Article

The Reinvention of ELT Associations During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Challenges and Strategies

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates how ELT associations adapted and reinvented themselves to meet the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing on their efforts to stay relevant and support their members. While much of the existing research has focused on teacher collaboration, this paper examines how teacher associations played an active role in navigating the challenges of low teacher participation, financial sustainability, and competency issues, addressing professional development needs, and fostering collaborative networks. Using a qualitative approach, six executive committee members from teacher associations across Southeast Asia were interviewed. The data was collected through in-depth interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis to identify key challenges and the strategies adopted. The findings revealed that teacher associations actively worked to stay updated on changes in the ELT field, advocated for innovative professional development, disseminated government policies, and encouraged interdisciplinary research. This study highlights the evolving role of ELT associations during uncertain times and provides insights into their strategies for sustainability, overcoming financial challenges, and enhancing teacher competency.

KEYWORDS: ELT Associations, Professional Development, Pandemic Challenges, Collaborative Networks, Thematic Analysis

INTRODUCTION

Educators are critical agents of change, and their involvement in professional organizations is crucial (A1). The COVID-19 pandemic has pushed educational systems into uncharted territory, challenging and disrupting the work of educators and the daily learning experiences of students, and even the concept of schooling (Hollweck & Doucet, 2020). This provides a compelling argument in response to shifting educational contexts to find out how teachers survived during the pandemic, having to switch to online classes as well as focus on their own professional development. School closures at the pandemic's peak affected almost 91% of approximately 1.6 billion students and over 63 million teachers in 193 countries worldwide (Education International, 2020; UNESCO, 2020). In Canada, all schools were closed by the end of March, and most students were learning at home, where education is territorially and provincially organized (Hollweck & Doucet, 2020). The sudden shift to online schooling has had significant implications for pedagogy and professionalism during the pandemic and beyond. As many teachers tried to transform this into an opportunity rather than viewing it as a challenge, there were a lot of differences and inequalities which restricted them from lending support to student learning and well-being (Hollweck & Doucet, 2020). The pandemic made it mandatory for school management, educators, learners, and parents to use technology to design and implement new educational activities from home (Van Allen & Katz, 2020). Technology-supported collaboration has played an essential role in building meaningful professional learning networks that offer teachers a safe space to share personal and professional triumphs and address common challenges (Krutka et al., 2016; Tsai & Yang, 2018 in Burleigh et al., 2022). This new skill is an unexpected outcome of the pandemic that could benefit education stakeholders. Online programs offer educators the time and space to collaborate synchronously and asynchronously, gaining learning experiences that support their pedagogical practice. In summary, several studies (Van Allen & Katz, 2020; Wilson & Lane, 2022) have shown that the COVID-19 pandemic has shifted the education field and can be practised for continuous professional development. This disruption has necessitated the need for networking and the relevance of communities of practice which is discussed next.

According to Jocius et al. (2022), the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated urgent professional development (PD) experiences to support teacher learning in hybrid and digital contexts. However, there are still challenges in designing effective PD opportunities that encourage teachers to reflect deeply, make connections across school communities and disciplinary boundaries, and engage with core issues in teaching and learning. The COVID-19 pandemic has necessitated the need to offer professional development through online and hybrid platforms. While informal learning and online collaboration have been extensively studied, research on teachers' online collaboration for professional development is not yet comprehensive. Most of the communities and networks examined so far have been established for research purposes within educational circles (Slagoski, 2019). Nevertheless, a community of practice study found that social media and conferences were beneficial for many participants in terms of furthering their professional development and expanding their network (Slagoski, 2019). These online platforms help teachers to have access to the content easily and serve as a platform to diversify their network.

Chaikoed et al. (2017) stated that collaboration not only leads to successful work but also to successful working groups such as educational reform, learning reform, and teacher development. The author posits that there are eight factors that enhance the quality of

education in primary schools in collaborative network management: reciprocal interaction, common vision, participation, trustworthiness, common awareness development, commitment development, common activity practice, and common decision-making. The research found that each factor of collaborative network management contributed to the peak value of the loading factor, and it was concluded that all the factors were essential for the success of collaborative network management.

