



Local Engagement Refugee Research Network Paper No. 14 –  
November 2020

# Building Local Professional Learning Communities with and for Teachers in Refugee Camps

A Case Study on Hareed Primary School in  
Dadaab

ABDIKADIR BARE ABIKAR

*Graduate of the Master of Education, York University  
Borderless Higher Education for Refugees Program*

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	3
1. Introduction.....	5
2. Literature Review: Professional Learning and School Reform .....	12
3. Methodology .....	19
3.1. Recruitment, Participants and Workshop Development.....	21
3.2. Pre-Workshop Surveys and Workshop Development.....	22
3.3. Workshops at Hareed.....	25
3.4. Challenges .....	27
4. Post-Workshop Interviews: Data, Findings and Analysis .....	29
4.1. Impacts of Creating the Professional Learning Community .....	29
4.2. Changes in Teacher Disposition: Team Teaching and Taking Responsibility .....	31
4.3. Technology and the Professional Learning Community .....	32
4.4. Using Technology for Teaching .....	34
4.5. Will the PLC Workshops have Sustainable Impact? .....	35
4.6. Classroom Management: Shifts in Perspective and Pedagogy .....	37
4.7. Final Thoughts on the Workshop.....	39
4.8. Links between the School, Teachers and Parents in Unstable Times.....	41
5. Discussion .....	43
6. Conclusion .....	46
7. Recommendations .....	47
Works Cited .....	50

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## Executive Summary

This paper is a modified version of a Major Research Paper for the Master of Education degree at York University as part of the Borderless Higher Education for Refugees project, which provides virtual education to refugees in the Dadaab refugee camps in Kenya. In this paper, I employ an action research methodology to argue that, in order to improve the capacity of novice and untrained teachers in schools in the Dadaab refugee complex, local educational actors need to introduce in-service professional learning opportunities to better prepare teachers who have not had the chance to pursue educational opportunities past their secondary studies. The purpose of this study was to first listen and learn from the experiences of employees at Hareed Primary School and to investigate the in-service education needed by untrained teachers in a refugee camp in Dadaab. Phase one of the research was a pre-workshop survey that asked participants questions about any educational training they have received, and their challenges. Phase two involved developing and implementing workshops for novice/untrained educators that modelled how a professional learning community works, and provided modified BHER teacher educational content for new/untrained teachers. Phase three of my study evaluated the impact of the workshops on the development of professional learning communities and if teacher attitudes or behaviors were transformed. My analysis of the data found that the professional learning community improved teacher confidence and positively changed dispositions toward collaboration and ongoing community-driven learning, as well as improved use of technology tools in and outside of the classroom. I conclude with recommendations for present policy and future research within Dadaab and beyond. I think some obvious challenges facing the PLC's sustainability will be that some of the teachers have been working with minimal administrative supervision. I fear that if the school does not support their continued collaboration, the community may not continue to fully coordinate and cooperate, which would cause the collapse of the professional learning community that we developed. The first recommendation is that the school administration supports the Professional Learning Community to ensure its sustainability. Given the positive impact of this community, I I strongly support the idea that other schools should organize similar continual in-service training in the Dadaab camps, using as an untapped

resource the teachers that have already been trained at Hareed and the qualified refugee teachers who have been educated in the BHER project, and who now understand the power of creating professional learning communities to empower teachers.

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## 1. Introduction

This paper is a modified version of a Major Research Paper for the Master of Education degree at York University as part of the Borderless Higher Education for Refugees project, which provides virtual education to refugees in the Dadaab refugee camps in Kenya. Without any formal teacher education, in March 2012, I was employed as a new and inexperienced teacher of Mathematics and English Language for grades 7 and 8 at the Hareed Primary School (pseudonym), located in the Dadaab refugee camps in Kenya. Established in 1991, the Dadaab refugee camps constitute one of the largest refugee encampments in the world. Dadaab is host to almost 219,000 refugees as of July 2020, primarily from Somalia, Ethiopia and South Sudan (UNHCR 2020). I became a teacher in these camps and entered this role without any professional teacher training or teaching experience and only my experience as a student upon which to draw. My highest level of education prior to accepting this position was the completion of my secondary studies. As a high school graduate, I was only confident with the content of the curriculum that I already knew, but not with the strategies for teaching or for supporting student-directed learning. For a full academic year, I taught without any pedagogical or professional support, including any practical training or formal in-service support that would have better prepared me for the daunting task of teaching a classroom of 30 primary-age students (who spoke six different first languages: English, Kiswahili, Somali, French, Amharic and Ugandan Gambella). English was the only common language but the least spoken of the six. I would have some of my students telling me to teach them mathematics in the Kiswahili language (that other students did not understand), while others also needed me to teach them the subject through their own language (e.g. Somali or Ugandan).

In 2013, I was able to join the Increased Access and Skills for Tertiary Education Program (INSTEP). According to their web page documentation, the primary purpose of the INSTEP program was to prepare prospective students for university education through courses like English Language for Academic Purposes, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), and Research Skills; successful students who completed the program would receive a non-credit certificate. Having completed INSTEP in April 2013, the program had provided me with

introductory computer skills, intensive English language classes and academic preparation for the start of the Borderless Higher Education for Refugees (BHER) inaugural Teaching Certificate Program. Up to this point, even though I had been a teacher for several years, I had never had formal training or preparation to teach. It was BHER's teacher certificate program that opened my eyes and exposed me to an array of teaching strategies that enhanced my students' learning, my classroom management skills, and my professional conduct with my colleagues, students, and community, including creating professional learning communities locally in Dadaab with colleagues and fellow BHER students. The BHER program better prepared me to handle my teaching duties smoothly as I was able to apply the theory and methods learned through York University's Faculty of Education. I state elsewhere that, "in the York program, we learn to critically think, criticize, open our eyes, and to see what is beyond the page, and to see what is behind the content on the page. In the traditional university, those students who are taught are only reading what's on the page only: they cannot see outside the page. The students with York – things are different; they are given courses that change them. The creativity is not killed. We are transformed through the educational process" (Abikar *et al.* forthcoming: 11).

Apart from BHER programs, which play a dynamic role in educating teachers with both theoretical and practical skills, we also have other organizations that are currently participating in the training of teachers in the camp, including the Association of Volunteers in International Service (AVSI) Foundation. The AVSI Foundation is a not-for-profit, nongovernmental organization, founded in Italy in 1972 and presently active in 39 countries worldwide, with more than 100 development cooperation projects. AVSI has provided local teachers with primary school training for the last 4 years in Dadaab (Innovations for Poverty Action 2018). Through collaborating with a college in Nairobi called Imara ECDE teacher training college, they trained teachers with what is called "a preaching course" [a remedial support course], which allows those teachers with low grades to improve their marks and become eligible for certificate courses and a diploma course on early childhood education, and those with better grades are enrolled to certificate and diploma courses directly. Recently AVSI is collaborating with District Centers for Early Childhood Education (DICECE) college in Garissa so that these teachers are provided

content and course work for them to pass. For example, teachers are taught during holidays to cater for those who are teaching in schools in the camps. Similar teacher training programs are also conducted by The Lutheran World Federation (LWF). LWF is a global consortium of national and regional Lutheran churches headquartered in the Ecumenical Centre in Geneva, Switzerland. In the three camps (IFO, Dagahaley and Hagadera), LWF is the implementing organization in the primary schools, providing teachers and resources for the schools. They are also training teachers in the certificate and diploma courses, though not all teachers are given this opportunity. In fact, only a few teachers are taken from the different camps for training and support with teaching methodology. So, training opportunities are available, but only to a few, and many teachers very much need teacher education services and support. At the same time, using different partners to educate untrained teachers is quite costly compared with introducing local in-service teacher education in respective schools, who will support and mentor the untrained teachers as they attend to their everyday classroom activities. Further, without taking them outside the school, the in-service professional learning can provide contextualized methodologies and modeling that new teachers may require.

Significantly, many of those who were “trained” may not stay in the field, in the classroom, due to the low teaching salary, and many may opt to work outside of the teaching profession if the opportunity arises. Teachers in the camp are labelled “incentives” as they are given a fixed amount of payment that is equivalent to ninety USA dollar (\$90) at most. Once the teachers ask for a pay increase, they are told that UNHCR covers all that they need for sustainable living: they are given food, water, medicine, security and shelter for free, so this incentive payment is for purchasing add-ons (meaning buying clothes, and other items that are not provided to them by UNHCR). That is what UNHCR has been claiming for many years. It is different from the private schools that run on their own in the camps: they can pay teachers, whether refugee or Kenyan, the same amount per month ranging between \$300 and \$500, which is why most of the hardworking teachers opt to teach in private schools. Private schools are schools that are either run by communities or individuals who have the capital to maintain the schools and the students/families are paying monthly school fees.

One kind of supportive non-private teacher education that may best serve the interests of the students and the teachers in the refugee camps is one that is developed locally, using available resources from the community itself. The current situation that exists in Dadaab schools today is that the majority of teachers in Hareed Primary School are untrained and unsupported with pedagogical theories and teaching methods, and especially innovative theories and models that support meaningful student engagement, creativity, “deeper learning” and student knowledge making (Fullan and Langworthy, 2013). Nor are there opportunities for ongoing professional learning. According to Duale, Leomoi, Aden, Oyat, Dagane, and Abikar, with respect to the challenges untrained teachers can face within the classroom, we found that of all the teachers in Dadaab, “72% [have only] secondary school qualifications, [and, consequently, they] often have to depend on their own experience of schooling, to inform their pedagogy and classroom management” (2019: 56). The most obvious consequence of having insufficiently trained teachers is that “teachers rely heavily on memorization and testing rather than inquiry-based learning, which undercuts creativity and critical thinking” (Duale *et al.* 2019: 56). If teachers are not given novel teaching methods and diverse models, they will automatically depend on the system of teaching they experienced as students (e.g., chalkboards, lecture, rote memorization and testing, as well as corporal punishment) and thus children may not be able to meaningfully engage in literacy learning challenges that transform them (Cope and Kalantzis 2009).

