

# Impact of Effective Collaboration and Consultation: Insights for Educators

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## Abstract

This study aims to show the impact of effective collaboration and consultation, especially in education. People cannot live in life without help from each other. In Arabian countries, it is widespread that people ask about what they should do and how and when they must do something because they are seeking a person who could give those tips. Arabic culture also considers the feeling is essential when you would give anyone consultation, and Arabs tend to use a piece of oral advice are more than written advice. This is just one style of the consultation, but every civilizations and nation have different styles of how they use the consultation and all human use it and they need it. People need help and tips in different aspects in their lives such as psychological, social, economic, health and education aspects. Therefore, collaborative consultation has been given for people since an old-time to help, support them and give them a guide to solve their issues. This study found that definition of collaboration and collaborative consultation and their limitations. This also discusses the useful and ineffective collaboration and collaborative consultation and presents a plot to demonstrate the key steps towards an effective collaborative consultation. This study hope will benefit educators.

**Keywords:** Collaboration, Consultation, Education, Arabic Culture

## Introduction

Collaborative learning has been highly incorporated in schools in recent years. Different strengths and limitations of collaborative teaching and consultations are discussed. Collaboration means teamwork. The term collaboration can be considered as a myriad of activities where many people are involved, and it provides input into the problem-solving process by the help of specific activities such as collaborative supervision, collaborative inquiry and collaborative schools. Different authors have provided many different definitions of collaboration. Friend and Cook (1990) mentioned that the style professionals select to employ based on mutual goals; parity; shared responsibility for critical decisions; shared accountability for outcomes; shared resources; and the development of trust, respect, and a sense of community.

Moreover, a style for interaction between at least two co-equal parties voluntarily engaged in shared decision-making as they work toward a common goal (Friend & Cook, 1990). In the process of collaboration, every individual is involved (having different skill sets) as an active partner, working together to attain a mutual goal. As collaborators work together and participate in the task in every aspect, hence they share the resources as well as the accountability for resources. This makes every individual of the team responsible for the success or the failure of the task. (Dettmer, Thurston & Dyck, 2005). Tharp (1975) said the consultation had been described as a triadic model involving three individuals, i.e., the consultant, the mediator and the target. These three individuals perform different professional roles (Coben et al., 1997).

The consultant is the expert who has the ability concerning methodologies to change the conduct. The mediator is the expert endeavouring to achieve an adjustment in the conduct of the target.

Client or target may be students, teachers, parents, any organization or general members of the public. Consultation is a voluntary and cooperative problem-solving process. Consultant or consultee is responsible for the initiation of termination of a consultation process. Its sole purpose is to support consultees so that their relationship with the client is active. The goals of the process include to improve services to clients and to polish the abilities and skills of consultees to perform well in their weak areas (Coben et al., 1997).

Through the above, we can define the cooperative consultation is a carefully organized process that some people work in it as a team to solve common problems that they want to solve them and give advice and tips or reduce the adverse effects and work to support the consultees to reach the shared goals via sharing the ideas and experiences.

## Literature Review

Currently, the educational environment needs special education teachers with deep, cross-cutting expertise and, in particular, soft skills, including outstanding social interaction and communication abilities, and also the ability to collaborate with others — for example, how a pupil better supports an inclusively integrated school (Takala & Wickman, 2019; Hausstatter & Takala, 2008; TraCz, Beare, & Torgerson, 2018).

Collaboration and consultation are an interactive process where individuals having diverse skill sets work as a team to identify a problem and find out its solution. Such a process is based on a balanced relationship involving mutual trust and open communication. It involves the pooling of resources to work upon the strategies that will be effective in solving the problem. Every individual shares the responsibilities for implementing and evaluating a program as well as strategy selected for problem-solving (Dettmer, Thurston & Dyck, 2005).

Collaboration and consultation benefit both the individuals of the team and the clients. It provides improved services to clients. It also provides opportunities to enhance as well as develop professional skills. Knowledge sharing among individuals is one of the benefits of collaborative consultations. It also improves individual productivity and performance. It operates on different individual strengths and skills.

These include crosscutting capabilities, behavioural skills, and navigation skills. Collaborative consultation works based on brainstorming in which everyone devises strategies to solve problems based on their knowledge and expertise.

Behavioural skills include dependability, working effectively with others, adapting and managing stress. Navigation skills are needed to successfully navigate future pathways ( self-knowledge of abilities, likes and dislikes, values, exploration and planning skills, and knowledge of majors, occupations and career opportunities) (Coben et al.,1997).

Students are responsible for each other's learning apart from themselves. They share knowledge. Groups formed in such tasks consists of mixed students, both less intelligent and intelligent students and learning depend upon an individual's motivation and interest in a particular subject.