The importance of trust in promoting teacher collaboration has been established by the "Teaching and Learning International Survey" (TALIS) which focuses on teachers and school leaders (OECD, 2020). According to Kolleck and Schuster (2019), the study conducted by Vangkrien et al. (2015) categorized the different limitations and benefits of teacher association and reviewed the depth, strength, and challenges of teacher collaboration as stated in the scientific literature. The study also noted that teacher collaboration is a diverse construct, "ranging from mere aggregates of individuals to strong team entitativity including, for example, shared goals and values" (Vangkrien et al., 2015). Different understandings and meanings of teacher association find their suitable manner in many different terms used to describe the situation. "The literature on teacher association draws on many different expressions such as teacher teams, co-teaching, professional (learning) communities, (teacher) learning teams, or, more broadly, communities of practice" (Kolleck, 2019; p.92).

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Despite creating unprecedented challenges for students, staff, and schools, the COVID-19 pandemic has also expedited the process for academics to expose innovation, creativity, and most importantly opportunity. As Dabrowski (2020) observes, schools served as a bridge to build partnerships with teachers, families, and communities as the varying communities emerged from the different states of isolation during the pandemic. Turkle (2017), as cited by Dabrowski (2020), explains that teachers' well-being is essential and can be enhanced through mechanisms that support teachers at both individual and collective levels. An individual's health and well-being are connected to the health of communities and interactions with others; hence, there are possibilities that all these have been lost due to the COVID-19 SOPs and protocols (Turkle, 2017). Richter and Pant (2016), who surveyed a total of 1015 German secondary school teachers, stated that the study showed that almost all teachers consider it important to collaborate with others (as cited in Kolleck and Schuster, 2019, p. 92). However, their study revealed that there are differences in the types of collaboration that each teacher follows, for example, collaboration in projects, among the teaching team, and others. Hence, the role of teacher associations in building networks plays a prominent role in strengthening these communities.

The COVID-19 pandemic posed significant challenges that required ELT associations to reinvent themselves in the face of uncertainty. This shift necessitated a reassessment of their role in supporting teachers and fostering collaboration. While much of the research has focused on teacher collaboration and community-building, there is a gap in understanding how teacher associations themselves adapted to these challenges and ensured the sustainability of their work. This study aims to explore how teacher associations promoted collaboration and community among teachers during the pandemic and how they adapted operationally to maintain their relevance in an increasingly digital and isolated world. Considering the multidimensional aspect of collaboration, this research aims to explore the role of teacher associations in instilling a culture of collaboration to

strengthen the professional development of teachers.

While many studies have recognized networking as an efficient strategy, there are still many isolated teachers and researchers who work on their own, and hence, only collaborative work can bring about true change (Murillo, 2009). As described by Rincon-Gallardo and Fullan (2016), the essential features of networking include the interchange of effective pedagogy practices, the development of collaborative inquiry, and the growth of interaction and partnerships. This paper seeks to fill a significant research gap by investigating how teacher associations adapted during the pandemic, exploring their strategies for reinvention and how they maintained and even strengthened their networks and collaborative efforts.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Networking through Teacher Association
Teacher associations were established specifically to help teachers (Gnawali, 2018). However, the COVID-19 pandemic created an unprecedented demand for these associations to adapt and rethink their roles. They needed to offer immediate solutions for professional development, maintain engagement through virtual platforms, and address members' emerging needs. For the benefit of their shared profession, teacher organizations might be official or informal gatherings of educators. When instructors see they can share ideas and experiences while also learning from one another, they step forward to join associations and hence enhance their career network. The resulting alliances may take the shape of clubs, forums, or associations. Studies have shown that teacher associations have historically provided such platforms for the mutual exchange of ideas and experiences (Rana et al., 2016; Macia & Garcia, 2016), but the pandemic forced a reevaluation of how these platforms could function in a crisis. Instructors rely on other instructors to adapt to such quick changes and learn from the best practices. Teacher associations sought to connect professional organizations with similar objectives and empower teachers by continually enhancing their competence abilities (Rana et al., 2016). The urgency created by the pandemic demonstrated the resilience and adaptability of these associations, as they were able to leverage digital platforms to maintain engagement and offer professional development opportunities despite the limitations on in-person interactions. Studies such as Rana et al. (2016) and Macia and Garcia (2016) highlight how associations have provided platforms for mutual exchange of ideas, but there is limited critical discussion on their resilience and adaptability during global crises like the pandemic. Instructors may gain a lot from teacher organizations, whether it is by networking with other associations or by supporting instructors in improving their skills. Therefore, joining organizations that offer the opportunity for mutual exchange is one of the most efficient methods to stay in touch with other instructors, for them to communicate with one another and exchange ideas, experiences, and concerns, teacher organizations unite and bond them. The complex way in which teacher organizations operate demonstrates how effective they can be in assisting educators to advance (Mula et al., 2017).

