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***Transnational networks and teacher professional learning:
A case study of the Australia-Asia BRIDGE School
Partnerships Project in India***

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Abstract

The quality of teacher professional development in India is at best uneven, despite Government's efforts to promote reforms in this area. However, recent trends in globalization and communication technologies have opened up new possibilities for teacher professional learning. In this study, the potential of transnational networks for teacher professional learning in India is explored through an illustrative case study of the Australia-Asia BRIDGE School Partnerships Project. Based on data collected from interviews with teachers and principals from eight BRIDGE participating schools in the Delhi region, as well as observations and analysis of relevant documents, the study attempts to identify how and why teachers participated in the BRIDGE program; provide an account of their experiences; and determine the ways in which it shaped their professional practice. Data suggests that while the teachers and principals had positive attitudes towards the program, they viewed it to be mainly useful in 'internationalizing' teaching practices and student learning. Moreover, it seems that only those schools that were already 'transnational' in their dispositions, aspirations, and arrangements could take advantage of such networks. This implies that programs, such as BRIDGE, might contribute to the prevailing unevenness of teacher professional development opportunities in India.

Declaration

This is to certify that:

- (i) the thesis comprises only my original work towards the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
- (ii) due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other materials used
- (iii) the thesis is fewer than 100,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, bibliographies, and appendices

Atiya Khan

Preface

For the financial assistance they provided, I would like to thank the University of Melbourne for granting me the Melbourne Research Scholarship [MRS] Award, and the School of Education for the grants/scholarships for my fieldwork and attendance at international conferences. I am extremely thankful for all this generosity.

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List of abbreviations

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACARA	Australian Curriculum, Assessment, and Reporting Authority
ACER	Australian Council for Educational Research
AEF	Asia Education Foundation
BRIDGE	Building Relationships through Intercultural Dialogue and Growing Engagement
CRCs	Cluster Resource Centres
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
DIETs	District Institutes of Education and Training
DISE	District Information System for Education
GoI	Government of India
GSN	Global SchoolNet
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IEAA	International Education Association of Australia
iEARN	International Education and Resource Network
INDE	International Networks for Democratic Education
IT	Information Technology
INSET	In-Service Education & Training
K-12	Kindergarten to 12th Grade Education
MHRD	Ministry of Human Resource and Development

MOOCS	Massive Open Online Courses
NCERT	National Council of Education Research and Training
NCF	National Curriculum Framework
NCFTE	National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education
NCTE	National Council for Teacher Education
NPE	National Policy on Education
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
P-12	Preschool Education and K-12 Education
PLC	Professional Learning Community
PLN	Professional Learning Network
SSA	Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan
TALIS	Teaching and Learning International Survey
TESS-India	Teacher Education through School-based Support in India
TET	Teacher Eligibility Test
TOPDI	Teacher Online Professional Development India

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Prologue

My interest in the issues of teacher professional learning has been largely shaped by my experiences as a school teacher in Indian secondary schools. In my time teaching in India between 2003 and 2012, I experienced what I considered to be some of the most futile and pointless professional learning sessions. The non-instructional days, that the schools were allocated, often involved the work of external trainers, with their dull presentation slides, irrelevant tables and diagrams, and meaningless feedback exercises. All I could think of during most of these sessions was my work piling up. At their worst, the days fixed for teacher professional learning were ruined by meetings that mostly did not relate to my subjects, students or their learning needs, and covered everything from the school admission process to the board exam results. Very rarely did I leave a session with any knowledge, understanding, or skills that I could use to improve my professional practice. In another school where I taught, the ownership of teacher professional learning was given over to the school's human resource and marketing departments. We teachers sat in silence as the trainers enthusiastically boasted about their achievements in transforming policy and practice. It was very frustrating to see the days often being squandered on managerial rhetoric and mindless box-ticking. We were seldom given a chance to team-up and learn with and from each other, and have experiences that could help us reflect on, rethink, and act on our practice.

My experiences may, of course, represent an extreme case, but most school teachers in India, who I know, also have negative recollections of the learning opportunities they are provided by their schools or the Government. Recent research as well confirms that teacher professional learning approaches in India have not changed (Bolitho & Padwad, 2012; Subhita, 2018). I still hear similar anecdotes, like those above, about the sessions teachers are made to attend, and their lack of relevance to the teachers' actual professional practice. Although the above are anecdotes drawn from my professional

and mainly limited experiences, they do point to the various inadequacies in the quality of teacher professional learning in India. They also suggest the need to examine the ways that can be improved. What can be done within the complexities of the Indian system of education? Is it possible to learn from the experiments that have been attempted in various isolated cases within India and elsewhere, with a more extensive range of resources? How generalizable are such experiments in the broader context of the Indian system of education? In what ways might the use of new technologies enable new possibilities? What are the possibilities of transnational professional learning networks? These questions lie at the heart of this thesis.

The idea that the quality of teacher professional learning in Indian schools is characterized by unevenness, both with respect to content and opportunities, is not contested. Most teachers in unaided private schools in India are not given any opportunities for professional learning, according to the District Information System for Education [DISE] survey 2010–2011 (Mehta, 2012). According to a report by the Justice Verma Commission (2012), teacher professional learning programs, which are established, managed, and funded by the Indian Government, only cater to Government-aided schools, as the Government has deemed that it is the unaided schools' responsibility to look after the learning needs of their own teachers. This unevenness in opportunities does not only affect the status of the teaching profession in India; inevitably, it also impacts the quality of education (Verma Commission, 2012). The Commission insists that if the quality of education in India is to improve, the quality of and accessibility to teacher professional learning opportunities must improve.

The possibilities of reform with respect to teacher professional learning in India might be found in reflecting on what research reveals about how teachers learn and grow effectively, and in considering and attempting innovative ways to organize the practices of teacher professional learning (Singh, 2013; Subitha, 2018). These attempts may draw on how adult learning is theorized, around notions of collaborative learning, and learning through ongoing reflections on new experiences (Day & Sachs, 2004;

Hargreaves & Fullan, 2013). It might as well consider the dilemmas of teaching and the demands of the teaching profession, that school teachers often face in India, especially in a rapidly changing world, in which the potential uses of technology and the transnational flows of educational ideas feature prominently in educational reforms (British Council, 2015; Chattopadhyay, 2013; Government of India [GoI], 2019; Padwad & Dixit, 2014; Prince & Barrett, 2014).

In recent years, the use of professional learning networks and communities has been promoted worldwide as having a generally positive role to play in teacher professional learning, compared to the more traditional means, such as trainer-led workshops and large-scale conferences (Lima, 2010; Trotman, 2009). Moreover, the possibilities for teachers to learn collaboratively through online professional learning networks have also been proposed widely in the literature (Trust, 2012, 2013; Trust, Krutka, & Carpenter, 2016). In India, these possibilities are new, though there is a growing recognition of an international research base that supports the use of new technologies for teacher professional learning. Moreover, not long ago, I had heard stories of school networks in India that shared ideas and strategies for school improvement, where teachers were engaged in planning meaningful, creative, and useful professional learning activities, where they teamed up with their colleagues to learn together, where they encouraged each other to become bolder in realizing their professional needs and interests. And, of course, more recently, education resources and ideas are widely shared on social media. Nevertheless, most of these initiatives are known to be informally organized in India, often without the support of educational authorities (Bolitho & Padwad, 2012). Moreover, systematic thinking and research about such approaches remain a distant reality.

The major concern with most officially prescribed and organized professional development programs and practices for school teachers in India is that they undervalue the importance of teacher autonomy and teacher collaboration that should characterize the practice of teacher professional learning and professional practice (Singh, 2013;

Subitha, 2018). Time and again, research studies worldwide have emphasized that teachers are lifelong learning professionals who learn in and from diverse mediums, by adopting new approaches and using new opportunities within various contexts (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Darling-Hammond, Hyler, & Gardner, 2017; Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009; Opfer & Pedder, 2011). Yet, most programs in India continue to be outdated and lack the opportunities for teachers to interact, network, and lead their learning, as part of their professional work (Bolitho & Padwad, 2012; Verma Commission, 2012). Throughout my professional experiences, I found, in particular, that collaborative networks, whether formal or informal, have the potential to support teaching and learning practices. As such, I consider that every endeavor to understand the use of these networks for teacher professional learning in India is worthwhile and may help to shed light on the numerous possibilities and challenges. The intersection of my mainly negative experiences of professional learning as a school teacher in India and the general lack of quality teacher professional learning practices in Indian schools have led me to consider the emerging potential of teacher professional learning spaces created by transnational connectivity. These spaces have become possible through the use of new Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). This represents the key focus of this study. Throughout this thesis, I seek to find out how transnational learning networks are constituted in Indian schools, and if they have the potential to support teacher professional learning. This chapter presents an overview of the thesis. It begins by explaining the rationale underlying the study, followed by research questions and objectives guiding the research inquiry. It then describes the significance, scope, and limitations of the study. A brief outline of the structure of the thesis is presented at the end of this chapter.

1.2 Rethinking teacher professional learning in India

It is worth noting at the outset of this thesis that the term ‘professional learning’ is progressively overhauling the more common ‘professional development’ in education (Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009). However, in conformity with the literature on teacher professional development and the

‘developmental’ objective of the ‘case’ in this study, the terms ‘teacher professional learning’ and ‘teacher professional development’ are used interchangeably in this thesis.

Teacher professional learning is “the process by which, alone and with others, teachers...acquire and develop critically the knowledge, skills, and emotional intelligence essential to good professional thinking, planning, and practice with children...and colleagues through each phase of their teaching lives” (Day & Sachs, 2004, p. 34). It includes “all-natural learning experiences and those conscious and planned activities which are intended to be of direct or indirect benefit to the individual, group, or school and which contribute...to the quality of education in the classroom” (Day & Sachs, 2004, p. 34). The need for quality professional learning of teachers has been acknowledged the world over with the realization that under the contemporary conditions of rapid changes in the world’s economic, political, social, cultural, and technological structures, teachers also as professionals should renew their knowledge and skills on an ongoing basis (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2011). Consequently, schools, as preparation institutions for the young, are expected to prepare students to live and work in this evolving world (OECD, 2010, 2011). As a result, these pressures are also redefining the professional roles of teachers in India and their teaching-learning responsibilities.

More than ever, India is pegging its development agenda on the provision of quality education. Accordingly, the Indian Government is beginning to realize that one approach to improving education, in light of the above-mentioned changing conditions, is through quality professional learning of teachers. Against these demanding conditions, in recent years, the Government has introduced new reforms and programs for promoting teacher professional learning. However, current models, which are mandated by the Government, are known to be mostly inadequate and insufficient (Batra, 2005; Padwad & Dixit, 2012; Subitha, 2018). This is because the majority of these programs are generic, theoretical, outdated, and large-scale (Bolitho & Padwad, 2012; Prince & Barrett, 2014;

Singh, 2013). Most of these programs have been shown, many times, to have nearly no influence on teacher professional learning and teacher practice. From this perspective, Padwad and Dixit (2012) remark on some of the weaknesses in India's teacher professional learning policies and program:

The current teacher education policies and programs, which apply to the schools in question, seem to be based on a narrow view that reduces CPD [Continuing Professional Development] to infrequent INSET [In-service Education & Training] programs planned and delivered by authorities. Such a restricted view not only excludes informal and voluntary contributions to teacher learning and teachers' desire to learn but also assumes authorities to be the sole provider of CPD, disregarding any possible role for teachers in their own CPD. Probably under the impact of this view, teachers too often seem not to think beyond INSET programs, not to take responsibility for their own development and to rely on external agencies to plan and deliver CPD. (p. 13)

One of the well-documented reasons for the discrepancy between policy rhetoric of teacher professional learning and actual practice is the lack of teacher autonomy. Along these lines, Batra (2005) in her analysis of teacher agency and the professional learning of elementary school teachers in India, comments that "a creeping attitude of resignation" towards teacher professional learning has "become an integral part of state provisioning... This trend has diluted the identity of the teacher as a professional and has led to considerable erosion of faith in the agency of the teacher in bringing about change..." (p. 4352). In this regard, Batra (2014) also notes that:

Policymakers [in India] focus on the teacher as the object of reform rather than institutional cultures and provisions that prepare teachers...on 'training' teachers to perform and become accountable and not on changing the ways in which teachers are prepared and supported, reminiscent of the Fordist discourse on factory workers in the early twentieth century. (S8)

Most of the formal programs of teacher professional development in India rarely assimilate new possibilities around teacher learning with the realities of teacher needs and interests (Bolitho & Padwad, 2012; National Council for Teacher Education [NCTE], 2009). As a consequence, despite major drawbacks in teacher quality, "school teachers continue to be isolated from centres of higher learning and their professional development needs remain unaddressed" (NCTE, 2009, p. 6). Evidently, there is a

general concurrence among researchers in India on the lack of teacher agency in teacher professional learning reforms and practices, as exemplified by Kumar, Dewan, and Subramaniam (2012):

Most pre and in-service programs view teachers as mere agents of the state, and as implementers of curricular and reform directives. Hence they do not directly address the teacher's own conceptions of teaching, learning...gained from her own experience. Thus revisions in pre-service teacher education curricula and in-service modules tend, over the years to acquire 'add-ons' while not aiming to address teachers' beliefs and attitudes at a fundamental level. (p. 157)

Then again, in India's education context, the issues of how the teaching profession is viewed and whether teaching has a professional status or not have been debatable, and this also could be influencing the ways in which teacher professional learning is viewed. It is within this context that Padwad and Dixit's (2012) study explores the different teacher professional learning perceptions of educational stakeholders in the Maharashtra state of India—teachers, head-teachers, school management, students, parents, family members, and education authorities. Their study reveals the “prevalence of numerous 'narrow' versions of CPD with more mismatches than similarities, leading to many problems in CPD thinking and practice” (p.11). Yet, in spite of such narrowness, new expectations from teachers and the demands teaching profession in India are on the rise, mainly due to the intensification of technology and globalization. Discussing the dynamics of the changes in teacher roles and what these changes entail, Padwad and Dixit (2012) observe:

What it means to be a teacher is being redefined under the impact of radical changes in the socioeconomic situation in India, the changing nature of education and the learner and the increasing penetration of information technology. The conventional view of the teacher as an expert transmitting knowledge to students is gradually becoming redundant. The very nature of the teaching profession is undergoing unprecedented changes...The profiles of the learner and the classroom have also radically changed. On a more concrete level, new education policies, curricula, and materials keep bringing regular changes and challenges in teachers' lives and work...In this age of new challenges, demands, and opportunities, CPD assumes even greater importance, because that is the only way teachers can equip themselves to cope with the change. (pp. 13–14)

This short account indicates how most of the formal professional learning programs for school teachers in India are at best insufficient, inadequate, uneven, or, in some cases non-existing. The educational authorities have sought to reform these programs, but with limited success. Indeed, there is a major gap between policy statements and actual practice on the ground. The disparity between the Governmental provisions and its inability to meet the professional learning needs of teachers suggests that new approaches are needed.

At the same time, it is increasingly realized in India that the future of its system of education is linked to the rapidly changing processes associated with globalization (Anand, 2015; Mukherjee, 2015). As Appadurai (1996) explains in his book, *Modernity at large: Cultural dimensions of globalization*, this is happening because boundaries between nations are softening. He points out that "until recently, whatever the force of social change, a case could be made that social life was largely inertial, that traditions provided a relatively finite set of possible lives" (p. 53). He emphasizes that more people in more parts of the world contemplate a broader array of possibilities than ever before. Extensive migrations of people across national boundaries, and boundless exchanges of ideas and information through electronic networks have caused great flows; people, products, and ideas move and move each other around the world. These flows are both global and cultural and move in all directions rather than from just top-down. And because of these possibilities, people can aspire for things they could not have imagined before (Appadurai, 1996). Nevertheless, Appadurai also explains that the prospect to imagine and aspire through the flows of globalization is not the guaranteed pathway to a world of happy endings. But, undoubtedly, globalization is affecting everyone and everything.

Research worldwide advocates that both globalization and transnationalism are shaping the connections and processes associated with the possibilities and challenges facing education. In the discussion on globalization and transnationalism, it is important to take into account the distinction between the two, and also explain the notion of

transnationalism as opposed to globalization. Transnationalism is the “economic, social, and political linkages between people, places, and institutions crossing nation-state borders and spanning the world” (Vertovec, 2009, p. 1). It refers to “multiple ties and interactions linking people or institutions across the borders of nation-states” (Vertovec, 1999, p. 447). “Transnationalism overlaps globalization, but typically has a more limited purview” (Kearney, 1995, p. 548). This view is echoed by Ong (1999), who regards transnationalism as referring to the “cultural specificities of global processes” (p. 4). And while “global processes are largely decentred from specific national territories, and take place in global space, transnational processes are anchored in and transcend one or more nation-states” (Kearney, 1995, p. 548). In the same vein, Grewal (2005) makes a distinction between ‘transnational connectivities’ and ‘globalization’ and insists that “it is more useful to think about the heterogeneous and multiple transnational connectivities that produced various meanings of the term ‘global’” (p. 22). These connectivities are even more present nowadays, with “the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa” (Kearney, 1995, p. 547). In such a reality, the formation of identities is transnational (Appadurai, 1996), and therefore the construction of alliances is transnational as well when local groups situate themselves in globally-informed networks and develop connections in other parts of the world (Kearney, 1995).

In discussing globalization with education, Rizvi and Lingard (2010) observe that globalization is transforming not only social institutions and socio-cultural practices but also creating possibilities to develop a sense of transnational identity and belongingness. Rizvi (2014a) further affirms that transnationalism not only implies the physical movement of people, products, and ideas across borders, but also comprises distinct ways of knowing that are informed by socio-cultural ties and practices, including in education. As a result, several systems of education are recognizing that their teachers must be educated in this global reality so that students are prepared to realize their global imaginations and interests (Trust, 2013; Trust et al., 2016; Varga-Atkins, O’Brien,

Burton, Campbell, & Qualter, 2010). Against this backdrop, some schools have begun to consider how transnational connections might be harnessed to improve the quality of education. In doing so, these schools have considered the processes and rapid changes surrounding globalization and how transnational connections might be forged to develop professional learning programs for teachers (Trust, 2013; Trust et al., 2016).

It is within these changing circumstances that the notions of both globalization and transnationalism have become an important aspect of education policy and practice in numerous educational institutions around the world (Rizvi, 2014a). These considerations suggest profound changes in the social, cultural, and economic structures surrounding educational institutions (Castells, 2010). They also suggest profound changes in the institutional processes and practices to develop the global understanding, technological skills, and problem-solving abilities of teachers and students. Simultaneously, education, in these changing times, has also witnessed the emergence of professional learning networks. Professional learning networks “are uniquely defined systems of interactions made up of people, spaces, and tools that support learning and professional growth” (Krutka, Carpenter, & Trust, 2017, p. 247). Through these networks, members make connections with other members of the network with the specific intent that some type of learning will occur through these connections (Trust et al., 2016). In the area of teacher education, professional learning networks consist of any group(s) of teachers “who engage in collaborative learning with others outside of their everyday community of practice, in order to improve teaching and learning in their school(s) and/or the school system more widely” (Brown & Poortman, 2018, p. 1).

A body of research maintains that the use of professional learning networks, both within and across organizational and national borders, can be effective in supporting teacher professional learning (Baker-Doyle, 2011; Katz & Earl, 2010; Penuel, Sun, Frank, & Gallagher, 2012; Trust, 2012, 2013; Trust et al., 2016; Varga-Atkins et al., 2010; Varga-Atkins, Qualter, & O’Brien, 2009). Apex bodies of education, education ministries,

policymakers, local educational authorities, educational managers, and educational institutions, such as teacher training institutes, schools, colleges, universities, etc., whose foremost role is to provide education, have also been affected by these global trends (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009). They are gradually directing their attention to these networks as a pathway to improve education in schools and across systems of education (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2013; Stoll, 2015). The worldwide interest in professional learning networks can be seen as a part of the fundamental global movement, which Castells (2010) terms as 'informationalism':

In the new informational mode of development, the source of productivity lies in the technology of knowledge generation, information processing, and symbol communication. To be sure, knowledge and information are critical elements in all modes of development, since the process of production is always based on some level of knowledge and in the processing of information. (p. 17)

What is learned and what can be learned by individuals is known to be shaped by the networks in which they are immersed (Castells, 2010). In education, networks are known to provide avenues through which collaborative and coordinated development can be realized by teachers, schools, and systems of education worldwide (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009). Such prodigious changes and possibilities do, needless to say, also set the changes and possibilities of education in India in a new light. With the introduction of global concepts and thinking in education, and within the context of transnational alliances between organizations, major changes in the organizational and stakeholder aspirations have developed an inevitable interconnectedness between education systems (Martin & Raja, 2013; Martin & Wyness, 2013; Rizvi, 2014a; Trust, 2013). This recognition of transnational connectivity has moreover given rise to transnational opportunities for nations, such as India, which are aiming to build their capacity to support teacher professional learning practice. In particular, new advancements in communication technologies seem to present plausible means of achieving quality teacher professional learning through the creation of social learning spaces, such as transnational learning networks. What opportunities for teacher professional learning in India, then do transnational learning networks of teachers open up? And under what

conditions can such opportunities be deployed in the Indian context is explored in this study?

India's education needs are self-evidently enormous, serious, and significant. The nation has over 1.3 million schools and a gross national enrolment of 227 million students taught by about 7.2 million teachers, as revealed by the statistics from the 8th All India Education Survey [AIES] 2009, released by the National Council of Education Research and Training [NCERT]. However, the formal arrangements for meeting teacher professional learning needs, as has already been noted, are often lacking in quality and access. Nevertheless, as professional learning networks are rapidly developed worldwide, India is gradually beginning to show support of this trend to overcome the discrepancies in the current practices of teacher professional learning. The idea of learning networks is for example embodied in NCTE's National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education-2009, which views learners as:

...active participants in their own learning and not as mere recipients of knowledge; need to encourage their capacity to construct knowledge; ensure that learning shifts away from rote methods. Learning is to be viewed as a search for meaning out of personal experiences and knowledge generation as a continuously evolving process of reflective learning. (NCTE, 2009, p. 20)

Given the emerging understanding of teacher professional learning practices in India and against the backdrop of globalization and rapidly advancing technologies, the major premise explored in this study is that the use of transnational networks might have the potential to provide a mechanism in support of reforming the quality of teacher professional learning in India. Thus, this thesis explores whether and in what ways this might be realized. To achieve this research objective, this thesis consists of a qualitative case study of one such transnational teacher professional learning network in India, namely, the Australia-Asia BRIDGE School Partnerships Project.

1.3 The illustrative case

The Australia-Asia BRIDGE School Partnerships Project is an illustrative case of transnational networks for the professional learning of school teachers in India. It is a teacher professional development program, designed and managed by the Asia Education Foundation [AEF]. It is an Australian program, established with funding and support from the Australian Government. It develops and supports teacher learning networks across schools in Asia and Australia. The program provides teacher professional learning through ICT training, teacher-to-teacher partnerships and exchanges, interactive student learning tasks and activities, and teaching-learning materials and resources. It has a blended model of teacher professional learning, which includes both online and face-to-face components: webinars, reciprocal in-country workshops (in Australia and Asia), school visits, and homestays for teachers. The duration of the program is one year. It was launched in India in 2015 and connected teachers from eight Australian and eight Indian schools. In 2016, the program established an additional eight Australia-India school partnerships. As a component of the program, the BRIDGE team pairs up one teacher from each BRIDGE participating school in India with a teacher from a BRIDGE partner school in Australia. The BRIDGE teachers and/or schools in India are required to bear some of the costs for participation.

Based on the assumptions of qualitative approach, this research is based on a case study (Stake, 1995, 2000, 2005) of the BRIDGE program in eight BRIDGE participating schools in the Delhi region of India. It seeks to find out how teachers from these schools approached their involvement in the BRIDGE program, the perceptions they had of its possibilities and challenges, and how they regarded the program's potential for the professional development of teachers from other schools in India. The case study participants included primary and secondary school teachers and principals. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and examination of relevant documents. This exploratory study has two main aims. Firstly, it explores the teachers' and principals' expectations of the BRIDGE program. In doing so, it looks at their perceptions,

beliefs, assumptions, and motivations towards the program. It should be noted however that this study does not aim to compare or contrast the teachers' and principals' perceptions. The goal is to explore these perceptions, not purposefully look for similarities and discrepancies. The aim is to obtain the views and perceptions of teachers and principals, respectively, on the teachers' participation in the program. While the main focus of this study is teacher professional learning, it needs to be recognized that principals play a major role in teacher participation in such programs, in facilitating, encouraging, and mentoring them. Secondly, the study explores the teachers' experiences of the program. It also views the dynamics of their expectations and experiences against the socio-cultural context of their schools, stakeholders, and the communities they serve. In this way, it aims to identify the ways in which the program worked for the teachers within the contexts of their classrooms and schools. In the processes of achieving the above-mentioned aims and objectives, this study attempts to identify possible factors and conditions that shape the potential of transnational networks, such as the BRIDGE program, to support the quality of and access to teacher professional learning opportunities in India.

1.4 Research questions

The main research question of this study is: *What is the potential of transnational learning networks for teacher professional learning in India?* To explore this general question, it is necessary to ask: (1) What are teachers' perceptions about professional learning? (2) What are teachers' and principals' expectations of transnational learning networks? (3) How do teachers describe their experiences of transnational learning networks? (4) In what ways do teachers view their experiences of transnational networks as the means of meeting their professional learning needs? (5) What are the factors and conditions that shape the potential of transnational networks for teacher professional learning?

In an attempt to address these general questions, this study uses the Australia-Asia BRIDGE School Partnerships Project as an illustrative case of a transnational professional

learning network for school teachers in India. Accordingly, it seeks to: (1) explore the professional learning perceptions of teachers from BRIDGE participating schools in India; (2) describe the BRIDGE-based expectations of the teachers and principals; (3) account for the teachers' experiences of the BRIDGE program; (4) determine possible factors and conditions that facilitated or inhibited the potential of the BRIDGE program for the professional learning of teachers involved in the study.

The significance of this study lies not only in the attempt to address the challenges and possibilities of transnational networks for teacher professional learning in India but also fill the gaps in related research, which is at best, scant. The study investigates the potential of these networks in the Indian context. In this regard, this study is timely as the use of transnational networks is still in their early stages of emerging in India. The study is an in-depth, localized and contextual understanding of the Australia-Asia BRIDGE School Partnerships Project in India as an illustrative case. It seeks to understand if and how the quality of teacher professional learning in India can be improved through programs, such as BRIDGE. It aims to understand how teachers in India experienced and interpreted their participation in a transnational professional development program. However, the focus is not just on the case, namely the BRIDGE program, but also on teachers' expectations and experiences of the case.

It is important to also mention that this study mainly constitutes the participants' hopes and understandings of a transnational professional development program. This focus of the study aligns with several studies on the impact of professional development, which suggest that before looking at how and in what ways it contributes to student learning outcomes, one has to consider the teachers; their perceptions, expectations, and experiences (OECD, 2009, 2011; Opfer & Pedder, 2011; Yates, 2007). These studies advocate that it is imperative to first hear from those on the receiving end of a learning approach, that is the teachers, and know their views. This study does not measure or evaluate the effectiveness of the BRIDGE program. Neither does it examine whether the teachers' participation in the program improved their teaching practices in the

classroom nor does it assess whether their experiences of the program had an impact on their students' learning outcomes. It neither evaluates nor judges the teachers' participation in the program, but rather it is interested in their perceptions of what worked and how, and what did not work and why. It describes in detail the participants' understandings, interpretations, and reflections on the program. However, it does not postulate a comparison of differences across their perspectives and experiences. Moreover, the study does not attempt to reach conclusions beyond the single case (the BRIDGE program). Its focus is on the expectations and experiences of the participants against the backdrop of their schools' contextual conditions. It thus seeks to understand how school teachers in India feel about participating in transnational professional learning networks, the factors that possibly steer their participation, what potential benefits they derive from them, and what possibilities they envisage such networks have for the professional learning of teachers in India more broadly.

This case study aims to understand the potential of transnational networks for the professional learning of teachers from a specific context, which is the urban Delhi region of India. All the insights from this study are therefore not generalizable to all schools or all teachers. It is situated within a specific context, examining in rich detail the expectations and experiences of a small number of teachers and their participation in a particular transnational professional development program. The inquiry is limited to BRIDGE teachers from eight schools in Delhi that participated in the BRIDGE program. The representation and interpretation of the data are therefore localized and highly contextual. While the research strategy can be applied in other contexts and some of the insights can be transferable to other contexts, specific insights may be unique to the environment studied. Moreover, although some insights can also be gained about Australian teachers participating in the program, the focus is on teachers in India who were involved in this study. It is not intended that the insights are generalizable to all BRIDGE participating schools in other regions of India or necessarily transferable to other participating schools across the globe. However, an exploration of the factors and conditions that possibly influenced the schools' participation in the program, the

teachers' experiences of the program, and their perceptions of the program's potential to support their professional learning, may well have application as a framework for investigating the factors and conditions that may be present in other settings. Insights derived from this study might be transferable to similar schools or similar contexts, when considering the use of transnational networks, such as the BRIDGE program, for teacher professional learning.

1.5 Structure of the thesis

The thesis is organized into 8 chapters. Chapter 1 has introduced the purpose of the study and explained its aims, significance, and limitations. Chapter 2 is the background of the study. This chapter first describes the background of teacher professional learning in India. It reflects on its history and its more recent reforms. A variety of different types of issues are identified and the causes behind them are explained. The chapter maps the current situation of teacher professional learning in India to see if any new opportunities and possibilities have been considered and implemented. It then goes on to provide some recent examples of local and global teacher professional learning networks in India.

