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The professional learning of refugee volunteer teachers in Indonesian refugee learning centres

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HIGHLIGHTS

- Refugees do not have qualified teachers in the community.
- A developing Community of Practice was able to provide support to develop expertise of refugee volunteer teachers.
- Mentoring supported refugee volunteer teachers' professional learning but there were challenges identified.
- The role of external organisations was found to be significant.
- Issues of trust were found to be significant.

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ABSTRACT

This article investigates professional learning opportunities in a community of Hazara refugee volunteer teachers. These teachers have no formal teacher training or qualifications and work in Indonesian learning centres. The study investigates the benefits and challenges of mentoring, outside support, and trust using a community of practice framework and qualitative methodology.

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1. Introduction

The movement of people around the globe has occurred for millennia. In recent times a significant part of this movement has comprised individuals and groups fleeing wars and persecution based on religious and other beliefs. This displacement has intensified over the past five to 10 years, with close to 70 million refugees on the move (Edwards, 2018, para. 1). This number is expected to grow.

While this movement has intensified, countries have started to close their borders to refugees. Hazara people from Afghanistan and surrounding countries hoping to settle in Australia have become stranded in Indonesia as a result of Australia closing its borders to refugees arriving on boats. Other countries that

previously resettled them, including the United States, Canada, and New Zealand have reduced their refugee intakes. As a result, refugees who had hoped to spend only months in transit in Indonesia have been waiting years to have their resettlement applications assessed and then for relocation, often to no avail. This extended waiting in Indonesia has had many unintended consequences, one of them being the disruption of education for young people.

1.1. Hazara refugees in Indonesia

Hazara refugees come predominately from Afghanistan and to lesser extent Pakistan and Iran. The group is Shiite rather than Sunni Muslim. For the Hazara people, two of the factors that led to fleeing Afghanistan were the rise of the Taliban and the escalating mistreatment they experienced due to their ethnic and religious minority status (Zheng, Alberdi, Sagala, & Tahir, 2018). After many countries of first asylum, such as Iran, Jordan, and Syria failed to

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protect these refugees, Indonesia became a transit point in the global smuggling networks that sprang up as a result (Missbach, 2013). In 2016 (which is the most recent published figure) there were between 3000 and 5000 Hazara refugees in Cisarua, Bogor, and surrounding areas (Ali, Briskman, & Fiske, 2016). This figure has risen as more refugees continue to arrive in Indonesia in a situation described as a “bottleneck” (Topsfield, 2016). Given that Indonesia is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention, conditions for refugees there are difficult as they have no access to social security or employment.

While refugee children are allowed to go to local schools, none in the Hazara community do for a number of reasons. One is the language barrier, for which there is limited learning support (Ali et al., 2016). Moreover, as Zheng et al. (2018) state: “Even if refugees in Cisarua did enrol in local schools, they would be learning for the imagined future of Indonesia— neither their home country nor their envisioned third country of resettlement” (p. 4). As a result of Hazara students not attending local schools, learning centres staffed by Hazara refugee volunteers have been established for them. These volunteer teachers in the centres have no formal teaching qualifications.

1.2. The focus of this article

According to Sesnan, Allemanno, Ndugga, and Said (2013), there are three types of refugee teachers:

1. Individuals who were teachers when they became refugees and are teaching now or wish to teach
2. Qualified teachers who do not teach when in the host country, including those who do other jobs
3. Refugees who became teachers after arriving in the host country. (p. 31)

A fourth category – refugees, who teach within their community in learning centres in a transit country but have no formal training, is the focus of this article. Such teachers are referred to here as refugee volunteer teachers (RVTs). These teachers were not only volunteers, they were also unpaid. The learning centres received limited funds so could not pay them and refugees are not allowed under Indonesian law to undertake paid work.

It is argued that the needs of RVTs working in learning centres run by them are very different from those of trained teachers who work with refugee children. In order that various organisations can provide support for untrained RVTs, it is important to understand the contextual factors that support or inhibit their needs. To date, there has been limited research on the training needs of untrained RVTs, particularly those in Southeast Asia. Much of the literature on refugee teachers tends to focus on the needs of trained teachers in refugee camps. Mendenhall (2018), for example, has explored the Teachers for Teachers initiative in the Kakuma refugee camp situated near the South Sudan–Kenyan border. Similarly, limited research has been undertaken into the professional learning provided to untrained volunteer refugee teachers who teach in their own communities.

The aim of this article is to critically investigate the opportunities that untrained RVTs have to undertake professional learning and the communities that support such learning. Four refugee learning centres (LCs), located in Cisarua, Bogor are investigated using a Community of Practice (CoP) framework (Wenger, 1998). In this examination, three layers of the CoP are investigated: the learning centre, the learning centre community, and the combined

community. Members of the combined community include the four learning centres, the Australian International school (located in Jakarta), the Jesuit Refugee Service (located in Cisarua), and the researchers’ university.

1.3. The community of practice framework

Communities of Practice “are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly” (Wenger & Wenger-Trayner, 2015, p. 1). The CoP framework is drawn on to support the analysis of the data because it is based on the notion that learning is a social activity that takes place in communities and is heavily influenced by history and culture (Lave & Wenger, 1991). It thus provides a useful way of examining teacher’ learning (Patton & Parker, 2017).

