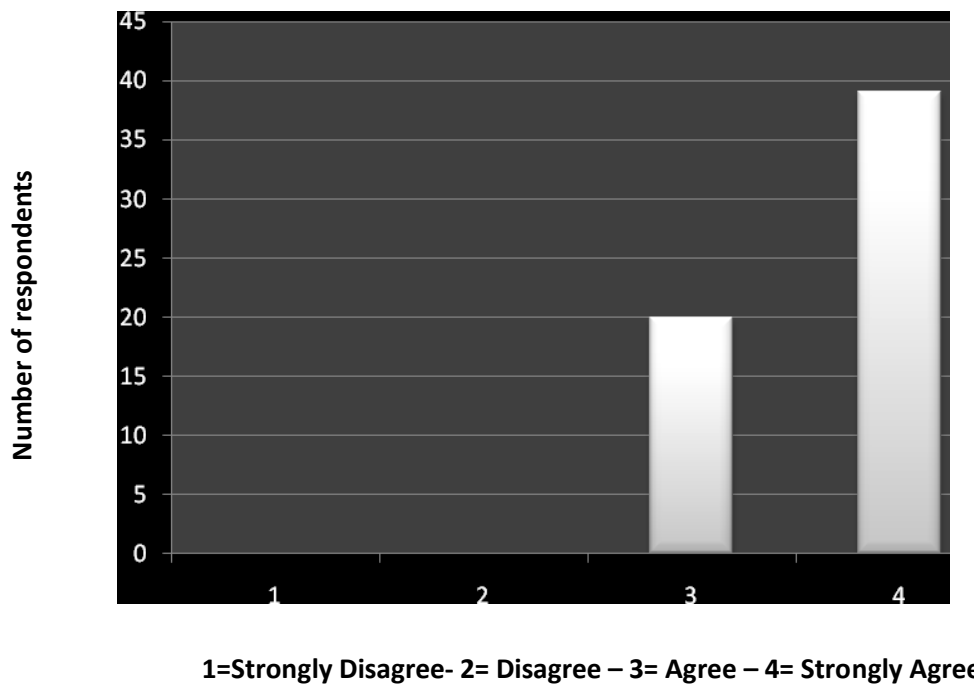
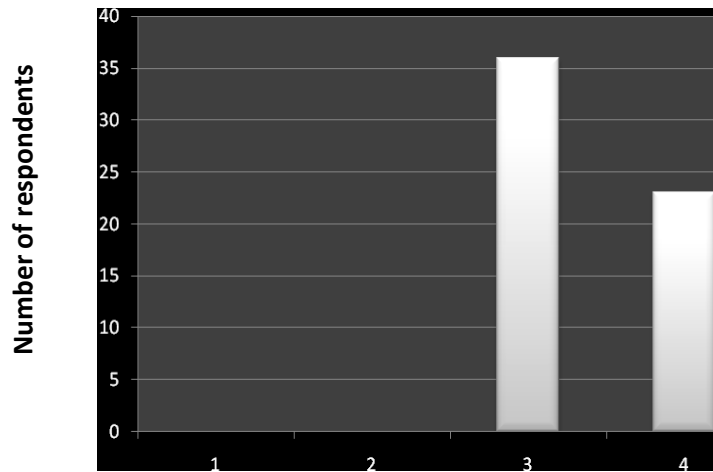


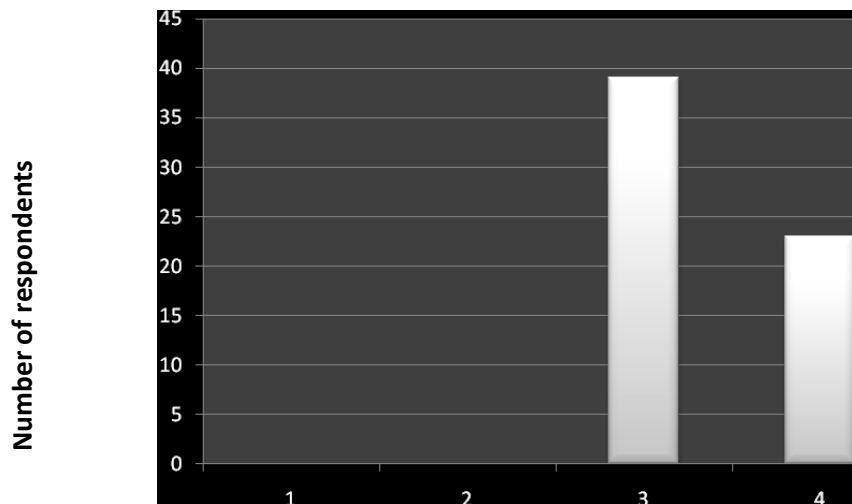
Figure 11: Impact of PDs on the tendency of student ushers to consider school a more like place