Chapter 3 is a review of related literature. This chapter looks at the factors and conditions that shape the professional learning of teachers. It also reviews scholarly literature on the prospects of online professional learning networks and identifies key issues and elaborates on key enablers. Several themes that emerged from the literature base reviewed, such as the changing nature and core features of teacher professional learning, and teachers' motivation towards it, are also discussed. The chapter also looks at the nature of globalization and its implications for teacher professional learning. Then, the review focus narrows to discuss literature on teacher professional learning within the specific context of transnational networks. This chapter develops a detailed conceptual framework that guides the design of the methodology and data of the study.

Chapter 4 is research methodology. The chapter outlines the methodological and epistemological underpinnings of this study, which are qualitative and interpretive. It explains the qualitative case study approach chosen, and why this approach suits the aims. It describes the case, namely the Australia-Asia BRIDGE School Partnerships Project. It gives a brief overview of the type of schools selected. It also explains how the schools were selected and how the research participants were identified. It describes the research instruments that were used for data collection; semi-structured interviews with teachers and principals, observations, and analysis of documents within and around the BRIDGE program, which were maintained by the BRIDGE schools. It also explains how data were analyzed and identifies ethical considerations in the context of the study.

Chapter 5, 'Expectations', presents the data based on teachers' and their principals' expectations of the BRIDGE program, followed by a discussion on their perceptions about teacher professional learning, and the teachers' motivations for participation in the program and any pre-participation hopes and doubts they had. It elucidates and synthesizes the possible factors and conditions that influenced their expectations of the program and why. These factors and conditions are noted as having a potential effect on the teachers' choice to participate in the program. The chapter mainly determines the reasons for their participation and the benefits that the program was perceived to offer.

Chapter 6, 'Experiences', presents the data based on the teachers' self-reported experiences of the BRIDGE program, followed by a discussion on any challenges they faced during their participation and the benefits they believed to have derived from it. It explores the factors and conditions that facilitated and/or inhibited their learning experiences of the program. By focusing on these dynamics, the section also draws attention to the teachers' implicit and explicit choices, and the interpretations of their learning experiences of the program and why.

Chapter 7, 'Possibilities', presents the data based on the teachers' and principals' perceptions about the future of transnational programs, such as BRIDGE, in India. It looks at the possibilities of transnational networks for teacher professional learning in the broader context of India's system of school education. It also describes the contextual factors and conditions that may be conducive to realize the potential of these networks in Indian schools. The final chapter provides an overview of the research, as well as a general discussion of key insights, implications for practice, limitations of the study, and suggestions for further research.

Chapter 2

BACKGROUND

2.1 Introduction

An education system is only as good as its teachers. Unlocking their potential is essential to enhancing the quality of learning. Education quality improves when teachers are supported—it deteriorates if they are not. (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2014a, p. i)

The importance of teacher professional learning is now globally acknowledged. It is noted that “no matter how good pre-service training for teachers is, it cannot be expected to prepare teachers for all the challenges they will face throughout their careers” (OECD, 2009, p. 49). As a multi-faceted and ongoing experience, which ranges from formal to informal, structured to unstructured, and individual to collective, professional learning can occur within or beyond the teachers’ workplace, and often takes place beyond their professional and into the realm of their personal lives (Hayes, 2014). In its worldwide survey report, based on the Teaching and Learning International Survey [TALIS] of 90,000 school teachers and principals in 23 countries, the OECD identifies teacher professional learning as:

...activities that develop an individual’s skills, knowledge, expertise, and other characteristics as a teacher. This definition recognizes that development can be provided in many ways, ranging from the formal to the informal. It can be made available through external expertise in the form of courses, workshops, or formal qualification programs, through collaboration between schools or teachers across schools or within the schools in which teachers work. (p. 49)

The global trend in professional development appears to be towards improving the quality of teacher professional learning, following what Hargreaves (1994) calls “the intensification of teaching”, a phenomenon in which “rapid shifts in the nature of work ensue from, among other factors, Government-driven waves of reform and restructuring” (cited in Zipin, 2002, p. 2). Professional learning is thus widely acknowledged to have “a powerful effect on teacher skills and knowledge and on student learning” (Wei et al., 2009, p. 7). Opportunities to learn can help teachers to evaluate their own and their students’ learning outcomes, and address the changes

needed in the teaching and learning practices in their schools, as well as their communities. Given that, Wei et al. (2009) comment that:

Educators and policymakers increasingly recognize the importance of providing high-quality learning opportunities to help transform teaching. As students are expected to learn more complex analytical skills in preparation for further education and work in the 21st century, teachers must learn to teach in ways that develop higher-order thinking and performance. Ensuring student success requires a new kind of teaching, conducted by teachers who understand learning and pedagogy, who can respond to the needs of their students and the demands of their disciplines, and who can develop strong connections between students' experiences and the goals of the curriculum. Efforts to improve student achievement can succeed only by building the capacity of teachers to improve their instructional practice and the capacity of school systems to promote teacher learning. (Wei et al., 2009, p. 7)

Teacher professional learning has always been important, but has acquired greater significance within the context of major advancements in technology, and demands that teachers must develop their knowledge and skills in consonance with these advancements. Moreover, as recent innovations in communication technologies have created possibilities of collaboration in almost all spheres of life, their use in education is opening up new possibilities of sharing ideas and learning from and with a worldwide community. Pedagogical reforms and approaches around the world now focus largely on teachers' effective use of technology in the classroom (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Huang, 2016). UNESCO (2014b) explains why education systems around the world increasingly promote technology-oriented teaching and learning agendas:

The opportunities offered by developments such as Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and the knowledge revolution, increasing capacity for innovation and closer global cooperation for overcoming obstacles to progress have never been greater...Technology supports cost-effective delivery of both basic and higher education, widens access, improves quality, and aids in teacher training and professional development. It can play a central role in developing skills needed in the 21st century and improving access to lifelong learning opportunities. (pp. 9 & 14)

Hargreaves (1994) has argued that the ‘intensification of teaching’ has inevitably resulted in the need to pay greater attention to teacher professional learning and also consider its new forms (Hayes, 2014). While in the past, teacher professional learning was viewed worldwide as important for mainly improving the quality of teaching and student learning (Meiers & Ingvarson, 2005), it is now also seen as critical in providing teachers with the means to deal with the major changes in the demands and expectations placed upon them due to the developments in technology and rise of globalization (Trust, 2013; Trust et al., 2016). Learning to function in these new contexts as a teacher and as a learner is being recognized by education ministries worldwide, and is the typical requirement being seen in education systems, as noted by the European Union (2009):

Demands on the teaching profession are evolving rapidly, imposing the need for new approaches. To be fully effective in teaching, and capable of adjusting to the evolving needs of learners in a world of rapid social, cultural, economic, and technological change, teachers themselves need to reflect on their own learning requirements in the context of their particular school environment, and to take greater responsibility for their own lifelong learning as a means of updating and developing their own knowledge and skills. (p. 8)

It goes without saying that teacher roles and responsibilities are becoming steadily redefined in several ways. As one of the consequences, teachers are expected to teach in culturally diverse and dynamic classrooms and also make more effective use of technologies in teaching. In this context, “the role and functioning of schools are changing and so is what is expected of teachers” (OECD, 2009, p. 49). The OECD (2011) also notes that “those who are now teaching [are expected to] adapt to constantly changing demands in order to prepare students to play their part in societies which seem to be evolving at a faster rate than ever before in human history” (p. 17). These trends and expectations also appear to influence new considerations for the teaching profession, including teacher professional learning. Indeed, as Darling-Hammond, Hyler, and Gardner (2017) point out:

As demands for deeper and more complex student learning have intensified, practitioners, researchers, and policymakers have begun to think more systematically

about how to improve teachers' learning from recruitment, preparation, and support, to mentoring and other leadership opportunities. Sophisticated forms of teaching are needed to develop 21st century student competencies, such as deep mastery of challenging content, critical thinking, complex problem solving, effective communication and collaboration, and self-direction. In turn, opportunities are needed for teachers to learn and refine the pedagogies required to teach these skills. (p. 1)

The processes of globalization and the changes associated with it are also believed to have created new demands and expectations in the Indian school education system. In these changing environments, the Government's most recent National Education Policy Draft (2019) also acknowledges that students need new opportunities to keep up with the changing demands and expectations of an increasingly globally-integrated society and professional workforce:

Globalization and the demands of a knowledge economy and a knowledge society call for emphasis on the need for acquisition of new skills by learners on a regular basis, for them to 'learn how to learn' and become lifelong learners. The narrow time lag between the generation of new knowledge and its application, especially in the fields of science and technology, necessitate the periodic renewal of school and higher education curricula to maintain their relevance to the changing societal and personal needs of learners... (Gol, 2019, p. 27)

These changes have led to India's education system becoming more focused on improving the quality of education by improving the quality of teacher professional learning. Of course, it should be noted that, over the past five decades, the Indian Government has introduced many reforms to improve teacher professional learning. These have, however, been limited in scope and uneven in quality. Many critics (Bolitho & Padwad, 2012; Singh, 2013; Subitha, 2012) have stated that professional development remains an often-neglected aspect of India's education system. As I have already noted, most teacher professional learning programs have been proven to be irrelevant and ineffective, time and again, the Government's policies and reforms have met limited success (Batra, 2005; Sriprakash, 2011). This limited success of formal professional development programs in India raises questions and the need to consider the potential of transnational interventions for teacher professional learning.

This study is an exploration of one such intervention, namely the Australia-Asia BRIDGE Schools Partnerships Project, to support the quality of and access to teacher professional learning in India. This chapter is organized as follows: It reviews the previous attempts made by the Government of India to reform teacher professional learning. It presents the factors that have affected these reforms and goes on to explain other factors at play in the limited success they have had. It then maps the current situation of teacher professional learning in India. It also looks at the effects of the growth of privatization of teacher education, and its impact on the quality of teachers and the teaching profession. The chapter highlights the growing interest in collaborative teacher professional learning and professional learning networks. It concludes with an account of the ways in which such networks are now being used in India, albeit quite unevenly and insufficiently.

2.2 Reforms in teacher professional learning in India

In India, the importance of the ‘teacher’ was recognized by the Education Commission as early as 1964–66, which emphasized that “of all the factors that influence quality of education...the quality, competence, and character of teachers is undoubtedly the most significant”. The Commission, popularly known as the Kothari Commission, which was set up by the Government of India and chaired by D. S. Kothari, recommended “securing a sufficient supply of high quality recruits to the teaching profession” by developing the professional status of teachers, “providing them with the best possible professional preparation”, and “creating satisfactory conditions of work” (GoI, 1966, Ch. 3, Sec. 3.01). Recognizing the need for ongoing professional learning of teachers, it called for “the organization of a large scale, systematic, and coordinated program of in-service education, so that every teacher would be able to receive at least two or three months of in-service education in every five years of service” (GoI, 1966, Ch. 4, Para. 4.56). As part of decentralizing teacher education and introducing relevant teacher training reforms in the nation, District Institutes of Education and Training [DIETs] were organized and established; Cluster Resource Centres [CRCs] were set up in every block for offering academic support to teachers of schools within their blocks. This was an ambitious

program that could not be fully implemented due to limited funds (Sriprakash, 2011; Subitha, 2018).

Just the same, following the Kothari Commission Report, the National Commission on Teachers (1983–85) maintained that what teachers need most was a change in the climate of schools, an atmosphere conducive to educational research and professional inquiry. It recommended the establishment of teacher centres as meeting places for sharing professional development resources in the workshop mode. Resource persons were recommended to come from diverse backgrounds, such as university professors, industry professionals, and practicing teachers (Gol, 1966). In 1986, the National Policy on Education [NPE] (1986) made a strategic attempt to break the separation between initial teacher education and teacher professional learning by considering both as equally crucial phases of a continuous process of the teaching profession. It emphasized that teachers should have the freedom to innovate, to use appropriate methods of communication, to experiment with pedagogical approaches and activities relevant to their learning needs, to develop their capabilities to meet the demand and concerns of the society (NPE, 1986).

More recently, the National Curriculum Framework [NCF] 2005, advocated reforms for “connecting knowledge to life outside the school, ensuring that learning is shifted away from rote methods...to provide for overall development of children rather than remain textbook-centric” (NCERT, 2005, p. 5). To a large extent, this framework was effective in changing the views on education throughout the system. With the NCF-2005, teachers became more receptive to the idea that their teaching and learning approaches need to change fundamentally (Kumar et al., 2012). The most recent National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education [NCFTE] 2009, a milestone reform document by the NCTE, states that “the whole approach to teachers’ professional needs continues to be determined, planned, implemented, and monitored extrinsically, compromising on the concept of the teacher as a professional and with little or no basis for the design of the interventions” (NCTE, 2009, p. 64). It further explains that:

Currently, all these trainings...are all based on directions which are issued to teachers to attend these trainings, without giving teachers any choice in the matter. Finally, there is no coordination between these agencies, nor does the education department have any mechanism for coordinating the total training being undergone by teachers, with the result there is a lot of over-training, repetition, and overlap. In this situation, it is necessary to conceive ways in which teachers can opt for different kinds of trainings, based on their interest and requirement, and along with the recommendation of school supervisors. (NCTE, 2009, pp. 70–71)

The NCFTE-2009 reform document suggests that the issues of pre-service and in-service teacher education can be addressed through the processes of sharing and reflection for teacher learning. It stipulates reflective practice as the central tenet of teacher education. In restating and explaining the previous recommendations for initial teacher education, the NCFTE-2009 also puts forth that the broad aims of teacher professional learning are to:

- Explore, reflect on, and develop one's own practice;
- Deepen one's knowledge of and update oneself about one's academic discipline or other areas of school curriculum;
- Research and reflect on learners and their education;
- Understand and update oneself on educational and social issues;
- Prepare for other roles professionally linked to education/teaching, such as teacher education, curriculum development, or counseling;
- Break out of intellectual isolation and share experiences and insights with others in the field, both teachers and academics working in the area of specific disciplines as well as intellectuals in the immediate and wider society. (NCTE, 2009, pp. 64–65)

The NCFTE-2009 also notes that some general principles related to pedagogical content and approach need to be considered during the designing and implementation of professional learning programs. These include:

- Programs must build on the principle of creating 'spaces' for sharing of experiences of communities of teachers among themselves, to build stronger shared professional basis of individual experiences and ideas.
- All programs must find acceptance of their aims with the teachers' group concerned, regarding whether they need such a program and why they are to attend it.
- The content of programs must be such that teachers can relate to it from their own experience and also find opportunities to reflect on these experiences.

- Any in-service program, whether it attempts to seek new ideas, challenge existing notions and assumptions, or simply provide content knowledge, needs to acknowledge and respect this professional identity and knowledge of the teacher, and work with and from it.
- Any effort to strengthen teachers' professional practice must equally respect them as professionals. This includes matters of training in content and approach, how trainings are announced, and how they are implemented.
- The practice of a teacher cannot be developed through quick-fix strategies and activities, without the development of an accompanying framework/theory on the process of learning and the aims of education. Over-training, routinized, and superficial training leads to cynicism and training fatigue. (NCTE, 2009, pp. 66–67)

The NCFTE-2009 also proposes a constructivist approach to the teaching and learning process. It acknowledges that schools need to respond to the broader social, cultural, economic, and political changes taking place in the country and recommends teacher professional learning models that are self-guided, self-paced, followed-up, and ongoing. It emphasizes that “equally important and significant is the participation of teachers in teacher networks, school-based networks, school twinning partnerships, and union networks. Participation in such activities should be encouraged as a valid form of in-service development of teachers” (NCTE, 2009, p. 69). The NCTE promotes the use of shared learning spaces to support reflective practice for teacher professional learning. In this regard, the NCFTE-2009 document states that such an initiative should address:

...the integrative and eclectic nature of teacher education; its liberal, humanistic and non-didactic underpinnings; its multicultural and context-sensitive facets; the necessity for it to be transacted in a diversity of learning spaces and curriculum sites apart from the classroom; and, most importantly, reflective practice to be its chief aim. (Pickering & Gunashekar, 2014, pp. 9–10)

The NCTE develops and manages professional learning programs for Government-aided school teachers throughout India, with the assistance of State and District Level institutes and training centres. The Government has made considerable efforts to make education more accessible, inquiry-based, student-centred, and democratic in values and ideals. As a consequence, it has introduced many reforms over the decades and shown policy support towards improving the quality of teacher professional learning. However, the realities on the ground paint a different picture.

2.3 The limited success of teacher professional learning reforms

The Central and State Governments' initiatives to reform teacher professional learning in India clearly indicate that the Government recognizes the role of teachers in improving the quality of education and has promoted teacher professional learning as an integral part of their efforts to reform the school education system. However, the visions and recommendations of these reforms have remained largely unimplemented and unattainable in actual teacher professional practice. Bolitho and Padwad (2012) note that "policy statements and traditional ways of thinking among decision-makers still fail to take account of CPD as a broad-based set of options, which may be driven by teachers' evolving professional needs rather than by imposed priorities" (p. 145). Similarly, Batra (2005) observes that the central question the NCF-2005 sidesteps is: "How do you enable critical thinking and meaning-making among children (the aim of the NCF) with a teacher who has not been through such a process herself?" (p. 4350). It also has been widely contended that most of these reforms view teachers as "mere agents of the State, and as implementers of curricular and reform directives" (Kumar et al., p. 157). Moreover, "there is very little clarity about what change really amounts to in terms of classroom teaching and learning, and schools and teachers look for help as they try to interpret the message of the new curriculum framework" (Kumar et al., 2012, p. 153). The main reason for this lack of clarity, Sriprakash (2011) reflects, is that although the policy documents consider teachers as crucial for the functioning and sustainability of educational reforms, teachers are mostly kept away from policy-making processes in India. As Sriprakash (2011) explains:

All too often, policy and research discourse positions teachers as agents of social change, as implementers of program directives, without consideration of the ways in which teachers are differently positioned in their work and lives, positions that are sometimes at odds with reform ideals. (p. 7)

The reforms also appear to have a narrow vision of teachers' learning needs, which are based on their work contexts and cultures (Batra, 2005). They do not address issues of teacher knowledge, beliefs and attitudes, and teacher professional identity, autonomy

and practice in a comprehensive manner (Kumar et al., 2012; Subitha, 2018). This narrow vision restricts the actual role of the teacher “to a mere object of educational reform or worse a passive agent of the prevailing ideology of the modern State” (Batra, 2005, p. 4347). Discussing the hierarchical structure of the nation’s education system, Padwad and Dixit (2012) remark that generally, “schools in India operate within an expert culture in the sense that teachers are expected to follow the advice of experts and authorities, and not to rely on their own knowledge and skills” (p. 12). Therefore, it is often the case that for the majority of teacher professional learning programs, “the planning, decision-making and implementation of CPD activities are usually the prerogative of ‘high-powered’ committees consisting of a few senior academic experts and educational bureaucrats, who usually stick to the policy guidelines already in place” (Padwad & Dixit, 2014, p. 251). School managers too more or less tend to be reluctant or believe themselves to be powerless (in many cases due to the restrictions of Central/State regulations) to encourage any undertaking of teacher professional learning outside those directed by the Governments (Bolitho & Padwad, 2012).

In this way, teachers in India are often known to work in conditions of very limited autonomy and agency for their professional learning (Padwad & Dixit, 2014). Moreover, “policy documents in India do not identify the role of school principals in teacher growth and development” (Subitha, 2018, p.85). While teachers’ and principals’ involvement are seldom taken into consideration in the planning and implementation of existing programs and new initiatives, follow-up and program revisions are commonly assumed to be unnecessary, as the initial training is deemed to be complete in itself. The current education system, Subitha (2018) observes, “caters to fixed programs designed to develop particular knowledge and skills considered effective by the administrative department. These programs are developed independently of the participating teachers’ practice and context” (p. 84). Accordingly, reforms have over the years “tend[ed] to acquire ‘add-ons’ while not aiming to address teachers’ beliefs and attitudes at a fundamental level” (Kumar et al., 2012, p. 157). Moreover, “the impact of these trainings still remains to be understood in spite of a massive infrastructure and

investment that went into creating them” (NCERT, 2006, p. 6), such are the inadequacies and unevenness of professional learning opportunities in India.

Furthermore, very few concrete steps have been taken to operationalize teacher professional learning reforms in India (NCERT, 2006). Most of the programs are often found to be highly rudimentary and limited in practice, with the syllabus, learning activities, and resources developed and provided solely by national-level or state-level Government agencies (Bolitho & Padwad, 2012; Prince & Barrett, 2014). These practices include mainly one-off participation in Government-sponsored and mandated training programs, namely the large-scale INSET program, and one-off participation in conferences or seminars conducted by top-down agencies approved by the Centre or State. The Indian Government’s centrally sponsored scheme for in-service teacher education under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan [SSA], referred to as the INSET program, conducts 20 days of annual training for in-service teachers and 30 days of orientation training for newly recruited teachers. The program, although mandatory and long-established in Government-aided schools, is known to have no coordination between the designated agencies, which provide such training, nor does the education department have any systems in place to get feedback from the teachers and improve the program (NCTE, 2009). Discussing the drawbacks of the INSET program, Padwad and Dixit (2012) remark:

Only officially sanctioned INSET training programs and courses receive recognition and support, while other forms of CPD activities such as attending conferences, acquiring add-on qualifications, or forming support groups are neither recognized nor supported. This restricted view of CPD does not recognize that different individuals are likely to have different needs and interests in CPD. Large-scale common INSET training does not usually meet individual needs and differing contexts. The standard INSET training programs, based on this view, lack relevance because their content is externally determined, with practicing teachers having no involvement in their design or delivery. (p. 13)

In a highly diverse and complex system of education in India, critics rightly regard the use of a one-size-fits-all INSET program for teacher professional learning as ineffective and unsuitable. The INSET program is one of the few learning avenues provided to

millions of teachers; the nature, structure, and content of which is more or less insufficient and inappropriate, as reported in the NCFTE-2009 document. As I have already pointed out, the program provides only 20 days of in-service teacher training in a year, which is mainly workshop-based and large-scale. It is often planned and conducted on the basis of managerial rhetoric and convenience, sometimes driven by the demand to make use of the Government-allotted funds and resources (MHRD, 2009). Moreover, there are no well-defined processes and teacher awareness about what needs to be done in the training and how it is to be done. It appears that little thought goes into the planning, design, and outcomes of these training programs (Bolitho & Padwad, 2012). The Indian Government also recognizes the inadequacies of teacher professional learning reforms and programs. The National Education Policy Draft (2016) states:

In spite of the continued efforts for improving teacher quality and performance, the system for initial professional preparation and continuing professional development of school teachers continue to be characterized by several deficiencies. The current teacher education and training programs are considered inappropriate in terms of equipping the teachers with the competencies required to cope with the new profile and roles expected of teachers and to enable them to carry out their duties in diverse social, economic, cultural, and technological environments. (GoI, 2016, p. 9)

The lack of quality teacher professional learning opportunities in India is in line with the poor perceptions about the teaching profession. In India, teaching is not valued greatly as a profession that requires intensive and innovative opportunities for learning and growth, in contrast to other esteemed professions, such as engineering, law, and medicine (Bolitho & Padwad, 2012). Nearly five decades ago, policy documents in education portrayed an image of the teaching profession that was noble and for the service of society (Kale, 1970). They described teachers as professionals, aware of the demands and expectations placed on them, confident in their knowledge, and understanding of what was best for their schools and students, with much autonomy to do what they considered best in educational matters; professionals who were better paid, respected, and valued. While this characterization may be somewhat exaggerated, the reality now is that teachers in India are often assumed to be people of an average

academic achievement, who have taken up this profession as a last option because of a lack of other possibilities; who have received their teacher education degrees from private unrecognized colleges; who give out-of-school-hours coaching for supplementary income; who are suppressed by bureaucratic management and assessment agencies; who are trapped within an inflexible standardization of curriculum and examinations, leaving no possibility of teacher autonomy and professional freedom; and who belong to a profession that does not provide the income, insurance, and security they need (Batra, 2005; Bolitho & Padwad, 2012; Kale, 1970; Subitha, 2018).

There are further challenges observed in the implementation of teacher professional learning programs in India, such as inadequate infrastructure, lack of sufficient funds, and negative attitudes still exist among some schools and teachers to adopt new practices, methods, and technologies (Bolitho & Padwad, 2012; Khambayat, 2015). In this context, planning and providing learning programs that are irrelevant to and isolated from teachers' professional needs and work contexts can further affect the professionalization of teachers (Batra 2005), and consequently affect the quality of school education (GoI, 2016). This can be unfavorable to the Government's vision for teacher development and to its attempts to reform education. Even though India has made notable reforms in teacher professional learning to this end, the actual practices in the nation need revisiting, more so with the unevenness of these programs.

2.4 Uneven state of teacher professional learning in India

The state of teacher professional learning in India has not improved in nearly five decades since Kale (1970) pointed out the intensity of the problem. Ramachandran (2005) notes that although teacher professional learning programs were initiated as early as the 1960s in India, in most cases they are neither planned well nor cater to teachers' needs and interests; and mostly remain an obligatory practice for the teachers, in contrast to developmental practice. As Padwad and Dixit (2012) suggest:

CPD of teachers is largely controlled by the school administration in the sense that schools have a strong say in what CPD activities teachers may be allowed (and supported) to undertake. Schools are usually indifferent to, and sometimes even discourage, CPD activities which teachers undertake on their own. Common CPD activities include participation in State-sponsored and mandated INSET programs and occasionally participating in workshops, conferences, or seminars organized by agencies other than the State...Teachers are supposed to work as 'just teachers' who should do what others like experts, principals, and educational authorities say...Therefore, teachers seem to be unaware of their potential to develop professionally. (p. 12)

The condition of teacher professional learning in India largely appears to endure a dual problem. In most cases, school managers and administrators rarely support practices beyond the mandated teacher training programs, and in other cases, many teachers seem to not be receiving any professional learning opportunities at all (Padwad & Dixit, 2012; Khambayat, 2015). According to a survey conducted by the DISE in 2010–2011, only 30% of teachers nationally reported receiving any in-service teacher professional learning in the previous year (Mehta, 2012), and mostly confined to Government-aided schools. The situation is found worse in unaided private schools, where only 1% or 2% of total teachers reported receiving any professional learning opportunity in the previous year (Mehta, 2012).

Similarly, Bandyopadhyay, Umabati, and Zeitlyn (2011) provide an analysis of the teaching-learning practices in 88 schools from two states of India. Their study reveals that although teachers had high levels of academic qualification, very large numbers were untrained as teachers. Inadequate subject competency of teachers also was a major concern, with considerable proportions of very well qualified teachers reported difficulty teaching any subject. This was seen as a serious issue in their study, especially when set against the backdrop of high levels of teacher absenteeism, poor attainment and poor retention, which were all substantial in the participating schools. While many elements can contribute to such a situation, teacher professional learning certainly has a vital role to play (Azam & Kingdon, 2015; Singh & Sarkar, 2012). In view of this, Singh (2013) cautions that “we cannot expect teachers to be effective in such a complex and changing environment unless the aims, content, process, methodology, as well as the

culture of teacher education, undergoes a paradigm shift” (p. 3). Along the same lines, Bandyopadhyay et al. (2011) suggest that improved teacher management systems are needed in Indian schools, with more transparent processes of teacher recruitment and teacher professional learning. The unevenness and inadequacy of opportunities are seen as a major concern in the nation’s education system. And, these systems are often reported to be characterized by low salaries and hectic working conditions for teachers. These conditions can further suppress the quality of and prospects for teacher professional learning (Ramachandran, 2005; Ramachandran, Pal, Jain, Shekar, & Sharma, 2005).

Enabling newly qualified teachers in India with the prospects to learn and grow, and developing the capacity of in-service teachers, is a difficult task. India’s education system is extremely complex with the dilemma of scale and its complicated federal system of educational governance. According to Behar and Mishra (2015), over the past decade, more than 200,000 new teachers qualify each year, and 7.2 million in-service teachers need professional learning opportunities. This is also the period when the low-fee private sector has increasingly dominated the nation’s school education system, where little professional learning opportunities exist. India’s teacher education sector has also been affected by the wave of privatization (Menon & Mathew, 2016). Unaided private initial teacher education institutions have grown rapidly in the country as a “lucrative business proposition” (NCTE, 2009, p. 5). According to an estimate from higher education statistics, in the academic year 2009, there were over 11,000 private institutions of initial teacher education nationwide (NCTE, 2009). This number is impressive. However, “behind the veil of such promising statistics, the learning outcomes of India’s children show little progress” (Knowledge@Wharton, 2013, n.p.). George and Madan (2009) state: “Even the situation of trained teachers is not encouraging. In India, teacher training or college education do not sufficiently equip students (that is, future teachers) to assess children’s needs or imagine how a curriculum should be designed” (p. 32).

The disquieting condition of many initial teacher training institutions in India is revealed more so in recent years, as the majority of graduate teachers who sat for the Central Teacher Eligibility Test [TET]¹ have failed to demonstrate even the most basic knowledge base expected from a teacher (Singh & Sarkar, 2012). Regardless of having obtained a teacher qualification, which is Diploma of Education or Bachelor of Education, out of 785,227 qualified teachers who took the test in 2011, merely 55,422 teachers (only 7 percent) passed the TET. This is substantiated by studies that claim initial teacher education programs in India to be overly theoretical, outdated, and lecture-based (Yadav, 2011).

In 2011, the Supreme Court of India established a high-powered commission, with the late Justice J.S. Verma as the chairperson, to review the country's teacher education system. The Commission suggested a complete overhaul of the system, including its regulatory, institutional, and educational aspects (Verma Commission, 2012). However, beyond its well-meaning recommendations, the Commission did not have the authority to implement changes, especially at the state levels, let alone over federal agencies. In the end, its recommendations had little impact on the system as a whole, despite its status as a legally-directed document (Menon & Mathew, 2016; Sharma, 2016).