A CoP draws on members with diverse expertise and experience who transcend organisational, disciplinary, and geographical boundaries (Wesley & Buysse, 2001). In the field of education this notion of diversity is supported by the notion that teachers need to form CoPs with colleagues and experts outside their own schools or district (Darling-Hammond & Ball, 1997). One of the purposes of a CoP is to develop domain knowledge that is specific to the community in which it is generated and brings with it a codified language system (Woolis, 2017). Becoming a member of a CoP involves developing the ability to communicate through the language and behaviour that is deemed acceptable by that community (Deters, 2006).

The role of the management (which in the study presented here consists of the learning centres’ executive staff comprising the principal, deputy principal and administrator) in helping to construct and support a CoP is an idea that is contested. Early thinking was that CoPs were so spontaneous, self-organising, and fluid and that management could not intentionally establish or influence them (Brown & Duguid, 2001; Lave & Wenger, 1991). Contemporary thinking is that CoPs must receive institutional support for strategic advantage and improved performance (Anand, Gardner, & Morris, 2007). Thus, the ways that management supports members within the CoP to develop the community are important.

One key aspect within a CoP is known as legitimate peripheral participation. This is the process through which newcomers are apprenticed into a community by established community members (Lave & Wenger, 1999) and domain language is developed with them. In understanding this aspect, the notion of apprenticeship has been evoked by Lave and Wenger (1999). Thus, a newcomer learns how to think, act, speak, and be a full participant of a community through guidance from old-timers. It is through this apprenticeship that new teachers can be supported to develop their skills and knowledge. However, a criticism of Lave and Wenger’s conceptualisation is that newcomers are assumed to be empty vessels to be filled by old-timers, which fails to acknowledge their own past experiences, knowledge and developing identities (Cobb, Harlow, & Clark, 2018).

Another key element of CoP is trust, which is one of the building blocks for relationships that unite members (Preece, 2004; Roberts, 2000). As observed by a number of researchers, the concept of trust is both complex and multifaceted (Adler, 2001; Simons, 2002). Fukuyama (1995) views trust as “the expectation that arises within a community of regular, honest, and cooperative behaviour, based on commonly shared norms, on the part of the members of the community” (p. 26). In considering the aspect of trust, scholars have suggested that CoPs traverse a series of five stages throughout

Table 1
Stages of community development.

| Stage | Definition |
|----------------|--|
| Potential | A loose network of people juggles with the idea of forming a CoP; structure, members, and common interests are identified, selected, and agreed upon. |
| Coalescing | The CoP is officially launched. The CoP activities are starting. The main focus is on establishing value. |
| Maturing | The CoP develops a stronger sense of itself. While its core practice is better de-fined, members see gaps and develop new areas of knowledge. The CoP goes from sharing tips to developing a comprehensive body of knowledge. Members know each other; a level of trust has developed. |
| Stewardship | The CoP goes through a stage where the biggest challenge is to sustain its momentum. |
| Transformation | An event – a major change in practice or work organisation, a large influx of new members, a leadership change, or a high decrease in energy level – will trigger the need for renewal. The CoP may start all over again on a new basis or simply fade away and die |

Note. Adapted from [Wenger et al. \(2002, p. 69\)](#).

their lives ([Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002](#)). [Table 1](#) illustrates these stages.

2. Literature on professional learning and support for teachers

This section introduces salient aspects that relate to professional learning, including mentoring. Research on support for refugees is also examined.

2.1. Teacher professional learning

[Day \(1999\)](#) contends that teacher professional learning consists of “all-natural learning experiences and those conscious and planned activities which are intended to be of direct or indirect benefit to the individual, group or school and which contribute, through these, to the quality of education in the classroom” (p. 4). [Bell, Cordingley, Crisp, and Hawkins \(2012\)](#) reviewed published research on professional learning and noted that for it to be effective it should be collaborative, supported by specialist expertise, focused on aspirations for learners, and sustained over time. Professional learning should also explore evidence from innovations in order to transfer new approaches and practices and the concepts underpinning them to multiple contexts. Additionally, professional learning positions teachers as agentic ([Calvert, 2016](#)) and responsible for directing their learning to achieve their own professional goals ([Louws, Meirink, van Veen, & van Driel, 2018](#)). Teachers can choose their own pathways to develop their understandings about a given area. This aspect of agency can be challenging in an environment where the teachers have limited training. There are benefits for both teachers and university staff in developing partnerships where professional learning is supported, as teachers are able to develop new approaches and ways of thinking about teaching and the teacher educators can gain insights about their practice along with feedback on the theory-practice alignment ([Maher, Schuck, & Perry, 2017](#)).

Teacher professional learning has long been recognised as an important factor in enhancing educational quality (e.g. [Cordingley, 2015](#)). More specifically, teacher quality is a primary driver of variation in student learning outcomes in refugee contexts ([Adane, 2016](#)). The International Rescue Committee (IRC) has identified teacher education as the highest priority for improving refugee school education quality ([Torrente et al., 2015](#)). As [Burns and Lawrie \(2015\)](#) state,

Teacher professional development in crisis and fragile contexts remains an under-theorized and under-researched domain, further perpetuating the cycle of poor teacher professional development and, consequently, poor overall education delivery in the parts of the globe most in need of both. (p. 9)

Since much of the current research has involved refugees in

Europe, “it is therefore highly important to shed some light on this crucial regional issue in Indonesia and Southeast Asia” ([Tanu, Missbach, & Lumenta, 2017, p. 1](#)).