Complicating the situation in Dadaab, the different organizations that implemented teacher training have largely discontinued work since 2012, as the camps were perceived as an insecure area for humanitarian services and NGOs. This problem was exacerbated by the Garissa University College attack on 2 April 2015. Gunmen stormed the Garissa University College in Garissa, Kenya, killing 148 people, and injuring 79 or more (Tran and Rawlinson 2015). The attack has worsened the security situation for teachers from elsewhere in Kenya, leading NGOs to forbid them to move or work within the camps. The free movement of teachers has declined due to insecurity, so Dadaab-area schools tend to employ only local teachers and provide short unstructured training in the camps, which is not satisfactory to the teachers or adequate for student learning. Follow up professional development or in-service training was not provided,



leading to a decrease in the quality of teaching and learning. Hence, the school dropout rate has increased. Many youth have dropped their studies, in primary and secondary school, due to lack of qualified teachers, who could use different pedagogies in the classroom.

The difference between teacher training and teacher education should be clarified. Teacher education and professional learning, for example, in BHER (Borderless Higher Education for Refugees) or other university programs is different from basic training or teacher induction because in the former, teacher education, the teachers are taught with courses where they start to be think deeply about the practices of teaching, which is different from mechanical skills that are uniformly communicated through mere training. Education also involves the teacher in the practice, learning through involvement, adaptation and reflection, which enables teachers to become part of a learning culture as they will be able to continue the skills and practices of teaching in their future classrooms. In contrast, in the case of training, there is a short time span where the teachers are inducted to do repetitive activities. In teacher education, there are opportunities to change the field of teaching into a better area of study and practice. The significance of training, however, is that it is helpful in remote areas for untrained teachers who cannot get access to professional learning or enroll in teaching colleges to become professional teachers. This is not only an issue in one camp, but it applies across all three camps near Dadaab: Ifo, Dagahaley and Hagadera. As such, refugee teachers are simply inducted and directly sent to classes for teaching, leading to many issues such as overuse of corporal punishment and teaching methods based in didactic instruction and rote memorization (Duale *et al.* 2019; Abikar *et al.* forthcoming).

In a different note on memorization, according to Christensen “teachers need to begin their teaching differently with the understanding that anyone who has lived has stories to tell” (2009: 1), and to not rely on “banking education”. As Paulo Freire (Freire 2017) notes, “education should not turn out to be an act of depositing, where students are the stores and the teacher” a “depositor” of static knowledge. Alternatively, Christensen attempted “to craft a curriculum that focuses on key moral and ethical issues of our time” (2019: 1) because she had discovered that students care more about learning when the content matters. Many untrained teachers also use

“the stick” as the only mechanism to discipline students and to take control of their classroom. As Duale and colleagues argue: “the use of corporal punishment can have negative psychosocial consequences for learners, reproduce existing power structures” (2019: 57). Arguably, if we do not empower un-trained teachers with teaching competences that support more meaningful forms of learning, many young school going children might reject schooling as it will become a place of fear, discipline and disengagement rather than an interactive learning environment. New teachers need more than training. They also need support for ongoing reflection on teaching and learning, so they move beyond didactic teaching to engage the ethical concerns of our time (Luke *et al.* 2017; Christensen 2019) and things of interest to the community (Abikar *et al.* forthcoming; Luke *et al.* 2017).

After going through the BHER Teacher Education certificate, it is clear that the knowledge and skills novice teachers have acquired through BHER are not accessible to other teachers in Dadaab (Abikar *et al.* forthcoming), and that these pedagogical and theoretical supports are key to enriched learning opportunities in the Dadaab schools. Untrained teachers frequently complain about the lack of academic and professional training and assert the need for education, models and in-service support to help them acquire the teaching skills that will enhance learning in Dadaab classrooms, give them confidence in the classroom, and equip them with skills to continue their professional learning with others in the community, including other teachers, the headmasters and principals, and the community’s Parent-Teacher Association.

In this paper, I argue that in order to improve the capacity of novice teachers in our primary schools, we need to introduce local, in-service professional learning opportunities to better prepare teachers who have not had the chance to pursue educational opportunities past their secondary studies. Currently, it is very hard to observe any professional support practised, except maybe team teaching. For example, in my study, I found that if a teacher in Hareed Primary School is having challenges, he or she will look for a more experienced teacher for assistance. However, a school culture of individualism prevents untrained teachers from working collectively. In the schools, we have two kinds of teachers: the national teachers who are Kenyans by nationality and refugee teachers, who were employed by the implementing

organization prior to finishing high school to support the national staff. I found that when a newly employed refugee teacher is having a challenge on a certain topic or with classroom management, he or she will often collaborate with the national staff (as I did during my primary teaching of mathematics). However, Kenyan national teachers may not have the education or experience to provide the support novice teachers need for more complex challenges facing refugees or innovative pedagogies.

The purpose of this study was to first listen and learn from the experiences of employees at Hareed Primary School and to investigate the in-service education needed by untrained teachers in a refugee camp in Dadaab. Phase one of the research was a pre-workshop survey that asked participants questions about any educational training they have received, and their challenges. Phase two involved developing and implementing workshops for novice/untrained educators that modelled how a professional learning community works (using technology, sharing ideas and resources), and provided some BHER teacher educational content for new/untrained teachers. Phase three of my study evaluates the impact of the workshops on the development of professional learning communities and if teacher attitudes or behaviours were transformed.

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## 2. Literature Review: Professional Learning and School Reform

Teachers are at the heart of learning in our schools. In the refugee camps, the school is the body of the community, and the teacher is the heart, whether teachers teach in a building, a tent, or a space under a tree. They literally provide life-changing knowledge and skills that help to provide an alternative to child labour, early marriage, or recruitment into armed forces (Mendenhall 2017: 3). Perhaps most important, teachers can bring a sense of stability and hope, and disrupt the cycle of violence by equipping learners with the skills to heal, grow, and participate in the peaceful reconstruction of their communities (Mendenhall 2017: 3). Hence, it is necessary to equip them with education and resources. Setting up plans for education and professional learning is the central part of teachers' development, including establishing ongoing learning communities.

A professionally educated teacher is able to organize his or her classroom, create a better teaching methodology, and have better rapport with the learners than untrained teachers who may only know "the content" to teach but do not have a variety of teaching strategies, or do not know how to create conditions for engaged and creative learning. This is the point where novice teachers need to be equipped with new values and models for teaching, so they do not simply imitate and reproduce colonial and "banking" methods (Freire 2017) of content transmission and memorization they experienced as primary and secondary students. If we do not invent new ways of providing novice teachers with support and modelling and professional learning, we will likely continue to face issues like disengaged students, high drop-out rates, and a continued lack of creativity, critical thinking and meaningful application of literacy in our schools. An educated teacher, equipped with a rich stock of methods, provides more relevant content and activities to their students as compared to other uneducated teachers who often do not know how or what to teach, or how to engage students in safe or inclusive ways (Duale *et al.* 2019: 57). In addition to the lack of pedagogical skills, my hypothesis is that there is also a need for teachers to better understand the professional conduct that is necessary when working with vulnerable populations like young students, and particularly refugee students. There needs to be a stronger understanding of the ethical practices that need to be exercised, along with a strong sense of informed professional judgment. This also means building professional learning communities

among the untrained teachers so they can support one another and share knowledge to create more inclusive and ethical learning spaces. Furthermore, technology like smartphones, communicative media and Internet

connectivity can support development of both formal and informal professional learning communities (Thumlert *et al.* 2018; Dryden-Peterson *et al.* 2017). As I discuss elsewhere (Abikar *et al.* forthcoming), just as social media apps connect BHER students as learning communities, they can also connect Dadaab teachers, and help build “communities of practice” (Wenger 1998) around technologies and tools (Pollack *et al.* 2014; Dryden-Peterson *et al.* 2017).

Teacher collaboration is essential for change in teaching practice, when teachers have opportunities to collaborate with other educators either locally or globally through digital networks (Abikar *et al.* forthcoming; Giles 2018). They have important opportunities to reflect on their work, try new teaching and learning with support from their friends and colleagues, and expand the learning to novice teachers (Mendenhall 2017: 3). Teachers have a critical role to play in the provision of quality education; they are working directly with children and their families, are at the forefront of community efforts to achieve autonomy, and attend to children's physical, emotional and cognitive needs (Mendenhall 2017). According to Mendenhall (2017), an interview with some of the untrained teachers noted that most of the teachers see no alternative but to use the cane (stick) as their method to control their students. My own study also relates to Mendenhall in that teachers in Hareed Primary School are also resorting to corporal punishment. As noted by one teacher who had been trained in a teacher education program in Kakuma: “personally, I had used [caning in the past] and then during the training I learned about alternatives. Other teachers that were trained in Kakuma refugee camp came to similar conclusions; in our [teacher learning communities] we had similar cases [where teachers] had confessed [to the use of physical discipline]. In the past, I learned ways of solving learner's problems especially with discipline” (Sudan, age 30). When teachers had the opportunity to openly discuss the use of corporal punishment in the past, they could revisit the positive discipline strategies learned in their training and reduce this practice in their classrooms and schools (Mendenhall 2017: 8).

As noted, educated teachers are very hard to find in Dadaab and, of course, which is largely due to the circumstances of where we are and what resources are available to refugee teachers financially, academically and professionally. The need to equip refugee teachers with sound professional foundations and models is necessary for students to gain a quality education. Furthermore, I believe that there is a strong need for in-service teacher education as a requirement in schools, especially within the schools in Dadaab refugee camps, where teachers receive no training and may rely upon unsound teaching and disciplinary methods learned through their own experience as students. One aspect of my study is focused on exploring if and how in-service workshops can break the cycle of violence in schools. In addition, I am interested in how to improve student engagement and learning through providing teachers with new activities, as well as building sustainable professional learning communities (Jussim and Harber 2005: 137) where ongoing teacher inquiry is a part of the profession (Thumlert *et al.* 2018).