Another major issue in India's education system is that many teachers do not undertake any initial teacher training before starting their teaching careers, because it is not a prerequisite for teacher recruitment in many schools, especially in private schools. Every state has its teacher recruitment policies and regulations; largely in line with the national norms and standards with locally applicable adjustments. In general, one needs to complete a bachelor's degree and a two-year initial teacher training degree to be a primary school teacher, and a master's degree and a two-year initial teacher training

¹ Teacher Eligibility Test was introduced by the Government of India in 2011 to improve standards in school teaching. One of the essential qualifications for a person to be eligible for appointment as a Government school teacher for Grade I to VIII in India is that he/she should pass the Teacher Eligibility Test, which is conducted by both Central and State Governments in India, in accordance with the guidelines framed by the National Council for Teacher Education. The test focuses on both pedagogical competence and subject knowledge of the candidate.

degree to become a secondary school teacher in India. While these norms are mostly adhered to in Government-aided schools, in many cases, they are overlooked in unaided private schools (Padwad & Dixit, 2014). It is thus common to find insufficiently or inadequately qualified teachers in India's educational institutions. In 2013, 1.1 million teachers out of 6.5 million teachers across India — including 700,000 in private schools — were found to be untrained (Ministry of Human Resource and Development [MHRD], 2014).

The Indian Government provides funds for teacher professional learning, which only cater to teachers working in Government-aided schools. Teachers employed in unaided private schools are not provided these funds, as the Government has deemed that it is the responsibility of the owners of the schools to provide teachers with the learning opportunities they consider appropriate (Verma Commission, 2012; NCTE, 2009). Even the NCFTE-2009 document notes that “all these trainings [teacher professional development] target only Government and aided schools, leaving all teachers of private schools out of the ambit” (NCTE, 2009, p. 70). Little research exists about the proportion of private school teachers in India who get support for their professional learning needs from the school owners (IDFC Foundation, 2012). Moreover, in low-fee private schools, teacher professional learning is likely to be minimal, while in high-fee private schools, considerable importance is attached to teacher professional learning and greater efforts are made (Singh, & Sarkar, 2012; Subitha, 2018).

2.5 Globalization and new opportunities

The Indian teacher education system functions under several contradictions or tensions which, although clearly apparent in the system, are yet to be resolved. These include: long term perspectives vs. short term gains; planned development vs. adhocism; quality vs. quantity; rigor vs. ease; responsiveness vs. unconcerned; professionalism vs. bureaucracy; dynamism vs. rigidity; mission vs. doing the chore; and integration vs. isolation. Furthermore, new perspectives and opportunities are emerging, which pose enormous challenges for those working in the Indian education system, such as the growing impact of privatization, liberalization, and globalization. (Rajput & Walia, 2001, p. 254)

While many schools have recruited unqualified teachers, while many initial teacher education institutes have been proven to be inadequate and ineffective, and while not much is known about the provisions for the professional learning of teachers in unaided private schools, some schools and teachers have begun to deal with these limitations by seizing upon new opportunities (Muralidharan, 2013; Singh, 2013). These new opportunities to support teacher professional learning in India are driven potentially by many developments, including new technologies and India's growing global links, as well as the growing realization of the complex nature of the issues facing the quality of education and teacher quality (Bolitho & Padwad, 2012). Moreover, it has been suggested that the challenges are typically too great for schools in India to tackle by themselves that the processes of globalization (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010), which involve 'great flows' of people, products, and ideas (Appadurai, 1996), may be able to assist with. Reviewing the constant changes in Indian education due to globalization, Chinnammai (2005) explicates that:

The effects of globalization on education bring rapid developments in technology and communications are foreseeing changes within learning systems across the world as ideas, values, and knowledge, changing the roles of students and teachers, and producing a shift in society from industrialization towards an information-based society. It reflects the effect on culture and brings about a new form of cultural imperialism. The rise of new cultural imperialism is shaping children, the future citizens of the world into 'global citizens', intelligent people with a broad range of skills and knowledge to apply to a competitive, information-based society. Globalization and technological advancements are delivering and increasing access to the world and subsequently, subjects should reflect this global outlook. (n.p.)

Although the new demands of globalization have created many challenges for education in India, the 'great flows' of people, products, and ideas across learning systems around the world have also opened up new opportunities. As a result, policymakers and educational managers in India also are beginning to look beyond the traditional view of the teacher as an expert merely passing on local knowledge to students. Chattopadhyay (2013) notes that teacher roles are also being redefined with the influence of fundamental changes and developments in the socio-economic situations in India,

changes in the nature and function of education, and changes due to the pervasive advances in technology and the Internet. The very disposition of the teaching profession is experiencing extraordinary changes beyond the chalk-and-talk method. On a more concrete level, new education policies, and curriculum and teaching resources to prepare the students with global knowledge and 21st century skills, have created new expectations from teachers (Padwad & Dixit, 2012). With globalization, there has been a fundamental shift in the overall nature and purpose of education, as Oommen (2018) suggests:

Globalization is marching forward rapidly, catering to the global market and ignoring local needs and aspirations. We need not deliberately pursue this perverse process of globalization, but we cannot opt-out of it either...The most important challenge of contemporary education is to envision the creation of students who can combine the roles of [global] citizens, consumers, and communitarians in a balanced way, and to produce knowledge that advances and supports this goal. (p. 19)

New roles and responsibilities of the teachers are being constantly defined and re-defined also because the learning expectations of students are changing in the global age. “The pressures of globalization leading to commercialization in all sectors including education and increasing competition are forcing children into unprecedented situations that they have to cope with” (NCTE, 2009, p. 4). This is also because:

In the context of India, globalization has impacted the education system in complex and conflicting ways. There is an increased emphasis on preparing global citizens who are ready to face the highly competitive world. There is a huge upsurge in the demand for learning English language...[and the] need for curriculum restructuring and inclusion of ICTs...While the basic aims of education are to enable children develop their potentials, define and pursue a meaningful purpose; globalization has put an extra pressure on the education system to create ‘winners’ who are ready to battle in the race for the survival of the fittest. It has led to the preparation of a curriculum that has to be internationally acceptable. (Anand, 2015, pp. 236–237)

Against this emerging background, teachers are therefore expected “to constantly undergo adaptation to meet the needs of diverse contexts through critical reflection ... on his/her practices” to “deal with different contexts” and “characteristics of teaching-learning environments” (NCTE, 2009, pp. 19–20). They are expected to play the roles of

a subject expert, IT coach, counselor, and global educator, rather than a mere transmitter of local knowledge and information (Padwad & Dixit, 2012). This suggests that major changes in teacher professional learning practices are desired more than ever and is much needed, even more, because of the rapid changes due to globalization and the consequent changes in the nature of teachers' job.

2.6 Focusing on professional learning networks

Quality professional development opportunities are not sufficiently available [in India]. Teachers often speak of teacher development workshops as not particularly relevant to them, while others do not have any such opportunities at all. There are few teacher organizations that help to connect teachers within localities, exacerbating the lack of opportunities for increasing teacher motivation through the sharing of ideas and best practices with peers. (Gol, National Education Policy Draft, 2019, p. 116)

These descriptions suggest that new models and approaches are needed to fill the gaps between teachers who do and teachers who do not have access to quality professional learning in India (Chudgar, 2013; Khan, 2017; Singh, 2013). This might necessitate the dismantling of obsolete practices and the introduction of new interventions with a collaborative focus. Equally, the NCFTE-2009 advocates the use of collaborative spaces for teacher professional learning. One of the suggestions, as mentioned in the document, is for teachers to “break out of intellectual isolation and share experiences and insights with others in the field, both teachers and academics....” (NCTE, 2009, p. 65). For this, the need to create, develop, and sustain “spaces for sharing of experiences of communities of teachers” (p. 66) is highlighted. It recommends that the spaces for teachers to share their teaching-learning needs and experiences be recognized as an important component of their professional practice (NCTE, 2009). It further recommends that such spaces are planned and implemented with teacher involvement, therefore recognizing the professional role of the teacher in their professional learning. Even the National Education Policy Draft (2019) suggests that:

Professional learning communities and centres must be created, developed, and sustained. While such efforts do require great academic and social expertise, they must be carried out so that a culture of self/peer learning is developed rather than a

‘command and control’ type directed learning. CPD must be delivered within school complexes by making use of the nearest CRCs, which can be upgraded into well-resourced and pleasant environments, offering platforms for peer learning. (Gol, 2019, p. 129)

Indian researchers, in recent years, are emphasizing the social and collaborative nature of teacher professional learning (Bedadur, 2012; Gupta, 2014; Khan, 2015, 2016, 2017). According to Bolitho and Padwad (2012), quality teacher professional learning is collaborative and includes both formal and informal experiences. It is known to keep teachers updated with pedagogical innovations to face the rapidly changing teaching and learning scenarios. Research on recent trends has also shown that developments in communication technologies have extended the prospects for Indian teachers to network, share, and learn (Behar & Mishra, 2015).

Collaborative teacher professional learning opportunities are progressively being enabled in some scenarios and includes both offering access to digital resources and facilitating connections between teachers and their learning communities. For example, Prince and Barrett (2014) note how using text messaging was a trendy and helpful way to support teacher professional learning in their study. Bedadur (2012) examines the use of mobile phones by rural teachers of English for their professional learning in the Karnataka region of India and suggests that “the pedagogical design of a professional development plan has to be collaborative to succeed. Moreover, it has to be an initiative driven by the participants” (p. 94). Khan (2015) investigates the use of blog-based online learning environments for the professional development of English teachers in Mumbai and suggested that online professional learning of teachers in India is sustainable with time, positive school culture and school support, and teacher openness to change.

New possibilities of teacher professional learning are afoot in India at a steady pace. Online portals and networks are being recognized and developed gradually, where teachers collaborate with other teachers on a larger scale to share knowledge and impart ideas. According to a report by InfoDev (2010), the development of online learning spaces for teachers is now being recognized as effective and imperative for

improving the quality of education. For example, the Government of India's Sakshat portal gives in-service teachers a web-based prospect to connect and share experiences. The Azim Premji Foundation and the National Knowledge Commission of India work with teacher networks across India by developing an online portal called The Teachers of India. The portal, involving a few thousand teachers, was established to provide an environment for teachers to easily network across all Indian languages, and access updates, resources, and new trends in education from all over the world (InfoDev, 2010). British Council India's Teacher Online Professional Development India project [TOPDI] works in partnership with Government schools across India to raise standards of teaching and learning of English by building the teaching and learning capacity of teachers. Another project, launched in the Kerala state of India, enabled around 100 trainee teachers to participate in an investigation on the advantages of the use of social networks for their professional learning. The project was embraced by the trainee teachers, who were able to develop regular online interactions with their partner teachers as part of their professional learning (Nayar, 2012). Microsoft's Project Shiksha has trained over 745,000 Government school teachers in India. Under this program, Microsoft India has so far partnered with 12 State Governments of India to set up training centres. The program trains school teachers to use technology in teaching and school administration.

Nonetheless, in the information age, learning is no longer confined within the boundaries of local communities, institutions, and nations. Mukherjee (2015) explains that "globalization and economic liberalization in recent years pose additional challenges for Indian education to train a globally competitive workforce and empower them as citizens of a modern democracy as well as citizens of the world" (p. 168). Global projects, such as The Open University in the UK's TESS-India project and MOOCS and the Connection Classrooms Program by the British Council, are enabling teachers in India to access high-quality online learning for free and interact with teachers around the world (British Council, 2015). TESS-India's professional learning materials for school teachers are produced as the result of a collaboration between UK and Indian education experts

and policymakers and focus on the use of student-friendly teaching and learning approaches in Mathematics, Science, and English. It is found to contribute to the development of teachers' confidence in using digital tools for teaching and professional learning, and to facilitate teachers' use of social networking media to share ideas and practices with peers across the world (Wolfenden, 2017). Similarly, STIR Education is a non-profit organization that works extensively with 12,000 teachers in India and Uganda. Founded in 2012, STIR focuses on bringing teachers together through teacher peer networks; where teachers collaborate to learn from each other and try to overcome the drawbacks in their education system (Singh, 2013).

The global era now is one of quick accessibility—through texts, emails, mobile phones, Webinars, and numerous other means. It follows then, that teaching also has changed from what it used to be a generation ago, though most teacher professional learning programs in India have not changed at the same pace (Verma Commission, 2012). Reforms in teacher professional learning have met limited success, and only cater to teachers in Government-aided schools. And, although in recent years, the use of professional learning networks for teachers is emerging in India, such networks are mostly limited in nature, function, and scope; most of these networks are still in transition, the collaboration is mostly local, and teacher engagement in these networks is far from universal (Bedadur, 2012; Nayar, 2012). This raises the need to understand in what ways transnational learning networks can support the quality of and access to teacher professional learning in India.

2.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have provided an overview of the present situation of teacher professional learning in Indian schools, which is at best described as uneven, if not inadequate. I have discussed how, in an effort to remedy the situation, various Government reforms have been implemented over the years, but these too have had their drawbacks. While increasingly, the Indian Government has recognized the

importance of investing in teachers for realizing meaningful outcomes in education and introduced new policies and programs to support teacher professional learning, the quality of most of these programs remains largely poor; incapable of meeting the demands of the changing conditions under which schools and teachers work. Moreover, these programs only cater to Government-aided schools, as the Indian Government expects unaided private schools to look after the professional learning needs of their teachers by themselves. This means that there is a profound unevenness of professional learning opportunities for school teachers in India.

Yet, while many teachers in India's private schools lack opportunities for professional learning, few schools have recognized the need to explore the possibilities of new models for teacher professional learning within the context of rapid changes in educational trends and learning possibilities. At these schools, in recent years, the social and collaborative nature of teacher professional learning has gained attention, although unevenly and insufficiently, largely driven by the awareness that professional learning networks offer better and extensive learning opportunities in the era of globalization and communication technology.

The realization that globalization has brought about an increase in the social, cultural, political, and economic interconnectedness between countries has also given rise to the realization of the transnational opportunities for education systems around the world. Such learning networks are assumed to offer a chance to build their capacity to support the quality of and access to teacher professional learning. Moreover, new developments in communication technologies seem to offer means of achieving quality professional learning through the creation of social learning spaces, such as transnational learning networks. More generally, it is assumed by some researchers (Chattopadhyay, 2013; Gupta, 2014) that the use of these networks in India might mitigate the gaps in teacher professional learning policy and practice. Within this context, the realization of quality teacher professional learning may emerge from establishing cultures of collaborative inquiry and learning, both within and across schools. This possibility is explored in this

study. It aims to investigate the potential of one such transnational learning network to support the quality of and access to teacher professional learning in India. It focuses on the specific learning expectations and experiences of a group of teachers in the Delhi region of India, based on the teachers' perceptions of their participation in a transnational learning network, namely the Australia-Asia BRIDGE School Partnerships Project. However, before discussing the BRIDGE project, the next chapter presents a more general review of the literature relevant to professional learning networks and the conceptual framework of transnational networks in education. It examines the theoretical concept of transnational learning networks by focusing on what the research says about the potential of these networks for teacher professional learning.

Chapter 3

LITERATURE

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I provide an account of the state of teacher professional learning in India. I note that the quality of teacher professional learning is widely recognized to be uneven, if not poor (Batra, 2005; Bolitho & Padwad, 2012; Verma Commission, 2012). Policy actors and educational researchers, both within India and elsewhere, have pointed to a major gap between policy and practice. They have argued that there is a crucial need to consider ways of reforming teacher professional learning in India. A huge variety of such reforms have been attempted in India, which are variously sponsored both by Central and State Governments. Increasingly, also, leading private schools in India have begun to independently develop their own practices of teacher professional learning. Some of these practices have recognized the need to develop networks where teachers can support each other in improving the quality of teaching and learning, bringing it to up to the standards that are regarded as the world's 'best practice'. Beyond a focus on networks, some of these schools have also begun to consider ways of collaborating with schools and educational systems outside India through transnational learning networks.

This study explores the potential of such transnational learning networks in extending access to and improving the quality of teacher professional learning opportunities in India. It considers how and why such networks are established and maintained in Indian schools, and what are the challenges and barriers. To address these generalized issues, this study is structured around an illustrative case study of the Australia-Asia BRIDGE School Partnerships Project, a transnational teacher professional development program developed by the AEF in Australia with the support of the Australian Government. It seeks to provide an understanding of the perceptions, expectations, and experiences of a small group of school teachers and principals from eight BRIDGE participating schools in the Delhi region of India, with the broader aim of elucidating the challenges and

possibilities of transnational networks in supporting teacher professional learning practices in India.

The idea of what constitutes effective professional learning has been widely debated. A wide variety of theoretical accounts of the factors and conditions that make it effective have been articulated in the literature, some of which are context-specific while others claim to be universally applicable. In this chapter, I will provide an overview of this literature, which invariably suggests that teacher professional learning is most effective when it is teacher-led, ongoing, collaborative, and encouraged by the school. What this literature does not do however is to show in-depth how local conditions and traditions determine what can be regarded as effective teacher professional learning. One such condition relates to the cultural orientation towards such networks across schools and school systems. The prospects of professional learning networks do not, of course, exist only within the schools, school systems, and nation-states but have now become more extensively possible within the transnational learning space, with the emergence of new technologies, which enable teachers across national borders to discuss common experiences and challenges as a way of learning from each other.

An exploration of these possibilities points to the need to consider transnational learning spaces as a specific example of the rise of transnational learning links, driven by the processes of globalization. In what follows, I discuss some of the ways in which the idea of transnationalism has been theorized, particularly in education. I then review the literature on transnational learning networks, examining what the literature says about the potential of these networks for teacher professional learning. Related to this discussion is the need to consider how the emerging nature of communication technologies, ubiquitous flows of people, ideas, and things, are leading to major developments in educational practices worldwide, and how this may also drive changes in teacher professional learning. In the final part of this chapter, I, therefore, discuss research related to online professional learning networks to describe various attempts

that have been made to realize its potential, and what challenges have such experiments faced.

3.2 Unpacking the concept of ‘professional learning networks’

At its most basic, a professional learning network is a group of interconnected people. It comprises professionals who interact with one another to exchange information, ideas, and resources for learning purposes. According to Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace, and Thomas (2006), a professional learning network “may be seen as a complex metaphor, one that is multidimensional and needs to be unpacked” (p. 621). Their accepted understanding is that members of a learning network contribute in some way to each other’s learning, whether online or in-person, whether synchronously or asynchronously. Moreover, Anderson (2010) suggests that learning networks are not merely invariable structures, but are organized communities comprising dynamic learners, where learning activities are driven towards particular goals, which are often shared or common. In a similar vein, Lieberman (2000) notes that by their very nature, networks can be “flexible, borderless, and innovative” (p. 221) as “unlike bureaucratic organizations, networks are organized around the interests and needs of their participants, building agendas sensitive to their individual and collective development as educators” (p. 221). They “can mediate professional engagements with a wide variety of people, spaces, and tools that might not otherwise be available” (Krutka et al., 2017, p. 246). It is the established connections and alliances between the network members that are believed to create the possibilities of professional learning.

In recent decades, the expectations and demands of how teachers participate in professional learning have undergone considerable changes, partly in response to the shifts in teaching and learning trends and partly due to the increasing use of various technologies in education. In these conditions, “the traditional notion of teachers as passive recipients has been largely rejected for a more active conception of teachers as co-constructors and contributors to the pedagogical knowledge base” (Baker-Doyle & Yoon, 2010, p. 115). It is also against this background that professional learning networks

in education have been emerging as teacher-driven, support networks that stimulate teacher collaboration, where teachers lead their learning:

Teachers have been considered passive receivers of prescriptive programs, given little time or incentive to integrate these new programs into their classroom practice. Networks, in contrast, involve their members in a variety of activities that reflect the purposes and changing needs of their participants. They attract teachers because they mount agendas that give teachers opportunities to create as well as receive knowledge. Teachers become members of a community where they are valued as partners and colleagues, participants in an ongoing effort to better the learning process for themselves and their students. (Lieberman, 2000, p. 226)

In view of this, Knapp (2003) explains that 'learning' means improvement in teacher capacity for practice (professionally significant knowledge, skills, beliefs, and attitudes as a teacher) and/or the practice itself (applying the new knowledge, skills, beliefs, and attitudes in the daily functions as a teacher). Professional learning networks are known to support teachers and schools to develop using "numerous sources of external capacity" (Day, Hadfield, & Kellow, 2002, p. 19). Simply put, they are seen to generate broader prospects for professional learning, as they enable a wider possibility to collaborate with other professionals within and beyond the organization (Morris, Chrispeels & Burke, 2003).

Several studies have observed that professional learning networks often share four key characteristics, which also appear to be interconnected and functioning together. These features are:

3.2.1 Collaboration

Networks will enable staff inside schools to become plugged into the world of ideas outside their professional contexts, as well as offering them the chance to explore their work with the help of others outside their schools. These networks will be highly interactive, thereby making them not only instruments for information dissemination but also as learning networks. (Southworth, 2000, p. 287)

It is widely acknowledged that at the core of teacher professional learning networks is how teachers support each other's learning experiences. Researchers such as Baker-

Doyle and Yoon (2010) and Lima (2010) support that even though teachers, as individual professionals, may be up-to-date about innovative approaches and practices in education, it is by means of the networks with their colleagues that they ascertain how to interpret, support, share, and sustain new knowledge, information, and skills. “At the heart of a PLN [Professional Learning Network] are people...from whom you can learn and with whom you, in turn, can share and converse” (Buchanan, 2011, p. 19). Spillane and Louis (2002) explain that in these networks, when teachers discuss their professional practices and needs with other teachers, they are more likely to work together towards improving each other’s practices and realizing each other’s needs, and in turn contribute to school improvement. In the same vein, Boud and Hager’s comment on teacher professional learning translates as a sound appeal for positioning it in a social context where teachers, as professionals, work and learn collectively. This outlook of professional learning, according to them, entails being connected to one’s colleagues as:

[Teachers] cannot think simply in terms of the attributes of the professional, of their knowledge and skills or even of their competencies. These are not mere possessions of the individual to be acquired but are only of value when they are played out in practices. These practices involve the practitioner operating in complex ways, often with others, in a particular environment that has attributes of its own. It is only this relational combination that reflects the practice, and it is the practice itself that ultimately matters in terms of getting things done in the world. It does not matter what the professional knows or can do if this is not deployed appropriately in a particular context with requisite others. (Boud & Hager, 2012, p. 26)

According to Day and Hadfield (2004), professional learning networks represent an attempt to change the long-established perceptions and practices of the teacher who learns and works in isolation. In their project, Day and Hadfield attempted to set up learning networks for primary school teachers to transfer the ownership of teacher professional learning back to the teachers, and develop the social learning space where teachers can learn collaboratively. They suggest several principles, which they believe can help in developing and sustaining such networks:

- Teacher professional learning is most effective when teachers collaborate with other teachers.

- Teachers learn better when they are involved in the decision-making about their learning processes.
- Teacher professional learning is most successful when it has both personal and professional implications for teachers.
- School principals essentially shape the practices of collaborative teacher professional learning and also influence the schools' capacity to deal with new practices of professional collaboration. (Day & Hadfield, 2004)

Different forms of professional collaboration are known to ensue in teacher professional learning networks. According to the TALIS study, teacher collaboration “involves teachers working together in groups or teams to improve educational processes and outcomes” (OECD, 2009, p. 101). Such collaborative experiences are known to “...give rise to a more bottom-up organization of learning where workers with their peers interact about their work experiences through sharing their practice, knowledge, and contacts” (Hanraets, Hulsebosch, & de Laat, 2011, p. 85). Similarly, Flanigan (2012) identifies that professional learning networks “take a grassroots approach to professional development. Administrators and teachers say such networks reduce isolation, promote autonomy, and provide inspiration by offering access to support and information not only within a school but also around the globe” (p. 42). Further citing the benefits of professional collaboration, Hanraets et al. (2011) stress that “innovative teacher professional development should involve opportunities for teachers to share their practice, learn from peers, and collaborate on real-world projects” (p. 87).

3.2.2 Shared values and vision

Learning networks may also be characterized as alliances working towards a certain shared or common goal. Writers such as Anderson (2010) and Stoll, Bolam, et al. (2006) affirm that teachers work together more effectively when their learning experiences are aligned with their educational beliefs. Shared values and beliefs in a network are known to provide a starting point for close planning of professional learning. It focuses on the collective activities in the network and enables teachers to develop their shared beliefs and make learning arrangements mutually. However, irrespective of the arrangement or focus, the needs and aims of professional learning networks are related to capacity

building, which is defined as “the power to engage in and sustain learning of all people at all levels of the educational system” (Stoll, 2010, p. 470). Members of a professional learning network commonly are “likeminded” professionals who are part of “a cyclical learning process where teachers both receive help and provide advice. It is through this process of giving and receiving information and networking with likeminded individuals that teachers are known to thrive in a demanding and dynamic work environment (Trust, 2012, p. 138).

With the sharing of vision and values, teachers as members of a network often collaborate in a culture of openness towards a common belief. Such a collaboration is mainly on the belief that it will benefit student learning. In this aspect, Daly, Moolenaar, Bollivar, and Burke (2010) point out that interest in teacher professional learning networks is normally linked with the shared goal to improve student learning. Strong teacher engagement in such networks is interconnected with resultant improvement in teachers’ self-efficiency and confidence, which in turn is known to contribute to student learning (Moolenaar, Slegers, & Daly, 2012).

3.2.3 Shared ideas and resources

Teachers use PLNs [Professional Learning Networks] to share information, connect with other members, find resources, solicit ideas, and obtain feedback or help...A popular topic discussed in PLNs is resources...PLNs succeed and grow based on member input. Anyone can share their expertise in a PLN, and this collective knowledge from various experts is what helps PLNs grow. It is also one of the reasons teachers join PLNs—to learn from other individuals that have expertise in different areas while also sharing their own expertise. (Trust, 2012, pp. 137–138)

A variety of both physical and intellectual resources are commonly shared in learning networks. By engaging in professional learning networks, teachers can access knowledge, information, tools, and strategies that they apply as they develop their professional practice (Baker-Doyle, 2011). Tools “do not simply refer to instruments or machines that teachers might use to accomplish a task, but also ideas, skills, and habits that educators can draw on to improve their teaching and their students’ learning”

(Krutka et al., 2017, p. 247). And when teachers are exposed to a variety of resources, their learning experiences are found to be potentially richer (Trust, 2012). This particular aspect of networks “may represent an important manifestation of teacher agency through which some teachers find the resources...needed to transform conditions and outcomes at their schools” (Anderson, 2010, p. 560). Coutinho and Lisboa (2013) also observe that “these environments are by nature democratic, people feel free to talk or share ideas and information” (p. 206).

Learning networks are seen to also involve relationships of connectivity that form and develop when participants interact with each other and share ideas and resources, enabled via face-to-face and/or online collaboration (Haythorntwhaite & De Laat, 2012). Writers, such as Cross, Parker, and Sasson (2003); and Moolenaar (2010), exemplify that network relationships result in a receptive and active learning environment, which facilitates better opportunities to share and gives teachers more chances to be exposed to a diversity of knowledge and resources. In this regard, Trust et al. (2016) note that “such collaboration could potentially lead to rich cross-pollination of ideas and the import and export of practices” (p. 29).

3.2.4 Reflection

Reflection has long been regarded as an integral practice of the teaching profession and teacher professional learning (Schön, 1983), and this is particularly true given the ever-changing educational trends and environments (Nagle, 2008). Through reflection, “teachers can develop their pedagogy, drawing insights from their practice, which can then guide their future teaching” (Hepple, 2012, p. 310). According to Trust et al. (2016), teachers’ engagement in professional learning networks “arouse personal reflection about the very nature of teachers’ work” (p.24), and it can “instigate reflection upon practice and even reconsideration of goals” (p. 26). They believe that networks have the potential to “offer educators’ windows into their peers’ work, which can provide mirrors for reflecting upon their own craft” (p. 26). Findings from their qualitative study that investigated the professional learning network experiences of 732 P-12 teachers report

that through interactions with their learning networks, “the participants expressed that they were able to reflect upon and shift their identities as professionals in relation to their students, their schools, and broader professional communities of educators” (p. 26). They also note that such a process might prompt teachers to “recognize a weakness in their own processes and address shortcomings” (p. 30). Along the same lines, Krutka et al. (2017) maintain that teacher learning in professional networks involves “purposeful” identification of knowledge through reflection, and its “intentional” understanding in a particular context (p. 248). By reflecting on their experiences, teachers often become “more mindful of the people, spaces, and tools that shape their learning experiences” (p. 250). This can help teachers “identify successes and areas for growth” in their professional practice, and “formulate plans” for enriching their experiences to meet their professional needs and improve their professional practice (p. 250).

3.3 Enabling professional learning networks

Creating and developing teacher professional learning networks appear to depend on several processes, factors, and conditions inside and outside the networks. These are known to operate symbiotically in complex ways. These processes, factors, and conditions are set out below. This section of the chapter draws not only on professional learning network literature but also that related more broadly to teacher professional learning.

3.3.1 Teachers’ orientation to learning

In learning contexts, pre-service and practicing teachers may be guided by their beliefs about teaching knowledge and ability. Such beliefs may lead them to question the value of information presented; make epistemic assumptions about the nature of teaching knowledge; question the validity of knowledge content; and support their views on teaching and the need for teacher education. (Fives & Buehl, 2008, p. 135)

It is widely accepted that at the heart of a professional learning network is the professional. Learning networks are often observed to be rooted in the members’

interests, attitudes, and views about their professional learning. In education, a shift from the traditional expert-led, large-scale, workshop model of teacher professional learning towards the culture of professional collaboration demands a simultaneous shift in the roles and attitudes of the teacher (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Day & Leitch, 2001). In considering these networks, it is therefore imperative to pay attention to teachers' professional priorities and learning orientations.