1=Strongly Disagree- 2= Disagree – 3= Agree – 4= Strongly Agree

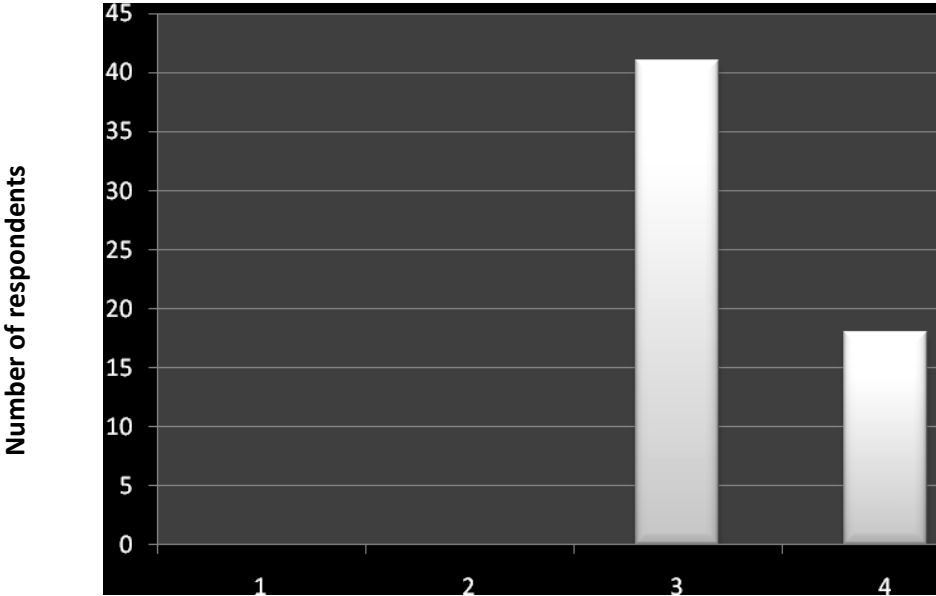
Student ushers expressed that they tend to build stronger relationships with their teachers (Fig. 12) and their friends (Fig. 13) during PDs. Furthermore, they are given the chance to practice some leadership skills by performing specific responsibilities in PDs (Fig.14).

Figure 12: Role of PDs at fostering stronger relationships between usher students and teachers



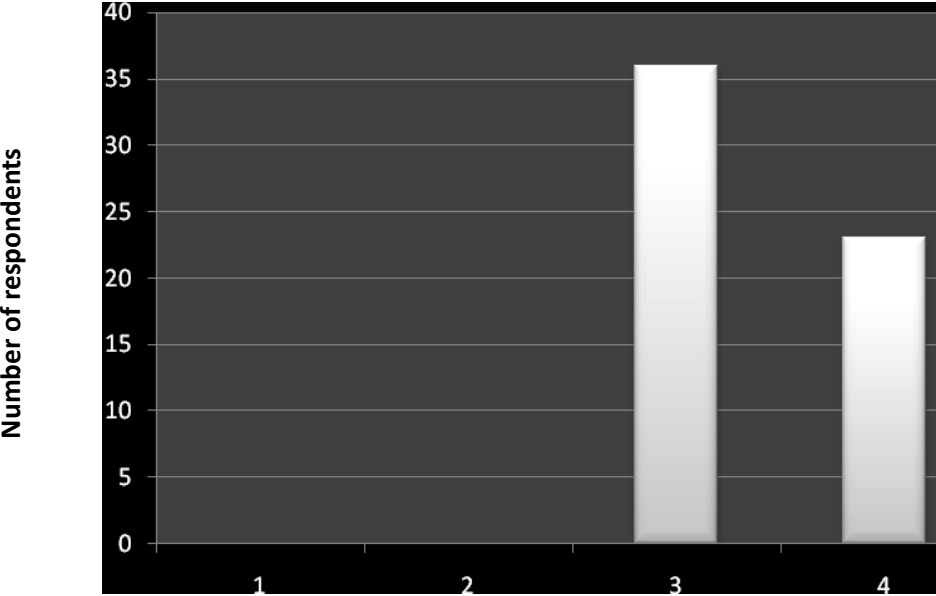
1=Strongly Disagree- 2= Disagree – 3= Agree – 4= Strongly Agree

Figure 13: Role of PDs at fostering stronger relationships between student ushers and colleagues



1=Strongly Disagree- 2= Disagree – 3= Agree – 4= Strongly Agree

Figure 14: Student leadership opportunities made available to students by virtue of PDs



1=Strongly Disagree- 2= Disagree – 3= Agree – 4= Strongly Agree

In other words, student ushers also believed that PDs played an important role at improving their school's climate by allowing them to interact with their teachers and colleagues more closely. The end product is the promotion of stronger relationships. Moreover PDs enabled students to feel that the school was a good place to be at and raised their level of pride in their school. Last but not least, PDs also seemed to be playing a critical role in terms of student leadership, enabling them to play leadership roles at their school and at a younger age.

Lessons Learned From the Action Research Undertaken

Although it was claimed that PDs do impact the professional growth and school climate positively, this study assures these two claims by providing concrete evidence that may be used by HHS 2 to further improve the school via professional days. The study indicates that the greatest benefiterers are teacher trainers whose skills and content knowledge are highly enhanced. Consequently, the participation of a larger number of teachers as trainers should be encouraged so that a critical mass of highly professional teachers would be made available.

The study also indicates that PDs enhance school climate by primarily allowing for distributed leadership that takes the form of both teacher leadership and student leadership. It makes teachers and student ushers believe that their school is a nice place to be at and hence their sense of pride in their school is increased. Teacher-teacher relationships, whether departmental or cross-departmental, are promoted. Moreover, student-teacher relationships are also strengthened.

Next Questions

It is important at this stage to start questioning the impact of the PDs on the performance of teachers inside classrooms and at positively affecting student achievement.