Teachers must have the dedication and passion for teaching and for performing tasks designed to impart valuable knowledge for students. But, we should remember that teaching is more than imparting knowledge. It is about creating opportunities for engaged learning, multimodal learning, rich tasks, inquiry and knowledge making (Cope and Kalantzis 2009; Lotherington and Jenson 2011; Christensen 2019; Fullan and Langworthy 2013). That can only be done after teachers have received adequate professional education, which can be assisted through in-service learning from educated personnel (e.g., BHER graduates) who can provide valuable feedback and support teachers in creating their own learning communities: communities both local and globally connected (see Abikar *et al.* forthcoming). There was relevant research carried out by Copriady *et al.* (2018) which pointed out that in-service training for chemistry teachers determines the effectiveness of collaboration and teacher proficiency on chemistry teaching experience. This study was done with a total of 184 teachers, 64 of which had less than 10 years of teaching experience (Copriady *et al.* 2018: 3). This study was intended to confirm whether teachers need trained personnel or mentors to improve their teaching. The study indicated significant differences between in-service training and collaboration based on teachers' teaching experience and parallel results between teacher proficiency in chemistry and teaching

experience. The Structural Equation Model (SEM) was used to identify the teacher contributions to practical design, planning, implementation and assessment of practical exercise. The study showed that collaboration has a positive effect on the relationships between in-service training and teacher proficiency (Copriady *et al.* 2018: 2). The researchers concluded that chemistry teachers with less teaching experience required additional in-service training and collaboration to enhance their proficiency. Results of this study implied that schools should organize collaborative activities that involve teachers with professional learning experiences. Teamwork and collaboration are expected to enhance teacher proficiency in the subject and in teaching it (Copriady *et al.* 2018: 3). This type of research helps in showcasing the impact of in-service training, collaboration and teacher proficiency. Besides that, I also strongly support the idea that schools should organize continual in-service training in the Dadaab camps using as an untapped resource the qualified refugee teachers who have been educated in the BHER project, and who now understand the power of creating professional learning communities to empower teachers.

Educating a teacher is also necessary in supporting children's learning, since if teachers are not well trained they might negatively impact the future learning of children in their classroom. For example, "gifted" children and children with disabilities or unique needs are special groups within the scope of education, and effective special education requires teachers who can apply different techniques and teaching methods to identify and work with diverse students (Sayi 2018). Most teachers in Dadaab do not receive any training about diverse students, students with special needs, sight and hearing impaired students, or second language-related challenges. This situation of teachers lacking education and resources can cause students to underachieve or even renounce the school (Sayi 2018). Truly, many children with special needs have dropped out of school due to teachers' lack of knowledge or the skills to integrate them into the classroom community.

According to an article on transforming school culture through technology, inquiry-driven learning and professional learning, Thumlert *et al.* (2018) found evidence of a "synergistic relationship between innovations in inquiry-driven pedagogy and professional learning cultures" with evidence of increased collaboration, deepened engagement and models that inspire



networked professional learning, collaborative teacher inquiry, and the “dispositions necessary for teachers to take risks” and share responsibility in reshaping their own professional cultures (see Hargreaves and O’Connor 2017; Hargreaves and Fullan 2012; Donohoo 2017; Hattie 2015; Fullan and Donnelly 2013). This point was also acknowledged by Zeichner (2002) and Drew *et al.* (2016), who suggest that “successful innovation” in schools requires a “culture of learning” that “permeates” not just classroom learning, but professional learning as well, and that is why I am so concerned with professional learning in Hareed Primary: to build a culture that recognizes “teachers’ voices” and opportunities to grow and become active partners in system change (Thumlert *et al.* 2018; Fullan and Langworthy 2014; Drew *et al.* 2016). Hence, I argue, if schools require a culture of inquiry and knowledge sharing that would facilitate professional learning and collaborative processes, and that is why I created a workshop on the good use of technology and collaborative inquiry so that teachers can connect with and learn from one another, as well as learn from online resources.

In addition, in transforming school culture, teaching is a learning process and it takes some time for a teacher to adjust to the teaching environment and the multiple challenges new/untrained teachers face in the Dadaab context. Change models that encourage technology-supported professional learning and collaborative teacher inquiry might be introduced in the camps, where refugee teachers can also engage in collaborative learning (Copriady *et al.* 2018; Zeichner 2002; Drew *et al.* 2016). This innovative culture is what I wanted to examine and support in the refugee camps – if such a learning culture is possible, and sustainable. For teaching to be effective, we should employ different pedagogies that will serve our future generations well. Presently and in the future, refugee teachers can be agents of change in the camps and in their homelands. They can spearhead change back home (e.g. in Somalia and elsewhere) and we need to support them with teaching and professional learning models that will provide an effective and innovative culture of teaching in order to lead future generations of students to success in their homeland.

This study is grounded in the proposition that there is a need for Dadaab primary schools to have in-service teacher education to improve the quality of instruction in the camps, and to create local communities of professional learning, where teaching is a valued profession, and where

teacher inquiry and learning is as important as student inquiry and learning. As we can see from Sayi's (2018) findings on in-service training activities, giving emphasis on the practice of teaching, I hope to contribute to efforts to increase the quality of the education in the Dadaab camps. A research study in the UK has also found out that training teachers outside their schools is more expensive than introducing in-service training in the schools and thus, James' foundational report in 1973 introduced the idea of bringing In-Service Education and Training (INSET) to teachers in schools, instead of taking teachers out from the school (James and McCormic 2009: 4-7). As noted above, there is very limited funding, motivation or opportunities for formal teacher education outside of the school context in the camps. The report further states that in-service training should be encouraged in schools. It is here that learning and teaching take place, and curricula and techniques can be developed contextually and specifically related teacher's needs, as revealed by Pike (1993: 74). Like the BHER program that educates teachers within Dadaab, we need to have programs that stay in the camps and develop locally: if we have a professional learning community created that takes place in Hareed Primary School, we hope to support many teachers who will learn how to inquire, communicate with one another, and share resources, activities, pedagogies and models as an "ongoing" practice (Thumlert *et al.* 2018). If we have this kind of training outside the schools, the training is not going to be successful as it will only reach a few teachers in the camps. As noted above, nearly all of the organizations (NGOs) have a difficult time training teachers outside of schools, especially when there are both logistical challenges and security concerns. It is first of all costly and, second, refugee teachers typically have little freedom of movement outside the camps. Furthermore, many studies have outlined how professional development for teachers does not end after they receive their license or certificate for teaching; it is something that is lifelong and continuous. Ma, Xin and Du suggest that even though some teachers may know their teaching content and theory very well, they may not necessarily be able to apply them within their teaching practices (2018: 292). In addition, the authors state that sometimes teachers may have a difficult time "identifying what concepts are difficult for students, what representations are best for certain ideas or what ways are optimal for developing conceptual understandings" (Ma *et al.* 2018: 292).

They highlight how “peer coaching” can address this concern and help develop collaborative and strong teaching relationships within the school environments.

Despite the Dadaab refugee complex existing for over 20 years, there has been no sustainable in-service teacher training program that has been able to last and reach all teachers in the camps. As a researcher and a beneficiary of teacher education through BHER, I am curious to know if and how teachers can benefit from a professional learning community in the Dadaab refugee camps. Below I present the narratives of the new and inexperienced teachers or teachers without formal teacher education in a professional development workshop, looking at the impact of the workshop on their teaching skills and the community support environments they created during workshops.

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### 3. Methodology

The importance of this project relates to me personally, as I have been a teacher at Hareed Primary School and I know that the community is very dedicated to having children receive the best education possible. When I worked there before, I built many strong relationships with the families and guardians of my students. They shared their concerns, needs and opinions about the quality of education that was being delivered. However, my own teaching and professional disposition was transformed after I finished the BHER certificate program. I found myself collaborating with other teachers and peers and working hard to build and use relevant and responsive pedagogies in my classroom, in part because there was a minority of Gambella students in my majority Somali classroom. Through this new knowledge and skill set, I was able to build a more inclusive learning environment where students were respectful to each other and to the diversity of our classroom.

I asked three main research questions: How might in-service professional learning (workshops) support pedagogical reform in Hareed Primary School (including new teaching and classroom management methods)? If, how and to what extent do in-service workshops transform teaching practice and create a community of collaborators and teacher ‘co-learners’? To what extent did the workshop impact teacher confidence (e.g. in relation to classroom management techniques)?

Some important but secondary questions included: What are some of the priorities of the school (Headteacher) and community and how can a PLC (professional learning community) work with these priorities and actors? What might other schools learn from these experiences and what are the policy implications for using similar workshop models for in-service teacher education in and beyond the Dadaab camps context?

As my research seeks to understand the impact of creating professional learning communities, I provided a series of professional development workshops to build the capacities of the teachers at Hareed Primary School, and support professional learning communities. My study focused on untrained teachers at the school, with data collection consisting of a pre-survey workshop and two focus group discussions of 10 teachers as well one school administrator interview (the head teacher from Hareed). Following the survey (phase 1), I introduced a set of three workshops that enabled the untrained teachers to undertake this professional learning in or near their school setting, allowing them to utilize this training in daily teaching and work together in learning communities for about a month. Later, I interviewed those who attended the training and received feedback from them regarding the impact of the in-service workshops, the development of learning partnerships among teachers, and any related changes (e.g. regarding pedagogy, classroom management techniques and confidence). Following Professor Steve Alsop's suggestion, I was sure not to start with a "deficit model" that assumes teachers without formal teacher education "cannot teach" or are incapable. Rather, my research seeks to understand the possible impacts of in-service teacher education conducted through a local learning workshop for already working, but mostly untrained teachers in the Dadaab refugee camp.