Teachers are known to ascribe a high priority to learning activities that coincide with their learning orientations. Lieberman (2009) points out that teachers' perceptions of any new learning initiative are mainly influenced by their previous understandings and experiences of a similar kind. By the same token, according to Opfer, Pedder, and Lavicza (2011a), teachers' orientations to professional learning encompass "those general understandings related to learning that a teacher holds to be true" (p. 444). Moreover, "discrepancies between one's visions and one's performance can create the motivation to learn—or if too great—can discourage learning and replace hope with despair" (Shulman & Shulman, 2004, p. 261).

Many other investigations have pointed out that teacher professional learning is very much influenced by the personal dispositions, cognitive processes, and collaborative practices involved in becoming a teacher (Cave & Mulloy, 2010; Hindin, Morocco, Mott, & Aguilar, 2007; Malm, 2009). And therefore, professional learning networks are influenced not only by the teachers' cognitive orientations to learning but also by their personal and social orientations to professional learning (Duguid, 2005; Penuel, Riel, Joshi, Pearlman, Kim, & Frank, 2010). In these circumstances, as remarked by Bolstad (2011), teachers who are open to "explore new ideas and ways of working, share and challenge each other's knowledge, work through open-ended problems, navigate relationships, [and] learn about themselves" are more likely to have effective learning experiences with these networks (p. 15).

Teacher professional learning in networks is also believed to be shaped by the uniqueness of their professional, social, and work orientations (Stoll, McMahon, & Thomas, 2006; Timperley, Wilson, Barr, & Fung, 2007). This means that teachers might engage effectively in particular learning networks while being quite unresponsive in others. This also means that the same network might work differently for teachers of the same school. Morewood, Ankrum, and Bean (2010) give their support to this by saying that variation happens also as “professional development may be perceived differently by individual teachers” (p. 202). Similarly, Varga-Atkins et al. (2009) emphasize that these perceptions are a complex product of individual learning attitudes and understandings. These subjective orientations can influence the teachers’ understandings and attitudes towards learning networks, and consequently, their experiences of these networks.

3.3.2 School context

It has been noted, time and again, that learning is shaped by the contexts in which it takes place. What and how teachers learn are also known to be influenced by the setting in which they learn. Lee, Dedrick, and Smith (1991) investigated the effects of the schools’ social culture on teacher efficacy and professional learning and found that school leadership, schools’ collaborative set-up, and opportunities provided by the schools in support of teacher autonomy are linked with the quality and success of teacher professional learning. Likewise, over two decades later, Huang’s (2016) study on teachers’ cross-cultural professional learning in an emerging Canada-China school network of Ontario and Shanghai school teachers found that “whether or not supportive organizational conditions are available can not only affect the development of the network but also directly affect teachers’ motivation and the sustainability of their cross-boundary professional learning” (p. 208).

Levine and Marcus (2010) observe that collaborative working conditions created by the schools can motivate teachers to develop shared norms, values, practices, and orientations towards their professional learning. School context is also identified to have

an influence on the teachers' use of professional learning networks and on the overall success of the networks in developing their professional practice (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2013; Hattie, 2009; Mourshed, Chijioke, & Barber, 2010). Similar views are expressed by Stoll and Louis (2007) and Varga-Atkins et al. (2010) who point out that schools that have the history of providing opportunities for their teachers to learn together are more supportive of the use of professional learning networks for teacher professional learning. A school's role can be important concerning the links it aspires and is able to make with external networks, and this is most likely due to the internal networks that the school supports and promotes (Stoll, Bolam, et al., 2006; Stoll, McMahon, et al., 2006; Stoll, 2010). In that connection, McLaughlin & Talbert's (2006) broad study of teacher collaboration conducted in Boston Public Schools too observes that the schools that promote collaborative teacher professional learning opportunities beyond the schools often have a pre-existing culture of shared responsibility and ongoing learning within the schools. Such schools also are known to stimulate the use of professional learning networks by encouraging collaborative learning cultures in the contexts of their classrooms and schools (Cosner, 2009), and by promoting teacher professional learning beyond formal, school-based collaborative structures (Stoll, Bolam, et al., 2006; Stoll, McMahon, et al., 2006; Westheimer, 2008).

Indeed, teachers need support from their schools for their professional learning practices; more when teachers use new mediums for their learning. Within this context, the schools' provision of an adequate network infrastructure also lays the foundation of professional learning networks and can influence the teachers' use of these networks (Stoll, Bolam, et al., 2006), but is one of the many factors necessary. In some cases, it has been reported that the school vision and values could hinder teachers' participation and use of such networks. Teachers' participation in such mediums is often noted to be a matter of choice, mostly made by their school leaders (Sit, 2015), and largely shaped by the learning values and vision of their schools (Schulz & Geithner, 2010).

Teachers often favor the use of such networks for their professional learning, because their schools facilitate these opportunities (Baker-Doyle & Yoon, 2011). In this connection, Fuller and Unwin (2004) observe that an expansive school culture presents teachers with the possibilities to engage in learning networks, while a restrictive school culture restrains the possibilities. Therefore, teachers' work contexts can either create or restrict the conditions and chances for them to participate in professional learning networks. From the same perspective, Trotman (2009) investigated the network experiences of primary school head-teachers during the implementation of inter-school networks in England. After studying five years of their network communications, he found that the inter-school exchange was initiated in school settings where the structure of these networks was unorganized and their nature was misunderstood. His observations led him to infer that participation in such networks is often impeded by insufficient knowledge of the theories and processes that enable a collaborative approach to education and teacher professional learning. Moreover, he cautions against the inherent assumption that schools are largely well prepared to engage in such initiatives, as for networks to actually be effective, schools need to develop and integrate a strong sense of strategic "withinness"; where the theories of the network, the organization of teacher roles in their learning, and the change processes of their experiences are considered essential by the school and thereby fully attended to (p. 352).

3.3.3 School leadership

In addition to the school context, leadership support, especially from the principal, is also believed to make a big difference in how new practices are enacted in a school, including new approaches to teacher professional learning (OECD, 2009). Leadership support is also found to be an important resource for the establishment of teacher professional learning networks, in terms of the principals' openness to shared learning and their active involvement at all levels of their teachers' experiences of such networks (Earl & Katz, 2007). School principals directly or indirectly influence these experiences and shape its success in supporting the teachers' professional learning. According to

Bridwell-Mitchell (2019), the principal is “one possible indicator of motivation... associated with schools being more likely to form partnerships” (p. 36). In the same way, Penuel, Riel, Krause, and Frank (2009) observe in their study that a school, where the school leader also practices and promotes professional collaboration, has more prospects for teachers to learn with their colleagues. They found that the managerial structures in the school involved in their study were more open to teacher-led, shared learning activities and programs, and, as a result, the teachers often participated in learning networks to support their professional learning needs and interests. The principal in their study had a practical outlook towards the teachers’ autonomous management and use of learning networks and resources, rather than being someone who expects official approval from the school managers. Similarly, findings from the TALIS Survey (OECD, 2009) also show that school leaders who have strong enthusiasm for collaborative learning practices and related educational outcomes are more likely to encourage initiatives for collaborative teacher professional learning. Support from school leaders has a positive influence on the schools’ culture of collaborative learning and the teachers’ use of collaborative learning networks for their professional learning (Sun, Penuel, Frank, Gallagher, & Youngs, 2013).

3.3.4 Trust and positive working relationships

Significance lies in the inter-relationship between [teachers’] individual experiences and the social contexts and community dimensions, which help shape them. Teachers’ learning experiences are distributed across technologies, communities, and people. What ties them together is a community perspective which informs both practice with pupils in classroom and teachers in CPD contexts. (Pachler, Daly, & Turvey, 2009, p. 87)

Learning that takes place with colleagues is essentially understood as a social activity. Beckett (2011) exemplifies that professionals learn together with other professionals, and intrinsically, those learning practices are socially influenced, rather than being exclusively the experiences and concerns of the individual professional. The concept of the “individual professional” is “paradoxical” (Doecke and Gill, 2001, p. 8), as to be professional, one must socialize with other professionals in the field to learn together and from each other. Also, there is broad agreement in the literature that teacher

relationships formed through learning networks have a positive influence on their learning:

A networked learning perspective attempts to address this critique by focusing on the diversity of social relationships people develop. What is the nature of these relationships, how strong are they, and what determines learning in such relationships? In the area of professional development for teachers, for example, what matters is the relative number of contacts one has to share a work-related experience with. This can mean talking with one or more colleagues in the hallway or in the coffee corner; email, Skype or phone between a few peers around the world; or sharing your experience with one or more communities...This process of participation is best served through the ability of people to create and continually extend or maintain a meaningful social/professional network. People use their networks as a social infrastructure to gain access to what it is they are looking for whether it is products/materials, knowledge, and new colleagues. (Hanraets et al., 2011, p. 86)

Professional learning networks also are largely shaped by the assimilation of the members' individual learning experiences and social learning experiences. In this light, Chalmers and Keown comment that learning should "include the personal and social dimensions" (2006, p. 144). Likewise, Putnam and Borko acknowledge that what is learned is a "product of the interactions of groups of people", highlighting the value of positive working relationships in learning networks (2000, p. 5). Along the same lines, Boud and Hager (2012) state:

Learning is a normal part of working, and indeed, of most other social activities. It occurs through practice in work settings from addressing the challenges and problems that arise. Most learning takes place not through formalized activities but through the exigencies of practice with peers and others, drawing on expertise that is accessed in response to need. (p. 22)

The development of strong network ties among members is known to be the key to effective professional learning networks. In this direction, Carmichael, Fox, McCormick, Procter, and Honour's (2006) study looks at networks of head-teachers to identify the role of professional relationships within network structures and the benefits of these relationships. They explored the networks' structural factors, such as the power dynamics of network relationships, and found that the teachers' experiences in the

network were shaped by all kinds of relationships; strong and weak relationships, and positive and negative relationships. They conclude that it could well be that some of the teachers were unaware of the value of these relationships and the effects these relationships could have on their learning. They recommend that further research into the dynamics of network relationships is needed to realize the unique benefits these relationships can bring. Nonetheless, they also acknowledge that positive working relationships among teachers in learning networks require time, school support, ongoing interactions, and trust (Carmichael et al., 2006).

On that front, Harris and Jones (2011, 2012) notes that although the predominant function of any professional learning network is building connections, often minor attention is paid to the formation of those connections and little thought is given to the fact that to be most productive and effective, professionals should form strong connections to learn, and also learn to form strong connections. In this way, the teacher professional learning network also is more likely to be effective when trust is pervasive throughout the network and provides a strong basis for positive working relationships among teachers.

Trust itself remains one of the most valuable goals for enabling authentic learning within a community, as well as perhaps the most elusive. It fosters the sense of belonging, commitment, and loyalty that marked the earliest formations of community among human beings. It engenders optimism, excitement, shared responsibility, and growth and learning of all community members. (Havelock, 2004, p. 76)

Teacher engagement in professional learning networks, when supported with the prospects for teacher interaction in different ways and through ongoing interactions, are believed to develop trust and positive working relationships, through which teachers feel mutually motivated and supported to learn (Opfer & Pedder, 2011; Pickering, 2007). This mutuality for ongoing collaboration turns out to be an imperative determinant for positive teacher professional learning experiences in these networks. The formation of trust in learning networks is known to be associated with a variety of efforts made mutually, including decentralized network-management, shared learning and problem solving, and collective decision-making among teachers (Lieberman & Miller, 2008).

3.3.5 Relevance and use of learning resources

Teacher professional learning is largely considered as knowledge and skills development (Desimone, Porter, Garet, Yoon, & Birman, 2002; Fishman, Marx, Best, & Tal, 2003; Timperley et al., 2007). Therefore, as researchers such as Borko (2004) and Guskey (2002) mention, teachers participate in professional learning networks with the expectations to refine their knowledge and skills, while at the same time integrate new knowledge and skills into their professional practice. Under those circumstances, networks that recognize teachers' learning needs, which relate to the teachers' contexts, have been reported to have a positive contribution to their professional learning (Timperley, 2008). It is believed that when network activities cater to the teachers' interests, needs, and concerns, teachers are more likely to make effective use of the learning experience in their specific work contexts, while also actively engaging in ongoing network activities. This facilitates their use of these networks for their professional learning in a new light (Penuel, Fishman, Yamaguchi, & Gallagher, 2007; Penuel et al., 2012; Timperley et al., 2007). It is within this context that Little (2005) suggests there are three central working assumptions concerning the relevance and use of network resources:

A first assumption is that the school is well-positioned, or could become well-positioned, to exploit the resources of a network for purposes of school improvement...A second assumption is that the network has resources, or could come to have resources, of importance to the school—resources in the form of ideas, materials, advice, or encouragement that justify the transactional and opportunity costs of participating...The third assumption is that there are interactions, activities, and processes by which the 'stuff' of network interaction comes into the school—and vice versa. (Little, 2005, p. 279)

The teachers' experiences of professional learning networks, therefore, are mainly related to what and how they intend to apply to their practices. In view of this, Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, and Kwang Suk (2001) consider that this largely depends on the perceived relevance of these experiences in actual teaching practices. Literature often suggests that teachers themselves find professional learning to be most productive when they feel that it provides opportunities for them to apply their learning

to improve their teaching skills (Barber & Mourshed, 2007; Coburn, Russell, Kaufman, & Stein, 2012). This is more likely when their learning activities in these networks are related to the contexts of their schools and incorporated in their classrooms (White, Lim & Chiew, 2005).

3.3.6 Time and duration

As mentioned earlier, a great deal of literature indicates that networks support teachers' ongoing professional learning by facilitating the possibilities of collaborative learning. But, its effectiveness in the long run also depends on the ongoing nature of teacher engagement in these networks. Boyle, While, and Boyle (2004) maintain that "the continual deepening of knowledge and skills is an integral part of the professional development of any professional working in any profession" (p. 46). Reciprocally, Cordingley, Bell, Thomason, and Firth (2005), and Cordingley, Bell, Isham, Evans, and Firth (2007) believe that teacher professional learning is a rather slow process, and when sustained over time, could enable teachers with the opportunities to try and merge new knowledge, skills, and practices with their already existing ones. A body of research on teacher professional learning has advocated for teachers to partake in regular and ongoing professional learning activities of longer duration as they also "have more subject-area content focus, more opportunities for active learning, and more coherence with teachers' other experiences than do shorter activities" (Birman, Desimone, Porter, & Garet, 2000, p. 29). Rajagopal, Berlanga, and Sloep (2012) suggest that to realize the benefits of their participation, teachers need to be able to hold and sustain interactions with each other on an ongoing basis. In that sense, the time utilized and regularity of teacher communications among teachers to support their professional concerns and needs are one of the key indicators of an effective teacher professional learning network.

It is widely acknowledged that when the process of teacher professional learning is planned around a longer duration in professional learning networks, it often fosters more opportunities for active sharing of knowledge, teacher reflection, and application

of learning. Hoekstra, Brekelmans, Beijaard, and Korthagen (2009) express similar views, that teacher professional learning networks are successful when “[teachers have] ample opportunities to interact with peers, to report about their learning, and to access resources for learning” (p. 10). However, for that, teachers need time to acquire, accommodate, share, and apply new knowledge. This means that teacher engagement in the network involves considerable numbers of contact hours among teachers, and over a long period. Much like, Cordingley (2015) and Opfer, Pedder, and Lavicza (2011b) affirm that this also has implications for the frequency of learning activities that teachers should engage in. Regular and continuous learning activities in these networks are more likely to provide teachers with the opportunities to reflect on their experiences and to put into practice their learning.

3.4 The growing role of new technologies

Over more than twenty years, Castells has chronicled the ways in which the network is the new determinant and metaphor for understanding society. His main argument is that although the industrial reform saw the structure of society as a set of relationships, the new age (what Castells calls the information age), with advanced communication technologies, facilitates diverse and more complex interactions that are organized by networks. The information age introduced with it a new social composition, namely the networked society. Schools, the school staff, and students are all elements of this society:

What is specific to our world is the extension and augmentation of the body and mind of the human subjects in networks of interaction power fed by microelectronics-based, software operated, communication technologies. These technologies are increasingly diffused throughout the entire realm of human activities by growing miniaturization. They are converging with new genetic engineering technologies, able to reprogram the communication networks of the living matter. It is on this basis that expands a new social structure as the foundation of our society, the network society. (Castells, 2004, p. 7)

Traditionally, teachers’ professional learning was provided through formal and local arrangements in the school, which were largely constrained by geographical limits and

reach (Risser & Bottoms, 2014). This seemed to be aligned with teacher preference for face-to-face communications because of the human social dynamics (voice, aural, touch, and gestural expressions) that are likely through this approach (Katz & Earl, 2010; Katz, Earl, Jaafar, Elgie, Foster, Halbert, & Kaser, 2008). Scott and Scott (2010) argue that face-to-face professional interactions, however, are not always possible, suitable, or affordable, as no one method meets all learning needs and no one innovation is predominantly better than another. Without a doubt, as society has become increasingly networked in the knowledge economy due to the Internet and social media (Castells, 2010, 2014), new possibilities for teacher professional learning are emerging. Online professional learning networks are known to be bigger, include extensive use of the Internet and communication technologies, and have greater possibilities for teacher collaboration and shared learning (Ball & Forzani, 2009). A variety of applications and software are now used to support teacher professional learning:

PLNs can be part of a self-contained, password-protected school-wide effort or a mixed bag of social networking and bookmarking sites...The past four years alone have seen the launch of thousands of personalized education sites that allow threaded commenting, immediate feedback on teaching methodologies, and extended professional development through videos, blogs, podcasts, webinars, and slide shows. (Flanigan, 2012, p. 43)

Online professional learning networks comprise Internet-based platforms, such as discussion forums, email servers, webinars, text and/or voice chat, and social media networks that allow the participants to exchange professional knowledge (Trust, 2015). In education, teachers typically use online professional networks and communities to find and share lesson plans, digital resources, teaching materials, learning activities, informative websites, and other relevant resources (Trust, 2015). These online mediums are known to provide the 'anytime-anywhere' option and offer participants the flexibility, irrespective of their location, to achieve their learning objectives within and beyond their work environments and work schedules (Davis, 2009).

Online teacher professional learning is viewed to correspond well with today's rapidly transforming educational environments that expect teachers to be tech-savvy and aware of worldwide content and pedagogical trends (Dede, Ketelhut, Whitehouse, Breit, & McCloskey, 2006). It is generally recognized that online learning networks are useful in meeting these demands as they offer broader prospects and flexibility for teacher communication and collaboration (Charalambos & Michalinos, 2004; Duncan- Howell, 2010; Park, Oliver, Johnson, Graham, & Oppong, 2007). Networks "connect teachers in ways that encourage them to deepen their professional knowledge, offer support to one another, to mentor and be mentored, and to engage in professional dialogue" (Hutchison & Colwell, 2012, p. 274). By providing these opportunities in a shared space, online learning networks also enable, what Lieberman and Mace (2010, p. 78) describe as making practice public, that is, "making artifacts and events of practice, and reflections on practice, available to interested educational audiences". Going public "facilitates improved teaching and that all teachers can benefit from making their practices public and sharing them with each other" (p. 78). This also points to the function of online professional learning networks in reducing teacher isolation - which is identified to be one of the main challenges in the teaching profession (DuFour, 2011).

Several factors and conditions, which are identified in literature worldwide, are known to influence the teachers' use of online networks for their professional learning. Hur and Hara (2007) examine the factors that influence teachers to share knowledge in online learning networks and suggest four key motivators: (1) Collectivism: teachers share knowledge for the benefit of other members, (2) Reciprocity: teachers feel obliged to share their knowledge with other teachers as they have been helped by others and want to contribute in return, (3) Personal benefit: teachers gain new knowledge from others when they share their knowledge, and (4) Altruism: teachers understand the struggles of other teachers and help them by sharing their knowledge. Similarly, Doyle and Yoon (2011) point out that the use of technology for teacher professional learning is most effective when (a) teachers have a desire to learn, (b) teachers feel responsible for learning, (c) there is teacher readiness to learn, (d) the learning is based on a task, and

(e) teachers are motivated to learn. Studies on online professional learning networks also observe that networks are more effective when teachers are comfortable about sharing their ideas and when they participate in learning activities that cater to similar teaching needs and concerns (Vavasseur & MacGregor, 2008). This is more likely to happen when the teachers are involved in outlining network expectations, planning relevant learning activities, structuring teacher roles and responsibilities, and sharing relevant ideas and perspectives (Day & Hadfield, 2004; Ross, 2011). Developing a sense of responsibility and belongingness in teachers is also considered essential to sustain their participation in online networks. Ellis, Oldridge, and Vasconcelos (2004) explain that professionals engage in online learning merely not for the ideas and resources shared, but also for feeling a sense of belonging that the engagement generates.

Much has been discussed on how teacher participation in online learning networks can also be influenced by the teachers' individual learning beliefs, previous experiences, knowledge, confidence, and self-efficacy (DuFour, 2011). Scott and Scott (2010) explain that like any new learning situation, teacher experiences with online professional learning networks depend on the teachers' pre-existing level of technological proficiency, user-readiness, and user-comfort in a particular learning environment. It is argued that, in some cases, the use of such networks is affected when the members do not have a specific learning objective when communicating with other members (Daugherty, Lee, Gangadharbatia, Kim, & Outhavong, 2005). In other cases, teachers hold back from participating in online professional networks as they are reluctant, due to lack of self-efficacy or fear of judgment, to interact and make their professional practice public on a visible social learning space, thus looking for professional support within their schools only (Havelock, 2004; Trust, 2013). In particular, for teachers who are not familiar with online learning environments, their participation in online networks can often be challenging (Parkes, Zaka, & Davis, 2011; Schlager & Fusco, 2004).

It is also generally understood that without connections to teachers' school contexts, online professional learning networks risk coming across as irrelevant. Baker-Doyle and

Yoon (2011) observe that teacher interest in an online network is influenced by the applicability of the network in their workplace. Nevertheless, in McLaughlin and Talbert's (2006) view, in some cases, when the network resources are designed and developed by external specialists, without involving the teachers, and planned towards the schools generally, they may be perceived by teachers as falling short of their school-specific learning needs. As Lock (2006) puts it:

The realization of online learning communities to facilitate teacher professional development is a matter of carefully and deliberately designing dynamic learning environments that foster a learning culture. This requires a pedagogical framework...where people engage in shared learning experiences mediated through technology. (p. 663)

In that connection, Lieberman (2000) pinpoints that several school-based materialistic features can support or hinder teacher participation in online networks. Some of these features are lack of access to technology and the Internet. Wilson, Rimpilainen, Skinner, Cassidy, Christie, Coutts, and Sinclair, (2007) note that when the tools used for communication in networks fail or are interrupted, so too are the processes of online learning networks. Thus, readily available and reliable hardware and software are essential. Laterza, Carmichael, and Procter (2007) suggest that the resolution of such difficulties may come from an increased understanding of different educational contexts and a more careful alliance and mediation between schools, teachers, technical support, and network facilitators.

Professional learning networks are known to facilitate an intersection between online and offline collaboration. Offline and online networks are no longer seen as distinct kinds, but as one that blends and corresponds with teacher professional learning needs and activities, and are used complementarily (Brandtzæg, 2012; Owen, 2011; Subrahmanyam, Reich, Waechter, & Espinoza, 2008). Blended learning, which is defined as "the thoughtful fusion of face-to-face and online learning experiences" (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008, p. 5), is becoming the new framework for teacher professional learning, and is more widespread and recognized than previously studied online-only ones

(Haythornthwaite & Kendall, 2010). Essentially, “in professional associations, online activities complement the networking begun at meetings, events, conferences, and workshops” (Downes, Fluck, Gibbons, Leonard, Matthews, Oliver, Vickers, & Williams, 2002, p. 52).

There is a broad agreement in the literature that the teachers’ shared learning experiences in professional learning networks can enhance their pedagogical skills and professional awareness more effectively than practices that do not enable shared learning opportunities (Harris & Jones, 2012; Krutka et al., 2017). Moreover, these experiences can be formed and developed within and beyond the organization (Cordingley, 2008). In that respect, Cordingley et al. (2005) claim that collaborative professional learning works best when external networks are brought into the schools’ learning context, and when these external agencies develop learning partnerships with teachers. Additionally, a systematic review by Cordingley et al. (2007) explores how teachers are supported in their professional learning with the help of external networks. The review implies that teacher professional learning is most successful when the school merges external networks with the schools’ already existing internal learning networks. However, for all this, Cordingley et al. (2005) and Cordingley et al. (2007) emphasize that strong links between the schools and external agencies are exceptionally significant. In this practice of forming and developing educational ties for learning partnerships, the advent of communication technologies and Internet has enabled schools and teachers to develop extensive learning networks online; enabling professional learning relationships both within institutions and across institutional borders, and thereby overcoming the limitations of geographical distance (Ball, Steinle, & Chang, 2015). It is within this context that Bolam et al. (2005) also support that online education networks have the potential to be extensive, effective, and essential spaces for both student learning and teacher professional learning, but only if schools are open to both internal and external learning networks in order to maintain and expand the nature and function of schools as learning communities.

3.5 Transnationalism and learning

Transnationalism has emerged in recent years as a powerful new concept with which to understand how the world is now constituted by cross-border relationships; patterns of economic, political, and cultural relations; and complex affiliations and social formations that span the world. It names the multiple and messy proximities through which human societies have now become globally interconnected and interdependent. (Rizvi, 2009, p. 276)

Over the last few decades, globalization has brought about an increase in the social, cultural, political, and economic interconnectedness between countries. Rizvi (2007) points out that global interconnectivity is no longer simply about systems of economics, politics, and environment but "produced organically through the shifting subjectivities of people" (p. 3). This global interconnectivity is also known to be reshaping learning; with 'great flows' of people, things and ideas across national borders (Appadurai, 1996). Popkewitz and Rizvi (2009) note that globalization is "no longer linear but dynamic and networked and that this has highlighted the need to pay attention to the transnational" (p. 13).

Since the late 1990s, transnational thinking has earned recognition worldwide. It acknowledges that in the current era of globalization, these movements across borders are more advantageous than movements restricted in an individual country. Transnationalism accounts for interconnected national societies that are socially and culturally diverse, and for people that move or reach across this diversity. Smith (2001) describes "transnational social relations as 'anchored in', while also transcending, one or more nation-states" (p. 3). It is widely accepted that transnationalism enables the possibility of getting "cross-border agents, structures, and interactions that are not all worldwide in scope" (Khagram & Levitt, 2008, p. 26). Transnationalism makes possible a way of understanding the complex life-settings and experiences of people who are part of networks that stretch across national borders.

Education, now more than ever, is deeply influenced by the nature and features of transnationalism. In these changing circumstances, Johnson (2010) comments that:

Teaching and teacher education, in general, are without question under more pressure today than at any period in recent memory, as increased global access to schooling magnifies the demand for teachers and the corresponding demand for teacher education. Globalization has worsened the economic situation for many localities, but it also opens up spaces for educators to reach across geopolitical borders in new ways to transform the status quo. (p. 127)

Indeed, the processes and practices of globalization and transnationalism have been observed to influence and impact various aspects of contemporary education. Transnational education can include but is not limited to distance learning, online provision, joint and dual courses and programs, campus visits, or blended learning. In particular, the globalization of educational systems has been shaped by new expectations and aspirations for educational transferability. There is broad agreement that transnationalism has affected the nature and extent of the demand and supply of education by opening up previously unreachable and unfamiliar options for learners. Rizvi (2008) argues that “education is deeply implicated in these transformations, affected by the accelerating transnational dynamics of globalization” (p. 63). It also has profound implications for schools and school systems.

With the emergence of the Internet, diverse world cities and their education systems are now connected effortlessly. In this essence, as researchers, such as Flint and Taylor (2007), and Taylor (2004), exemplify that standardization of academic curriculum and assessment makes this transnational movement of people in education more readily feasible. Such movement of people can improve education in many ways; by increasing diversity, specialization, and global employability. It is against this background that Castells (2010) explains that the networked era has emerged not only because of the Internet but also because of globalization, the increasing global influence of multinational organizations, and new economic consciousness and aspirations. Fullan (2007) notes that educational systems worldwide have endorsed the capacity building of organizations in reaction to the public demands in this global age. Recent educational reforms in many countries have looked for transnational solutions to meet these

educational demands, by developing intellectual resources for transnational efficacy (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009).