2.2. Professional learning for refugee teachers

In this section the literature on the professional learning opportunities for refugee teachers and their associated benefits is examined. The type of support that is being provided to refugee teachers can be classified as formal and informal. Formal training constitutes professional learning that fulfils national requirements to qualify refugee teachers who can join the regular teaching force ([Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies, 2010](#)). Informal training does not lead to certification to teach. Most post-conflict refugee teachers do not receive formal training and so rely on informal training ([Dicke, Elling, Schmeck, & Leutner, 2015](#)).

The benefits of professional learning for untrained teachers have been reported in the literature. [O’Neal, Gosnell, Ng, and Ong \(2018\)](#), for example, examined professional learning by focusing on refugee teachers in Malaysia. They examined peer training of teachers who were largely untrained and unqualified as teachers in their country of origin. It was found that participation in the program had significant effects on teacher knowledge, confidence, and self-care. In a project undertaken in Kenya at the Kakuma refugee camp with the Teachers College of Columbia University, it was found that in undertaking the training for teachers that “the space and network – both inside and outside of the camp – that foster communities of practice and collaboration are at the heart of sustainable support” ([Mendenhall, Collas, & Falk, 2017, p. 2](#)).

Research on the importance of local community involvement for providing professional learning opportunities for refugee teachers demonstrates that there are clear benefits for refugees and for those who contribute the support. [Brown \(2018\)](#), who reports on conditions for Hazara refugees in Cisarua, found that benefits for RVTs working with members of the local community included assistance with their transition to life in the new country and creation of a sense of belonging.

2.3. Mentoring

One important way of mediating professional learning opportunities for teachers is through mentoring ([Orland-Barak, 2014](#)), which is “the personal guidance provided, usually by seasoned veterans to beginning teachers in schools” ([Ingersoll & Strong, 2011, p. 203](#)). Mentors are individuals with experience and influence who teach those with less experience ([Crow & Matthews, 1998](#)). A mentor serves as a guide, advocate, supporter, friend, and role model ([Pitton, 2006](#)). Mentoring is not about drawing from one’s experience and projecting it onto the newcomer in the form of distilled wisdom and authoritative action, but rather, listening to newcomers to learn how to meet their professional needs ([McCann, 2011](#)).

Mentoring in the form of personal guidance provided to beginning teachers has been identified as a hallmark of induction programs (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). According to Ellis, Polizzi, Roehrig, and Rushton (2017): "Mentoring is an intrinsically valuable practice for the development of beginning teachers, and one approach to developing an environment of mentoring and collaboration between novice teachers and more experienced practitioners is the creation of a community of practice" (p. 248). From a CoP perspective the mentor is the more experienced member and the mentee is the apprentice. The quality of the mentoring is more important than the quantity (Richter et al., 2013). As such, the expertise of the mentor is significant and it is therefore important that the mentor is properly trained (Maguire, 2001; Schmidt, Schwedler, & Hahn, 2010; Viskovic, 2006).

An important aspect for the mentoring process is the quality of the relationship between the mentor and mentee (McMorris, Doty, Weiler, Beckman, & Garcia-Huidobro, 2018). Pillen, Beijaard, and den Brok (2013) identified such relationships as a possible source of tension when beginning teachers are developing their professional identities. As discussed earlier, relationships depend on trust, and the building of trust is widely accepted as a prerequisite to cooperation (Wang & Ahmed, 2003). In Scotland, the Refugees Into Teaching in Scotland (RITeS) program enabled refugee teachers to become eligible for professional service by establishing official refugee status, recognising equivalent qualifications, and assuring English proficiency (Kum, Menter, & Smyth, 2010). In their research into the teachers who were supported by this program, many of whom had traumatic pasts, Kum et al. found they were able to collect and process information, and build confidence and trust.

2.4. Research questions

This current study is centred on three research questions:

1. What professional learning opportunities exist for the refugee volunteer teachers?
2. Who provides such opportunities?
3. What are the some of the benefits and challenges of professional learning within the community?

3. Methodology

A qualitative methodological approach was used to focus on the day-to-day lived experiences of the participants in their natural setting (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Qualitative research draws on data collected typically in the form of words and pictures. The data are analysed inductively (Babbie, 2001), in that there is no attempt to confirm or disconfirm a hypothesis, as is customary in quantitative research. The methods used to collect data in this project included surveys, interviews, and participant observation.

Participant observation, as defined by Mulhall (2003), focuses on the observer "who undertakes prolonged observation, is involved in all the central activities of the organisation, and whose role is known" (p. 308). It was not only the actions of participants that were of interest, but also the University team's actions and how these impacted, and were impacted by the community under investigation. The dual role, where the researchers were both participants/trainers and evaluators of the success of the community, is a methodological weakness in that the ability to both objectively observe and evaluate can be problematic. This aspect is taken up in the limitations section.