Phase one of my study consisted of pre-workshop surveys. Teachers were invited to discuss perceived needs and challenges as untrained teachers, as well as if, how and to what extent any informal learning communities are active in the school (for example, where, or to whom, untrained teachers might go when they have questions or needs related to teaching or classroom management). In phase two, participants were invited to attend a series of workshops on creating and sustaining professional learning communities (PLCs), and receive workshop content and activities based on BHER program documents. In phase three, after the workshops (with one

month allowed for teachers to apply workshop skills and work in learning communities), I interviewed the untrained teachers (in two focus groups). I also interviewed the headmaster of Hareed school in order to get his views on the challenges of working with untrained teachers and the impact of professional learning to his teachers.

### **3.1. Recruitment, Participants and Workshop Development**

The participants were recruited in consultation with the school administrators, who were enthusiastic about the project, to identify untrained teachers interested or in need of further professional learning (the participants were selected through using a convenience sampling method). My study eventually had eleven participants (workshop attendees). Participants included eight male teachers and three female teachers, between the ages of 22 and 27. Most of the participants were Somali, with two from South Sudan, and one Kenyan. Most of them speak English, Kiswahili, Somali, Dinka, and Akamba. Most of them began teaching sometime after 2015 as untrained teachers with 2 teachers among the participants having received some basic training from the organizations that were implementing the teaching services in Dadaab.

My own workshop series built on a practicum course called EDST 3999: Experience, Inquire, and Contribute, that was developed by a panel, including myself, when I was a teacher assistant in the BHER program. For this course, teachers learned and empowered themselves, since we had many teachers without formal teacher education, who needed support with new teaching models and skills. These workshops were designed to increase participant confidence in their teaching practice. This was originally a practicum course taught on-site by the Teaching Assistants (Master of Education students) who liaised with Professor Don Dippo (York University professor) and Mohamed Duale (York University doctoral student). This course provided BHER teachers the opportunity to develop skills and to organize and implement professional adult education workshops for untrained teachers and others working in the camps, as well as for members and leaders of the community-at-large. It essentially puts the “untrained teacher” in a position to acquire teaching competencies, build confidence, understand how to access online resources and lesson activities, and then contribute to “capacity-building” in the workplace and community.

The role of these workshops in my study was to think differently and co-create a professional learning community for my former school (Hareed). Because I have been a Teacher Assistant for some students and I worked for this course last year, I thought I could create a similar training program. Being more focused around a local community of teaching in my school, the project will be better than having outsiders come and try to provide knowledge to the teachers, because with my model of workshop, it will benefit the teachers to have more self-confidence organizing themselves. Duale *et al.* state the importance of this point: refugee teachers “must have meaningful participation in the planning and provision of education for refugees since it is refugees, above all others, who have the most to gain” (2019: 58). I could not fully determine the content of workshops until I established the teacher needs. During the pre-workshop survey my original proposed topics for the workshops included: a) Changing Pedagogy and Classroom Management: Active, safe, inclusive learning, b) Sustainable Development: Building professional learning communities, c) Modelling Professional Learning: Good uses of technology for teacher research and knowledge sharing). Prior to the pre-workshop survey, I saw these themes as an opportunity for the teachers without formal teacher education to be inducted with teaching skills that would support engaged learning and then, help them well in their classroom management. I hoped to build learning communities locally rather than rely on external organizations (which cannot be guaranteed in the future). At the end, these educators (workshop participants) might become leaders in the camps (e.g. for classroom management skills, effective classroom teaching and parental engagement). I hoped that all the teachers who became familiar with the workshop topics would be better able to handle the challenges of Dadaab classrooms and create conditions for learning where teachers also learn together, share ideas, and support one another.

### **3.2. Pre-Workshop Surveys and Workshop Development**

In the following sections of this paper, I will first discuss the survey data I collected and how that shaped my workshops and, later, my “themes” for coding interviews. Next, I provide a brief overview of the workshop design and explain my experience leading the workshops. My workshops were designed to be changed based on teacher input collected during my pre-

workshop survey. In order for me to gain a stronger understanding on the teaching experience and quality of training that exists in Hareed Primary School, I used an inductive method and created a survey asking about participant training (to what extent teachers had any training or mentorship) and asked participants to assess their own needs. Mostly, my questions were looking into the teacher's perspectives, how they thought before any workshop training was done. The survey was completed by 7 teachers who were teaching at Hareed Primary School and employed by the implementing organization in Ifo (Lutheran World Federation). The Headteacher later suggested two new teachers who were volunteering in the school, but not employed. According to my questionnaire data, most participants had little experience or knowledge about teaching and classroom management. Most of the concerns expressed were around classroom management, the use of technology, and professional documents (e.g. lesson plans, schemes of work). Early on, I sat down with the principal of the school to figure out some of the challenges he faces as a Headteacher and he agreed with me that we should form a Professional Learning Community (PLC).

In examining the pre-workshop survey data, I saw a number of important themes and factors emerge from the data. The key challenges and concerns included: lack of resources (how to find the proper resources and models for teaching, including lesson plans, new activities, lesson content, and professional documents) and problems of classroom management (using the stick, corporal punishment). The teachers also showed curiosity to learn more about technology as a tool for teaching in their classroom. Not all of this was possible through a professional learning workshop, so I came up with a number of themes for the workshop sessions. As described above, some of them had never had any purpose for teacher-teacher interaction unless the administration was calling a meeting, assigning teachers some specific tasks, or passing information down from the higher authorities like the Lutheran World Federation (LWF). This situation has also encouraged me to direct my workshop more toward a professional learning community, that will allow the teachers to have interactions and enable them to collaborate and learn from one another.

In a one-month period (January, 2020), in three half-day workshops, we covered a series of topics during their weekends because I did not want to interrupt their daily teaching practice in the school. This on-site training was designed to enable them to get skills that will be helpful in the classroom environment and support engaged learning and communication with one another. With the help of the pre-survey workshop, I found three core themes around which to build my workshops:

- a) Introducing a Professional Learning Community at Hareed Primary School in Ifo
- b) Uses of Computers in Schools and Smartphones for Professional Learning
- c) Finding Professional Documents: Lesson Plans, Curriculum & Activities

Professional documents are the documents which are used by the teacher in their preparation, implementation and evaluation of the teaching/learning process in school. They include schemes of work, lesson plans, records of work, and progress records. They are meant to make teaching and learning more effective. Without them, the teacher is not considered to be teaching well. These are documents which are very essential in our teaching fields and all teachers are required to be ready with and keep track of them. The issue of classroom management was fitted into all the three days of the workshop, as most of the teachers expressed interest in classroom management, so all activities carried out throughout the workshop incorporated this theme, like the use of technology to ensure students are meaningfully engaged and learning with more creative activities.

These topics took three weeks for me to share and discuss with the teachers. As most of the teachers were present as the school was opened and students were returning from their holidays, I happened to interact with still more teachers who were away during my Pre-workshop survey. In the workshop, we formed a professional learning community and some of the teachers have taken the responsibilities to working with the other teachers in sharing more of the same content outside of the workshop. Around the technology part of the workshop, I have created a WhatsApp group for Hareed Professional learning team, in order for them to share resources and, in any cases of concerns, they can meet and share their concerns. The Headteacher also promised me some resources that are already in the school like the computer laboratory for the training and



some writing materials. Lastly, I shared with the Headteacher the timeline of my workshops and communicated with the participants and organized the workshop calendar using our WhatsApp group. This was already a good use of technology to model how to communicate and organize, even with their learners in the future classroom teaching.

### **3.3. Workshops at Hareed**

It is in this part of my study, in the workshops, that I came to see that teachers need more than just in-service training: they also need a community of practitioners working together who find out what each teacher is lacking and what they can learn from one another. Some of the teachers told me that it is hard for them to work as a team due to individualistic behaviours. By individualistic behaviours, I mean a behaviour or a school culture where the teacher becomes overly-confident. That is what I found the teachers had been doing: working alone. The group work or collaborative teaching was not helpful to all, so they independently teach and do what they are able to do to the best of their abilities without associating with others.

My observations were that the Headteacher was the only one who was trained in the school, and the rest of the teachers have never been given the opportunities to get training except for an “induction” training in the school by the principal. An induction is the process of introducing the new teachers to the school with the aim of bringing them up to speed as quickly as possible, as well as making them feel socially comfortable and aware of their professional responsibilities. This induction is also important because it helps the new teacher to settle themselves immediately and understand the environment of the new school, and it will also provide them with confidence to teach. The Headteacher and I agreed that my study would be a good opportunity for me to practice my skills and knowledge, to provide the teachers with some new ideas and practices to support them in teaching, as well as to learn from them. The workshops were held in Hareed Primary School with 10 teachers. Later I had 9 teachers, due to one of the teachers having other commitments. I hosted three workshops: Introducing a Professional Learning Community, Uses of Computers in Schools and Smartphones for Professional Learning, and Finding Professional Documents: Lesson Plans, Curriculum & Activities. After forming this community, the teachers were also taught technology use in schools i.e. selecting

good keywords and ways of identifying good/useful educational sites for lesson plans, activities and good models (including videos from YouTube, etc.), and also sharing resources with the other members of the professional learning community. Afterward, I also provided an interactive session on professional document preparations where teachers in the PLC were able to make some samples of Unit plans, lesson plans, a record of work covered, and grading registers. Later, I guided the teachers to search better templates from some Kenyan educational resource websites (e.g., <https://www.elimulibrary.com/> or <https://kcserevision.com/>). For the latter site, I acquired a premium account for them to get the resources relevant to their teaching and, at the end, share among themselves and also inform other teachers in the school (or in other schools in the camps) about these website resources.

After getting all these workshops done, I welcomed an experienced teacher, who has taught many years in the camps and outside the camps. This teacher, Mjomba Mombo, teaches the community language skills and works for the same organization (Windle International in Kenya) for which I also work. Given his experience and knowledge of teaching, on the final day of my workshop on the Professional Learning Community, I invited this teacher to the school and introduced him to the rest of the teachers and welcomed him to share his pedagogy and methods. Below is an abstract of what Mjomba Mombo covered in his lecture. I include this here to show what kinds of methods and philosophies were being shared in our workshop.