Education systems worldwide are becoming increasingly complex in the context of globalization and technology. There is a strong interest in opportunities for developing transnational connectivity within and between different levels of education systems to achieve particular educational goals of greater organizational quality (Rizvi, 2007; Rizvi, 2014a, Rizvi, 2014b). Within the contexts of these interests and aims, it is believed that transnational networks can serve as an environment to explore and steer new pedagogical ideas and practices. Interestingly, more and more educational organizations now take part in activities and alliances with a global dimension, and which is provided on a transnational platform (Gu, 2005; Martin & Wyness, 2013; Kenway & Fahey, 2014; Kenway & McCarthy, 2015). Several other scholars have explored various dynamics of this transnational connectivity; the implications of increased global interconnectivity for the education offered and the social groups served (Kenway, Fahey, Epstein, Koh, McCarthy, & Rizvi, 2017; Kenway & Langmead, 2017; Mukherjee, 2015; Rizvi, 2017), the continuation of colonial-era relationships between countries (Casinader, 2017; Chana, 2010; Koh & Kenway, 2015; Martin & Raja, 2013; Martin & Griffiths, 2012, 2013), and geographical imaginations, mobility and practices in the global age (Gu & Schweisfurth, 2015; Kenway, 2017; Koh & Kenway, 2015). In this current era of enhanced globalization, Casinader (2017) argues that till now:

The relationship between transnationalism and education has been highly restricted, aligned as it is with the utilitarian perspective, in which transnationalism has been seen primarily in the context of the international commodification of teaching and learning; the economic aspects of the globalizing process have been very much in focus. The accent remains on the notion of 'trans-', reflecting the simple act of movement of phenomena across defined national boundaries, which is also at the foundation of transnationalism in the higher and school education context. Under the more expanded configuration as a disposition of the mind, however, the concept acquires much greater scope as a lens for interpretation of global movements, especially in the context of demographic shifting across the world, both temporary and permanent. (p. 21)

Educational researchers have also shown interest in other possible links between transnationalism and teacher professional learning. Teacher experiences in a transnational learning space are recognized as comprehensive and multifaceted (Dobos, 2011; Sanderson, 2011), concerning the multiplicity of cultures and interests (Hicks & Jarrett, 2008; Stella & Bhushan, 2011). According to Smith (2001), the multicultural experiences, which are inherent in this transnational space, can be advantageous for exploring the global milieu in which “locality is experienced and lived” (p. 2). It is generally understood that the teachers’ transnational engagements can challenge their local assumptions, beliefs, and practices. As teachers interact with and relate to different members in the network, they learn more about themselves and reflect on their own unique, individual, and contextual pedagogical beliefs and practices (Smith, K., 2009, 2013). However, these spaces, while enabling the opportunities for developing intercultural discourses and transnational orientations to learning, also sometimes bring with them the “probability of cultural misunderstandings, tensions, and conflicts” (Ang, Van Dyne, & Tan, 2011, p. 582).

Martin and Griffiths (2012) argue that, too commonly, previous research has developed an idealized and credulous value of intercultural experiences, which are mostly assumed to transform teacher perspectives, stimulate their global understanding, lead to deeper intercultural awareness, and successively result in professional learning. However, teacher participation in transnational learning networks can be a challenging process. Hofstede (1986) remarks that “getting intellectually and emotionally accustomed to the fact that in other societies, people learn in different ways. This means taking one step back from one's values and cherished beliefs, which is far from easy” (p. 316). Challenges are found to be mainly embedded in the intercultural nature of transnational experiences, which, as Alred et al. (2003) state, “presents a challenge to customary modes of perception, thought, and feeling” (as cited in Gu 2005, p. 16). In the same perspective, Brock, Wallace, Herschbach, Johnson, Raikes, Warren, and Poulsen (2006) believe that feelings of teacher discomfort and isolation can emerge in these networks when teachers confront unfamiliar social or cultural milieus and are obliged to “operate

outside their comfort zones” (p. 36). In this aspect, Franson and Gu (2004) point out that, in a network, teachers will bring in their own beliefs, attitudes, assumptions, which might be unlike others. In such contexts, teachers are sometimes faced with unfamiliar pedagogies and ‘other’ conceptualizations of professional learning that may be at odds with their learning experiences at home (Martin & Griffiths, 2013). Moreover, it is also accepted that not all networks are helpful for all participants. Some networks, as Lima (2010) cautions, could be risky and disadvantageous, since some inadequately formed connections reinforce prejudices rather than challenge stereotypes. To overcome this, Gustavsen (2001) suggests that ongoing teacher interactions and the development of positive relationships among teachers help overcome the challenges that come with transnational spaces.

Transnational learning networks typically involve professionals learning with and from each other through transnational discourses. However, learning experiences may not be merely duplicated from one institution to another, or from one teacher to another. In view of this, Martin (2008) pinpoints that this is because “teachers’ social and cultural heritages” influence their experiences with transnational networks and their use of these experiences (p. 62). Similarly, Gu (2005) warns that any “attempt to indoctrinate teachers with imported and decontextualized teaching theory and practice ignores the personalized and contextualized nature of teachers’ schemata, and is unlikely to result in success” (p. 18). Gu’s (2005) study made a comparison of the perceptions of Chinese teachers of English, who had received professional training from British trainers, with the perceptions of Chinese non-participant teachers of English. Although the participants had more positive attitudes towards interactive teaching practices when compared to their Chinese non-participant counterparts, they did not abandon their traditional teaching practices entirely, keeping in mind the need to apply the practices that are “suitable for our Chinese students” (p. 10). In other words, newly imported ideas were not quickly or easily adopted.

Transnationalism is also known to be linked with a sense of simultaneity; where social connections transcend across space in a continuous social field and simultaneously retain the textures of local settings (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004). The boundaries between two domains, or discourses, can become a fused realm—or what Bhabha (1994) terms as ‘Third Space’. Through open interactions, representatives from ‘First Space’ and ‘Second Space’ constantly define and re-define a hybrid ‘Third Space’ as they traverse their identity, culture, and their shared language in the new context (Bhabha, 1994). A Third Space is known to channel both spaces in dynamic hybridity that transcends both while privileging neither. Bhabha uses the metaphor of a museum stairwell to show how the passage (Third Space) provides a connection that is simultaneously a part of and beyond the various galleries:

The hither and thither of the stairwell, the temporal movement and passage that also prevents identities at either end of it from settling into primordial polarities. This interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy. (1994, p. 4)

A Third Space, according to Bhabha, cannot be restricted to a fixed place or defined in concrete terms. He suggests that “meaning is constructed across the bar of difference and separation” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 210) but also hints us to slant that bar and blur those lines of difference. The ability to interpret unfamiliar discourses and transcend boundaries creates a hybrid self that can function as a catalyst for the exchange of ideas and information. And within a Third Space, the speakers “think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities...to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 2). More recently, in the changing environments of intercultural learning and global citizenship, Hassim (2015) suggests the use of a Third Space to explore where and how different perspectives connect and deviate in intercultural learning scenarios:

Within any Third Space, people are exposed to a combination of familiar and less familiar cultural norms. This creates situations of discomfort, which are ideal conditions for exploring interculturality and its implications for people-people relationships as well as transforming thinking and behavior with respect to cultural diversity... Discomfort is not a sign to stop: it is a healthy starting point for transformative intercultural learning... The

intent is not to identify a superior standpoint; rather, it is to affirm the importance of a common humanity when attempting to address the great ethical challenges facing all sectors and levels of society...The Third Space provides a platform to see and articulate common issues from multiple perspectives. (p. 20)

In a similar vein, Martin and Griffiths (2012) emphasize the value of understanding culture in a relational sense. Their study defies the norm that intercultural learning requires an emphasis on cultural commonalities and shared goals; findings imply that if the exclusive focus is on commonalities, it escapes the more complex work of learning about and from differences. Furthermore, Martin (2013) notes that an understanding of difference is useful to the experience of an enhanced understanding of one's own and others' cultures and identities. With this, the participants of the network step into a Third Space (Bhabha, 1994), and develop new meanings and understandings, both collectively and individually. In this process, "teachers will not only gain new knowledge, skills, and practices, but will also influence other teachers in powerful ways" (Harris & Jones, 2015, p. 12). Therefore, it is argued that transnational networks need to be seen as relational projects where meeting spaces grow into spaces of collaboration, co-operation, and conversation (Martin & Wyness, 2013; Martin & Raja, 2013; Trust, 2013).

3.6 Experiments in transnational learning networks

Collaboration across countries does not only signify intercultural cooperation for teachers, but also understanding different education systems. In many aspects, teachers are exposed to new ways of teaching and understanding other education systems beyond their own school confinement. (Cachia & Punie, 2012, p. 433)

Among the recent features of educational research, which are stimulated by an appreciation for globalization, is the exploration of the global flows of ideas, information, education resources, and education professionals. Rizvi (2007) observes teachers can take advantage of this transnationally networked society by developing educational connections across national borders. New opportunities and initiatives have emerged worldwide to support and sustain these flows, through the creation of transnational learning spaces. Research worldwide on transnationalism and the use of transnational learning spaces in education, largely recognizes its use and effectiveness

in initial teacher education through transnational university-school partnerships and/or transnational placements for teaching practicum (Bodycott & Walker, 2000; Dobos, 2011; Dunn & Wallace, 2005, 2006, 2008; Feast & Bretag, 2005; Leask, 2004; Mahmud & Sanderson, 2011; Seah & Edwards, 2006; Smith, K., 2009; Smith, L., 2009). Other studies also focus on the professional preparation of teaching staff for transnational teaching at the higher education level (International Education Association of Australia [IEAA], 2006; Connelly, Gaton & Olsen, 2006; Gribble & Ziguras, 2003; Hicks & Jarrett, 2008; Keevers, Bell, Ganesharatnam, Dawood Sultan, See Yin Lim, Loh, Lefoe, Hall, & Scholz, 2014; Keevers, Lefoe, Leask, Dawood Sultan, Ganesharatnam, Loh, & See Yin Lim, 2014; Pannan & Gribble, 2005).

A growing number of studies draw attention to the use of transnational professional learning networks by school teachers, all the more with developments in technology and the Internet, which have enabled broader and extensive possibilities of learning through such networks (Huang, 2016; Trust et al., 2016). Many of these transnational learning spaces are using various technologies to provide the necessary resources for online transnational collaboration and teacher professional learning. For example, eTwinning is a large online community for schools in Europe. It enables teachers to find each other, interact, collaborate on projects, and participate in professional development activities organized at the national and European levels. As of October 2016, 400,000 teachers from 166,000 schools in over 40 European countries have participated in the eTwinning project for professional development. Bacigalupo and Cachia (2011) acknowledge that the eTwinning model is an effective professional learning network for teachers in terms of its bottom-up approach with low administrative control and ratio between the number of participants and running cost. The European Commission (2013) confirms direct or indirect benefits in the professional development of eTwinning participating teachers, such as growth in the teachers' self-confidence and motivation, development of their skills in ICT, languages, project management, and teaching, reduction in teacher isolation, and so on. It is also observed that teacher collaboration through eTwinning enables teachers to:

...further develop a wide array of interpersonal skills, such as communication, cooperation, and better time management...to ameliorate their leadership skills, through managing people, taking initiative, and learning to support and instruct teamwork. Others felt that through their participation they had opportunities to be creative, to develop their own ideas, and learn how to learn through collaboration. (Cachia & Punie, 2012, p. 433)

Apart from eTwining, some transnational sites and organizations are known to help teachers find willing partners for collaborative learning. Global SchoolNet [GSN] is a non-profit organization that supports quality learning practices through resource-driven collaboration (Aspin, Chapman, Evans, & Bagnall, 2012). It was established in 1984 as Free Educational Mail [FrEdMail] in San Diego, California. GSN's main goal is to help teachers find collaborative learning partners and relevant projects. By engaging teachers and students in e-learning projects worldwide, the organization's purpose is to develop skills in math, science, literacy and communication skills, promote teamwork and collaboration in education, foster multicultural understanding, and encourage professional preparedness in both teachers and students. Nearly 120,000 educators from 194 countries have participated in GSN projects as of 2019². There are diverse learning projects for every age and to support every subject area.

iEARN [International Education and Resource Network], a similar international learning network for school teachers, offers both face-to-face workshops and online professional development courses for teachers (Aspin et al., 2012). Since 1988, iEARN has helped more than 100,000 teachers across the world to improve their collaborative and technological skills needed to participate effectively in an online global and collaborative learning projects and face-to-face meetings. It is a non-profit organization, involving over 30,000 schools from more than 140 countries. The network has over 150 projects, which are designed and implemented by teachers and students to fit their teaching and learning needs and schedules³. The primary focus is on the particular curriculum and classroom context of each participating teacher and student. The online courses are

² Global SchoolNet 2019, <http://www.globalschoolnet.org/>

³ iEARN 2019, <https://iearn.org/professional-development>

designed to assist teachers in how to integrate global projects and activities into their teaching. The main goal is to equip teachers and students with the skills and knowledge to use technology in collaborative projects. ePals is another online learning community that facilitates global learning. Founded in 1996, ePals connects teachers and students all over the world. The program offers free digital content, teaching resources, and activities to K-12 teachers and students. The program also runs a teacher forum for teacher-members to interact with other teachers around the world. The forum is used to ask subject-specific questions, share tips and suggestions, find learning partners, and more. As of 2019, ePals has 1424 project collaborations across 111 countries⁴.

Clearly, in the context of teacher professional learning, transnational learning networks are widely known to provide “opportunities of learning new ways of teaching, trying new pedagogies by bringing international learning partners into the classroom, and raising global awareness are particularly relevant to the teacher professional learning in international school networks against the backdrop of globalization” (Huang, 2016, p. 207). Teachers can easily multiply their professional connections beyond the local and can seek guidance and support, and access new information and ideas, at any time and from anywhere, with the help of a diverse transnational network of people and resources (Hur & Brush, 2009; Trust, 2012, 2013). Such networks are now used as professional meeting spaces for teachers who have complex learning and teaching needs for which their local teacher networks cannot cater. A study by Trust (2013) investigated 14 K-12 teachers’ participation in an online course about using professional learning network tools for educational guidance from educators across the globe. A survey was conducted to establish whether the online course was successful in developing the teachers’ help-seeking behaviors further than their schools. It was found that after the completion of the online course, teachers showed more readiness and enthusiasm to use online professional learning networks to seek guidance and help from other teachers and experts. In another study, Trust et al. (2016) studied the experiences of 732 P-12 teachers in a transnational professional learning network. They concur that

⁴ ePals 2019, <https://www.epals.com/>

the anytime-anywhere characteristics of professional learning networks, and their varied functions to cater to teachers' different learning interests and needs, improve professional practice as teachers develop positive attitudes towards the accessibility and scope of these networks and, as a result, use it more effectively.

Similarly, based on data from surveys and several case studies on a school linking program initiated to develop partnerships between schools in the United Kingdom, Africa, and China, it was found that there were perceived advantages and positive influence of the program on both teaching and student learning (Edge, Mejias, Odeck, Ogolla, Sannoh, & Suswele, 2008). It was also found that teacher participation in such programs helps in cultivating more positive attitudes towards globally-integrated educational practices, in getting access to a comprehensive range of international teaching strategies, and in developing their knowledge, skills and professional expertise. Focusing on the International Networks for Democratic Education [INDE] and related research in the Netherlands, Veugelers (2005) establishes that teacher professional learning is horizontal, reciprocal, and reflective in transnational networks, and that these networks enable teachers to become reflective practitioners with global educational goals.

Transnational networks are known to provide opportunities for teachers to learn from one another and self-reflect on their practice (Edge, Frayman, & Lawrie, 2009; Krutka et al., 2017). Teachers' reflections on their transnational experiences concerning their intrinsic cultural predispositions and pedagogical assumptions can result in "perspective transformation" (Smith, K., 2009, p. 111). Edge et al. (2009) identify that collaborative activities planned by the teachers themselves in the network; including teacher-to-teacher interactions, team teaching, and special theme days or events related to the partnership, develop the teachers' self-efficacy and self-confidence. Another study reported by Edge, Higham, and Frayman (2010) establish that teachers, by connecting classrooms (students) globally through these networks, can lead their own learning also.

Studies also address the conditions and difficulties of transnational professional learning networks. The process of building and sustaining these networks “is often slow and fraught with conflicts, silences, and misunderstandings” (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009, p. 50). Other challenges include lack of school support, lack of funding, communication barriers, infrastructural barriers, teacher workload, negative attitudes, and so on (Edge et al., 2009). Teachers in these networks are from unique and diverse work settings that can influence what and how they learn. With this in view, Huang (2016) suggests that the effectiveness of transnational professional learning networks in education can only be realized “alongside the accounts of teachers’ current circumstances regarding the prior knowledge about the other’s education, the ongoing teaching practice, the weight of global awareness in teacher identity, and the initial motivation to participate” (p. 185).

However, some studies also observe that although engaging in reflective practice is mostly a part of the teaching profession (Bolton, 2014), teacher engagement in transnational learning networks and the ensuing teacher reflections do not always extend to teacher professional learning (Smith, K., 2009, 2013), and not all members of a transnational network do so (Tange & Jensen, 2012). In many cases, teachers struggle between the transnational nature of these networks and their highly contextual professional work lives. “The global reach of such communities removes them [teachers] from local activities and thus weakens this aspect of practice” (Jones & Preece, 2006, p. 118). Teachers in that situation need to strategically modify what they experience in the network to fit within the local needs and the local contexts of their schools and classrooms. Hepple (2012) suggests that professional learning through transnational networking is most effective when it is situated in the unique everyday work of teachers and focused on their unique classroom teaching practices and concerns. To achieve this, the processes of transnational networks need a negotiation between knowledge provided and knowledge applicable in the contexts of the teachers’ schools, classrooms, and overall professional practice.

Research on professional learning networks has shown some support that with transnational learning spaces, teachers have more extensive opportunities for reciprocal sharing of diverse knowledge, ideas, resources, and practices than local professional learning networks. Then again, Huang (2016) points out that most studies on professional learning networks in education “still investigate school networks or teacher networks within certain national or provincial education systems, although it has been noted elsewhere, for instance in the business sector, that professionals in international cross-cultural professional communities can learn from each another” (p. 17). Moreover, while a considerable body of work has demonstrated that transnational learning spaces enable greater possibilities to enhance the quality of education and educators, as discussed in this chapter, the use of these possibilities in India and its potential to support teacher professional learning remains largely uncharted. One of the very few initiatives that has emerged is the Australia-Asia BRIDGE School Partnerships Project, which has sought to develop a learning network across Indian and Australian teachers.

3.7 Australia-Asia BRIDGE School Partnerships Project

The Building Relationships through Intercultural Dialogue and Growing Engagement [BRIDGE] program began in January 2008. BRIDGE is the Asia Education Foundation’s [AEF] flagship teacher professional development program for over 10 years. AEF is an arm of *Asialink*, funded by the Australian Government since the early 1990s in order to encourage Australians to forge stronger commercial and cultural ties with countries, people and organizations in Asia, and to overcome accordingly the historical legacy of the White Australia Policy, which had banned immigration from Asia (Walker, 2019). Based on the recognition that Australia’s future lies within its own region, *Asialink* has attempted to change Australian attitudes about Asia, encouraging them to learn more about Asian languages and cultures. In this way, it has performed a public diplomacy function. AEF was created in 1992, not only with an outreach function in mind but also to encourage schools across Australia to develop learning links with schools in Asia. Over

the past three decades, AEF has worked closely with the Australian Governments to pursue this strategic objective, with the BRIDGE program as one of its many initiatives.

The BRIDGE program attempts to build teacher capacity, seeking mainly to develop intercultural understanding among Australian teachers and students through school partnerships between Australia and Asia. The BRIDGE report *What Works 9* makes clear that “while the exact focus of each BRIDGE country project varies and specific activities differ from school to school, the overarching concern of BRIDGE is the fostering of intercultural understanding through authentic cross-cultural engagement” (AEF, 2015, p. 17). The program is funded by the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade [DFAT]. It was awarded ‘Best Practice in International Education’ by the IEAA in 2016. As of 2019, it has grown to include 13 countries, including Malaysia, Indonesia, China, Malaysia, South Korea, and Thailand. The program has established 382 school partnerships across Asia and involved over 1000 teachers⁵. Over the years, BRIDGE has been the topic of a number of reports with the title *What Works*, which contain both helpful advice for schools and clarification and explanation of the main objectives of the program. BRIDGE report *What Works 6* emphasizes that the program is unique and involves more than capacity building:

The focus of BRIDGE on building teachers’ cultural knowledge and awareness, intercultural understanding, ICT skills, and capacity to manage partnerships as a whole school change process separates BRIDGE from many other international school partnership programs, which tend to focus solely on student-to-student connections... [Moreover], a school’s involvement in BRIDGE can achieve much more than developing teachers’ and students’ capabilities to engage with Asia. It can enhance their capabilities as global citizens, possessing both the ability and readiness to act and interact positively, respectfully, and open-mindedly with others in a globalized world. (AEF, 2014, pp. 3 & 12)

The objectives of the BRIDGE program are aligned to the views of policymakers and educational experts in Australia who emphasize that schools need to build intercultural understanding and knowledge of Asia among the Australian youth (Peucker & Hassim,

⁵ Asia Education Foundation 2019, <http://www.asiaeducation.edu.au/programmes/school-partnerships>

2014). The Australian Government recognizes that fostering Australian students' intercultural understanding is central to education in Australia—a nation that is increasingly intercultural and interconnected (Peucker & Hassim, 2014). This aim has also been highlighted in the 'Melbourne Declaration' (Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs, 2008):

Global integration and international mobility have increased rapidly in the past decade. As a consequence, new and exciting opportunities for Australians are emerging. This heightens the need to nurture an appreciation of and respect for social, cultural and religious diversity, and a sense of global citizenship. India, China, and other Asian nations are growing and their influence on the world is increasing. Australians need to become 'Asia literate', engaging and building strong relationships with Asia. Globalization and technological change are placing greater demands on education and skill development in Australia and the nature of jobs available to young Australians is changing faster than ever. (p. 4)

Intercultural understanding is one of seven general capabilities, and Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia is one of the three cross-curriculum priorities identified in the Australian Curriculum (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority [ACARA], 2019). The key ideas for intercultural understanding are organized into three interrelated elements in the learning continuum: (1) Recognizing culture and developing respect, (2) Interacting and empathizing with others, (3) Reflecting on intercultural experiences and taking responsibility. The Asia and Australia's Engagement with Asia priority has been developed around three key concepts of Asia and its diversity, achievements and contributions of the people of Asia, and the Asia-Australian engagement (ACARA, 2019).

Despite the Australian Government's emphasis on intercultural understanding, the AEF (2013) notes that schools in Australia have generally perceived intercultural understanding as mere knowledge or learning about diverse cultures. One potential problem with this approach is that the cultures of Asia may be seen as distinct and fixed, rather than dynamic and interconnected (AEF, 2013; Hassim, 2013). Through programs, such as BRIDGE, the AEF seeks to enable schools in Australia with opportunities beyond cultural awareness of Asia, placing more emphasis on authentic and dynamic cross-

cultural interactions (AEF, 2014). Against this backdrop, AEF (2015) explains that intercultural understanding:

...is not an automatic by-product of a multicultural society: it needs to be both considered and intentional...[It] is not only about cultural awareness and knowledge; rather, it also encompasses respect, communication, perspective-taking, empathy, reflexivity, addressing stereotypes and prejudice, and negotiation...It takes considerable effort, at the institutional and people-to-people levels, to get culturally diverse individuals and groups to go beyond co-existence and tolerance and begin to engage cross-culturally and learn from one another. This remains a challenge even for Australia, which is arguably one of the world's most successful nations at multiculturalism. (pp. 2 & 10)

It is also supported in previous BRIDGE evaluations and reports that the BRIDGE program incorporates features considered most favorable for successful cross-cultural engagement of teachers and students in Australia. Findings of the *What Works 6* survey of Australian BRIDGE schools show that 97 percent of all BRIDGE teachers in Australia reported the development of their intercultural understanding through the program. Ninety-five percent stated that their knowledge and awareness of the partner country has grown. Seventy-nine percent indicated that the school staff had a chance to visit the partner school and establish personal connections. And, 72 percent reported that BRIDGE has enabled their schools to develop and maintain school partnerships for cross-cultural engagement. In the same vein, according to the Australian Council for Educational Research [ACER] 2010 independent evaluation report on the Australia-Indonesia BRIDGE (Nugroho & Beavis, 2010):

The program has achieved a number of positive outcomes in participating schools. Overall, teachers indicated a positive experience to the program...Where the strongest linkages have formed, communication and collaboration between teachers and between students are regular and ongoing...These strong collaborative linkages were fostered and are maintained through strong school, community, and, in some cases, local Government support and have a great chance of continuing after the program ends. (p. iii)

Indonesian teachers also reported that their participation in the BRIDGE program influenced their teaching practice. Moreover, most of them were comfortable with using

ICT in their classrooms. Others spoke of adopting new practices and integrating more creative and innovative teaching approaches with the program. Australian teachers reported positive impacts on themselves, their students and their schools. The majority of teachers remained optimistic about the BRIDGE program continuing in their schools. The evaluation also found that while most of the teachers were successful in establishing strong professional relationships and collaborative school-to-school partnerships, some of them had not been able to generate and sustain strong professional relationships and professional learning links, often because of “communication breakdowns. Lack of responses, connectivity issues, and timing constraints in the face of other teaching and learning responsibilities were attributed to the drop in communication” (p. iii). Three key factors for developing sustainable school-to-school learning partnerships have been identified by the evaluation: “The first is a strong, preferably high-level, advocate within a school from the beginning. The second is good infrastructure to support a range of communication and the third is recurring face-to-face interactions and exchange” (p. 6). Reciprocally, the BRIDGE report *What Works 6* suggests that “partnerships built around common goals, shared understandings, and a commitment to innovation are most likely to be sustainable” (AEF, 2014, p. 3).

The BRIDGE program was launched in India in 2015 and has established school-to-school partnerships with 16 schools; by connecting schools across Australia with their counterparts in India through a range of activities undertaken. Nevertheless, previous studies on the BRIDGE program are mainly quantitative and largely evaluative (Nugroho & Beavis, 2010). They focus mainly on the Australian teachers’ perceptions and experiences of the program, and the intercultural dimensions of their engagement (AEF, 2014, 2015). The ways in which schools and teachers in India are considering the use of the BRIDGE program for teacher professional development is largely unknown. Given that, this study is exploratory and focuses only on the Indian teachers’ perceptions and experiences of the program. Against this background, this study also seems timely as research on the use of transnational teacher professional development programs in Indian schools, and research on how Indian teachers perceive it for their professional

learning is scant and largely uncharted. This study attempts to fill this gap in the literature. The main aim is to understand the ways in which transnational networks, such as BRIDGE, have the potential to support the quality of and access to teacher professional learning in Indian schools.

3.8 Conclusion

Despite the Indian Government's continuing investment in reforming teacher professional learning, there remains a significant gap between policy rhetoric and the reality of most of the programs it has instituted in recent decades. The quality of these programs remains, as most policy actors and educational researchers have pointed out, at best uneven. The need to reform teacher professional learning is therefore considered necessary. A growing body of research on effective teacher professional learning provides support for collaborative models of learning. In the context of rapid developments in ICTs, the idea of learning networks across schools, systems, and national boundaries has acquired renewed significance. The literature reviewed in this chapter has suggested that professional learning networks can be a collaborative medium for supporting teacher professional learning practices. With innovations in technology emerging almost on a daily basis, it has become possible for teachers to extend their learning networks transnationally. Research on teacher professional learning has also provided some evidence that such networks contribute to teacher professional practice through the sharing of ideas and resources. However, the literature reviewed in this chapter suggests that such learning is not possible everywhere, but depends on the particular school context, leadership, and orientations to learning. This study examines the particularities of the Indian schools that might encourage their teachers to participate in transnational networks, asking how it might be possible for them to take advantage of such networks to promote more robust and effective forms of teacher professional learning.

To investigate this question, this thesis uses the illustrative case study of the Australia-Asia BRIDGE School Partnerships Project, as it has been established and operated in a

number of private schools in the Delhi region. This case study is used to examine a range of broader issues around the creation of transnational spaces for the professional learning of teachers in India, the challenges that are encountered in maintaining them, and the conditions under which they can be potentially effective. The main focus of this study is therefore on the perceptions and practices of teachers in India as they negotiate the opportunities and possibilities of a transnational teacher professional development program. In the next chapter, I provide a methodological account of this case study and describe how the data were collected and then analyzed to provide insights about the participating teachers' expectations and experiences within transnational learning networks as well as their broader possibilities in the wider context of India's education system.

Chapter 4

METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

The literature reviewed in the previous chapter suggests that the evolving age of globalization and communication technologies has opened up new possibilities for conceptualizing and creating teacher professional learning networks in general and transnational learning spaces, in particular. Such networks have been shown worldwide to be effective in supporting teacher professional learning, not least because they provide opportunities for collaborative learning across different educational systems. The purpose of this study is to explore the potential of these learning networks within the specificities of the Indian context. To carry out this exploration, a case study approach (Stake, 2005) is adopted to discern the perceptions of a group of teachers already participating in a transnational professional learning program developed in Australia, which is aimed at connecting Australian teachers with teachers in a number of countries in Asia. The program is at its early stages of implementation in India, so it is possible to find out what motivated Indian teachers to participate in it, what benefits in professional learning they expect from it, and how generalizable they believe its principles to be across other schools in India. What aspects of the program, and the principles they underlie, are applicable to Indian schools where the quality of and opportunities for teacher professional learning practices are uneven, far from satisfactory, or in some cases, non-existent.

This chapter opens with a discussion of the methodology applicable to this study. Philosophical assumptions underlying my methodological approach, which is an interpretive case study, are discussed, pointing to its appropriateness for an examination of the potential of transnational teacher professional learning networks in India. This discussion is followed by the study design and methods, including the processes involved in gaining access to the research site and participants. I then describe the techniques and procedures involved in the generation and analysis of data. In

particular, the concept of potential is critically interrogated. The chapter ends with a discussion on the ethical considerations, generalizability, and trustworthiness of the study.

4.2 Qualitative research

The study is informed by the traditions of qualitative methods in the gathering and analysis of data. These traditions are apt because little research is done in India to find out what teachers think about the professional development programs they are offered, and the extent to which these programs contribute to their professional learning (Bolitho & Padwad, 2012; Kumar et al., 2012). As I have already observed in Chapter 2 that policies and programs around teacher professional learning in India are known to seldom meet their objectives, and are less successful than planned, envisioned, and anticipated. Moreover, this assessment is based on quantitative surveys of large-scale and intermittent programs (Subitha, 2018). By their very nature, these surveys reveal the inadequacy of the programs, but not why teachers find them so (Kumar et al., 2012). The question of how these programs fail to meet teachers' learning needs within the context of their professional roles and the conditions in which they work is obscured. The actual perceptions of teachers are not sought, along with their opinions about what kind of professional learning they might prefer. A qualitative approach to research is more apt in providing teachers a voice.