3.1. Participants

Four learning centres participated in the project. Table 2

provides details of each (their names are pseudonymised as are individual participants' names).

All learning centre principals were part of the Hazara community and had no previous experience operating a school or learning centre. All of the centres taught in English, as this prepared students to move to English-speaking countries, and all surveys and interviews were conducted in English.

Three Australian academics, including the author of this article, were involved in the training; two have a background in Education and the other in Human Rights, in particular the rights of refugees, asylum seekers, and women. Together they ran workshops and provided guidance in relation to classroom practice.

3.2. Data sources

The data collected include interviews, surveys, informal conversations, and observations. These data were collected during the three visits to the learning centres, and after one of these visits. For all three visits, informal discussions and observations were undertaken. Table 3 sets out the data collection process.

Overall, eight interviews with three principals, a centre administrator, and two teachers were conducted. It was felt important that one member of the management from each learning centre be interviewed to gain a balanced view of its practices. The two teachers interviewed were chosen as they had recently been involved in mentoring, as will be discussed further in the results and discussion section.

Each interview lasted approximately 30 min and was audio recorded. Six were conducted face-to-face and two online. A survey was provided to all 64 RVTs at the four learning centres, of whom 35 responded. The survey was explained to participants at the learning centres. All participants had a good understanding of both written and spoken English, and they were asked to complete the survey at the learning centre so they could ask the University team to clarify any questions if needed. The questionnaire was provided early to the Green Learning Centre, which permitted it to be piloted, and subsequently disseminated to the other centres at a later visit. After being deemed to be fit for purpose, the survey remained unchanged so that consistent data could be collected. As set out in Table 4, the teachers were asked for demographic information such as age, gender, their own schooling experiences (as pupils), and how long they had taught at the centre. They were also asked if they had taught elsewhere, and their teaching roles at the centres. The second section of the survey inquired about their professional learning needs, which were consistent across the four centres.

As can be seen in Table 4, most of the participating RVTs were female. In relation to age, the majority of teachers were no older than 25 years. Of those who completed the survey, 31 teachers had completed Year 12 or lower (Year 6 being the lowest). The remaining four teachers had tertiary qualifications. All had been teaching for two years or less in a learning centre.

The researchers paid three visits to the learning centres, each lasting five days. For the first visit (January, 2017), one learning centre was visited and two researchers spent time in classrooms. During the first visit two researchers ran afternoon workshops on curriculum differentiation and lesson planning. For the next two visits (September, 2017 and January, 2018) four learning centres were visited. On each visit, one day was spent in each learning centre, with two University staff members working with three classes individually each day (1 h per class). In addition, observations of lessons and informal discussions with teaching staff were conducted. During these visits the third University staff member organised the on-going centre visits and the workshops. At the last two visits, all three researchers gave presentations at whole-day workshops. Given the size of the venue, not all RVTs could

Table 2
Overview of the refugee learning centres.

| Learning Centre | Opening date | Context |
|------------------------|---------------|---|
| Green Learning Centre | August 2014 | 18 staff members including teachers and management: 200 students aged 6 years to adult. |
| Red Learning Centre | March 2015 | 17 staff members including teachers and management: 110 students aged 6 years to adult. |
| Blue Learning Centre | Sept. 2015 | 20 teachers, 220 students aged 6 years to adult |
| Orange Learning Centre | February 2017 | 15 teachers and 92 students from pre-primary (aged 4 years) to adult |

Table 3
Overview of data collection.

| Date collected | Type of data | Data collected |
|----------------|--|--|
| January 2017 | Survey from Green Learning Centre | Demographic information, professional learning needs |
| September 2017 | Survey from other learning centres | Demographic information, professional learning needs |
| January 2018 | Interviews with principals and administrator | Factors that impacted on the professional learning of the teachers |
| February 2018 | Online interviews | Discussion with two teachers regarding the mentoring process |

Table 4
Demographic information about the RVTs.

| | | | | | |
|--------------------|------------------|-------------------|-----------------|--------------|------------|
| Gender | Male: n = 16 | Female: n = 29 | | | |
| Age | 17–20: n = 16 | 21–25: n = 10 | 26–32: n = 6 | 32–40: n = 2 | >40: n = 1 |
| Level of schooling | Primary: n = 1 | Secondary: n = 30 | Tertiary: n = 4 | | |
| Years at centre | One year: n = 21 | Two years: n = 14 | | | |

attend. Consequently, there were between four to five teachers selected from each centre. The principals chose the RVTs to attend the workshops based on who they felt would best benefit.

The workshops focused on themes related to the curriculum, including assessment, social studies and technology. The University team used the Australian curriculum as this was the country some participants hoped to resettle in. However, they also worked with curriculum documents from Canada, New Zealand, and the United States as these were the most likely countries of resettlement at the time the research was undertaken. These curriculum documents were used in consultation with the principals at the learning centres. All participants gave informed consent to be included in the research project. Ethical clearance to undertake the research was obtained by the University Ethics Committee.

3.3. Data analysis

Drawing on a CoP model, a number of layers of the community were examined. According to Wenger (1998), a specific CoP can be part of any number of constellations of practice, which arise from interactions among practices involving boundary processes. This concept is illustrated in Fig. 1.