Community of Practice
According to Al Hashlamoun and Daouk (2020), there were 19,644 references related to "Communities of Practice" in the EBSCOhost database from 1992 to 2019, which highlights its growing importance and recognition in the literature. Wenger et al. (2002, p.4) defined communities of practice as a group of individuals who share a common interest or passion in a specific area and engage in ongoing interactions to deepen their

knowledge and expertise. In the pandemic context, teacher associations extended this framework by creating online communities that fostered rapid problem-solving and innovative teaching practices. In a study by Slagoski (2019), the author examined the extent to which members of a professional learning network (PLN) used social media for work-related goals and their opinions on the benefits of social media learning compared to conventional methods such as reading pedagogy textbooks or attending ELT conferences. Slagoski (2019) found that, during the pandemic, many participants found social media and virtual conferences more useful than traditional methods, as they allowed for ongoing, interactive professional development that was accessible despite physical distancing measures. The findings indicated that many participants found social media and conferences to be useful for their professional development, as perceived by the community of practice regarding educator learning. The study highlights the importance of worldwide, national, and regional ELT organizations providing professional learning opportunities through social media to engage current and potential members. Thus, the pandemic emphasized the importance of teacher associations in facilitating ongoing professional development through digital platforms, a shift that has lasting implications for the future of teacher collaboration.

Theoretical Perspectives
Azorin and Fullan (2022) conducted a study on The Pulsar Model, which emphasizes human potential, student learning, and new forms of collaboration to transform the education system. The Pulsar paradigm encourages experimentation and innovation by connecting and interacting with the forces of change. The emphasis of this model is student-centred learning that encourages deeper collaborations to be successful. This model surpasses the original supernova drive and represents a lighthouse that illuminates new educational pathways. The light beam prioritizes collaboration, the innovation field focuses on improvements in education, and the Copernican axis highlights the significance of students. According to Oxfam (2021):

The coronavirus pandemic has widened pre-existing inequality gaps, but it has also brought our shared experience, vulnerability and interconnectedness into focus. Our health and resilience are inextricably linked to those of our neighbours, as is our survival in the face of other economic, political, social and climate crises. Cooperation and collaboration are not a choice, they are the only way to go (p. 44).

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need for educational adjustments and a move towards networked schools that prioritize both technological advancements for remote learning and meaningful collaboration. As a result of the pandemic, ad hoc networks have emerged, attempting to fill gaps in the educational system, leading to a significant increase in technology-assisted networking. To foster a deep and lasting commitment to caring for pupils, the concept of "spirit work" has been coupled with the "science of collaboration," which emphasizes profound and meaningful collaboration (Azorin & Fullan, 2022). The model emphasizes 'spirit work' and collaboration which will help the educators to advance in equity and excellence. The theoretical framework adopted for this study underscores the importance of collaborative cultures and networking. As Sinnema et al. (2021) observe, the use of collaborative networks should be promoted worldwide to foster teacher learning to improve practice and as well as to address issues of equity and achievement. However, the limitations to this model could come from the constraints within the individual institutions as well as inhibitions on the part of educators to widen their network as part of the new culture.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This led the study to investigate the role of teacher associations during the pandemic in building collaborative networks and communities of practice. The following research questions are proposed:

Research Question 1: How can teacher associations serve as a tool for professional development during and after the COVID-19 pandemic?
Research Question 2: What actions do teacher associations take to build ELT communities of practice?
Research Question 3: What are the key factors that contribute to the successful operation and sustainability of teacher associations?
Research Question 4: What are the challenges faced by teacher associations in running and sustaining their organization?

RESEARCH METHODS

This study adopted a qualitative research design. The study aims to investigate the role of teacher associations in Malaysia. The focus is to explore and give descriptive details of the data collected, and hence adopting a qualitative method is deemed appropriate. Data was collected from the educators on how teacher associations during the pandemic were useful as a platform to expand their collaborative networks and build communities of practice. The paper highlights the implications of using such associations to enhance the educators' networks for their professional development as well as help to understand ways to advance English language education. Qualitative research is built upon writing in the same manner as how the core of quantitative research is mathematics and data. A purposive sampling method was used, involving the selection of participants in Southeast Asia based on specific criteria relevant to the study's objectives. Educators were chosen for their active involvement in teacher associations during the pandemic to ensure they could provide rich and meaningful insights. To ensure the trustworthiness of the data, triangulation was applied by gathering information from multiple educators and member checking was conducted to validate the accuracy of transcriptions and interpretations.