It is vital as a teacher before walking into a class to acknowledge that learners are what determines both the choice of content and method of instruction. The content should be tailored to fit the level of the learner and the method used should improve their ability to conceptualize information. Giving the example of my learners who are mature people, I use both lecturing and discussion methods to allow them to express their ideas. But for your case, you need to use more activity[-based] methods to gain their concentration. Having said that, you need to check the type of the content comparing it with the level of the learners so that you can choose appropriate activities that will be used to teach. I have seen activity-oriented methods helping even my [adult] learners. Secondly, is the flexibility of the method. This is the ability to shift from one method to another within the time of instruction without losing the concentration of learners. For example, I can start with a relevant activity of my lesson that will inform the content notes that I will make with the students in the class. Finally, the method should be reliable in the sense that it will be effective to deliver certain content to

given types of learners in a particular context. For example, when teaching about measurements, you need to use demonstrations and activities that will aid conceptualization. I conclude, teachers must be motivated with both the learners and the content we teach. Our major work is to adopt a method that will favour our students in understanding the content the best way possible.

While conducting this workshop and working with teachers, I observed that the teachers were very engaged, and enthusiastic to apply the new knowledge they received from the workshop. Embodying the ideas of creating community, they were also willing to share the knowledge with the other teachers who did not make the workshops. What amazed me was the cooperation and teamwork that was happening among the teachers, and I encouraged them to continue the cooperation. They have started to work with the Hareed administration to create support materials and resources required for teaching, which was not happening before the workshop, and it may be evidence that the workshop helped motivate them to apply these collaboration and planning skills.

Generally, through the facilitation of this workshop, I learned a lot about myself as an educator and leader by gaining experience. Now I feel confident, at this point, that I am capable of successfully facilitating any workshop on education if given the opportunity. Additionally, I have acquired many useful skills from the teachers: knowledge which came directly from the workshop seminars and interactive sessions, as well as from the guest speaker who impacted the teachers with his teaching experiences and professional models. Overall, my experience was positive, and this facilitation has helped me gain confidence. It was challenging at the beginning, but in the end, I was able to organize the learning community, deliver my workshop content and create contexts for inquiry, workshop activities, and dialogue. The school Headteacher also played an important part in the organization of the teachers and provided a suitable venue for me to conduct my work.

### **3.4. Challenges**

The challenges were not many, but for every complex project, as usual, there are possible obstacles that individuals and learning communities can face. Time was a problem as many teachers had to be called and reminded to attend. I was also nervous about the use of a projection

system since the school had no projectors, but I managed to borrow one, and it served me well. Bringing handouts was also a challenge, but I created a WhatsApp group and shared documents with them through the application. Again, that was an initial model of how to use mobile devices for professional learning and communication. The school was also open, so convening the teachers during school time was a challenge, but through the support of the senior teacher and the Headteacher, we scheduled our workshops on weekends and later one school day for the guest speaker. My plan for post-workshop data collection was to give teachers three months to apply the knowledge and continue working in the PLC but, unfortunately, due to a shortage of time, participants had six weeks to apply the knowledge they gained from the workshops prior to collecting interview data.

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## 4. Post-Workshop Interviews: Data, Findings and Analysis

My post-workshop interview questions inquired into how the Professional Learning Community had made use of the content and skills shared, and if professional learning communities were established among the participants. Did the workshops succeed? If not, then why not? Were there any surprises or mistakes from which to learn? This approach enabled me to assess the impact of in-service training on teachers' attitudes and practices, as well as offer critical reflections and recommendations for future research and for teacher training and professional learning communities in refugee contexts like Dadaab and Kakuma.

The post-workshop interviews were done in a semi-structured format with some open-ended questions that focused on teaching, classroom management and the impact of the workshops. This left room for my participants to respond from their perspectives as naturally as possible. I prepared questions designed to gain greater detail about their workshop experience and subsequent teaching experience (and I made sure to clarify any questions to reduce any of my own assumptions that I might have brought with me). The workshops were conducted in January 2020 and participants were interviewed in two focus group discussions about their experience as a learning community. The focus group questions included open-ended queries about the workshops, the creation of learning communities and evidence of changes in teacher dispositions, classroom management, or uses of technology. I recorded and transcribed focus group discussions (in English) then thematically coded them using my research questions and new themes, including: Impacts of Professional Learning Community; Technology and PLCs; Technology and Learning; Classroom Management (Shifts in Perspective) and Pedagogy. The semi-structured interview format allowed me to probe themes and unexpected events about how the project affected the teachers or the Dadaab community as a whole.

### **4.1. Impacts of Creating the Professional Learning Community**

One of the most recognizable themes from the responses of the teachers in the focus group discussions was the creation of a professional learning community and how it has impacted the teachers' views on effective teaching, for example becoming clearer in instructions and being

attentive to specific students in the classroom during the class session. Though teaching new skills was just one part of the workshop, the professional learning community workshop has really impacted the teachers at Hareed Primary School who attended the workshop. It also enabled the community and teachers to have links, so that it promoted a networked way of doing professional inquiry, teaching, curating resources using technology and the Internet, and coming up with a variety of methods of sharing teaching so that everybody will participate. The participants provided evidence of impacts in their interviews:

Respondent 2: I can say this [workshop]...helps the teachers to [share] methods of teaching, and also enable the community and teachers to have a link, so that it promotes a global way of teaching... [The workshop] also promotes the participation of the teacher and the parents of Hareed primary school.

Similarly, another participant reflected on the positive impact of the workshops in terms of the development of teaching skills:

Respondent 4: In terms of improving teaching skills, we teachers from Hareed primary school...we have improved a lot [of] our teaching skills, like the one we were using initially, after we got this PLC professional learning, that is why we started using new methods of teaching, new ways of delivering the lessons/ contents to the learners, whereby the learners and the teaching have improved. When the teacher gets training in this PLC, the learners benefit from the knowledge learned in the workshop.

As the educator and workshop organizer, I saw evidence during the focus group discussion that teachers have changed their strategies of classroom organization as they were able to explain the skills they learned, share examples, and understand the impact upon their students in the classroom. As I will show below, the professional workshop has motivated the teachers to stand united as a community, which they were not doing previously. My analysis, based on the interviews and observations, is that the teachers have been dealing with their own problems alone. After the workshops, they have gained the confidence to express anxieties and concerns and accept new methods like team teaching to support one another in the field. As one respondent reported:

Previously, before [the] PLC was introduced to me or to us, it used to be like, if I have a problem with a topic or chapter in mathematics, I don't share this as a concern with the other teachers due to either feeling shy or [because I] never

wanted to expose my weaknesses to other teachers. But through PLC, I came to know that no one is perfect. Maybe I may be clever [ or] good at some topic in a subject, but may be dull or weak in [another]. And in that part, [if] I am weak there is someone who is capable or able to do it. Through [the] PLC I am told and realize there is no one is perfect and t we could share [with] one another, help one another, and go to any teacher for help, and even if I cannot understand the explanations, I can ask that teacher to teach the same concept to my class or learners.

This statement is an indication that, through the PLC, teachers were able to utilize the knowledge and make some adjustment in their work areas, extend the PLC team to allocate knowledge, or use some of the resources to improve their teaching and even do team-teaching. Understanding that nobody is perfect, the teachers experienced changes in their attitudes and moved away from "individualistic behaviours" based on competition or the fear of being seen as “weak” or incapable. So, we see a shift from “individual” behaviours to the view that we need each other as a learning community. A PLC is a community-like structure where people can speak about their needs and worries among people who share similar professional worries and concerns and come together as a team, rather than as competitors.

#### **4.2. Changes in Teacher Disposition: Team Teaching and Taking Responsibility**

In the following section, I explore how teachers felt about the professional learning community, and how they saw it working. How did the participants interact with their peers? I probed during the interviews if participants started sharing tips for lessons, did team teaching, used any new teaching strategies (modelled by me or the guest speaker), used new classroom management techniques, or if they found it useful just to talk with a colleague about daily successes or struggles. At this point, many of the teachers expressed sharing of resources and enacting team teaching. For example, one of the teachers noted that if an emergency happens to him, he will now notify the administration who will inform the students that their subject teacher cannot make it to their class on some days, due to either illnesses or domestic issues. After the professional learning community was formed, teachers have learnt the importance of the students in the school and the pain they feel in going back home without been taught, so the teachers have now come up with departmental plans where, if a teacher is away, another teacher in the same

department (like the language, humanities or science department) could distribute his/her lessons (e.g., using WhatsApp) and cover the lesson for the learners. This is a good practice – collaborative planning – that the participants have learnt in part from the workshop, and as noted by the teachers:

Respondent 1: As teachers we have staff meetings where we always plan and share duties, where we exchange the subjects and allocate one another based on the ability of the teacher, as well as do team teaching. We do the strategy of team teaching.

Respondent 1: To add on what others have said, as teachers of Hareed primary school, we did what is called collaborative planning as a group. In order to benefit both the learner and the teachers.

Respondent 9: Ok sir, before the PLC, we never had such kind of workshops in schools...But we have learned, and I realized that working together as a team makes working easier. Like when I have a problem, I can welcome my colleagues to help me, so through the PLC, we have learnt the art of working and collaborating amongst ourselves. Discussing our problems with one another and working as peer groups who can support one another in the school.

Because most of the teachers' primary responsibility is to teach, cover and complete the required curriculum, they never thought of working with the other teachers as a good model of teaching. After the workshop, as shown above, they were more likely to do cooperative planning, team-teaching and sharing duties. This is the culture the professional learning community is currently advancing and it may be evidence that teachers have learnt a better model of teaching than the more individualist style they had been practising.