The first layer is the individual learning centre layer. The second layer is the learning centre community layer, which involves the coalition of the four learning centres. The third layer (the outer ring), is the combined community layer, which includes the four learning centres and external organisations committed to supporting the refugee learning centres, which in this instance was the Australian International School (AIS) in Jakarta, the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), located in Cisarua, and the researchers' University. In using this model, practices within all three layers are investigated.

The data were analysed using a thematic analysis approach (Boyatzis, 1998) by one of the researchers. The spoken data were transcribed and then coded. To understand at what levels the learning was occurring, two codes were created for each of the three levels of community shown in Fig. 1: organisation, and contribution of organisation (e.g., professional learning sessions, mentoring opportunities, resource sharing). Other codes developed included enablers and inhibitors. These two codes allowed

identification of practices that supported or impeded professional learning.

In order to ensure trustworthiness in data preparation and analysis and to diminish the risk of subjective interference with the emerging results, a number of measures were adopted. In the data preparation stage, the researchers drew on multiple data sources, including interviews, observations and surveys (Merriam, 1998). They also discussed the emerging themes. Method bias (Sinkovics, Penz, & Ghauri, 2008) was minimised as all research participants spoke English (this being the language of instruction at the learning centres).

3.4. Limitations

One limitation of the research is related to participant observation. Given the nature of the project, the community being observed was designed to change with the researchers' involvement. The University research team became part of the community and as a result may have influenced the responses and actions of the RVTs. However, conclusions from participant observations are useful if methods of observation and analysis have been made clear (Jackson, 1983). Future research could include revisiting the four centres to understand if the research team's presence influenced the outcomes in a systemic way.

Another limitation that may have impacted results was the aspect of power. As expressed by Eyben (2008), power is a diffuse process that enables and constrains action. Given this potential imbalance, the Hazara participants may not have been as willing to share thoughts as freely as the University team had hoped (.). In addition, while data were collected progressively during a 13-month period, the amount of data that could be collected at each visit was limited by the ongoing teaching activities of the University team. It is anticipated that further visits to the centres will allow more to be learned about volunteer refugee teachers' practices and learning.

4. Results and discussion

The results and discussion section is arranged to illustrate the

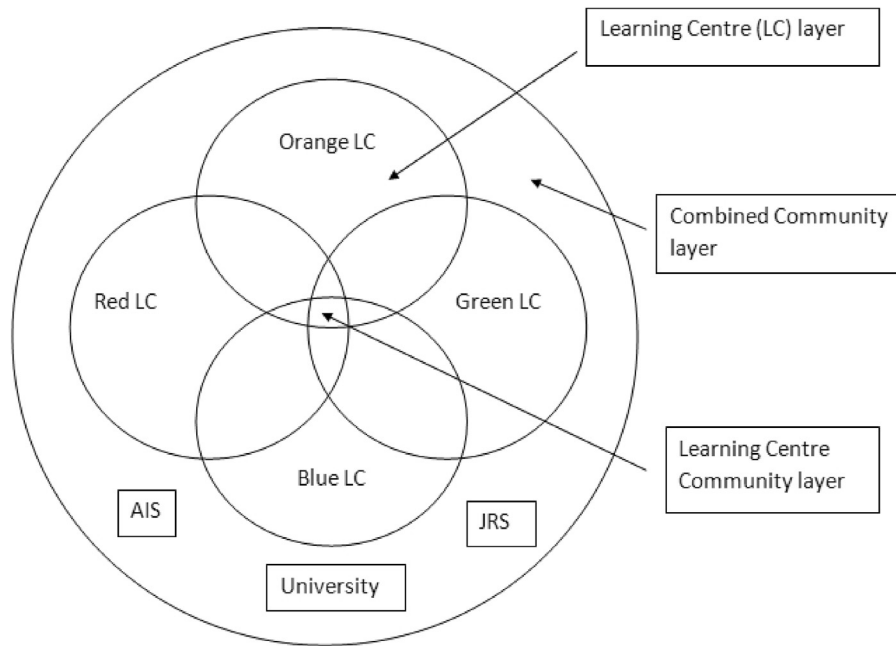


Fig. 1. The three layers of community.

professional learning opportunities at the three different intersections of community: the learning centre layer, the learning centre community layer, and the combined community layer.

4.1. The learning centre layer

One of the challenges at the learning centre layer was that many of the RVTs had limited teaching experience and were junior members of the community (being recent arrivals). As indicated earlier, most of the RVTs surveyed were young, had limited school qualifications and no more than two years' experience working in a learning centre. Significantly, none had taught in schools.

Another factor that impacted the limited experience of RVTs was the high turnover of staff. The high rate was based partly on the RVTs either resettling in another country or moving to Jakarta to be close to a refugee camp. According to the principal of Green Learning Centre, the level of turnover reduced as the time to achieve resettlement was extended. The principal at Green Learning Centre (which had been open for 3.5 years) discussed this during an interview:

When the learning centre started we had 17 volunteers, now we have 21 volunteers. Most of them have changed. New people come with no experience. We have a short interview and look at CVs and resumes and look for a committed person to come and teach.