Participants

The researchers selected six executive members from six different English associations for interviews. These individuals were selected to get diverse perspectives on the role of such associations. These individuals were selected based on the key roles they served, and their experience was one of the criteria concerned. Written and verbal consent was obtained from them to participate in this study.

For the selection criteria for participants from the management pool of the major teacher associations, a total number of six of them are from the executive committee. These participants were selected based on the role they served in the management committee and their experience. This served as an inclusion criteria for the participants.

Sandelowski (1995), recommends that qualitative sample sizes are large enough to allow the unfolding of a 'new and richly textured understanding' of the phenomenon under study, but small enough so that the 'deep, case-oriented analysis' (p. 183) of qualitative data is not precluded. The interviews focused on the instrumental role played by these associations in enabling collaborative networks and building communities of practice during the pandemic for educators. A purposive sampling method is used to further obtain more in-depth insights.

Data Analysis

The interviews focused on the instrumental role played by these associations in enabling collaborative networks and building communities of practice during the pandemic for educators. The results and discussion are presented in the following sections. The main recurring themes from the interviews were coded and a thematic analysis was adopted to discuss the findings. The process began with familiarization, where the researchers thoroughly reviewed the interview transcripts to gain a deep understanding of the content. Following this, initial codes were generated manually, focusing on recurring ideas and concepts that appeared across the dataset. The coding process was iterative, allowing the researchers to refine and consolidate the codes as patterns began to emerge.

The next stage involved searching for themes by grouping related codes into broader categories that captured the overarching ideas within the data. The data analysis identified several emerging themes that reflect the evolving roles, initiatives, and challenges of ELT associations, particularly during the pandemic. These themes include professional learning communities, teacher competency concerns, collaborative networks, pandemic-related challenges, and operational sustainability. Themes were reviewed to ensure they were consistent with the data and distinct from one another. Finally, the themes were defined and named to reflect their core meaning, ensuring they aligned with the research questions.

This systematic approach ensured a rigorous analysis of the data, enabling the researchers to extract meaningful insights and maintain the integrity of the findings. To enhance the reliability of the thematic analysis, multiple researchers cross-checked the codes and themes, discussing discrepancies to reach a consensus.

RESULTS

The findings illuminate several critical challenges faced by ELT associations during the COVID-19 pandemic. These challenges include low event participation rates, resource constraints, insufficient English proficiency among teachers, and organizational limitations in membership and operational management. The pandemic further exacerbated existing issues, particularly in shifting to online platforms and ensuring meaningful engagement.

Low Event Participation and Online Engagement

One key challenge identified was the difficulty in achieving high participation rates for events and programs conducted online. For example, a participant highlighted the challenges faced by INDOES in meeting the attendance rate requirement for the PRELIM project, which was mandated by the British Council to exceed 80%. Despite the association's efforts, encouraging teachers to commit to online programs was difficult, especially when some teachers struggled with their English proficiency.

"It is hard to encourage teachers to join the program, especially when they have problems with their English proficiency," shared one participant.

While the transition to virtual platforms provided opportunities to reach teachers in remote areas, engagement rates remained low. This emphasizes the need for innovative methods to foster active participation, such as incorporating interactive activities or tailored content for diverse teacher profiles.

Resource and Funding Challenges
Budget constraints emerged as another critical challenge. Many ELT associations operate as non-profit organizations and rely on membership fees or external sponsorships for their activities. Mansour highlighted that limited funding often restricted associations' ability to incentivize participation or adequately compensate editors, reviewers, and event organizers. "Editors and reviewers are not paid, so they might prioritize other commitments outside the organization," noted Mansour.

Despite these challenges, some associations demonstrated resilience by adopting collaborative strategies. For instance, MELTA established MOUs with 13 associate partners, enabling resource pooling and shared expertise. These partnerships also provided access to funding opportunities, training materials, and logistical support, alleviating some of the financial burdens.

Similarly, INDOES leveraged partnerships with organizations such as the British Council and the U.S. Embassy to secure sponsorship for webinars and teacher training programs. However, the reliance on external funding posed risks, particularly when sponsors reduced their contributions or shifted priorities. This highlights the need for associations to diversify their revenue streams and develop sustainable funding models.

Limited English Proficiency and Lack of Standardized Recruitment
Another challenge pertained to the English proficiency levels of teachers, particularly in Indonesia. Rose observed that many English teachers, despite holding undergraduate degrees in the subject, lacked the necessary language skills to meet professional standards.