Low-achieving students become passive and do not focus on the task due to being in a group of mixed ability. Furthermore, they are always in need of help rather than leading a group. On the other hand, intelligent students do not experience the challenges to perform further better due to mixed ability groups. There is an increased chance for conflicts emergence among individuals and also skills to resolve those conflicts.

Conflicts occur due to the difference of opinions, but tolerance towards others is required to avoid conflicts (Dettmer, Thurston & Dyck, 2005). Idol (1995) mentioned that collaborative consultation is an interactive communication process that may exist among general and special educators, administrators, related service personnel, and parents to facilitate the provision of special education services to disabled students in regular/mainstreamed classroom settings.

## Methodology

This model provides programs to students with hearing impairments. It provides an approach focused on students' needs, namely their academic, social, communication and physical needs in a classroom. Unique students have different qualifications and expectations than most students.

It helps in the enhancement of the skills of consultant and mediator for better performance. Working in a team polishes their skills, they share knowledge. They further work on their expertise to solve the problems (Luckner 1989).

Individuals involved in a team share their resources to solve a problem that facilitates and benefits the community both socially and financially. It also helps to make communication better and open among diverse professional disciplines. Mostly there is a lack of communication among people belonging to different disciplines; hence, ideas to solve a problem cannot be merged or worked upon to solve problems related to some other discipline.

However, collaborative communication helps to decrease this communication gap and solve the problems. (Luckner et al., 1989). Because they can share their ideas and listen from the other side. Collaborative consultation should use critical thinking to find the best solution for every problem. It also facilitates instructional services based on academic and social learning needs. The needs of special and general students are different from each other. Consultants and consultee both work upon the ways to make the instructional system of sign language effective (Idol, Paolucci & Nevin, 1995). Most importantly, it is a student-centred approach requiring the development of effective programs by both consultant and consultee. On the other hand, it is a cost-effective model benefiting the administrators (West, 1990).

The number of general and special education teachers engaged in collaborative consultation can be small, which limits the sample size. This is due to a low number of special schools as well as lack of communication among general and special educators as communication becomes difficult because of the language barrier of special educators, who use sign language. On the other hand, general educators prefer a basic description of the student's problem and the educational plan.

Another reason for the limitation of this method is that educational responsibilities and missions are viewed and understood differently by different professionals who can inhibit communication as well as create resistance between general and special educators (Coben et al. 1997).

Special educators possess the ability and expertise to support the integration of students with disabilities. Because of this, general education teachers receive impossible and unrealistic recommendations for implementation in a traditional classroom. The collaborative consultation processes to give advice, tips and the best solutions to consultees then consultees have the right to do what they want after they understood all factors and aspects that can work to help themselves that means the final the decision is due to the person who asked the consultation.

Collaborative consultation should not interfere with religious or cultural concepts, especially in some countries where religion or customs and traditions are robust and influential in the lives of

people. Therefore, they should seek to find appropriate solutions and avoid criticism of the direct and indirect religion or customs and traditions.

## Findings and Discussions

Collaborative consultation involves an equal partnership between the two partners for problem identification and developing solution. The most important for an effective collaborative consultation is the consultant shall negotiate with the people who ask the consultation to select the goals and the steps that they should do to reach problem-solve and create a plan, which is agreed therefore the negotiation is one of the vital factors for any collaborative consultation successful. This results in shared resources and shared accountability for the success and failure of the project. Hence, both the professionals are equally benefitted by the task. It develops positive partnerships among professionals.

For effective collaborative consultation, special educators should not be a consultant to general educators because the conditions of a classroom of special education are different from that of general education. (DuPaul, Lisa & Grace, 2011).

West (1990) found to be most effective in the case where teachers take the lead during the stage of problem identification and consultants leading when different possible strategies have to be discussed to address problems and design solutions. This is because teachers are the experts regarding their classroom, curriculum, and the target student's difficulties, while the consultant typically is the expert regarding empirically supported interventions to address student difficulties (DuPaul, Lisa & Grace, 2011; West, 1990).

Besides, the collaborative consultation has to considerate the culture, religion, customs and traditions. For example, in my country (Saudi Arabia) not acceptable when males consult with females that is for cultural and religious considerations. Interact with open and honest feedback between the consultant and mediator is essential to ensure that ideas have been shared and appropriately adopted for problem solving.