In a situation where refugees are already trained teachers, ongoing support would allow them to build on existing knowledge gained in their home country and adapt their teaching to the current conditions (Mendenhall et al., 2017). However, as none of the participants in this project had teaching qualifications, any support they received could only be at a beginning teacher level. In addition to this, they were learning to teach with limited resources. In response to these challenges a number of initiatives were developed by the learning centres to help support the RVTs' professional learning. One of these was mentoring, which will be discussed next.

4.1.1. Mentoring

Green Learning Centre had developed strategies to support the professional learning of incoming RVTs through a mentoring program. Given the limited time that the other centres had been open, they were still in the planning stages of setting up their programs.

Green Learning Centre management would identify established and experienced RVTs (someone who had taught at the centre for a minimum of one year) who would then become mentors to novice RVTs. The centre principal explained how this process worked:

The new teacher would work with the teacher and observe. They also work with the students who do not catch [understand] things. Slowly, within two or three weeks the new teacher is able to plan one lesson for the next week and work with the regular teacher. Then after four weeks they can teach for a week and the teacher observes. They have discussion of the lessons with the regular teacher.

A mentor and mentee who worked together discussed how the process worked, which provided an understanding of the teaching strategies for the mentor. The process of allowing the mentee to have limited teaching in the first three weeks allowed time for reflection by the mentee, which was then facilitated discussion with the mentor. Salud (the mentee), spoke of the three main areas she benefited from in working with her mentor: games, activities, and lessons plans. Both spoke of the value that they placed on the mentoring process and working collaboratively. As Veugelers and Zijlstra (2002) noted, effective collaboration provides teachers with valuable opportunities for professional discussions.

This mentoring program provided important training for the new RVTs and was one of the few sources of training they would receive. Whilst the mentoring program did have some beneficial outcomes as identified earlier, there were some challenges. One was associated with the mentors' lack of experience: resources were not always shared. As mentor Harada said:

I remember my situation when I was a new teacher. For example, when I started and was with a teacher, she didn't share

anything about the plan or see the students' names on the attendance sheet. That made me really sad. When I have a new teacher I try to involve them.

Harada also noted another challenge that concerned the relationships between mentors and mentees:

Sometimes when the two teachers are in the classroom they have different ideas. One of them will say the students will learn this way better and the other one will think differently. They might judge each other – you don't try enough, you don't work very well. They make some problems because of this.

Other issues impacting the success of the mentoring scheme included the lack of formal training of mentors and of an evaluation process to gauge the effectiveness of the program. As can be seen from Harada's comments, there was a limited understanding of what the mentoring process involved for both the mentor and mentee. This created some tenuous relationships between the mentors and mentees and impacted the mentoring process negatively. While mentoring can sometimes be a messy process, conflicts arising can also be generative. As stated by [McMorris et al. \(2018\)](#), it is important to recognise the "mutual perceptions of mentees and mentors by including multidimensional reports from both sides of the mentoring experience" (p. 156). This implies that both mentors and mentees need to provide feedback that can then be used to refine the process. This was not happening at Green Learning Centre and so learning was limited there.

One of the important outcomes of a mentoring in a CoP is that mentors can support the development of domain knowledge ([Woolis, 2017](#)) through what [Lave and Wenger \(1999\)](#) call legitimate peripheral participation. In an established school system, experienced teachers would work collectively and mentor beginning teachers to build upon knowledge gained from teacher training ([Cobb et al., 2018](#)). The beginning RVTs, by contrast, had very limited knowledge of teaching and the language of teaching. Their experiences of schooling were typically from a student's perspective, which is different from a teacher's. As observed by [Maguire \(2001\)](#), the expertise of the mentor is critical, but given the inexperience and lack of formal training of the mentor teachers in this study, such expertise was very limited.

Green Learning Centre had a lack of what can be termed "institutional maturity". Its staff had been able to establish a number of collaborative initiatives very quickly, but given their lack of experience and the insufficient evaluation procedures of the mentoring program, they had no clear ways to judge the success of the program. As stated by [Vescio, Ross, and Adams \(2008\)](#): "Collaborative efforts include strategies that 'open' practice in ways that encourage sharing, reflecting, and taking the risks necessary to change" (p. 84). Whilst the centre had put a process in place to encourage some of these practices, at a learning centre layer these were not yet fully refined. This resulted in the needs of the RVTs not always being met and potentially impacted the functioning and growth within the CoP.

4.2. *The learning centre community layer*

At the time this research was being undertaken, the learning centres were not working with each other to a great extent at the learning centre community layer. However, there was some important building at this layer occurring in a number of ways to develop this layer of the CoP, one of which was by sharing resources. The principal at Green Learning Centre explained this process:

Anything we have and they have asked we have shared. We have shared books, we have shared the timetable, how we manage if we have visitors, how we have made our waiting list process and how we managed students who are non-Farsi speakers. One learning centre came and they took some books.

As resources were limited, this sharing of them was important in supporting the students' education and in supporting the RVTs' professional learning. The types of resources suggested by the principal were physical resources and strategies related to time-tabling and working with visitors. Other types of resources suggested by [Puzio, Newcomer, and Goff \(2015\)](#) include experiences, stories, tools, words, and routines that support, facilitate, and interpret the shared practices of a CoP.