"There are no standardized procedures for selecting English teachers, so their proficiency levels are not guaranteed," explained Rose.

This gap in teacher quality underscored the absence of a standardized competency test for English teachers in Indonesia. To address this issue, INDOES initiated collaborations with the British Council to design programs aimed at improving teachers' language skills. These programs emphasized practical, communicative English to help teachers build confidence in classroom instruction.

In addition, the association proposed developing a standardized competency test to be adopted nationally as part of the recruitment process. However, this initiative faced challenges, including securing funding for research and gaining government endorsement.

Organizational Structure and Membership Management
Managing membership databases and ensuring effective communication with members also posed significant challenges for ELT associations. Ben, a co-founder of an association, highlighted that resource limitations made it difficult to track membership data.

"With only 10 people running the entire organization, maintaining an accurate database and reaching out to members is extremely challenging," remarked Ben.

To address this issue, INDOES successfully upgraded its IT systems, identifying 800 active members compared to the previous 200. This marked improvement in database management enabled the association to better understand member needs and tailor its

programs accordingly.

Moreover, the transition to digital platforms during the pandemic provided opportunities for ELT associations to expand their reach. Social media platforms such as Facebook and websites became vital tools for promoting activities and sharing resources. However, limited expertise in digital marketing among some committee members hindered the full utilization of these platforms.

Challenges of Sustaining Engagement During the Pandemic
The pandemic brought about both opportunities and challenges for ELT associations. While online platforms facilitated broader participation across regions, they also introduced unique difficulties. Teachers and participants reported "Zoom fatigue," and some expressed scepticism about the effectiveness of virtual training sessions.

One participant noted, "It's hard to replicate the energy and engagement of in-person events in a virtual setting. Many teachers feel disconnected and find it challenging to stay motivated during online sessions."

Despite these challenges, associations adapted by organizing innovative online events. For example, INDOES hosted a symposium on language assessment in collaboration with the British Council. Such initiatives demonstrated the potential of virtual platforms to deliver high-quality content and engage diverse audiences.

However, the long-term sustainability of these efforts requires addressing persistent challenges. Associations need to invest in professional development for their committees to improve the delivery and management of online programs. Furthermore, fostering a sense of community among members through regular communication and interactive sessions is crucial to maintaining engagement.

DISCUSSION
This study delves into the multifaceted roles, challenges, and contributions of ELT associations in advancing English language education, particularly during the pandemic. By analyzing the findings, several key themes emerged, each offering valuable insights into the operations and aspirations of ELT organizations like INDOES, MELTA, and others across the region.

Building Professional Learning Communities
One significant finding is the role of ELT associations in fostering networked professional learning communities (NLCs) that support shared learning among members (Lieberman, 2000). Through their efforts, these associations provide platforms for teachers to develop their skills and collaborate on innovative pedagogical practices. As highlighted by Mansour, MELTA plays a vital role in helping young researchers and postgraduates publish their work, engage in interdisciplinary research, and attend conferences. This aligns with Harris's (2003) concept of non-hierarchical collaboration, which encourages the dynamic interchange of ideas and information.

The emergence of these communities has created spaces for authentic conversations among educators, enabling them to share experiences and challenge each other's perspectives (Gallagher et al., 2010). This approach has proven essential, particularly during the pandemic when many teachers experienced isolation. Online platforms

provided opportunities for broader participation, allowing educators from remote areas to connect and learn, which was a silver lining amid the challenges.

Addressing Challenges of Teacher Competency

The study highlights significant challenges faced by ELT associations in ensuring teacher competency. Rose pointed out the absence of standardized measures to assess English teachers' proficiency levels in Indonesia. Many teachers, despite holding undergraduate qualifications, lack the requisite proficiency to deliver effective English language instruction. To address this, INDOES has initiated collaborations with the British Council and other stakeholders to design programs aimed at improving teachers' language skills.

The development of a standardized test for English teacher recruitment in Indonesia, as proposed by the INDOES board, is a step toward addressing these gaps. This aligns with the findings of previous studies that emphasize the importance of establishing competency benchmarks for educators to ensure quality instruction (MacPhail et al., 2014). However, implementing these measures requires significant financial and administrative support, as highlighted by Mansour, who identified funding constraints as a persistent issue for ELT associations.