Accordingly, this study is interested in finding out about perceptions of a group of Indian teachers about professional learning in general, and their views about their participation in a transnational professional development program, namely the Australia-Asia BRIDGE School Partnerships Project, in particular. A qualitative approach is invariably preferred for gaining an in-depth, contextual, and subjective understanding of the dynamics acting upon the teachers' expectations, experiences, and possibilities of the program for their professional learning. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) define qualitative research as:

a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations...At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, the phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. (p. 3)

Qualitative research is a tradition of research in the social sciences aimed at obtaining a deep understanding of society or human nature. A typical feature of this approach, as Bogdan and Biklen (2007) note, is that “qualitative researchers are concerned with process rather than simply with outcomes or products” (p. 6). Creswell (1998) explains the process wherein “the researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting” (p. 15). Similarly, Sarantakos (2005) and Patton (2002) maintain that a qualitative focus is most suitable when trying to explore views about a contextual event and/or experience. Unlike quantitative research, in qualitative research, the setting, its people, their perceptions, their interactions, their interpretations, and their reflections, all are taken into consideration (Wolcott, 2009). From this point of view, Bogdan and Biklen (2007) comment:

Unlike quantitative researchers, qualitative researchers do not see themselves as collecting ‘the facts’ of human behavior, which when accumulated will provide verification and elaboration on a theory that will allow scientists to state causes and predict human behavior. Qualitative researchers understand human behavior as too complex to do that and see the search for cause and prediction as undermining their ability to grasp the basic interpretive nature of human behavior and the human experience. (pp. 42–43)

A qualitative approach to research, however, does not provide a uniform view of how a social phenomenon might be studied. As Patton (2002) notes, qualitative research is open to adaptation as perspectives develop and experiences vary. Qualitative researchers “avoid getting locked into rigid designs that eliminate responsiveness and pursue new paths of discovery as they emerge” (Patton, 2002, p. 40). In this qualitative study, this flexibility has allowed me to interact with the participants, explore their

views, and generate further understandings as they developed. Discussing the embryonic nature of the process of qualitative research, Bogdan and Biklen (2007) state:

As a qualitative researcher planning to develop some kind of theory about what you have been studying, the direction you will travel comes after you have been collecting the data, after you have spent time with your subjects. You are not putting together a puzzle whose picture you already know. You are constructing a picture that takes shape as you collect and examine the parts. (pp. 6–7)

Accordingly, the emergent design flexibility and open-ended nature of the qualitative approach has proved useful for me in this study to form a better understanding of the views and nuances that possibly influenced the professional learning expectations and experiences of my research participants. With this approach, I was able to explore the complexities and the processes that give rise to the social phenomena of transnational learning networks. In this way, my study is essentially inductive by developing theory based on the data generated, not testing a pre-given theory. It is exploratory and does not hold any prior hypothesis about the phenomenon under investigation. Moreover, a broad theoretical framework, which is set out in the literature review chapter, serves only as an initial and tentative direction to interrogate the case of a particular transnational teacher professional learning network in order to generate insights that might be more generally applicable.

4.3 Researcher as the instrument

Qualitative researchers bring with them an edifice of knowledge and experiences to the research situation, which merges with other people's understandings or interpretations of the phenomenon being studied. In these conditions, Lincoln and Guba (2000) observe that "any [researcher's] gaze is always filtered through the lenses of language, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity ... there are no objective observations" (p. 19). Similarly, Bogdan and Biklen (2007) suggest that the qualitative researcher's prime objective is to add to already existing knowledge, and not to pass judgment on a phenomenon:

It is fine to shape your study, but you need to be open to being shaped by the research experience and to having your thinking be informed by the data. The data argues with your general notions, so your thinking is necessarily shaped by the empirical world you are exploring. You need to be open to this and not defensive of what you bring to the research. (p. 38)

Qualitative researchers should be susceptible to the participants' work contexts and all the factors within, including the physical settings, the people, the explicit and implicit agendas, and nonverbal behavior (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). With this in view, Merriam (2009) emphasizes that the qualitative nature of the study calls for "understanding the phenomenon of interest from the participants' perspective, not the researchers" (p. 14). As a researcher in this qualitative study, I too have attempted to be sensitive to the biases natural in this type of research. In collecting and analyzing the data, I have been conscious of my history and experiences. However, I am also aware that:

All researchers bring their own specific backgrounds to a study. This often includes training in a particular field, knowledge of substantive topics, a particular standpoint, and theoretical approaches. This shapes what approaches are taken and what issues are focused on. These markers provide the parameters, the tools, and the general guide of how to proceed. (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 55)

Bogdan and Biklen (2007) further contend that although it is important to identify biases and monitor them as to how they may be shaping the collection and interpretation of data:

Some researchers and writers are so concerned about controlling their personal biases that it immobilizes them. Our advice is to lighten up. Acknowledge that no matter how much you try, you cannot divorce your research and writing from your past experiences, who you are, what you believe, and what you value. Being a clean slate is neither possible nor desirable. The goal is to become more reflective and conscious of how who you are may shape and enrich what you do, not to eliminate it. On the other hand, do not be so headstrong about who you are and what you believe that it leads to being unreflective and to losing your self-consciousness. (p. 38)

In the opening chapter of this thesis, I explained my professional background and recount my professional learning experiences as a teacher. My past experiences as an Indian school teacher give me a potential advantage in terms of the data collection and

analysis processes. I bring enthusiastically and candidly shared in-depth perspectives of the participants into the analysis and interpretation of the data. My experiences as a secondary school teacher in India, my previous professional learning experiences as a teacher, and my previous learning experiences with my co-workers, all combine to shape my interest in and thinking about teacher professional learning practices.

This study is also consistent with the case study approach to research.

4.4 Case study

The case study approach is described as "a methodology, a type of design in qualitative research, an object of study, and a product of the inquiry" (Creswell, Hanson, Plano, Vicki, & Morales, 2007, p. 245). It is defined as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the 'case') in-depth and within its real-world context" (Yin, 2014, p. 16). For Stake (1995), it is "the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances" (p. xi). The underlying goal of the case study approach is to conduct a comprehensive analysis of a topic or issue, within its context, to understand it from the participants' perspectives (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 2005; Yin, 2014). It is also known as an "iterative process" (Yin, 2014, p. xxii). Similar to other forms of qualitative research, the researcher seeks to subjectively explore, understand, and present the perspectives of participants, by interacting with them in their natural setting (Creswell, 2013). This interaction between the researcher and participants is considered essential to generate in-depth data (Creswell, 2013). For that reason, constructive and interpretive orientations usually flow throughout the implementation of this research approach.

Stake (2005) regards the case study approach as qualitative and generally aligned with a constructivist and interpretivist focus. An interpretive position enables the researcher to look at reality through multiple and subjective meanings and understandings. Knowledge generated from this research process is closely related to the context of the case. Within this framework, the researcher's role in producing knowledge is crucial.

Stake (2005) further emphasizes that the researcher plays an interpretive role, which is crucial in the case study process as the researcher is interactive and participates in the study. The researcher attempts to capture a self-interpreted reality of the case and also study the case contextually to explore in detail the assimilated processes in which the case unfolds. Against this backdrop, Creswell (2014) also notes that the researcher's perceptions and interpretations become part of the inquiry and, as a result, a subjective and interpretive focus is typical in this research process and often flows throughout the case study approach.

According to Merriam (2009), the detailed insights gained from the case study research can help to develop a field's knowledge base. Creswell (2013) and Yin (2014) maintain that a further advantage of case study research is that it enables researchers to retain meaningful features and descriptions of real-life events and organizational processes. A topic can be investigated in greater detail, using a smaller number of participants (Merriam, 2002). The case study approach "has proven to be particularly useful for studying educational innovations" (Merriam, 1998, p. 41), and many studies of professional learning networks have applied the case study approach, for example Lima (2010), Moolenaar (2010), and Schulz and Geithner (2010).

Why is a 'case' selected as a case? According to Stake (2005), a case is worth investigating because it is remarkable in itself or can enable a better understanding of something else entirely; it helps provide deeper insights on a topic or issue (Stake, 2005). My reasons for selecting the Australia-Asia BRIDGE School Partnerships Project as a case lies in my assumption that it can illustrate the broader potential of transnational learning networks in India. My research approach is thus embedded within Stake's (1995, 2005) constructivist and interpretivist views of the case study approach. I view my study as holistic because it is a single functioning unit (Merriam, 2009), namely the BRIDGE program, even as the research focused on eight teachers and their principals. What is common to these teachers and their principals is their involvement in the BRIDGE program. As such, the case in the case study is BRIDGE, not the teachers and principals.

The aim is to develop an interpretive and subjective understanding of the program's potential for teacher professional learning.

4.5 Research methods

Qualitative researchers have a design; to suggest otherwise would be misleading. How they proceed is based on theoretical assumptions (that meaning and process are crucial in understanding human behavior, that descriptive data are what is important to collect, and that analysis is best done inductively), on data-collection traditions (such as participant observation, unstructured interviewing, and document analysis) and on generally stated substantive questions...It is not that qualitative research design is non-existent; it is rather that the design is flexible. (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 55)

In this study also, data generation involves interviews, documents, and analysis of relevant documents.

4.5.1 Interviews

Interviews are one of the most widely used and most popular methods of data collection in qualitative research generally, and particularly in the case study. Brown & Dowling (1998) remark that interviews can be used to investigate the ways participants interpret their world and make sense of their experiences. This study uses open-ended and semi-structured interviews as the primary tool for gathering qualitative data, a method most commonly used in qualitative research (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 2000). Glesne (1999) argues that interviewing in qualitative research enables a strong and distinct opportunity to learn about what one cannot see and to explore alternative explanations of what one can see. Interviews facilitate further opportunities for the researcher to explore in-depth the beliefs, thoughts, and attitudes of the participants (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007; Patton, 2002), which may not be possible by other methods, such as surveys or observations (Creswell, 2014; Kendall, 2008); as interviews can also help in probing incomplete or unclear responses (Patton, 2002). Stake (1995) establishes the descriptive and interpretive functions of interviewing in a case study:

Two principal uses of case study are to obtain the descriptions and interpretations of others. The case will not be seen the same by everyone...Much of what we cannot observe for ourselves has been or is being observed by others...Qualitative researchers take pride in discovering and portraying the multiple views of the case. The interview is the main road to multiple realities. (p. 64)

In this study also, interviewing has helped me to uncover how the participants constructed meanings of their expectations and experiences of the BRIDGE program. In this sense, I agree with Seidman's (2006) proposition that researchers use interviews because there "is an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience" (p. 9). Face-to-face interviews of eight school teachers and principals from eight BRIDGE participating schools were conducted. With the semi-structured nature of interviews, I was also able to change the sequence and add, modify, or skip the questions to follow-up the answers given by the participants.

An interview protocol (Appendix 1 & Appendix 2), comprising a set of questions relevant to the research questions, was written before interviewing the participants. Appendix 1 shows the interview protocol for teachers while Appendix 2 correspondingly presents the interview protocol for principals. Interview questions asked are mainly developed from the literature, especially regarding views on teacher professional learning and the factors that promote or inhibit the practices. I asked questions, such as why are the teachers interested in the BRIDGE program, what they believe to be the goals and benefits of the program, what challenges do they face, what kind of learning network have they been able to forge, how has the network helped them to develop professionally, to what extent and in what ways have their expectations been realized, what are the unexpected outcomes for them and their schools, both positive and negative, and so on? Although face-to-face interviews provide vital data for the study, they also serve as a way of establishing rapport with the participants. Depending on the participants, each interview with a teacher took up to 45 minutes to complete.

In addition to the teachers, their school principals also participated in the study. It was important to also involve the school leaders in this study, as they were involved in the teacher professional learning agenda in these schools. The principals were interviewed to understand some of the deeper factors at play in shaping the teachers' participation and engagement in the BRIDGE program. Depending on the participants, each interview with a principal took 20-30 minutes to complete. I audio-recorded and transcribed all the interviews.

It is important to also recognize and address the limitations that interview as a method could have in this study. Two of the known weaknesses of interview method are the 'interviewer effect' (Denscombe, 2007), that is, when participants respond differently depending on how they perceive the interviewer, and 'demand characteristics' (Gomm, 2004), that is, when the participants' responses are shaped by what they assume the situation requires. To address the limitations of using interviews in this study, I also conducted observations and examined documents related to the BRIDGE program. Data drawn from other sources, namely observations and document analysis, help minimize the possibilities of participant bias and assisting in building a better understanding of the data drawn from interviews.

4.5.2 Observations

Observations work the researcher toward greater understanding of the case...We need observations pertinent to our issues. If our case is a curriculum and a main issue is about opposition to the content of that curriculum, we should not expect to make most of our observations in classrooms as that is not where opposition is likely to be expressed. We want to increase our understanding of the case. (Stake, 1995, p. 60)

In this study, the context of teacher professional learning within the BRIDGE program might not have been solely restricted to the program environment, as it was also located in the teachers' workplaces. Rather than just relying on their self-reported experiences of the BRIDGE program, I also observed the teachers' school culture and work environment in general and the teachers' use of the program in particular to analyze some of the information obtained through interviews (Merriam, 2009). In this regard,

Fox (2010) contends that the inclusion of selected observations gives a more complete description of the event or experience than would be likely by merely referring to interview statements or documents.

My observations took place during the field visits to the BRIDGE schools. I had also hoped to observe, in the presence of Indian teachers, the live teacher communications as they took place between Australian and Indian teachers. However, I did not get a chance to observe any of these live conversations since it was a busy period of the term in July for BRIDGE schools in both India and Australia, and most of the teachers had not planned any live sessions during the time I conducted my fieldwork. My observations included teachers showing me their BRIDGE resources, projects, and related achievements and rewards. I also observed the teachers and their work environments when they gave me a tour of their schools. With that, I got the chance to explore other dimensions of the settings in which the teachers worked, including aspects of the school infrastructure and the school culture itself. I observed the physical spaces of these schools, that is, the institutions' buildings, hallways, classrooms, libraries, computer labs, and so on. This approach was in line with Stake's (1995) view that:

During observation, the quantitative case study researcher keeps focused on categories or key events, attentive to background conditions that may influence subsequent analysis but concentrated on what constitutes a tally. He or she tries not to interpret relationships along the way, wary that moving to that level of thinking might alter the objectivity of the tally. In one way, the researcher is closed-minded, not looking for opportunities to expand or refine the design. But in another way, the researcher is testing every tally, every happening, raising the possibility that seeing things in a different way might change the tally. (Stake, 1995, p. 62)

One item of contention that can occur during observations is the 'Hawthorne Effect', a situation in which participants are aware of being studied and this awareness can shape their responses (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtler, 2006). In this study, such awareness could have influenced the teachers during the observations. Therefore, to minimize a possible 'Hawthorne Effect', I also had a one-on-one discussion with the teachers during these observations. I chose to have a rather spontaneous conversation with the participants

also because I wanted to know more about those dynamics that were not observable (or missed) by me earlier, which could surface during the conversations (Seidman, 2006).

After each observation, I recorded my observations in the form of field-notes in a digital notebook. Field-notes are analogous to the interview transcript (Merriam, 2009). After each observation, field-notes are made to describe in-depth what happened during the observation process, the setting the observation took place in, researcher thoughts, and any other explanatory notes the researcher may have missed of the observation (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Depending on the participants and their schools, each observation took up to 30 minutes to complete.

4.5.3 Document analysis

Documents are yet another method of obtaining qualitative data in case study research (Yin, 2014). While the main research instruments in this qualitative study are interviews and observations, documentary evidence is sought and analyzed to clarify, supplement, and verify interview statements and observations. Document analysis as a method is useful for qualitative researchers to explore the materials already present in the research setting (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012). And although documents are usually not produced for the study, Yin (2014) explains that they can present useful and explicit information and, most importantly, validate and strengthen evidence from other sources. Glesne (1999) points out:

Documents and other obtrusive measures provide both historical and contextual dimensions to your observations and interviews. They enrich what you see and hear by supporting, expanding, and challenging your portrayals and perceptions. Your understanding of the phenomena in question grows as you make use of the documents and artifacts that are a part of people's lives. (p. 59)

I collected documents related to the BRIDGE program, which were maintained by the teachers and their schools. I have taken into account any written and/or digital materials that contained information (of non-confidential nature) about the teachers' preparation for, participation in, and experiences of the program, such as teacher lesson plans,

teacher progress reports, school annual reports, school magazines, school newsletter, and so on. Some of the printed documents, namely the school magazines and school newsletters, were collected in hard-copy format. Other printed documents were scanned and the digital documents were collected in a digital format as a PDF or DOC file. All the documents were collected in-person during the school visits. Web documents were collected by taking screenshots and saved as JPEG files. No documents of confidential nature were collected. I consider all these documents important for identifying the schools' perspectives of the BRIDGE program. The documents provide insights into the organizations' contextual underpinnings behind the teachers' participation in and experience of the program. They have the potential to explain the dynamics of the schools where they work and learn, and from where they participate in the BRIDGE program. Finally, the analysis of documents helps me verify the data from interviews and observations and guides the data collection process (Stake, 2005).

4.6 Ethical considerations

In the collection of data, this study is conducted under the ethical guidelines as determined by the Melbourne Graduate School of Education Human Research Ethics Committee at the University of Melbourne. I have aimed to “present insights and conclusions that ring true to readers, educators, and other researchers”, while following all ethical procedures during the research (Merriam, 1998, pp. 198–199). Since all BRIDGE participating schools in the Delhi region of India are private, permission to conduct research in the schools and recruit teachers for participation required endorsement from the school principals. I contacted the school principals of all the participating schools via email and requested written approvals to recruit participants for the study and conduct fieldwork in their schools. After getting approval from the school principals in the format of signed endorsement letters, I provided a copy of the following to all the selected participants:

- plain language statement outlining the nature of the research and what is required of the participants
- consent form

Being a participant in this study did not have the potential to add to the stress and the workload burden of the teachers, as most of the data were collected outside the teachers' class time. All participants were given the opportunity to renegotiate their involvement or withdraw from the study if participation became onerous for them. Participants were informed that their consent to participate or not participate would have no effect on their employment. Although the intention was to explore their professional learning perceptions and practices, data did not have the potential to reveal sensitive information about the participants. Nonetheless, I was careful in all formal and informal discussions with the principals to not share any information shared by their teachers and vice versa so that reputations were not inadvertently damaged or enhanced.

It is clearly stated in the plain language statement that the participants could choose to withdraw from the study at any time and that confidentiality is respected. In keeping with general ethical practices in qualitative research, all participant names are replaced by pseudonyms to protect their identities. I took the participants' permission to audio record and transcribe their interviews, to observe their use of the BRIDGE program and their schools, and to examine BRIDGE-specific documents maintained by them. Copies of transcripts were provided via email to all the research participants for their reference and amendments. All data is preserved and secured according to the University of Melbourne guidelines.

4.7 Selection criteria and recruitment process

To recruit the participants in this study, I requested the BRIDGE team at the AEF in Australia to provide me the names of BRIDGE participating schools in India, initially only to identify the potential participants. A total of sixteen schools in India had participated in the 2016 or 2017 BRIDGE program. Fifteen of these schools are located in the Delhi region of India, and each of these schools was invited to participate in the study. The schools were recruited based on their suitability to the purpose and focus of the study.

They were selected on the understanding that this could provide an “instance in action” (Adelman, Jenkins, & Kemmis, 1976, p.140) of the phenomenon under inquiry.

Since all these schools are privately owned and managed, I sought written permission from the school principals to conduct research in their schools and recruit participants. All fifteen school principals were contacted via email. Eight schools out of fifteen schools agreed to participate, following which I requested all eight school principals for their signed endorsements. There are generally two academic terms at schools in Delhi: April to September & October to March. In most schools, the academic year begins in April, followed by summer holidays from May till mid-June. Keeping that in mind, I visited the BRIDGE schools during July and August 2017 for data collection. After the school approvals, I contacted in-person the teachers and their principals in their respective schools, briefed them about the study and gave them a plain language statement, and gained their signed consent before the commencement of data collection. This procedure established my links with the schools, making them confident that my research was officially approved by the University of Melbourne and that it was designed to contribute to the goal of improving the quality of teacher professional learning in India.

4.8 Participants and their schools

Keeping in mind the recent introduction of the BRIDGE program in India, this qualitative study can best be considered as small-scale and in-depth. School teachers and principals from eight BRIDGE participating schools in the Delhi region of India participated in the study. The teachers have diverse teaching experiences in their schools. Some of them teach primary students (grades 1 to 5), some middle year students (grades 6 and 7), while some of the teachers teach secondary students (grades 8 to 10) and senior secondary students (grades 11 & 12) in their respective schools. The age of the research participants ranges from mid-20s to mid-50s. The teachers as participants conform most closely to the two criteria for selection; (1) Should be a teacher from a BRIDGE participating school in India and (2) Has participated in the BRIDGE program. The

principals as participants conform most closely to the one criterion for selection, that is, the principal should be from a BRIDGE participating school in India. Each of the eight BRIDGE schools are privately owned and managed. None of the schools are funded and operated by the Government.

The schools involved in this study are high-fee unaided private schools, and largely hold the market image as top-notch and high-quality educational institutions. These schools are identified as highly esteemed and affluent because their students rank amongst the most high-achieving in India, because their alumni occupy successful ranks of authority in India and internationally, and because their infrastructures and neighborhoods further represent their position as exclusive and reputable schools; endowed with a history of superior benchmarks symbolizing their economic and social capital in the local education markets (Bourdieu, 1996). In this study, the schools are located in urban Delhi, which:

Like most cities in India—has a highly stratified school system. Public schools and a growing number of low-fee private schools serve the large population of urban poor. A loosely defined middle-class typically sends its children to private schools intermediate in their price and exclusivity to public and elite private schools. Relatively expensive ‘elite’ private schools cater to students from wealthy households. These types of schools differ widely in affordability, school inputs, and acceptance rates. (Rao, 2019, p. 778)

In light of this, when looking at the potential of the BRIDGE program in Indian schools that are mainly urban and have elite environments, this study draws also upon Schijf’s (2013) conceptualization of the elite that refers to people who occupy a position of power and are in the process of upward social mobility. The majority of the students from such schools often share a globally-relevant position and identity, backed by their academic achievements, future goals, and affluent backgrounds (Courtois, 2013; Thurlow & Jaworski, 2017). Therefore, these schools are known to commonly provide opportunities and measures to prepare students for global environments. In a similar vein, Kenway and Fahey (2014) argue that globalization is impacting the purposes of unaided private schools as such schools adopt globalizing practices to cater to the socio-cultural and economic changes and developments in India. It is worth mentioning that

all the BRIDGE schools involved in this study have previous experiences of transnational learning collaborations and partnerships with several other countries.

4.9 Credibility and dependability of data

Concepts of validity and reliability are concepts derived from the sciences and positivist paradigms. This study does not situate itself in such a space. Rather, notions of credibility and dependability of data have greater relevance (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). To ensure the credibility and dependability of my data, I have conducted member checks and triangulation. Triangulation is considered useful for checking on data as one data collection method, and subsequent data gathered, acts as a check on the data of another. This process helps in checking discrepancies within the data collected. The triangulation of data enables the researcher to check on interpretations derived from one source of data with data from another source (Cohen et al., 2007). I triangulated the data from interviews with data from observations and document analysis. This allowed me to verify whether the themes I have identified are, indeed, prominent across all of the data gathered. Merriam (1998) describes member checking as “taking data and tentative interpretations back to the people from whom they were derived and asking them if the results are plausible” (p. 204). And although member checks are known to have their drawbacks, they can lessen the incidence of misinterpretation of data (Creswell, 2013). A copy of the interview transcript was provided to each participant for verification and/or amendments after each field visit for them to clarify, elaborate, or suggest changes to the interview transcripts.

4.10 Methods of data analysis

Qualitative researchers avoid going into a study with hypotheses to test or specific questions to answer. They believe that shaping the questions should be one of the products of data collection rather than assumed a priori. The study itself structures the research, not preconceived ideas or any precise research design. Their work is inductive. Our advice is to hang loose. (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 54)

In this study, the procedure followed for data analysis is inductive and utilizes thematic coding for analyzing qualitative data. This procedure is believed to be one of the most common forms of data analysis used in qualitative research and looks for the emergence of recurring themes in the data (Bain & McNaught, 2006). As explicated by Bogdan and Biklen (2007), the inductive approach evades an *a priori* formulation and premature testing of hypotheses; and qualitative researchers are interested in the process of arriving at (rather than a concern with only) outcomes:

Qualitative researchers tend to analyze their data inductively. They do not search out data or evidence to prove or disprove hypotheses they hold before entering the study; rather, the abstractions are built as the particulars that have been gathered are grouped together. Theory developed this way emerges from the bottom up (rather than from the top down), from many disparate pieces of collected evidence that are interconnected. The theory is grounded in the data. (p. 6)

In the analysis of data generated in this study, I look for emerging patterns that are based on a number of sources of information, including:

- The review of the literature, such as orientations to learning, support of school leaders, positive school culture, and positive working relationships;
- Direct responses to the research questions, such as assumptions about the BRIDGE program, perceived relevance of the program to the schools' contexts, perceived applicability of the program in the context of the classrooms, teachers' enabling and inhibiting experiences of the program, and future possibilities of transnational networks for teacher professional learning in India;
- Other insights that emerged during the analysis of datasets collected at each stage of the research.

The approach used is defined as “a process of coding the data without trying to fit it into a pre-existing coding frame, or the researcher’s analytic preconceptions” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 12). I looked for recurring patterns and emergent themes through the process of thematic coding; using thematic phrases to describe and capture the meaning of the key aspects of the data as indicated by Bogdan and Biklen (2007), Merriam (1998, 2002, 2009), Miles and Huberman (1994), and Yin (2014). By ‘theme’ I mean categories

of meanings that appear throughout much of the data, or appear unevenly, but carry considerable subjective value relevant to the research (Ely, Vinz, Downing, & Anzul, 1997). I have identified patterns through a thorough process of preliminary review, familiarization, and sorting of data, thematic coding, the building of sub-categories, and final revision, most of it manually. However, during the initial stages of organizing the data and deriving themes from it, I employed the professional learning software NVivo (see Appendix 3).

I expected the NVivo research tool to be helpful in structuring and grouping data. But during the early stages of analysis, I realized such tools to be more useful in clustering the large data-sets, and of very little use in interpreting a much smaller scale qualitative exploration. I felt the technicalities associated with the software was taking me away from the richness of the data, especially for a study that was essentially exploratory, qualitative, and interpretive. Moreover, I realized that the software was restricting the analysis, since I wished to use not only the interview texts but also my observations. Moreover, many of the informal conversations that I had with the BRIDGE teachers were not possible to be considered in a tool that relied on pre-configured analytics. Against these considerations, I abandoned the use of NVivo, preferring to rely on manual coding, bringing together the insights from the interview texts, informal conversations, ethnographic observations, relevant documents, and the contextual understanding of each school. Appendix 4 briefly illustrates the coding process.

I examined themes and sub-categories across the data sets associated with the research questions and color-coded them. I noted the themes and sub-categories; intending to identify the connections between them that could be in the form of singularities, similarities, and variations. I have also, for the most part, been attentive to Miles and Huberman's (1994) advice to complete the thematic analysis of one set of data source before moving to the next set. This also helped in easing and furthering the process of triangulation.

In this way, I believe the analysis presented in the following chapters is more comprehensive, in that the sequence of findings was seen as a whole. Themes generated from the interviews were compared and combined with themes that have emerged from participant observations and document analysis, and vice versa. At the end of this process, key themes and the sub-categories of each theme were presented, elaborated, and discussed as key insights. In interpreting the results, I took into account the self-reporting nature of the participants' responses. For example, the teachers' responses about their experiences of the BRIDGE program embodied their reflections, recollections, interpretations, and perceptions of those experiences.

4.11 The interpretive approach

The qualitative research approach demands that the world be examined with the assumption that nothing is trivial, that everything has the potential of being a clue that might unlock a more comprehensive understanding of what is being studied...The process of data analysis is like a funnel: Things are open at the beginning (or top) and more directed and specific at the bottom...Nothing is taken for granted, and no statement escapes scrutiny. (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, pp. 5–7)

This study has taken an interpretive approach towards data analysis: it looks for culturally derived and traditionally situated understandings. Researchers working within an interpretive paradigm seek to understand socially constructed meanings and understandings (Creswell, 2014). This research framework provides an opportunity for the researcher to comprehend the authentic milieus of the participants, and to understand their experiences within the contexts they work, through the communications that take place between the researcher and participants (Patton, 2002). The interpretive researcher does not measure the performance of the participants but rather seeks to understand how and why the participants react to people, settings, and events in the ways they do, and how the participants make sense of their experiences.

Stake (2010) identifies that an interpretive approach takes a constructivist view of how to make sense of the world, and considers a social constructivist epistemology that emphasizes the importance of culture and context in constructing knowledge and experience. Meaning comes into existence as a result of how people experience or interpret a phenomenon; based on their interactions with the environments they inhabit (Crotty, 1998). It follows that different people in different settings, from different cultures, and in different situations might experience or interpret the phenomenon or a case of the phenomenon quite differently; since they engage and interact with the world quite differently. Therefore, an investigation can result in many interpretations.