The principal of Orange Learning Centre commented that the idea of matching goals and thus building a sense of solidarity was important and would help to first build the community in general and then the CoP amongst the RVTs. This sense of community was achieved at one of the learning centres when it held an appreciation day for the RVTs on a Sunday and invited students' parents and families along with the RVTs and their families from the other learning centres. Another way of building the learning centre community was through social events. For example, the principal of Green Learning Centre said:

Maybe we will have a competition amongst the learning centres such as a quiz or scrabble so we can remove the distance.

Additionally, there was discussion about holding a soccer carnival where RVTs and students alike could participate. These types of social events are important because they bring together students and staff and lay the social foundations upon which a vibrant community can be built. An important aspect to note is that the refugee community in the area was relatively small in number and some of the RVTs at the different learning centres were siblings or had younger family members other learning centres as students, so there was already a relatively strong sense of community in place.

An important way that an educational community can function and develop is for individuals and groups to physically work together to discuss ideas. The idea of RVTs from any learning centre travelling to another centre (which were a minimum of 30 min' distance from each other) and working with each other was discussed by the administrator at the Red Learning Centre. When asked if this could work Abid replied:

Very useful but difficult because transportation is very long and sometimes our teachers just receive one-way transportation.

The cost of paying RVTs for travel and other related training expenses is an important contextual consideration as none were paid for their work. The learning centres do receive financial support from various organisations but this is very limited. However, despite the challenges associated with developing the learning centre community, all staff members at the centres were very optimistic about the opportunities to develop it. When asked whether refugee learning centres might do more work together in the future, the principal from the Blue Learning Centre said:

Yeah, in my opinion if we work together we have more achievement and success for refugees because we have the same goals, from refugee for refugee. All learning centres are the same; same goals and same aims and if we can work together it is better for the refugee community.

As can be seen from the quote above, there was a clear desire that the centres work together and there were events being established that would help build the community in general, as well as the CoP at the learning centre community layer.

4.3. *The combined community layer*

The building of the combined community of the learning centres and the other organisations that supported professional learning was beginning just as this research was concluding. As noted earlier, the three organisations that were involved in supporting this process were the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), which is a non-government organisation, the Australian International School (AIS) in Jakarta, Indonesia, and the researchers' university. These organisations provided different types of learning support to help develop expertise within the CoP.

4.3.1. *Jesuit Refugee Service*

During an interview, the administrator of Red Learning Centre spoke about the services JRS provided to the learning centres:

They [JRS] act as a bridge between the refugee community and the local community. In order to do that they communicate with the centres. Recently they have started a session with the refugee centres to hear what their problems are. General problems, inside and outside learning centres, if they have any trouble with the locals.

This link between the local community and the refugees is important. In many countries, refugees are met with a level of mistrust by the local community (Irish Refugee Council, cited in NíRaghallaigh, 2013) and a climate of suspicion (Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants Refugee Council and Commission for Racial Equality, 1998). This mistrust can be seen even when the immigrants have arrived through legitimate channels. The JRS support for refugees in helping them to work with the local Indonesian community was critical for the running of the learning centres. As noted by Brown (2017), it is important that refugees collaborate with members of the local community.

At the time of the interview there had only been two meetings held with the managers at the learning centres and JRS to share ideas, suggestions and problems. This was discussed with the principal of Orange Learning Centre, who stated:

It is a very new program – two meetings, just to share ideas suggestions and problems. For example, we might be going through different issues, different challenges. Our learning centre might be having different problems and we can say that happened to us and how we dealt with it this way.

In the current study it was seen that JRS supported the four learning centres to work together, which not only provided a forum for the sharing of ideas and challenges, it also helped to build trust and, ultimately, the CoP. This aspect of trust is taken up in greater detail later in this article.

4.3.2. *The Australian International School*

The second member of the combined community was the AIS in Jakarta, which provided opportunities for the RVTs to learn from, and be apprenticed into the profession by experienced and qualified teachers. The principal at Green Learning Centre discussed learning at the AIS:

Every year the teachers go down to Jakarta for two to four days and they stay with the teachers. They stay in their apartment. One teacher goes and they sit with the class and they help the regular teacher.

Working with experienced teachers was an important contributor to building the RVTs' domain knowledge. The RVTs did this not only by working in the classroom with the experienced teachers but also by talking with them about their practice and accessing the documents the AIS teachers would use to guide their practice. The teachers at AIS were thus able to act as mentors for the RVTs. It was through these repeat visits that the RVTs were able to develop and refine their identity as teachers through what Wenger (1998) called mutual engagement.

4.3.3. *The University*

The third member of the combined community was the University. The researchers had developed professional learning workshops to build capacities that the RVTs could bring to their classroom practices at the four learning centres. As outlined earlier, in these workshops the RVTs worked with colleagues of varying skill levels from other learning centres as members of the CoP (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The University team also provided support via peer teaching in classrooms along as well as providing curriculum resources and instructions on how to use them.

There was positive feedback from the RVTs who attended the workshops. In an unsolicited letter to the University team after a visit, one RVT from Blue Learning Centre appreciated how they had been supported:

We have already learned a lot from you and your talent, wisdom and experience. The lessons and experience you have shared with us during these two trainings are quite helpful for our teachers and Learning Centers. You have changed our whole aspect on our learning and teaching.