Leveraging Collaborative Networks

Collaboration and networking have emerged as crucial strategies for sustaining ELT associations. Both INDOES and MELTA have demonstrated the effectiveness of partnerships in enhancing their programs. For instance, INDOES relies on chapter coordinators to organize localized activities, enabling them to better meet members' needs. The establishment of forums like NELTON (National English Language and Teachers Organization) under INDOES's East Jawa chapter has encouraged teachers to present and publish their work, fostering confidence and professional growth.

MELTA's collaboration with international partners such as the U.S. Embassy and the British Council exemplifies the potential of leveraging networks to expand reach and improve program quality. These partnerships not only provide access to resources but also reinforce the sustainability of the organization's initiatives. Sean highlighted that partnerships create win-win situations, which are critical for long-term success. Furthermore, social media platforms have proven invaluable in disseminating information and engaging members effectively, as noted by Rose.

Sustaining Engagement Amid the Pandemic

The pandemic posed significant challenges to ELT associations, particularly in sustaining member engagement during online programs. Teachers often faced difficulties such as technological limitations, lack of motivation, and "Zoom fatigue." One participant remarked, "It's hard to replicate the energy and engagement of in-person events in a virtual setting. Many teachers feel disconnected and find it challenging to stay motivated during online sessions."

Despite these barriers, associations adapted by leveraging online platforms to deliver training and organize events. The symposium on language assessment organized by INDOES, with support from the British Council, is a prime example of how associations can innovate in the face of adversity. Such initiatives highlight the resilience and adaptability of these organizations, although sustaining these efforts requires addressing issues such as teacher participation and program funding.

Advancing Research and Policy Discussions

Another noteworthy aspect is the emphasis on research and policy discussions within ELT associations. Mansour highlighted MELTA's efforts to broaden its focus to interdisciplinary research and integrate priorities such as Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Industry Revolution 4.0 into its programs. The inclusion of SDG 4 (Quality Education) underscores the associations' commitment to aligning their initiatives with national and global education priorities.

Additionally, the establishment of platforms for discussing pedagogical and policy-related matters, as observed by John, reflects the growing recognition of the need for educators to voice their opinions on issues that directly impact their profession. Such forums foster collaboration among members to design creative programs and advocate for effective policies.

Overcoming Operational Challenges

ELT associations face numerous operational challenges, including limited funding, time constraints, and member recruitment issues. As noted by Ben, the small number of active members managing INDOES creates difficulties in expanding their reach and implementing programs effectively. Similarly, Mansour highlighted that unpaid editorial and review roles in MELTA's publications often lead to delays as contributors prioritize other commitments.

To address these issues, associations must explore alternative funding sources, such as partnerships and memberships. MELTA's MOUs with 13 associate partners serve as a model for diversifying funding and resource channels. Moreover, the implementation of IT systems, as seen in INDOES's membership database update, demonstrates the potential of leveraging technology to streamline operations and improve member tracking.

Reflections on Long-Term Sustainability

The findings underscore the need for ELT associations to adapt continuously to evolving challenges and member needs. Collaborative networks, innovative programs, and a focus on teacher competency are pivotal for sustaining these organizations. However, achieving long-term sustainability requires addressing persistent challenges such as funding, engagement, and operational capacity.

As associations move forward, integrating technology and fostering partnerships will be critical to their success. Emphasizing professional development, creating inclusive communities, and aligning initiatives with broader education priorities will ensure that these organizations remain relevant and impactful in the dynamic field of English language education.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study highlights the critical role that ELT associations play in fostering professional development, building collaborative networks, and addressing teacher competency issues, especially in the context of the ongoing pandemic. The findings emphasize the importance of professional learning communities that provide shared experiences, collaborative opportunities, and access to resources, which are vital in overcoming challenges such as low teacher proficiency and inadequate funding.

However, challenges related to participation rates, financial sustainability, and

membership tracking were identified, with recommendations for improving these areas. It is recommended that associations continue to strengthen their partnerships with international organizations like the British Council and the U.S. Embassy to provide resources and funding. Furthermore, there should be a focus on improving teacher evaluation systems and developing standardized assessments to ensure the quality of English language teaching. The implementation of digital platforms and hybrid event formats should also be prioritized to maintain engagement, particularly in light of ongoing pandemic-related constraints.

In conclusion, while the pandemic has posed significant challenges, the resilience and adaptability shown by ELT associations have enabled them to continue providing essential professional development and support for teachers. Moving forward, enhancing collaboration, securing sustainable funding, and addressing teacher competency will be key to the continued success and growth of these associations.

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