In espousing an interpretive paradigm, this study is consequently one that aims towards a better understanding of the participants, whereby their context is crucial. Opfer and Pedder (2011) observe that, in the research focus on professional learning in the area of education, teacher perceptions are often marginalized, although their perceptions could illuminate how they define, value, and use their professional learning experiences in their particular school contexts. Brookfield (1995) stresses that, although often dismissed as anecdotal, teachers' autobiographical experiences can have long-lasting and profound implications for their professional practice. Along the same lines, Kelchtermans (2004) strongly contends for the contextual nature of teacher professional learning:

Teacher learning at a certain moment in time can only be properly understood against the background of earlier experiences on the one hand and in terms of the teacher's expectations about the future on the other. Past, future, and present together constitute the inevitable 'situatedness in time', that characterizes teachers' work. (p. 224)

In this study, an interpretive paradigm allows me to focus mainly on Indian teachers, who are at the receiving end of the BRIDGE program, and to provide subjective glimpses of their beliefs, assumptions, hopes, and doubts about their experiences of the program. The participants describe their interpretations of these experiences and I have tried to interpret the dynamics of these interpretations, as the teachers' deal with their learning needs and concerns, examining their previous knowledge in the light of new learning

experiences, and considering new knowledge through the process of teacher reflections and my interpretation of their reflections. Cohen et al. (2007) describe the interpretive paradigm as being more than just dealing with observable behaviors. It highlights exploring and explaining the interpretations and meanings that people attach to each experience or concept. What is important to interpretive researchers is the natural world of their research participants; what makes it unique, and what the particular concerns are for each individual. Unlike the positivist researcher, for an interpretive researcher, the emphasis is on the process rather than the outcomes (Cohen et al., 2007). Moreover, although not entirely ethnographic in nature and approach, this study considers various ethnographic moments as it looks at the perceptions that school teachers and principals specifically in India have about the potential of the BRIDGE program for teacher professional learning (Taylor & Bogden, 1998). It is ethnographic also because it looks at the participants' experiences of the BRIDGE program as a socio-cultural process (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). That is, the study also seeks to uncover and describe the socio-cultural dynamics that possibly shaped the potential of the BRIDGE program.

4.12 Focus on potential

Most research methods used to analyze teacher professional learning, as Opfer and Pedder (2011) make clear, assumes that “some measure of teacher change” is “teacher learning”, and often fails to examine “under what conditions, why, and how teachers learn” (p. 378). One of the main concerns with the focus on learning outcomes is the philosophical one; that education should be open-ended, and an exclusive focus on learning outcomes does not fit in with this liberal view of learning (Adam, 2004). Several studies on evaluation and impact of teacher professional learning programs claim that before looking at how and in what ways a program might contribute to student learning outcomes, one has to consider the teachers; their values, attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs about the program (OECD, 2009; Opfer & Pedder, 2011; Yates, 2007). These studies suggest it is important that we first hear from those on the receiving end of a learning method, idea or practice: What are teachers' beliefs, needs, and assumptions?

What are their motivations and expectations? In what ways do they perceive their experiences?

Accordingly, this research inquiry constitutes an interpretation of the BRIDGE teachers' perceptions and experiences of the BRIDGE program. It neither evaluates nor judges the teachers' participation in the program, because it is more interested in their interpretations of what works and does not work, and how and why. It does not control, measure or assess the effectiveness of the program for teacher professional learning. The study does not examine whether the teachers' participation in the program improved their teaching practices or whether their experiences had an impact on their students' learning outcomes. Moreover, it is not the intent of this study to goad the research participants into a form of change or improvement, as critical theorists contend with emphasis on measurement, prediction, and outcome of learning.

Professional learning networks have their imperative and interdependent processes—what is hoped, why it started, how it started, and what has happened since (Hanraets et al., 2011). In this study, when it comes to articulating the teachers' understandings of the BRIDGE program, it seems best to focus on the perceptions that the teachers have about what their engagement in the program 'means' to them, and frame their perceptions by using a genre that also helps with interpreting their meanings (Merriam, 2009). Theoretical frameworks emphasizing perceptions, the nature of previous knowledge and experiences, and the processes of reflection are considered (Merriam, 2009); how it is influenced and how it developed in transnational settings. It is in this context that the study aims to identify the teacher professional learning that has taken place (or not) and the potential that has been realized (or not).

While potential is a theme well suited to the focus of this study and to make sense of the participants' reflections and interpretations of the program, without imposing any predetermined expectations on the outcomes of their experiences, it is also a most complex concept. There is no clearly defined logic that can establish the potential of a

particular practice. Claims about potential are therefore always tentative and, to an extent, notional. In this study, the potential of transnational learning networks is necessarily judged against the data relating to teachers' descriptions of what they want from a program, what they have experienced in the program, and what they project for others in response to these experiences. This study thus seeks to determine the potential of transnational programs, such as BRIDGE, for teacher professional learning in India, with a skeptical and critical view about the generalizability of its claims.

4.13 Issues of generalizability

The real business of case study is particularization, not generalization. We take a particular case and come to know it well, not primarily as to how it is different from others but what it is, what it does. There is emphasis on uniqueness, and that implies knowledge of others that the case is different from, but the first emphasis is on understanding the case itself. (Stake, 1995, p. 8)

Generalizability addresses the issue of whether the findings of a study can be generalized beyond the specific research participants and the research settings involved. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) explain that although qualitative research and case study methodology offer rich data and insights from the participant's viewpoints, it is difficult to generalize the findings outside the participants or settings studied. Qualitative researchers concern themselves not with the question of whether their insights are generalizable, but rather with the question of to which other settings and subjects they are generalizable. This is also my position in this study.

As with case study research, the Australia-Asia BRIDGE School Partnerships as a single case of a transnational professional learning network for school teachers in India is used in this study to "understand the particular in-depth, not to find out what is generally true of the many" (Merriam, 1998, p. 208). In terms of generalizability, it is worth noting that it is not my intention or objective to generalize the insights of this study to other schools, teachers, networks, settings, or situations. In qualitative research, Marshall and Rossman (1999) argue that "the burden of demonstrating the applicability of one set of

findings to another context rests more with the researcher who would make that transfer than with the original researcher” (p. 193).

This is a small-scale study, aiming at deepening understandings of the teachers who participated in the BRIDGE program, as a basis upon which to envisage the potential of transnational networks for the professional learning of teachers in India. It can be potentially useful to other researches in similar situations with similar research questions (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). The themes arising can be extrapolated to “other situations under similar, but not identical conditions” (Patton, 1990, p. 489). An exploration of the conditions and factors that possibly influence the participants’ experiences of the BRIDGE program, and their perceptions of the program’s potential to support their professional learning, may well have application as a framework for investigating the conditions and factors that may be similar in other settings.

The inquiry is limited to teachers and principals from eight schools in the Delhi region of India that engaged in the Australia-Asia BRIDGE School Partnerships Project as part of their teacher professional learning practice. The representation and interpretation of the data are therefore localized and greatly contextual. The qualitative case study methodology and the methods used in this study can be applied to similar studies. Some of the the key insights can be potentially applicable to similar elite schools and elite school teachers in India and internationally. It also can be potentially applicable to similar transnational learning networks, comprising similar network components and functions. While the research strategy can be applied in other studies and some of the insights can be applied to other contexts, specific insights may be unique to the environment studied, such as the schools’ contextual dynamics and arrangements that potentially shape the Indian teachers’ participation and experiences of the BRIDGE program. Although the main focus of this study is on Indian teachers, some insights are also clearly gained about Australian teachers participating in the program. However, it is not intended that the insights would be generalizable to BRIDGE participating schools in other regions of India or necessarily transferable to other BRIDGE participating

schools across the globe. The most I can claim is that the analysis presented in this thesis highlights issues that might be inherent in any attempt to develop transnational professional learning programs elsewhere.

4.14 Conclusion

This illustrative study of transnational learning networks utilized the case study methodology as its fundamental framework. It seeks to understand and interpret how a group of teachers and their principals in India, in light of their expectations and experiences of the Australia-Asia BRIDGE School Partnerships Project, perceive the potential of transnational learning networks for their professional learning. It explores a particular case of the phenomenon in time and space. This case has taken place in a specific context, with a small number of teachers, to deepen our understanding of how and in what ways their participation in the BRIDGE program contributes to their professional learning. Therefore, the case study is the relevant methodology.

Since this study focuses on Indian teachers' perceptions and self-reported accounts of a transnational professional development program, a qualitative research design seems most suitable to generate a subjective interpretation and understanding of the case. Through the interview method, where the researcher intends to explore the perspective of the individual, I gathered data on teachers' and principals' perceptions and understandings of the BRIDGE program. Other methods employed included observations and document analysis. Participants were teachers and principals from eight BRIDGE schools in the Delhi region of India. I have organized, described, and interpreted the data, making inferences through inductive analysis to get the themes in line with the objectives of the study. Member checks of data and triangulation were done to ensure trustworthiness of the study.

The analysis of the data presented in the next three chapters utilized methods that are well-known to case study researchers, drawing their inspirations for the perceptions of the teachers and their principles, but locating them within the broader context of the

theoretical literature on transnational teacher professional learning networks, as well as a general understanding of the context of the participating schools, and the use of these networks within a rapidly changing India and its educational aspirations. These aspirations are linked to the perceptions and expectations of professional learning, the choices made to realize them, and the benefits that its transnationalization can bring to the schools and communities. The next chapter thus examines the teachers' and principals' expectations of the BRIDGE program.

Chapter 5

EXPECTATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The importance of quality teacher professional learning has been acknowledged worldwide. Nevertheless, in recent years, with major social, economic, and cultural changes due to globalization and technology, it has acquired greater significance, since these are reflected not only in educational policy but also in the ways in which the expectations of students and their parents are changing. With shifts in the understanding of how students learn and the expanding sources from where they can now acquire knowledge, teachers need to understand the dynamic contexts in which they now work and adopt new practices of teaching and learning on an ongoing basis. At the same time, globalization and major advancements in technology have opened up new opportunities for the ways in which teacher professional learning can now be arranged, not only with technology-driven innovations but also with the emerging possibilities of transnational learning networks. Many schools in India have begun to consider and experiment with these possibilities. This thesis is largely an investigation of the potential of these networks for teacher professional learning in India.

The investigation is based on the premise that although the Indian Government has, over the years, introduced several reforms to improve the quality of teacher professional learning, most programs have not provided adequate and sufficient opportunities to support teacher professional learning practices in Indian schools. To overcome the inadequacies and unevenness of these programs, in recent decades, schools in India have begun to consider the use of professional learning networks as an effective tool for teacher professional learning. Such networks have been widely investigated in recent research and are taken seriously by organizations worldwide to improve the quality of school education. Research points out that the use of learning networks in education is a consequence of emerging trends in learning as a socio-cultural and global phenomenon and the growing use of communication technologies in

classroom practice (Haythornthwaite & De Laat, 2012; Lima, 2010; Trust, 2013; Holmes, Preston, Shaw, & Buchanan, 2013). Yet, in India, little is known about the potential of these networks for teacher professional learning, especially with respect to the challenges that these new approaches face and the conditions under which they might be effective.

To overcome this gap in research and understanding, the discussion in this thesis revolves around an illustrative case study of the Australia-Asia BRIDGE School Partnerships Project, designed in Australia but extended to Indian schools to support their attempts to improve the quality of teacher professional learning. Based on the data collected in eight BRIDGE participating schools in the Delhi region of India, this study discusses the beliefs about teacher professional learning in these schools, as well as the motivations for teacher participation and their initial expectations of the BRIDGE program. With a focus on these perceptions about the program, this chapter aims to gain a deeper understanding of how their expectations have shaped their experiences of and engagement with the various components of the program.

It is worth noting at the start of this chapter that the teachers' expectations of the BRIDGE program were not static but changed over time. These expectations were deeply influenced by the leadership provided by their principals and the program's coordinators, and their interpretations of the program's objectives. These interpretations related to the broader Indian context in general and the context of their schools in particular. The chapter also aims to describe how the schools made their way into the program; it identifies the factors that have influenced their choice to participate, linking these factors to the broader discussion in Chapter 3 of various theoretical perspectives on the drivers of, and rationales for, teacher professional learning and use of professional learning networks in education. In this chapter, I discuss ways in which teachers and principals have perceived the BRIDGE program and possible reasons for their perceptions. I provide an analysis of their expectations of the program. I also describe the organizational features of the school, the context in which the teachers

have enacted their professional learning practices and the context in which they have interpreted and comprehended the program. I believe that by focusing on both school-related and broader socio-cultural factors surrounding the teachers' and principals' expectations of the program, I am able to better understand the underlying dynamics of the teachers' experiences of the program, which is discussed in the next chapter, and draw together this discussion of expectations and experiences to explore, in Chapter 7, the broader potential of transnational learning networks for teacher professional learning Indian schools.

5.2 Perceptions of teacher professional learning

The literature reviewed in Chapter 3 emphasized that teachers' prior views and attitudes towards their own learning play an important role in their understanding of professional learning networks. For example, Opfer and Pedder (2011) note that "based on past experiences, teachers bring to their teaching and learning attitudes, values, theories, and images in the guise of beliefs that affect their own decisions about learning" (p. 387). In this section, I discuss the perceptions of teachers I interviewed with respect to the importance they attached to their professional learning, and how their practices were positioned within the contexts of their schools. I asked both teachers and principals about their general views on the forms of professional learning they considered important and helpful. The interviews revealed that all teachers and principals viewed teacher professional learning as fundamental for updating the teachers and their teaching practices, and for improving the quality of student learning. In particular, all acknowledged that teacher roles and responsibilities have changed due to advancements in ICT and its growing use in education. Many agreed that with these changes, the nature and purpose of teacher professional learning have also changed, as illustrated in these comments⁶:

Teacher roles have changed. These days, the job of a teacher is beyond the classroom. She has the role of a counselor, teacher, mentor, and ICT expert. So basically all teachers are trained to look into the overall development of the students. The teachers are being

⁶ Pseudonyms are used throughout the thesis to protect the identities of all the research participants.

trained with a new focus now. I encourage all my teachers to plan as a team. They also teach as a team. So they learn as a team now. (Principal Pooja)

The education field has become very, very dynamic over the years. With the onset and exposure to social media and technology, children are becoming so much aware. Children nowadays have more knowledge and want to know more than we knew a couple of decades ago, so this makes teaching very challenging. All this is a big change and a tremendous challenge for teachers to deal with, and it is also making not just student learning but also teacher learning very dynamic. This is why there are a lot of in-service training programs that weren't there earlier. These programs are followed up very thoroughly as there are new things happening in education. So new avenues to professionally develop are constantly considered and provided to teachers. All that was not happening earlier. (Teacher Priya)

Teachers' development of ICT skills seemed to be the major focus of the schools' teacher professional learning programs and practices. ICT was the dominant component of the schools' teaching and learning environments. Many principals talked about the ICT features of their schools and why ICT-based and ICT-centred teacher professional learning practices are needed. For example, Principal Pooja's view was that the school had achieved a great deal in terms of the use of advanced ICT infrastructure in online examinations and assessments, school administration, and parent-teacher communications. She believed that, in such a setting, it is most essential for teachers to be on par with the school's infrastructural capacity, and use ICT accordingly and effectively in their classroom practice:

ICT is a very important area in our school and the teachers are guided from time to time about the recent changes in technology. We have the latest technology installed in all the classrooms. We have all the classrooms with smart-boards. Ours is a school that has initiated online examinations also. So we try to give the best to our children and want our teachers to practice the best. And we also have a one-of-a-kind in-service research training centre for our teachers, which is run on a fortnightly basis. They are exposed to a lot of ICT trends, which we expect in a teacher so that she uses it in the classroom. We try to give the best to our students and want our teachers to practice the best. (Principal Pooja)

Collaboration was another common feature of teacher professional learning practices in these schools. Many teachers shared that they regularly participated in conferences, seminars, workshops, and in-house training sessions as part of their professional

learning. These experiences had usually taken place in the contexts of their schools and commonly involved the teachers to learn as a team. For many teachers, such activities have helped them to stay informed about recent developments in teaching and to integrate it effectively into their teaching practices. Many teachers showed a strong preference for collaborative learning and were happy that their schools encouraged teamwork among teachers and students. For example:

We have a training centre in our school itself, a teachers' training centre. And we have sessions every Saturday, where we teachers discuss about the developments that are taking place and what changes need to be reinforced. The school staff is regularly updated, motivated, encouraged through continuous training. We are encouraged to learn together. We form learning groups according to the subject areas and discuss ideas and plan future activities. The teachers are bonding and there is a continuous exchange of ideas. I think that works very, very well. (Teacher Priya)

The teachers stressed the importance of promoting collaborative learning cultures at workplace and also admitted that their schools provided the environments and opportunities for them to work collaboratively with other teachers. These teachers often drew support from each other as they were supported by their schools to do so. Many believed that their working together had a positive impact on each other's professional practice and understanding, and also contributed to the schools' learning environments. Similarly, the principals seemed receptive to innovative, collaborative, and ongoing teacher professional learning practices. For Principal Rashmi, her school regularly provides teachers with the "learning environments to interact, explore and reflect"; where, according to Principal Rashmi, the "teachers are always encouraged to develop their ideas and look for inspirations from each other", and where teachers are encouraged to "be in charge of their learning through group effort". Moreover, Principal Deepak believed in supporting "teacher-led learning" through collaborative partnerships and exchanges:

Unless teachers interact with other teachers, learning is incomplete. And we have to explore all the possibilities and interact with the world also. It is said in our scriptures that let there be light from all sides. Teachers have two-way learning with each other in this school. We have our own small learning community as part of the school system, which is fine. But what is happening all over the world is also important and valued now

more than ever. So this shared learning has to be beyond the school and our country. And it is not one-way learning. After all, we should also share with them what we practice. Every week we have other school teachers coming to our school. Our teachers learn from them and they also get to learn from our teachers about our practices. So that is true confidence and competence building. (Principal Deepak)

The teacher professional learning cultures of the BRIDGE schools were also grounded in teachers' views on learning. Recent research on teacher professional learning also suggests that teachers find their professional learning activities to be useful when it is aligned with their beliefs and perceptions. For example, Opfer and Pedder (2011) affirm that "teachers will tend to seek out learning activities that are consistent with their orientation to learning" (p. 390). In this study also, the teachers' views were that professional learning activities are effective when they provide opportunities for them to share their knowledge and ideas with other teachers. For many teachers, their activities of professional learning, which were mainly arranged by their schools, were mostly positive as collective learning was encouraged. According to them, the collaborative nature of these activities had developed in them a sense of autonomy and professional responsibility towards lifelong learning and development. When questioned further about their understanding of professional learning, many teachers perceived that it is an ongoing process. Their use of the phrases, such as "teacher is a lifelong learner" (Teacher Asha), "teacher for life, learner for life" (Teacher Reema), and "learning is a continuous journey" (Teacher Poonam), is a confirmation of this general pattern. The notion of continuity is also indicated implicitly in the teachers' descriptions of their professional learning practices as a way to keep themselves "up-to-date" (Teacher Reema), "get to know the latest" (Teacher Teacher Poonam), and to "be aware of recent changes and developments" (Teacher Asha).

Nonetheless, when talking about the importance of their professional learning, few teachers spoke of its effect on their overall professional practice in the classrooms. Most teachers equated the concept of professional learning with knowledge and skills development. Their perceptions, purposes, and practices of professional learning were

articulated in a direction that is student-centred and focuses on improving student learning through improvements in teaching. For instance, Teacher Seema believed that:

Even experienced teachers face challenges, such as changes in subject content, new instructional methods, advances in technology, and changes in student learning needs. And when teachers do not engage in quality professional learning, student learning suffers. (Teacher Seema)

When I asked teachers about their professional learning needs, many teachers made consistent use of words such as “improve teaching” (Teacher Poonam), “our learning should benefit students” (Teacher Asha), and “improve student learning” (Teacher Reema). Their responses reveal that professional learning in most of the BRIDGE schools was interpreted and realized pragmatically. The dominant professional learning cultures and practices of these schools mainly focused on improving the teachers’ use of ICT to enhance student learning experiences. Most teachers shared how learning about new ICT resources and strategies through their professional learning activities has helped them improve their content knowledge and teaching techniques.

The teachers engaged in professional learning activities that were mainly organized by their schools. In many ways then, the teachers’ perceptions of the nature and purpose of their professional learning could have been influenced by what their schools believed and expected from them. In this regard, Boud and Hager (2012) observe that teacher perceptions of professional learning often intertwines with their workplace aims, philosophies, and practices. Against this backdrop, old and new practices of professional learning, which are promoted and provided by the schools, are embraced by the teachers mainly to satisfy what is expected and demanded of them in their work environments:

Public expectation of professionals is that they are aware of new knowledge and keep themselves up to date. A simplistic view of this is that it is just a matter of acquisition. Required participation in development activities can be readily portrayed to the public as satisfying their expectations of professional accountability. (p. 20)

In that case, it is possible that the teachers' beliefs and understandings of their professional learning could have been shaped by certain perceptions and expectations of their schools. That being said, teacher professional learning was valued, promoted and practiced in all the BRIDGE schools. Both teachers and principals shared a similar understanding of the importance and purpose of teacher professional learning, which mainly related to improvements in the use of ICT in teaching to support student learning (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Day & Sachs, 2004). Overall, they had positive attitudes towards the ways in which their professional learning practices realized their pedagogical and technological aims. This could have influenced their attitudes and shaped their receptiveness towards new possibilities, such as the BRIDGE program, and what they expect from these possibilities.

5.3 How it all began?

The teachers learned about the BRIDGE program through their principals. When asked during the principal interviews, all the principals mentioned that they had received emails from the Australian High Commission in Delhi; informing them about the BRIDGE program and the application process to apply to take part in the 12-month program. Most principals perceived that since they have maintained a professional association with the High Commission, they have been regularly updated by the Office with information about international education programs and partnerships, as exemplified by Principal Anita:

The Embassy is regularly in touch with me and they always let me know whenever such programs come up. There is good coordination. Our school has taken part in similar programs in the past. And we got to know about these programs through the Embassy. We had conveyed our interest to them and they know that such programs are always appreciated in our school. (Principal Anita)

It is no coincidence that the BRIDGE schools learned about the BRIDGE program through the Australian High Commission in Delhi. It is important to add here that all the BRIDGE schools involved in this study are located in highly affluent, cosmopolitan, and political suburbs of urban Delhi. The city, being India's political capital, is surrounded by

Embassies of various countries. It is likely that the schools' location and the principals' connections prompted the schools' initial interests in the program. Nevertheless, the schools' interests in programs, such as BRIDGE, could have influenced the principals to maintain these connections with sources that inform them about such programs. This is aligned with the thoughts of Stoll, Bolam, et al. (2006), who note that a school's location can be important in relation to the links it can make with external partners:

Some schools are located in areas with a better-developed professional learning infrastructure. The nature and quality of professional development opportunities and external support available to staff can impact on a PLC's [Professional Learning Community's] development. (p. 246)

The principals had received a BRIDGE program document in the email that offered to provide teacher professional development and establish learning partnerships between students, teachers, and schools in Australia and India. The program document outlined that the teachers would be supported to develop and sustain a collaborative learning plan; to link their classrooms in India to their partner schools in Australia, to develop teachers' ICT skills for teaching and learning, and to strengthen their professional capacities and values to lead this work in their schools. All participating schools and teachers were required to meet certain eligibility criteria. Of particular importance was the inclusion of the English language in the participating schools. Other requirements were that the schools selected to participate must have suitable hardware, software and reliable access to the Internet and have suitable technical support within the school. The teachers selected to participate must have a strong command of English, must have intermediate computer skills, and understand Internet navigation and usage.

The program was described in the document as a blended model of teacher professional development, which included face-to-face and online learning plus an international travel and homestay program with partner schools in Australia. Each school partnership would be initially led by one teacher from the school. It was expected that the teachers would host their partner teacher from Australia in their homes in India for one homestay period (7-10 days) and vice versa. As part of the program, the teachers would have joint

professional learning sessions in Australia with their partner teachers. The program would provide teachers with the opportunity to get hands-on experience in BRIDGE schools in Australia, which would then be used by the teachers to develop teaching ideas and resources in their classrooms in India. The 12-month program was structured to equip teachers with the ability to self-manage the ongoing partnership after the duration.

When I asked the principals about their initial reaction after reading the program document and eligibility criteria for participation, all of them believed that their schools were prepared to participate in the BRIDGE program. Moreover, many principals felt that teacher eligibility criterion of teacher competency in the English language was not a problem as their schools have a strictly English-medium curriculum and medium of instruction. Also, based on my observations, all the BRIDGE schools had sophisticated ICT infrastructure and adequate ICT support, including ICT hardware and software, and Internet installed in each classroom, the staffroom, and computer-lab. Moreover, according to teachers and principals alike, the schools conducted regular ICT training sessions for the teaching staff. Each principal selected one teacher from his/her school to apply to participate. The principals had selected their teachers based on the teachers' prior knowledge, understanding, and experiences of transnationally-integrated education, and also their prior ICT skills. The teachers filled up and submitted their applications to the AEF. The AEF team assessed these applications and teachers were selected on individual merit. On being selected, the BRIDGE teachers received partial funding from the AEF and partial funding from their schools to support the reciprocal school visits and homestay experiences within the program duration. At a broader level, none of the teachers and principals mentioned receiving any form of support from the National/State Government agencies.

The teachers' participation in the BRIDGE program was a planned action that was based on their principals' involvement, followed by formal application procedures and written agreements completed by the teachers. However, the teachers' interest to participate

in the program was possibly influenced by their schools' interest and capacity of such programs (Lima, 2010), and the teachers' capacity to meet the eligibility criteria for participation. These schools were known to be familiar with such programs, and the principals had contacts with relevant sources who informed the schools about the BRIDGE program. Moreover, the schools had the infrastructural eligibility to take part in the program. The teachers were competent in English language and ICT skills, and they had knowledge and prior experiences of collaborative learning partnerships. For these schools and teachers, the initial impressions of the BRIDGE program were positive. The teachers' perceived their profiles and their schools' profiles to be relevant to what was expected and needed for participation.

5.4 Importance of the BRIDGE program's ICT components

Prior teacher professional learning practices in the BRIDGE schools were focused on improving the teachers' integration of ICT into classroom practices. Against this background, this section presents a picture of ICT-centred professional learning practices in BRIDGE schools and how the BRIDGE program was envisaged and positioned within that context. Without exception, all teachers and principals shared strong views about the importance of integrating ICT in the classrooms. The common belief among them was that ICT infrastructure was provided extensively and used consistently in their schools. However, some of the principals felt that the teachers "still had a long way to go" (Principal Pooja) in their use of ICT. They voiced their hopes to see ICT being integrated more effectively in classroom practices through the BRIDGE program. All the principals acknowledged that ICT is an integral part of learning and that educational technologies are changing and enabling new ways of accessing, understanding, and creating knowledge in the classroom. They regarded that, therefore, it is crucial that through programs, such as BRIDGE, the teachers develop their confidence to use ICT resources efficiently, and their skills to find, process, and manage these resources.

All the principals felt that the technology component of the BRIDGE program is most useful because of the ubiquitous presence of technology in the students' day-to-day

lives and their futures. Therefore, advanced ICT skills and capacities are required on the part of the teachers as well, for them to be able to use ICT effectively in their teaching. Their use of phrases, such as “ICT is very, very important” (Principal Pooja), “tech-savvy teachers” (Principal Radhika), “technology is the key to quality” (Principal Anita), and “ICT expertise is the most dominant feature of a competent teacher” (Principal Deepak), supports their inclination towards ICT.

By the same token, all the teachers had expected that the program would improve their skills and knowledge to use ICT more innovatively in the classroom. The teachers mentioned that as “technologies keep changing” (Teacher Asha), they “continuously update” their skills to “use the most relevant technologies” (Teacher Nisha) in the classroom. In particular, the teachers spoke extensively about the expectation placed on them to improve their ICT skills. Teacher Poonam explained that the society’s use of ICT, including the extensive personal use of ICT by her students, has significantly shaped her interests in educational technologies and in programs that help her improve her skills to use technology in her teaching practices. Similarly, Teacher Poonam felt there is a strong expectation of students, parents, and the school management, that ICT should be integrated into teaching practices. In Teacher Nisha’s words, the teaching profession demands technology use and she “has to use it [technology] because everything in education revolves around technology”. Teacher Reema echoed Teacher Nisha’s sentiments about expectations around integrating ICT and said that “no teacher can run away from technology. This is no way out. A teacher as a lifelong learner and responsible professional should be open to new things and new ways of working. We need to embrace ICT. Use it to the fullest satisfaction of our students and school. We have to meet certain shifts in education and the demands of our society”. Beliefs, expectations, and demands concerning the teachers’ use of ICT seemed to have contributed to the teachers’ professional learning expectations in general, including their expectations of the BRIDGE program and what the outcomes should include. For example:

Initially, it used to be just bookish; the chalk, duster and blackboard method. But nowadays we have ample sources of technology plus we are now being given professional experience and exposure, workshops, in-house workshops as well as global

learning opportunities, which help us understand what other teachers across the globe are also doing with technology. And we are learning from them and then implement it in our teaching-learning also. So yes, things have improved and we had similar hopes from the [BRIDGE] program. (Teacher Asha)

Similarly, many principals were certain that the ICT components of the BRIDGE program would train the teachers to innovate and try new teaching-learning approaches using technology. More importantly, it was believed that better ICT ideas and resources would be obtained through networking with teachers in Australia. All the teachers also saw the program as an opportunity to develop their online skills. Online learning (both synchronous and asynchronous) was a valued component of the BRIDGE program, as these extracts convey:

I find that such programs can open up so many avenues for the teachers to work together as a team. In the classroom, we are limited to our books. These days we can say since that we have access to technology, we can Google things and learn things on our own. But learning with others means that there is a possibility to learn more. We might not be aware that there are so many projects, apps and other resources that can help our teaching become much more effective and easy. It is with sharing and mutual learning that we can have access to more ideas and materials. And I had hoped that BRIDGE could help us in that way with the online projects and interactions. (Teacher Asha)

The ICT training provided through the program is something that is very, very useful. The teachers and students are exposed to apps and software which they never knew before. I knew that my teacher will learn something constructive about using technology in the most interesting manner in her classroom. (Principal Radhika)

Given the emphasis on ICT in these schools, it is not surprising to find that the teachers and principals had strong interests and positive expectations of a program with the key component being ICT. Typically, teacher professional learning in these schools were those activities that improved the teachers' ICT skills and knowledge. This is in alignment with what the teachers and principals assumed the BRIDGE program is; they largely expected the program to improve teaching and student learning with the use of BRIDGE-based ICT resources. This coincides with studies by Trust (2013) and Trust et al. (2016), which suggest that the spaces for teacher professional learning are promoted and realized when they have the prospects to improve teachers' ICT competencies.