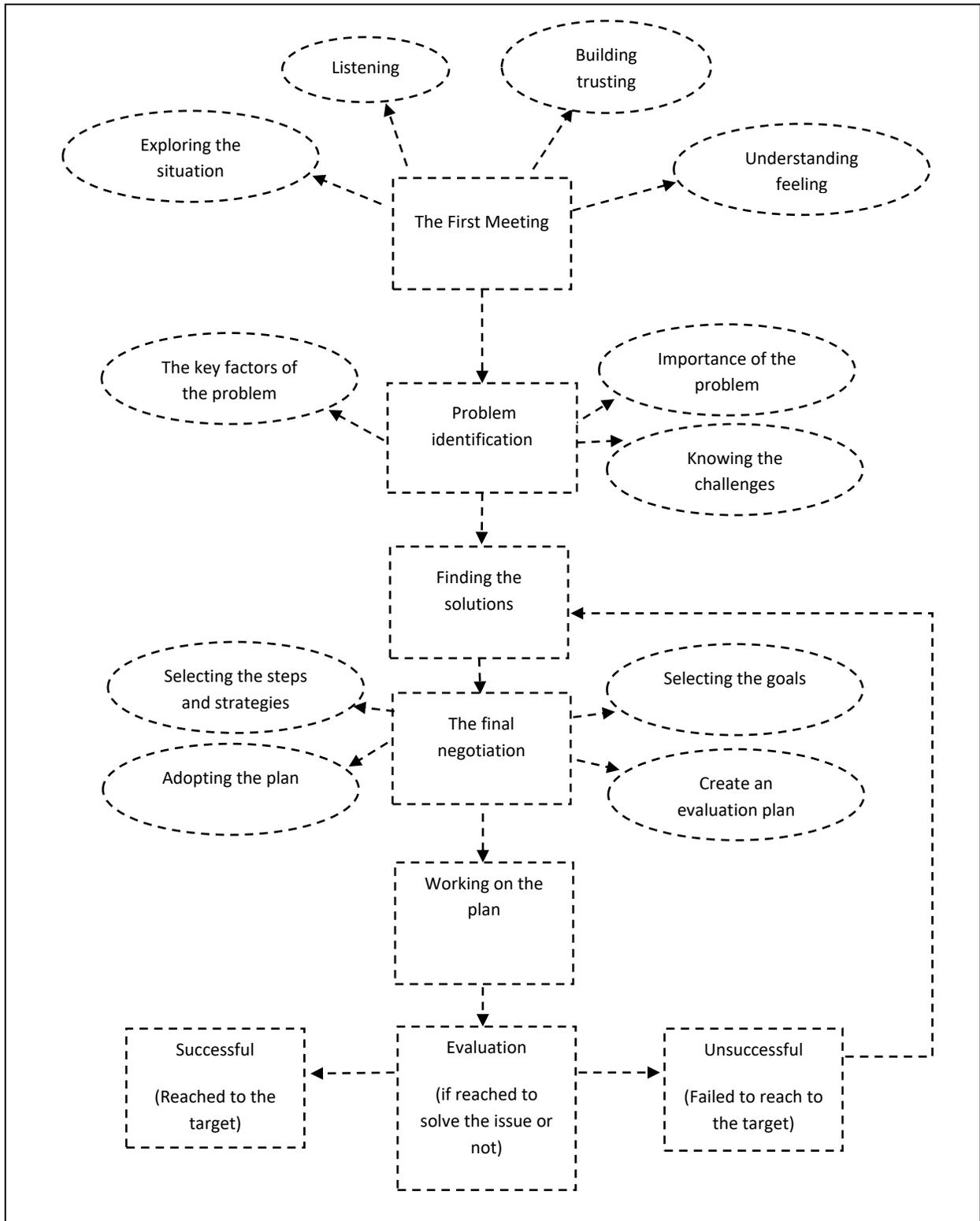
Collaborative consultation becomes ineffective in many situations. Some of them have been described here. If there is only one leader, it is not possible that he will be available every time and everywhere.

People do have personal engagements, which sometimes make them less available. There is also a chance that the leader is less capable of a specific problem and does not have specific expertise to solve an issue. Furthermore, it creates individuality, which is against the critical concept of collaborative consultation, i.e., creating parity and equality.

On the other hand, the consultant must not be perceived as a supervisor or evaluator; instead, he must be perceived as a person whose ideas and recommendations must be judged in the light of empirical results West (1990). All individuals involved in implementing collaborative consultation must cooperate.

The researcher made a chart to show the main steps and processes that help to give consultation. Negotiation occurs at every step not just after (finding solutions) or in (the final negotiation). There are six main steps for the collaborative consultation and under each step and who should be involved.

Figure 1: Flow Chart of the effective collaborative consultation



## Conclusion

In Arab countries, it is reasonable to ask what to do and how to do, as they are finding a person who could advise them. People cannot live in a life without support from each other. Arab culture believes that the feeling is always important for everybody, and Arabs wanted more than written advice. All cultures and nations use and need consultation both in various ways and for all. Individuals need support and guidance on the psychological, social, cultural, health and education aspects of their life. Therefore, since an old age, informal consulting has been performed to support, assist, and direct people in solving their problems. This article would argue that collaboration and collaborative consultation concept and its limitations are useful and counterproductive, as well as when collaboration and collaborative consultation are helpful. This study will be useful for educators.

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