### **4.3. Technology and the Professional Learning Community**

As the workshop modelled the use of technology for finding online teaching resources and sharing them, I asked participants about their experiences with technology. Did they use smartphones to search out resources for teaching and learning? If so, did they share resources, lessons, or teaching tips with other teachers in the professional learning community? What tools were commonly used? While the teachers used smartphones in their personal lives for communication, they rarely used technology for formal educational purposes before the PLC. Most of the teachers in Hareed thought that technology required experts to manage, just as I once believed. But when I modelled to them how easily technology can be utilized in their classroom



teaching, it was something of a wonder for them. While the school has computers and power (with limited access to the Internet through tethering to smartphone hotspots using data bundles), only a few teachers were assigned to use them. To many teachers, the computers were a mystery. In the workshop, I showed them how all teachers can use technology in the classroom to make their everyday professional work easier: for example, creating lesson plans, preparing class notes, and sharing notes and expectations with students over a newly created class WhatsApp group (with the teachers as the group admins). This was an important part of my workshop, creating digital communities through WhatsApp. Once I created my WhatsApp group for the PLC, I introduced them to the tools and features. I stated that this is what we do in our social life, but you can also use these tools in your classroom with your students for teaching and learning. As this workshop took place shortly before COVID-19, it turned out that the use of technology would be useful, as I discuss in my conclusion.

Prior to the BHER program, my own understanding was that technology could be used by experts only. Now, through the workshop, we came to realize that all of us could use the technology to write and share notes, prepare our professional documents, and, since students are also using smartphones, we discussed together and agreed upon the best uses for the smartphones in the classroom teaching context. The use of smartphones and technology was also emphasized by the teachers and one participant's response is worth quoting at length:

Respondent 8: The smart phone, yes, it has helped us a lot before the workshop, [but] we never knew that such things [teaching resources] can be found on the internet (I mean resources that can support teaching like videos of teachers and simplified notes). [The researcher] during the training has used a clip of a teacher explaining mathematical calculations which show how a simple mathematical calculation can be done. Afterwards, he urged us to search for this clip and similar clips on YouTube and the web to facilitate our teaching. This makes [learning] easier for students and the teacher because, before the PLC, we were calculating using chalk and the blackboard, swallowing the [chalk] dust. Through this PLC workshop we can now also teach our students through use of our smartphones, by getting clips of different concepts, and through those kinds of clips, the students understand better than before, when I was using the chalk and the board. For example, when the students are watching clips they are more attentive than when you are teaching physically, and when you are teaching [with your back turned] many don't pay you attention and others are just in class but not concentrating

well. But when they see some clips, movies or pictures, they are always attentive, so that is how smartphones help us to teach better in mathematics. It has also helped us in teaching by preparing the...lesson plan, and everything that is required for teaching in school.

Respondent 7: Really, the smartphone has helped us get more resources other than the textbook we are given; this enables the students to have more techniques, or different ways of solving a single question. And as a teacher it helped us by making our work easier in the classroom, giving the students different techniques. On top of that, the internet also helped us by creating WhatsApp groups for PLC members for communications and discussing the interactions and the progress of the students of the school.

Respondent 4: We used smartphones for WhatsApp and google share or [google] doc. In WhatsApp, it helps us, like when I browse the internet and get resources for teaching, like professional documents for example, the scheme of work, lessons, all these things... And then later I may send [resources] to another teacher who is far away from me through the WhatsApp media. So that that teacher can be ready and well prepared...

This was truly a learning process for the teachers, as some of them acquired the skills of using their smartphones in new and different ways. As for communication, we noted that the smartphones are of great help for communication between teachers, as well as for the students, since the teacher can also make smaller WhatsApp pages for instruction, or interact with their student after class where students could ask questions through their WhatsApp group. Students could also get information updates, notes or other resources from each other or their teacher.

These findings link with the work of Dryden-Peterson *et al.* (2017), who have shown the importance of mobile devices in the refugee setting. Building on their work, I have also argued that “informal, local, and improvised uses of digital tools are... proving to be vital in [the refugee] landscape — not just for achieving formal educational goals, but for transforming the everyday lives of refugee students” (Abikar *et al.* forthcoming). With regard to technology, our workshop experience provides further evidence that smartphones and networks can be of great use in classroom teaching and provide connected learning for students in the refugee camps.

#### **4.4. Using Technology for Teaching**

Teaching using technology with the use of smartphones, as well as with computers, laptops, projectors, and speakers in class is a smart way of transforming education in the refugee set-up.

It saves time and is a better teaching method, as one Hareed teacher explained, because using technology for geography to show students how geographic features work is a much better way to teach than explaining geography through chalkboards. As respondent 4 stated:

Initially we are not using technology to teach, for things like teaching children about rivers or lakes and all the things of which they had never seen [before] in their lives, and we use chalk and books to explain things...using the technology, like the projectors, they will see what the river is, how the rivers work, and how Lake Victoria is...they will see it well and the student will be able to explain and understand better, and later be able remember.

This is a good example that links to themes like access to Internet resources and multimodal literacies (Cope and Kalantzis 2009) and being able to “see” beyond chalkboards, books and the printed words on a chalkboard. That is important as teachers are beginning to move from “telling the world to showing the world” (Lotherington and Jenson 2011: 227). Previously, workshop participants were using books to copy teaching and professional resources (lesson plans, unit plans, and lesson records) but now, after they attended the workshop, they were shown how to get these relevant resources and multimodal representations to support learning. As one participant noted:

You can access, through Google, you can download your professional documents like schemes of work, lesson plans, records of work covered and other lesson activities, whereby you use this technology to get the right or relevant resources needed for teaching.

#### **4.5. Will the PLC Workshops have Sustainable Impact?**

The untrained teachers surely gained new skills, knowledge and experience that they are sharing and showing to others now. In the interviews, they expressed their positive feelings about sharing both in the school and outside the school. In the school, they are attending to the new teachers who are new to the system and offering counselling sessions. Outside the country, or in other schools, they will be willing to share this knowledge. What is important to note is that when teachers interact and form teams or a community of learners, it enables learning and sharing of different ideas, but at the end, for those who are trying to support others, they will also end up learning more. One of the teachers also noted that we should share this kind of professional learning to our [home] countries like Somalia, Ethiopia, Sudan or Uganda, where the first thing

we should do is see if the curriculum is able to accommodate and accept modifications: “going back to our homes we have different curriculums...as a teacher you need to sit down and see what the curriculum looks like, what is possible to be applied...or difficult to use with your plan, so in that case it means we should base [our learning community] on that system of the [home] country.” As most of the teachers in the refugee camps come from different countries of origin, they have noted that the professional learning community workshop will impact them back at their home, as they will be able to reuse and adapt this knowledge to share with their colleagues, and be a part of rebuilding their nations, depending on the curriculum with which they will be working.

Others also emphasized their interest in sharing the professional learning community experience with other teachers in Hareed, or with newly employed teachers in either Hareed or other schools:

There were some of the teachers who attended the training workshop with us, they have some knowledge to use...For those [teachers] who did not attend the workshop, we plan to help them on what to do in the classroom, what they are supposed to do before they approach the learner in class... we are able to reuse the content of the workshop and orient them, because our fear is that they may pick the textbooks, and go to class, and copy paste what is in the textbook. So what we will do [now] is guide them.

This statement shows how the teachers are showing their interest in sharing their knowledge with others and, furthermore, if that excitement continues, we shall have other professional learning communities who will share their improved knowledge of teaching in the refugee camps. To reflect upon my workshop, receive feedback, and also help the teachers think about doing their own workshops in the future, I asked the participants: if you were to lead your own workshops in the future, what would you improve? What activities or knowledge did you find the most useful for helping you as a teacher? What activities were not useful? Leading a workshop of your own requires time, planning and confidence, and it took me some months to plan, do my own inquiry, and make it happen, knowing that I might face all sorts of challenges. I asked the participants during the interviews and some of the teachers expressed to me thoughts or ideas towards the having such future workshops in either their home country or in schools in the camps:

“According to me, this is going to help me because I have learnt how to use the internet and whatever I learnt from it: I will reuse it in the future (Respondent 9).” Another participant commented:

we are required to produce our teaching resources...like the [curriculum] scheme, lesson plans and record the work covered. We used to have a hard time copying everything [by hand], but now through the workshop I have learnt you can find everything well prepared and ready from the internet by using your phone. So, maybe If I go back to my country, and I am supposed to hold such workshops in my country in the future, I will change their ideology of copying the lesson plan using a book and a pen. I will just show them where to get these resources freely, which will make work easier for them (Respondent 8).

While the teachers became more efficient using and sharing resources, and spoke to how “easy” work became with the tools, for the most part the general methods of teaching stayed the same, though I did see some transformations in practice, as noted above (and in the following section). In addition, the teachers were using technology and multimodal experiences in different ways. Teachers also gained momentum to find new ways of pushing collaborative learning, for example, by having students look for their own resources to share with other students. This may be evidence of teacher collaboration and learning using technology, leading to progress in student collaboration and differentiated learning in classrooms.

#### **4.6. Classroom Management: Shifts in Perspective and Pedagogy**

In my pre-workshop survey, classroom management was one of the things the teachers talked about even before our workshops began. As noted above, untrained teachers have many challenges in relation to the classroom management. Some teachers opt to leave the teaching profession due to uncontrollable disruptions in the classrooms, while other teachers may use the stick as the only method to “manage” the learners or keep them focused on their learning (Duale *et al.* 2019). Based on my observations, some untrained teachers also verbally threaten the children so that they will not misbehave in class. These are some possible actions taken by the teachers who are employed at schools without proper training. For teachers in the professional learning community in Hareed, these challenges were all examined and possible solutions and alternatives were discussed. The PLC workshop has given the teachers several options on class management measures, including group activities, team teaching, using smartphones in lessons,

and exchanging ideas and identifying the unique talents of diverse students. As the Headteacher noted the problem:

Untrained teachers don't manage time well because they have not been trained how to [organize] time. It becomes a challenge. [Second], they usually go to class without prepared professional documents: this is also another challenge. Number three, instead of motivating the learners, they usually punish the learners, because we have different types of learners. We have talented learners and we have low learners: these talented learners need to be motivated by giving them extra work, for them not to make noise with the untrained teachers. If they have seen a talented learner, they see a challenge to them. Instead of motivating them or giving them more work to do, they punish them. This is one of the challenges, lack of class control: they don't manage classes as a trained teacher does; they easily react to any situation that the learner provokes.