For professional learning to be effective it should be supported by specialist expertise (Bell et al., 2012). Having had experience of working with beginning teachers, the University researchers were aware that the novice RVTs were unqualified and had limited language skills to understand, discuss and develop domain knowledge. Much of the documentation drawn upon needed to be simplified in order to be accessible to them. For example, terms like formative and summative assessment needed to be unpacked and explained.

5. Trust

One issue that impacted development at both the learning centre community and combined community layers was related to trust. Without trust, "members of a community of practice may be reluctant to share knowledge" (Roberts, 2006, p. 628). As explained by a RVT from the Green Learning Centre, when the refugees began arriving in Cisarua they already had a low level of trust, based in part on fear they had experienced even before leaving the home country:

You know Hazara people are mostly ... I am Hazara ... Sometimes it saddens me because we have been suppressed for centuries, we have been living in fear in our own country.

The Hazara have long been persecuted in Afghanistan, an example being the massacre by the Taliban in 1998 of more than 2000 Hazara men, women, and children in Mazar-e-Sharif (Human Rights Watch, 1998, para. 1). When the Hazara refugees travelled to

Indonesia, the smugglers fed this fear as a way of keeping them silent. They were told not to gather in groups or talk to each other as this would jeopardise their chances of being resettled. As stated by Ali et al. (2016): “The lack of trust within the broad community made forming any kind of self-help or positive development impossible” (p. 29). The University team observed that trust grew in the refugee community during the project and this allowed for teaching support and development to take place. The administrator from Red Learning Centre also noted the change in trust among the refugees:

I think it [the refugee community] has grown a lot. I remember in 2014 when I was here the trust level in the community was below zero. Nobody could trust a second person. Now if I walk to the bazaar I see maybe 100 people to say hello.

Earlier, cost of travel and distance were outlined as reasons that RVTs did not visit other learning centres. Another reason that there were limited visits was that there was still not a strong level of trust (although as noted this was developing). Given the lack of trust there was there not a strong culture of visiting schools to share ideas.

The University researchers' status as sitting at the edge of the CoP assisted in developing trust at the combined community layer. The importance of their status was explained by the administrator of Red Learning Centre when asked if the centres were open to community building:

Yes, but we need someone from the outside. I think the most important thing is that someone from outside is neutral. They are not biased and we feel that we can trust them more. I feel that we are lacking communication, we are not sharing with each other enough.

In using the framework set out by Wenger et al. (2002), the CoP was moving from the coalescing stage to the maturing stage. This meant that RVTs were able to benefit from support provided by the external organisations. As observed by the University staff at the whole-day workshops they ran, the RVTs were also able to provide each other with valuable ideas and resources and there was a clear desire support and trust each other. Without trust, some members of the CoP may have been reluctant to participate in this sharing of knowledge. It is therefore important that outside organisations appreciate each refugee's capacity to trust; the types of support they might provide will depend on the level of trust present.

6. Conclusions and recommendations

This article has focused on the professional learning of RVTs, the opportunities for professional learning that were provided at each of the three layers of the CoP, and some of the associated benefits and challenges. At the learning centre layer, learning occurred through a process of mentoring. At the learning centre community layer, opportunities existed for RVTs from different learning centres to participate in community building events such as sports days. At the combined community layer, there were learning opportunities such as workshops, meetings, mentoring, and resource sharing.

Individuals and external organisations with various levels of expertise were able to support the RVTs professional learning. The organisations included a refugee service, an international school, and the researchers' university. From a CoP perspective, this combination of expertise is significant. Being able to appreciate such webs of support is important for understanding and supporting professional learning.

There were a number of benefits associated with the RVTs' learning within the combined community level. They were able to receive ideas and resources from a diverse range of educators and support staff and observe the practices of both the experienced AIS teachers and the University staff. Receiving support from experts provided domain knowledge, which was important given the RVTs' lack of skills and experience.

There were a number of challenges in providing this professional learning. Whilst mentoring at the learning centre level was found to be valuable, the mentors' lack of experience meant it was difficult for them to help newcomers become experienced members of the CoP. However, another challenge was the limited trust within the combined community, although this was decreasing. Providing opportunities for collaboration at the combined school layer helped to build trust as opportunities for collaboration arose.

At the time of this research the wider learning centre community was still in its infancy. The refugees' experiences with smugglers had eroded trust, and this needed to be rebuilt before they could benefit from the learning opportunities. Community-building activities were essential in this regard. The participating RVTs recognised that trust was crucial and they were developing strategies accordingly, for example, planned social events where teachers and students from the different learning centres could mix. The opportunities for professional learning provided at the learning centre community and combined community layers helped develop the CoP. As noted in the theoretical framework section, management is important in helping to construct and support a CoP. This was also one of the findings in this study.

This article has reported on research undertaken at one community in one country. With the numbers of refugees throughout the world expected to grow, the mentoring of RVTs is fertile ground for further research. This article has also touched upon the roles of external organisations, including the researchers' university. More research is needed to understand how these institutions can work collaboratively to support refugee groups and their professional learning needs. This could include interviewing their staff about their organisation's processes and practices in supporting refugees.

Author statement

The structure in writing for the project undertaken was that each author will write a paper from the project based on his/her interests and expertise. There was some discussion regarding analysis and codes for the paper.

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