These are the challenges untrained teachers are facing that need to be addressed, and from the workshop the teachers have shown the interest in changing the modes of their teaching as a part of managing. The point of good pedagogy however is not to “motivate” with “more work”, but to provide interesting and creative and collaborative activities that allow the student to become curious and active in their own learning. As discussed during the interviews, the workshop participants took new perspectives that questioned the old ways of controlling the classroom:

Respondent 2: According to me, the stick will never help the child; it is not the best method of teaching. The best method of teaching is involving the learners into groups. Apart from that you could also provide teaching and learning resources whereby the children will have the curiosity and understanding and to engage these resources, as well as utilize a variety of teaching methods during teaching; you could make the classrooms child-centered where every child is involved with activities. This will enable the children to be involved to learning and reduce the teachers' use of corporal punishment in the classroom teachings.

Respondent 4: To add on, it can also engage the learner by giving them some work to do, instead of the children sitting idle, this method will enable the learner to participate and reduce idleness in the classroom. Children will be thinking on how to finish the assignment given and, as far as possible, we can also use the grouping method where the teacher can group the learners into different groups and provide them with activities, and the teacher can group in order where those who know some things [can] work with the slow learners, [and] this will provide the slow learners to learn from the gifted or fast learners.

The teachers have shown from the discussion how classes can be managed through collaborative learning and involving students in activities, though in some cases, the participants (and the headmaster) state that problems can be solved by simply giving students “more work”. Not all participants reported better classroom management results. But, the statements from the respondents above about “group work”, differentiated instruction, and mixed learning groups, show that some of the teachers are beginning to think critically and inclusively about teaching students as a learning community.

#### **4.7. Final Thoughts on the Workshop**

At the end of the interviews, I invited the participants to speak more freely about what they learned in the workshop and if or how a professional community might develop in the school. I also asked if our group interaction in the PLC changed any views on education – on what it means to be a teacher – in the refugee context. According to statements by many of the participants, I saw that the workshop has indeed helped the teachers to continue the activities begun in the professional learning community and apply them at Hareed Primary in different ways. The respondents noted valuable learning outcomes like: team teaching, collaboration and sharing, a new sense of responsibility to students and student learning, questioning “individualistic” and competitive dispositions, understanding that no teacher is perfect and we need each other, using technology for team teaching, using technology to make lesson plans and administration more efficient, and more confidence in teaching and finding resources. According to participants, the workshop has also shown new ways to teach and manage classrooms compared to their previous strategies as untrained teachers. Some of the teachers noted that the workshop has “opened their eyes” and they hope to support their learners with different pedagogical methods. Final reflections included:

Respondent 10: [The workshop] helped me gain knowledge, skills and experience from my colleagues.

Respondent 9: To add to what (R10) said, according to me, the thing that is most valuable in the workshop is that it improved my teaching skills, because when I was teaching through use of chalk and board, it was difficult to teach, but now it is better and due to the change of the method of teaching, we can have more lessons to teach than before. It makes our work easier.

The workshop has also relieved the teachers of technology fears, since it covered technology as a method for teaching. It showed that technology is not just for experts and how new media can free them from the workload of copying lecture notes on the chalkboard, while also allowing them to share with the learners through smartphones on WhatsApp or other sharing applications. The benefits extend to the learners as they will have, through WhatsApp, more time to read the lesson notes before class and also revise their work. For example, respondent 8 commented:

I teach class five mathematics and before we started the workshop we had students having problems on mathematical operations (addition, subtraction, multiplication and division). In the workshop, [Abikar] displayed a certain [video] clip...about easy ways of adding numbers. I watched the clip and found out that it was helpful and I was able to reuse the same clip for my students in the class. After they watched, I tasked them with a similar [equation] on the board and they were able to work it out.

Teaching is an art, I believe, and many teachers have different ways of teaching, and use different tools and methods to make learning better for the students. Since I have been studying and teaching, I came to realize that lecture with chalk alone cannot engage learners in meaningful ways and the retention of the children who engage a video clip is far better than the lecture method. For teaching to be effective, teachers should alternate between using technology and other methods. For example, the teacher can teach with animated videos on certain concepts that can be shown or displayed to the learners, which will open opportunities for children to learn better and will also engage the teacher to improve and learn. A teacher is important in the refugee context since he or she is the “eye opener” of the community and facilitates literacy learning for people of all ages. To educate these teachers on how to approach the new tasks of teaching and provide them with different dimensions of pedagogy is very important. Since the teachers often stand as the voice of the community, the community should provide support for them to be effective in our schools.

With this workshop education, they will also have the opportunity to further support new teachers, as they will, I hope, continue to learn and grow together as a community that can support one another. Some of them, during the focus group discussion, reflected on the impact of the professional learning community:



Respondent 4: We would like to continue this professional learning community, because it has improved our teaching, and the new teachers have also appreciated this work, and when we are given this training we also give sub-training to the new teachers, so that they can at least know what to do, when they need to go to class, and for them to have an easier time to teach and understand better [how to teach].

Respondent 2: Yeah, you know this will even help the [school] community because, as the PLC team apply their skills in the school, the newly employed teachers will learn and the community will form trained personnel to motivate the teaching.

This is very important, as the workshop has given the teachers more confidence to teach and help other teachers either new to teaching or who were not part of the professional learning community workshop. Compared to the surveys before we started, I observed a great change in the teacher's dispositions about teaching, their methods of teaching, and the confidence they showed.

#### **4.8. Links between the School, Teachers and Parents in Unstable Times**

I interviewed the Headteacher at the completion of my study. In his view, the workshop was very useful to the teachers, and he stated that it really helped his teachers to change their modality of teaching as well as change the culture of teaching at Hareed:

It has changed the attendance of the teachers; it has changed the attitude. And the behavior of the teachers...it has changed some ideas [about teaching]. Previously, every teacher uses his own methods without sharing with others. When you came up with this project and conducted this workshop, it brought them different ideas which they can share with others. It has also changed the method of teaching; they don't teach the way they taught last year... They have a different style of teaching, sometimes you can see a teacher going to class and introducing the lesson with a song. Whilst this method was brought by this workshop, it has also changed for the teachers to identify their weaknesses, and this is what I can say the workshop has done to the teachers. It has also changed the attitude of the learners, and the community as well.

Out of the collaborations created by the team at Hareed Primary, one wider theme emerging after the workshops is that parents have decided to come together and communicate with the teachers. The community has even come to employ five more teachers to reinforce the ones in already the

field and reduce their workload. Under normal conditions, the refugee teachers in the camps are supported by the national teaching staff, who are Kenyan by nationality, and these Kenyan teachers face a lot of risks as they may be targets of al-Shabaab. Up until now, the Kenyan government has been ignoring the sporadic cases of violence, but this year the TSC (Teacher Service Commission) has announced the retrieval of the national staff from the whole north-eastern region due to security threats and actual violence. The retrieval order came as the local Somali communities were expressing concern about the poor performance of their children on exams, as well as expressing concern about the Kenyan teachers possibly leaving, which would in turn cause the collapse of schools and formal education in the whole region. As Mohamed Hujale, a leader from the north-eastern region, noted in his speech: “The national government forced us to keep the schools open symbolically because shutting them down means al-Shabaab would win,” said Mohamed. “But they are not doing anything practical on the ground to help with the continuity of learning” (Hujale 2020). This is a big concern as the local leaders of the north-eastern region have criticized the TSC, the national body responsible for teachers’ employment, for creating an “education crisis” by pulling non-local staff out of schools in the area. They further argue that “the TSC has insisted that teachers will not be posted to the north-eastern region [where Dadaab refugee camps are located] until their safety is assured” (Hujale 2020).

Under these conditions, following the retrieval of the Kenyan national teaching staff, the parent community was informed by the school principal about the professional learning workshops the teachers were taking at that time. Following the completion of the workshop the parent representatives reviewed and accessed the workshop themes and the new methods applied to transform the school culture. In response to the crisis, and based partially on our work in the workshops, the parent representatives have come up with the financial resources to locally employ five new support teachers to the school (who will assist the existing local teachers during these times of instability). Two of these new teachers were hired directly from the professional learning community. At the same time, the NGO organization said it is hard to employ more teachers due to the lack of budget and funding. However, the work the school teachers are doing

now, in the learning community, to educate and prepare teachers and share knowledge, gave a clear rationale for the parent representatives to add more local teachers to support the already working teachers in the school. After the community realized that the implementing organization had no funds for the new employment of teachers and there was a crisis of absent national staff due to security matters, the school-parent association team sat down with other parents, and they came up with some recommendation where they are able to locally fund the hiring of the five new teachers to support the already-employed teachers. This example demonstrates where the wider Dadaab community has taken advantage of our professional learning community as some of those teachers who were part of the community team: participants who have been attending my workshops with the rest of the employed teachers have now been recruited and assigned jobs as support teachers at the school. Like the workshop itself, this action is another expression of agency from the local community. A very important emergent theme I identify, here, is that this action shows the growing autonomy of the local community in co-directing their own educational and learning futures. Through these forms of local action (our community workshop and the community-based educational funding for new teachers) the community no longer has to rely entirely on external agencies (e.g. Kenyan national teachers and NGOs like the Lutheran World Federation and Windle). The community is showing the interest and the authority to assume responsibility for education and support schooling, including organizing their own forms of community-based funding to hire more teachers under conditions of crisis and instability.

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## 5. Discussion

In this section, I revisit my initial research questions: how might in-service professional learning workshops support pedagogical reform in Hareed Primary School? If, how and to what extent do in-service workshops transform teaching practice and create a community of collaborators and teacher ‘co-learners’? To what extent did the workshop impact teacher confidence (e.g., in relation to classroom management techniques)? Some important but secondary questions included: What are some of the priorities of the school (headteacher) and community and how can a PLC (professional learning community) work with these priorities and actors? As noted by

some of the participants related to the impacts of the PLC and the assumptions teachers had before the training:

Respondent 7: First of all, being a teacher is very important and a professional education is something that everyone cannot get. Most people think that being a teacher is just writing things on the board, but that is not the truth. A teacher is someone who can change the intellectual perspective of the student to have a better future or a better life. Being a teacher in a refugee camp or in other parts of the world, it is just the same: their main purpose is to change the perspective and the understanding of the student.

As noted above by one of the participants, teachers can be change makers in our society, and they play a vital role in shaping the citizens of the countries we are living in. The more the teachers help produce creative students, the better the people will understand their political rights, as well as understand and enact better social relations with others in diverse communities like Dadaab and Kakuma. Whether in Africa or other parts of the world, teachers all have similar goals and objectives: that is, to create classroom conditions that help students to learn deeply (Fullan and Langworthy 2013). To accomplish this, teachers must be better prepared in order to plan, organize, and keep learning themselves. Further, teachers have the duty to nurture the well-being of children because, as Robinson states in his book, *The Element: How Finding Your Passion Changes Everything*: “our task is to educate [our student’s] whole being so they can face the future. We may not see the future, but they will and our job is to help them make something of it” (2009: 24).

The professional learning community workshop has witnessed several surprising outcomes and events that include the employment of new teachers, as discussed above. As I supported the teachers in the workshop, I realized that the kind of workload the teachers are given is too onerous for them to teach well. Teachers at Hareed Primary School were handling more lessons due to the insecurity in the region and the retrieval of Kenyan national teachers. As a result, the community agreed to employ five more teachers. The community itself is responsible for collecting their salaries and the new hires have relieved some of teachers in the school, given them more time to plan, as well as support the new faculty. This is the time when communities in Dadaab need to step forward and think of working more independently from the implementing

organizations and the government, because the community should be less dependent on others stakeholders and realize that they have the power to co-design their educational futures (Cope and Kalantzis 2009).

The second finding was that the more individualistic behaviours in the teaching culture at Hareed, where individuals mostly teach without consulting each other or coming together, was very much changed. As we developed the professional learning community, teachers were open to one another and were able to practice team teaching, collaboration, and sharing their weak and strong teaching areas with one another. They were able to group themselves according to departments, in order to help one another during successes and difficulties, and attend to the children in the classroom to cover for another teacher's absence. Within the new learning community, it was clear that some individual teachers were becoming more responsible and more professional.

Third, I came to further understand the critical importance of technology for learning in the refugee set-up. In fact, the lessons and practices discussed in the workshop became especially important due to the social distancing as a result of the coronavirus that is locking everyone down in their homes. This situation has also led the PLC members to look for new opportunities to help their students using technology and smartphones. With regards to the previous WhatsApp groups I created for our PLC communications, some of the PLC participants have now created their own WhatsApp groups for their students and have started teaching using smartphones. One teacher explained to me that he asks his students to respect the norms of the WhatsApp Group and he teaches using his voice recorder, and also shares class notes in image form through WhatsApp with the students. During the workshop, the pandemic was not yet a problem, but when COVID-19 locked down the world, an emergent theme about technology and learning connected directly to my study and our workshop practices using smartphones.

Use of technology is transforming our teaching in Dadaab as in my part of the world, people are worried about the future of their children. The refugee communities are now using the WhatsApp application extensively to deliver their lessons with students at home. Hareed Primary School

teachers who were part of the PLC team are increasingly using WhatsApp for teaching, and although this is a response to COVID-19, I believe that a truly creative use of these tools in the future may lead to a transformation of education in our classrooms. According to Ken Robinson, “education doesn't need to be reformed, it needs to be transformed. The key is not to standardize education, but to personalize it, to build achievement on discovering the individual talents of each child, to put students in an environment where they want to learn and where they can naturally discover their true passion” (2019: 22). This pandemic might be a turning point for education as many educators are transforming education through a more dynamic and interactive use of technology. The COVID-19 pandemic has forced the teachers in the camps to utilize the technology as a learning tool, as most of the teachers are now using WhatsApp, making videos, using smartphone screen-recorders and delivering content and instructions to the students quarantined in their homes. This use of technology is something to be expanded as it may create an innovative culture and bring a transformative pedagogy.

So it is our responsibility as teachers to help our students explore the world using new media. In my workshops, I emphasized and modelled the use of technology for richer learning. Abdi Noor Alimahadi, an education technologist from the north-eastern region, has been campaigning with local governors to adopt available technologies (like smartphones) to fill the digital divide that isolates learners in the northeast. Abdi Noor continues to explain the significance of technology for the region, those who are most negatively affected in Kenya. The government, due to massive corruption, is unable to support the education of the region well and “the need for technology has never been greater...Digital learning can not only resolve the issue of [the] teacher shortage but would also improve the performance of students. I have been presenting affordable e-learning technologies to the local leadership which they all welcomed. It is time we scaled it to the whole region” (Hujale 2020). If teachers and students are already adapting to the new technology, a time will come when the region will have adequate access and knowledge about how to use technology for transforming learning, so these initiatives can scale.

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## 6. Conclusion

In my view, many teachers in the Dadaab camps only become teachers due to the circumstances. What I often see is that many teachers are not finding teaching interesting, and because of the situational forces, when you are in the camp, you have no choice but to be either a teacher with low incentive pay, or work with an NGO. What is motivating most of these teachers is the incentive pay. But being a teacher requires total dedication, attention, and perseverance. In my workshop, I emphasized that pay should not be the main incentive. I repeated that teaching is a noble profession and engaging as well. The more a teacher is engaged in the work, the better the teacher will be in the future. We need teachers to be in the school not for payment, but to improve the field of teaching and to empower the community as a whole. That is why today I am researching teaching and learning in different dimensions, including the opportunities of professional learning and the uses of technology. It is because of my former teachers, who inspired me, that I came to be the change maker I envisioned myself to be. I wanted to communicate in the workshop that teachers are role models and producers of future leaders. My hope was that after the workshop, the teachers will envision another dimension of teaching, culture, and pedagogy that will lead to them to be change makers in their societies, support their communities and engage other local teachers on the use of the professional learning communities as the starting step towards community autonomy.

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## 7. Recommendations

I think some obvious challenges facing the sustainability of the PLC will be that, since some of the teachers have been working with minimal administrative supervision, my fear is that if the school does not support their continued collaboration, the community may not continue to fully coordinate and cooperate with one another, which would cause the collapse of the professional learning community that we developed. My first recommendation is that the school administration continue to support the Professional Learning Community to ensure its sustainability. As Owston states: “principal [or administrative] advocacy [is] a distinguishing feature in the most innovative districts – and an essential condition if innovative initiatives are to be sustained” (2007: 8).

Second, what might other schools learn from these experiences and what are the policy implications for using similar workshop models for in-service teacher education in and beyond the Dadaab camps context? I strongly support the idea that other schools should organize continual in-service training in the Dadaab camps. I recommend that, alongside local administrative support, the educational organizations (Windle, the Lutheran World Federation) be approached to support this kind of local professional learning in other schools, using as an untapped resource the teachers that have already been trained at Hareed and the qualified refugee teachers who have been educated in the BHER project, and who now understand the power of creating professional learning communities to empower teachers. Since it is hard to provide scholarships to all the teachers, they could reuse and develop these workshops in order to improve teaching and professional learning in all of the schools in all of the camps within the Dadaab complex. I recommend that donors provide funds to support interactive workshops that engage untrained teachers in learning about new teaching methods. Moreover, funding could enable teachers to better access technology to use to improve their teaching, such as installing projectors in classrooms. I also call for more research that might be done by future BHER graduate students, to take up this kind of local action research that looks into the idea of the PLC and its impacts on the local communities.

While the PLC had positive impacts, I also saw that new pedagogies need to be introduced to schools in Dadaab. The Hareed primary school Head teacher talked about “more work” as the solution to motivate and engage students, and “more work” is neither good pedagogy, nor good classroom management. Rather than “give students more work” to motivate them or manage behaviour, a shift to more self-directed learning and creative work that truly engages the students, and authentically motivates them, is the key (Robinson 2019; Cope and Kalantzis 2009). For example, collaborative video making using smartphones, where talented students who have more experience, or understand more quickly, can support peers in mixed-ability and inclusive groups, is one way to put technology and learning in the hands of the students themselves. The use of Comic Life (a game-changing app that allows students to create digital posters, graphic texts, or comic books) will enable all of the students and children to apply their



learning and create new knowledge (Fullan and Langworthy 2013). I suggest, the new “Competence-Based Curriculum” in Kenya may in fact align well with these uses of technology, like WhatsApp, ComicLife and student-made videos. This topic needs to be studied to foster the learning of future children through the Competence-Based Curriculum, and more research is required to investigate the better use of technology and pedagogy within the new curriculum. As colonial, didactic and banking (Friere 2017) education has a long history in Kenya and Dadaab, it cannot be expected that such workshops can transform teaching overnight. Therefore, I also recommend that more research and professional learning should be focused on team teaching and changing dispositions to student group work and using technology in the classroom to make learning more multimodal, interactive, creative, and inquiry-driven (Lotherington and Jenson 2011).

My final recommendations concern gender. In my workshop community, three participants were female and seven were male. Of the new teachers hired by the community, only one teacher was a female and the rest (4) were male. Two of these teachers hired by the community (PTA) and the school were from my workshop (1 male and 1 female). It is problematic that the community has less female teachers in the school. In any future workshops or studies, I will look to recruit more women to the workshops, because women are the backbone of our society and the fewer female teachers present in schools as models, the fewer girls will enroll in schools.

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<https://carleton.ca/lerrn/>

[lerrn@carleton.ca](mailto:lerrn@carleton.ca)

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This product was supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.