Another factor that could have enabled the BRIDGE teachers to participate in the program is that all the teachers had access to high-speed internet, advanced ICT infrastructure, and adequate ICT support team in their schools. The collaborative learning culture of these schools, combined with a large proportion of ICT-friendly teaching spaces, appeared to act in favor of the teachers' possibility to participate in the BRIDGE program. The teacher professional learning practices in these schools focused largely on matters relating to teachers' effective use of ICT infrastructure and resources in the classroom. Therefore, it is likely that these schools focused largely on the ICT implications of its decisions around the BRIDGE program. The teachers' and principals' views indicate that the school ethos and practices, which are aimed at improving teachers' ICT capacity in classroom practice, drive the schools' interests in professional learning networks, the main component of which is technology. This also shapes the teachers' expectations of these networks and their motivations for participation.

5.5 Relevance of the BRIDGE program to student learning

When adults interact in networked learning communities they engage with new ideas, new information, and new skills...Once the knowledge is created and shared, the expectation is that it will influence practices and change what these teachers and head-teachers do in their schools and classrooms and how they do it. Ultimately, the changes that teachers and schools make in their practices are intended to have an influence on pupils that will enhance their learning and their long-term success. (Earl & Katz, 2007, p. 241)

The teachers and principals positively anticipated the BRIDGE program as an outright opportunity to improve teachers' pedagogical knowledge, understanding, and classroom skills. Nevertheless, their main hopes were that since the program would also involve students, it would also enrich the students' learning experiences. The principals' interviews give the impression that they consistently valued student learning as the main objective of their teachers' involvement in the program. The principals were interested in what new skills or knowledge the teachers integrate into the classrooms through the program, for the benefit of other teachers and students:

We knew that the BRIDGE program is mainly for teachers and that the students are not visiting Australia. But we also know that when you train a teacher, she gets an experience, she is going to come back and share her learning with the staff and students. Ultimately, the gain is of the students. Their learning will surely improve. This program has a yearlong teacher collaboration of not just teachers. Even though the international exchange is of the teacher, the students are also involved and work together on many projects. I was most interested because my students would learn with students in Australia. They would always be in touch with each other. (Principal Radhika)

The teachers saw the BRIDGE program as an opportunity for them to keep up with the changes in teaching trends and the use of educational technologies to enhance student learning. They saw the nature and purpose of the BRIDGE program through the lens of their teaching roles and responsibilities, with the belief that the ICT components of the program related to their teaching needs and students' interest. They also perceived that the program would be useful for introducing ideas and resources in the contexts of their schools and classrooms, which would broaden their students' knowledge, skills, and understanding. The teachers' professional learning needs were based on their students' learning needs. They were hopeful that the program would enhance their students' learning with effective ICT resources, and international projects and activities. Therefore, the teachers' had positive expectations of the program. Like the works of Duncan-Howell (2010) and Holmes et al. (2013), data in this study indicate that networks are known to be most effective when they are considered relevant to the needs of the participants and their organizations. In the same way, for Boud and Hager (2012):

Practices exist and evolve in historical and social contexts—times, places and circumstances. Practices are also emergent in the sense that the ways that they change are not fully specifiable in advance. They are emergent from the context in unanticipated and unpredictable ways. Thus context transforms practice in an ongoing creative process...It is constructed (and re-constructed) in an ongoing process...So the directions of learning can only be characterized in broad, general terms. (p. 23)

The BRIDGE teachers and principals in this study also had optimistic expectations of how the program would prepare the teachers to use it in the context of their classrooms. They assumed that: (a) useful learning would take place; (b) this learning would be applicable in the context of their schools and the classrooms; (c) the teachers would be

prepared to apply their learning in their classroom. The program was expected to be effective in improving teaching practices and student learning and it was assumed that this expectation would be met through the teachers' use of the program in their classroom practices and the broader contexts of their schools and school systems. This view is in line with Katz et al. (2008), where it is discussed that there is a strong belief in educational organizations that through the establishment of networks, not only would new learning occur, but that it would also be transferred across the schools and benefit the overall schools' education systems. Similarly, the BRIDGE teachers also believed that the BRIDGE program would renovate their pedagogical understanding and practice, help them support better student learning experiences, and enhance their schools' learning cultures and systems.

Nonetheless, it is worth noting that the teachers' and principals' expectations to improve student learning through the program were not focused on improving the students' learning outcomes, as the student scores in these schools were already high. According to most of the principals, these schools were known in the local education market for the students' academic achievements and high scores. The focus was not on the outcome, but rather on the experience as there seemed no need for the teachers to improve something that was already successful in these schools.

The teachers' expectations of the BRIDGE program revolved around the benefits it could have on teaching to improve student learning. Similarly, for all the teachers, their professional learning needs originate from their teaching needs. This is in alignment with what all the principals thought about the teachers' participation in the BRIDGE program, that is, immediate practical solutions to enhance teaching and classroom learning environments. This resonates with Cave and Mulloy's (2010) view who suggest that "recognizing the value of a particular educational intervention (in terms of its positive effect upon students' learning and the classroom environment) is a powerful, intrinsically motivating reason for teachers to implement a program" (p. 15). Nevertheless, in view of this, most of the teachers had an operational view of teacher

professional learning and, therefore, had a highly pragmatic understanding of the nature and purpose of their involvement in the program. The professional learning provided by their schools were mainly ICT-centred and student-centred, and therefore, it is possible that the teachers had similar orientations towards the BRIDGE program.

The teachers and principals might have mainly expected the BRIDGE program to help realize certain teaching and learning practices prevalent in these schools, which were largely focused on improving ICT skills and teaching practices for better student learning. In that way, these expectations possibly tended to be less appreciative (or aware) of other potential benefits of the program. Though, it can be said that some of the teachers' anticipated benefits of the program were relevant to their work contexts and, therefore, could have motivated them to participate in the program. For instance, the development of teachers' ICT skills was highly valued and anticipated by all the teachers and principals as the schools' ICT infrastructure was well integrated and the teachers' use of ICT in classroom practices was promoted and demanded in these schools. A possible reason for the limited hopes and expectations of the program could be because the program might not have been valued in its own right; but, might have been taken positively with the core belief that it would mainly improve teaching and student learning. This means that the BRIDGE program was possibly not understood in the most comprehensive manner. This could be because prior practices of teacher professional learning were not perceived and realized by these teachers in the most comprehensive manner and focused mainly on the development of their use of ICT in teaching practices. In this light, Stoll (2004) suggests that professional learning networks are most effective when the participants, and the organizations they belong to, have a fundamental and clear rationale for participation. The BRIDGE teachers and their schools were also pursuing certain objectives through the program, which seemed to be primarily focused on improving ICT skills in teaching, which would enhance the students' learning experiences. Nevertheless, the schools were also interested in establishing school-to-school partnerships with schools in Australia through the teachers' use of the program.

5.6 Prospects of partnering with Australia

Many teachers were excited about forming professional connections with teachers from schools in Australia. In particular, all the principals expressed a strong interest in the program as they believed that it gave their schools the opportunity to connect with Australia. They often used words such as partnership, alliance, bond, link, and association when they expressed their view of this connection. They also saw the program as an ideal opportunity for the teachers to get a direct experience of Australian educational practices, the curriculum, school cultures, and teaching and learning environments, typified by this comment:

The one thing very exciting was that if my teacher goes to Australia, she will get hands-on knowledge and exposure to Australia. I am interested in the curriculum and reforms in Australia, like ACARA and NAPLAN. I like their ideas so I thought my teachers will learn more about Australian reforms and programs, and this will benefit our students. I was certain that our school system and our ways will improve and we will benefit through this partnership. (Principal Anita)

Like Principal Anita, the principals showed strong interest in Australian traditions and practices of school education, and expected their teachers to communicate, through the BRIDGE program, these traditions and practices to other teachers in the school. Principal Anita was, for example, hopeful that her teacher would transfer some of these ‘best practices’ to her school’s teaching and learning environments. It is also likely that these practices were possibly considered applicable to the school context. Moreover, key to her initial decision to get her teacher involved in the program seemed to be her desire to create a link between her school and an Australian school. Principal Anita seemed to favor a learning partnership with Australia, which was formed through the BRIDGE program, and believed that the global learning standards and competitiveness, that Australia followed, represented the best that the ‘West’ offered to her school. Nevertheless, she hoped that her teacher’s involvement in the BRIDGE program would also involve her students and improve the students’ understanding and awareness about Australia:

I was thrilled because my teacher will have a link with one school in Australia. And she will have the experience of a new country, the education system of a different country, which she can bring back and link with own teaching in the classroom. And not just my teacher, the school and our students also will be part of this link. I knew that since the students will communicate with students in Australia, they will form new friendships and learning teams. They will bond together on common problems taking place around the world. This will benefit our students and add to their learning and awareness. This is needed to make our students feel like global citizens in today's world. (Principal Anita)

Similarly, all the teachers saw the BRIDGE program as a medium for using 'advanced' ideas and resources of Australia with their students in the context of their classrooms, and in ways that had not been previously known and tried. For most of the teachers, the various socio-cultural aspects of the program were appealing as they were excited about collaborating with Australian teachers, traveling abroad, teaching in Australian schools, and also welcoming their BRIDGE partner teachers to their schools and homes in India. For example, Teacher Priya perceived that it would be "very rewarding to visit Australia and Australian schools and teach Australian students". Whereas, for Teacher Seema, the exchange visit was "one of the exciting incentives for participation", along with her love for traveling around the world and her desire to network with teachers around the world. Teacher Poonam also felt that the program would enhance her "professional profile as a global teacher", despite the lack of any monetary benefits. The pedagogical opportunities of the program, the use of ICT for teaching, and the potential to meet teachers and students from Australia were what attracted Teacher Asha to the program at first. And although Teacher Nisha's main motivation to take part in the program was her students' involvement in the program tasks, she also thought that it would be professionally enriching for her to visit and work with an Australian teacher, and benefit from her partner teacher's Australian background, knowledge, and expertise.

The teachers' positive perceptions and expectations of partnering with Australia were seen consistently in the use of language such as "everything will be interesting there" (Teacher Poonam), "something worthwhile" (Teacher Rohan) and "great learning opportunity" (Teacher Asha). And while all the teachers had taken part in other professional learning programs, there was an enthusiasm among all the teachers and

principals about the opportunity to experience and learn about Australia. The teachers often mentioned during the interviews that they were eager to learn new ideas and strategies from teachers in Australia, which they all expected to be of the highest quality. For instance:

I was confident because I was going to Australia. I am sure the teaching there is much better than in India and the education standards are for sure high-class. Everything is developed there. Even the smallest techniques used by teachers there must be very interesting and constructive to learn and adapt to. (Teacher Poonam)

In similar lines, Teacher Rohan was hopeful about the program because he believed that Australia is a “good place” to learn. According to him, he did not have doubts about the purpose of his participation and he was confident that his experiences of an Australian education program would be useful and beneficial for him and his school. Other teachers too had positive expectations of the program and they believed that collaboration with Australian schools would be valuable in some way or other. They hoped that exposure to schools in Australia would help them to identify the strengths and weaknesses of their own. They had also hoped that the program would widen their understandings of themselves as professionals and from different perspectives, similar to the findings of studies by Trust (2013) and Trust et al. (2016).

The principals’ expectations of the program took the same hopeful route, which is evident in their positive descriptions and understandings of the Australian education system. During the principal interviews, a strong emphasis of words, such as “definitely interesting” (Principal Rashmi), “surely beneficial” (Principal Radhika), and “something good to offer” (Principal Deepak), reflects the high expectations they had from their teachers’ participation in the program. And, although Teacher Sneha and Teacher Seema showed occasional aspects of doubts, in phrases such as “you carry a certain type of image” and “I had mixed feelings about it” respectively, their interpretations, on the whole, echo their optimism prior to participation, with positive anticipations about what the outcomes would be through an educational partnership with Australia.

It is then logical to surmise that the schools' strong beliefs in the quality of certain education systems, such as Australia's, could have led to a higher degree of receptiveness and enthusiasm towards the learning partnership promised by the BRIDGE program. Regardless of general or specific interests in the BRIDGE program, both teachers and principals were hopeful that teacher professional learning, particularly through an Australian program, would be a viable opportunity that could not just develop teacher capacity, but also bring about different improvements to their schools. The principals were positive that an Australian professional development program would fulfill the learning expectations and needs of the teachers as well as students. The teachers too anticipated that such a collaboration would lead to becoming a better teacher, having a stronger curriculum in their schools, integrating ICT more effectively, and finding better teaching ideas and resources. In all, the unwavering desire to do what is best for their students seemed to be an overwhelming motivation for participation.

5.7 Globally-integrated education

All the teachers and principals were highly positive and receptive to developing school-to-school connections with Australia. Particularly, the principals also viewed the program as a way to be a part of a global education community. Moreover, they were enthusiastic about the possibilities of the global nature of the partnership. Their use of phrases such as "meaningful insights from an international platform" (Principal Pooja) and "improve global mindsets" (Principal Rashmi) is indicative of their understanding and interpretation of the program. If this line of reasoning is assumed, the rationale for teacher participation appeared to strongly lie in the aim to learn the best of Australia's educational practices and a global disposition of thinking.

The teachers' and principals' interests and expectations of the BRIDGE program were influenced by the schools' globally-oriented educational culture and their openness towards such cultures. When talking about their initial impressions of the program, many teachers spoke that they were positive about the program as they had experienced similar education programs and partnerships in the past. Most of the

principals wanted their teachers to take part in the program, not just because they thought that global education practices are important, but also because their teachers and schools were familiar with such programs. They felt that the BRIDGE program would be a continuation of their schools' existing global practices of learning. Similarly, Principal Anita, when discussing how global education was viewed and practiced by teachers and students in her school, said:

We are very accustomed to global thinking and questioning. Our school promotes global integration and respects diversity...The classrooms have a global learning atmosphere. Our students compete in global competitions. Their achievements make us and their parents proud. Managing and maintaining the global benchmarks of our school matters to all of us, our teachers, even our students. These global projects help our teachers to develop more realistically. With this learning, they always aim to incorporate their global skills and strategies in the classroom. We train them regularly through our programs and global programs also, so that they teach our students in the best possible way and use the best global resources and methods. (Principal Anita)

Principal Anita's views are suggestive of a belief among those in leadership positions that teachers 'develop' when globally-oriented pedagogical beliefs and practices are incorporated. These views also imply a strong sense of leadership responsibility to ensure that the teachers learned what they were supposed to learn in the age of technology and globalization. This means that the forces of globalization were deeply rooted in the BRIDGE schools' vision and culture. These schools, the teachers, and students had participated in a range of global education projects and partnerships. The globally-oriented features of the schools' pedagogical and cultural backgrounds and achievements possibly developed their interests in programs, such as BRIDGE.

When talking about the importance of programs, such as BRIDGE, most of the principals acknowledged the collaborative, interpersonal, and intercultural dimensions of global learning environments, which, they believed, would allow for the development of teachers' self-reflective skills and recognition of one's own strengths and shortcomings. They seemed confident that their schools supported local and international collaborative learning values, which, according to them, were similar to the objectives of the BRIDGE program. They also shared that their schools promoted and regularly

integrated global and collaborative education practices through new projects, exchanges, and other activities at all levels for teachers and students. These schools seemed to possess a level of pre-existing globally-connected identity in their learning cultures, practices, needs, and dispositions, with all of them already comfortably and successfully assuming membership in the wider transnational learning community through such programs. This concurs with Rizvi's (2007) views of the dynamics of global interconnectivity in education:

while, under colonialism, interconnectivity represented a political project designed to legitimize territorial conquests, in the contemporary era it describes an empirical reality resulting from the ease with which goods, finance, people, ideas and media are now able to move across the world, giving people the impression that they have more choices, and that they are 'citizens of the world'. It is about their social imagination. (n.p.)

The transnational nature of teacher professional learning through the BRIDGE program seemed to align closely with the schools' aims, familiarities, and capacities to nurture globally-oriented learning cultures within the schools. To some degree, it is possible to conjecture that these schools had received invitations to participate in the BRIDGE program because these schools were known in their local communities to have experiences of and interests in such programs. All the teachers agreed that their schools had the material capacity to participate in the BRIDGE program. According to them, their schools were equipped with the technology required for participation, and they were certain that they would work well with the online components of the program and they had the technical skills needed. For example:

The basic ICT requirement was not an issue at all. We have access to superior technology and speedy Internet in our schools. And we have been trained from time to time in using all the equipment and software. (Teacher Rohan)

The BRIDGE schools in this study were known to have high-quality infrastructure in the local community. The schools' pedagogical practices were considered compatible and complementary with international pedagogical frameworks. The schools' learning environments and infrastructure seemed highly favorable for teacher participation in

the program. The principals seemed confident that the BRIDGE program resources and activities would be easily applicable in the contexts of their schools.

It follows that these schools, with their sophisticated arrangements and achievements, were willingly and confidently open to new prospects, such as BRIDGE, to maintain their globally-integrated practices of teaching and learning. All the principals valued the possibilities of globalizing teacher professional learning, teaching, and student learning through the program. This emphasis can be explained by looking at the context of these schools, where students came almost exclusively from affluent socio-cultural and economic backgrounds, with their own aspirations and understandings of globalization and global education (Kenway & Lazarus, 2017; Sellar & Gale, 2011). According to Kenway and Fahey (2014), “globalization is not necessarily a new phenomenon for them” (p. 177), and “these groupings have certain specificities that distinguish them from national class groupings. Specifically, they have global economic interests, sensibilities, and loyalties and relate to the national tactically” (p. 178). The learning cultures in the BRIDGE schools reflect the globalizing practices of the schools illustrated in Kenway and Fahey’s (2014) study, which indicates how globalization is impacting the schools’ pedagogical practices, preferences, and the choices they make:

Nowadays, everyone is much more globally mobile, and so these students must be too. Furthermore, people are much more globally-connected, and local connections may not be enough to succeed in the current interconnected, interdependent world. Thus a school and its students must have connections around the globe. They must build cross-border ties and networks and transnational social capital. (p. 189)

In this study, the principals’ views suggest that in these schools, it was recognized that globalization is a major factor driving educational change and that parental expectations are also changing accordingly. Most of the principals claimed that their students were prepared according to the current demands and realities of globalization. They perceived that to thrive in conditions and environments that are increasingly influenced by globalization and technology, it is critical that the teachers continuously renew their approach to teaching and learning. Global education practices were commonly viewed

as the strategy for improving the schools' learning environments, and was consistent in the words of most of the principals; for instance, Principal Deepak remarked:

We have to explore all the possibilities. Because unless you interact with the world. It is said in our scriptures that let there be light from all sides. And although we have our own system, and it is fine, but it is important to learn what is working all over the world. Let the learning transfer and transform across schools. (Principal Deepak)

The schools seemed receptive to having the necessary arrangements in place for their teachers to acquire a comprehensive understanding and an awareness of the global pedagogical trends. In this light, Opfer et al. (2011b) point out that compelled by greater expectations in the global era, schools increasingly face the need to transform themselves into globally-relevant communities to achieve international quality and standards. Reciprocally, Kenway and Fahey (2014) explain:

To these schools, contemporary expressions of globalization are understood to mean that the competitive arena of education has been stretched out...Nowadays, everyone is much more globally mobile, and so these students must be too. Furthermore, people are much more globally-connected, and local connections may not be enough to succeed in the current interconnected, interdependent world. Thus a school and its students must have connections around the globe. They must build cross-border ties and networks and transnational social capital...Finally, globalization is seen to mean the school now has to understand itself as a strategic actor on a global as well as national stage. (pp. 189–190)

At one level, the principals in this study shared that due to positive support from the schools, the teachers were aware of global trends in teaching and student learning. At a deeper level, through the teachers' awareness and use of these trends, it seemed that the schools were training the teachers to prepare their students for global environments in the future as many of the students, who had passed from these schools, were settled overseas for further education and/or work, as illustrated in this comment:

We are not doing this partnership for improving academic results. It is not that we aren't getting good results. We are getting very good results. As of now, the alumni of this school are globe-trotting. Name any giant company and my students are working there, be it Google office, be it Microsoft or Accenture. Be it the medical world or the vocational world, our children are doing very well for themselves. Our school is in this [BRIDGE program] for the experience. (Principal Pooja)

In this regard, Kenway and Fahey (2014) point out that, “they [the schools] offer a vision of the world in which students, of a certain caliber and social standing, can always move freely and are free to imagine a world in which they are always on the move” (p.192). In this study, Principal Pooja was most interested in any learning opportunity that enhanced the students’ global knowledge and understanding of global settings. Whereas, Principal Deepak felt that people nowadays are aware of what takes place around them and aspire to be a part of social groups and communities on a global scale. According to him, similar aspirations were being envisaged and realized in teacher professional learning through programs, such as BRIDGE:

We see our school as the centre of excellence, as the leader of global education, and we have to do it for the sole purpose of fulfilling the aspirations of all the stakeholders - the students, parents, teachers, management, alumni and society at large. Everybody has a global aspiration and the school in its own ways plays a very important role to achieve that. (Principal Deepak)

Other principals believed that their schools’ participation in programs, such as BRIDGE, was what the majority of parents expected and demanded. The general expectation was that such programs are relevant and engaging and would lead to sophisticated teaching and student learning. As a result, some of the teachers, such as Teacher Asha and Teacher Seema, who had experimented with innovative and global education practices were also often acknowledged (not necessarily monetary) and recognized by their schools. According to Teacher Seema, through her previous global networking activities for professional learning, she had successfully managed to stay informed about educational developments and practices in several countries across the globe. And she had hoped to similarly use her experiences of the BRIDGE program to know about the Australia’s teaching practices and education system. Seemingly, her previous experiences of professional learning through networking activities could have formed the foundation of her participation in the BRIDGE program.

It is clear that globally-integrated education was at the centre of the schools’ vision, values, and agendas. Also, in a physical and symbolic sense, the schools were consistent

in the illustrations of their global performances, published or presented as their achievements on the schools' Websites, newsletters, magazines, and notice boards. It is likely that these preceding illustrations and global dispositions possibly played an influential role in the schools' interests in the BRIDGE program and the teachers' and principals' expectations of the program. In this respect, Courtois (2013) notes:

In some cases, the buildings and surroundings give the school an air of luxury and prestige, which strike the first-time visitor. Vast expanses of land, historical façades, and hallways adorned with portraits of past teachers, sport trophies, and other school memorabilia also contribute to the students' self-esteem and a sense that they are special. (p. 177)

In this study also, it is likely that the interests and motivations towards the BRIDGE program were the consequence of the schools' pre-existing processes put in place for establishing globally-oriented practices. These schools seemed to have all the provisions in place to support their teachers' participation in the program. In accordance with these arrangements, the teachers were possibly practicing what their schools preached. This means that the teachers' orientations to learning were reciprocal to their organizations' orientations to learning. The teachers, their principals, and their schools' learning communities seemed to have collective beliefs, goals, and expectations of the program. This reflects the views of Opfer et al. (2011b), in that the:

School-level elements constituting the organizational orientation to learning thus include beliefs about learning, practices, systems, and supports for learning, a collective capacity for learning, and dissonance as a catalyst for change when practices and beliefs do not align. These elements of the organizational orientation to learning also show evidence of reciprocity. That is, school practices can and do enable collective beliefs while collective beliefs can also result in more enabling school-level practices and structures. In this way, the collective capacity of the school impacts collective goals and enabling structures for organizational growth that impact, and are impacted by, collective norms and practices. (p. 196)

The principals had also assumed that their teachers' use of the BRIDGE program might add to their schools' identity of a global learning community. For example, Principal Deepak anticipated that the program would integrate the school further in the global

education community. His sense of global camaraderie is consistent with Kenway and Fahey's (2014) study, in that a crucial aspect of the schools' connections is not just the knowledge shared through partnerships, but also the sense of global belongingness that such participation engenders. The BRIDGE schools deliberated the provisions to create globalized processes that support teacher belongingness in a global professional learning community, that is, the BRIDGE program. Likewise, Timperley et al. (2007) report from their study of the influence of the school environment on teacher professional learning, where they identify that the school culture facilitates teachers' motivations for professional learning and prospects for new ideas. Similarly, according to Opfer and Pedder, (2011):

The relationships between beliefs and practice enacted at the individual teacher level re-enact themselves at the school level, creating joint or socially produced conditions for teacher learning—a school-level orientation to learning system. Thus, although individual teachers' decisions about professional learning may result from a confluence of instructional practices, pedagogical beliefs, prior knowledge, and past experiences, school-level decisions about professional learning may result similarly from the interaction of collective practices and beliefs about learning. These collective beliefs and decisions about school-level learning then heavily influence individual beliefs and decisions about learning. Furthermore, although an individual teacher's orientation may lead him or her to participate in professional learning activities, the access, support, and encouragement to participate are heavily determined by the school. Thus, our conceptualization suggests that we cannot understand teacher learning by investigating these influences on teacher learning in isolation from one another. (p. 393)

The BRIDGE teachers' professional obligation to conform to the existing culture and needs of their schools might also have been one significant factor in their decision to participate in the program. However, that pressure did not seem overt on the part of any teacher. On the contrary, the schools' culture might have stimulated the teachers' expectations to adopt more innovative professional learning practices through the program. It could have guided them to plan their experiences and apply those experiences in ways that they perceived to be consistent with their schools' desired objectives and cultures. This implies that the school environment has a significant influence on the choices made for teacher professional learning and on the nature and purpose of these choices. The prospects of teacher professional development programs,

such as BRIDGE, might thus be shaped by what schools do, how they are, and what they do to improve the quality of teacher professional learning. This coincides with Schulz and Geithner's (2010) study, where it was found that "learning networks provide a specific situation with more or less independent partners that have to be actively involved and convinced of the benefits of the network for their own institution" (p. 83). For Opfer et al. (2011b):

School-level strategy, what in our study would be systems and supports, for teacher professional development provides clear boundaries for making decisions about what should be offered and to whom, what foci and types of learning should be prioritized, and what types of new practice will be required given changes in the school environment. And, these systems and supports make it more likely that when teacher learning occurs it is of use to the organization, making implementation more likely. (p. 209)

The implementation of the BRIDGE program seemed to mainly depend on the schools' readiness and interest. Getting the schools to 'buy-in' would have been unlikely if the schools were not familiar with such programs or if the schools were not certain that teacher participation was worth the money, time, and effort. However, the schools' pre-existing global cultures and practices were an added advantage to the implementation of the program. The teachers and principals had positive attitudes towards the program possibly as a consequence of the positive experiences they had of similar programs in the past. This could have motivated the schools to participate in the program. This indicates that the schools that perceive teacher professional learning and transnational learning networks to be meaningful and useful are more likely to promote and integrate such networks in their schools. This can be seen as supporting the views of Garet et al. (2001) on the coherence of professional development. According to them:

....compared to teachers whose professional development is not coherent, teachers who experience professional development that is coherent—that is, connected to their other professional development experiences, aligned with standards and assessments, and fosters professional communication—are more likely to change their practice. (p. 934)

The data presented in this section suggest that teachers and principals from schools, where the dominant and most common pedagogical practices are strongly collaborative,

global and focused on technology, are most likely to embrace professional development programs, such as BRIDGE. One common and strategic way followed by all the principals was to ensure that networks, such as BRIDGE, were officially embedded within the schools involved, and aligned with the school's development plans through reliable sources. The program was introduced to the school principals through certain communications and provisions that the principals had maintained. In a general sense, teachers' participation in the BRIDGE program was possible and seemingly driven by the principals' apparent responsibility and commitment to improve the schools' learning cultures at all levels through such programs (Fullan, 2007). This points to the crucial role of school leaders in creating a formal and recognized strategy for positioning teacher professional learning networks within the schools' priorities and agendas.

5.8 Role and support of the school leaders

School leaders play a pivotal role in teacher professional learning (Penuel, Riel, Krause, & Frank, 2009), and they are mainly responsible for realizing their schools' commitment to improving the standards of teaching and student learning (Earl & Katz, 2007; Harris, 2008; Stoll, McMahon, et al., 2006). Katz et al. (2008) made the point that "the formal leaders in schools cultivate opportunities for organizational learning in the school through the creation of conditions for collaborative inquiry in the network" (p.132). In this study also, the principals had certain roles, expectations, and interests regarding their teachers' involvement in the BRIDGE program. This section identifies four areas where principals had a direct or indirect role in shaping the prospect, nature, and purpose of their teachers' participation. These include: (1) The image of the principal as a global leader; (2) Direct involvement in the selection of teachers; (3) Emphasis on globally-integrated and collaborative learning environments; and (4) The principals' anticipations of the program outcomes.

The principals promoted globalization at the core of student learning and teaching activities. They were committed to maintaining their schools' reputation of being global in its outlook and practice. They also felt that they were responsible to raise awareness

among the teachers about professional development programs, such as BRIDGE. For example, Principal Deepak believed that his school was invited to participate in the program due to the school's extensive experiences of globally-integrated education, and also because he was known among the local education community as a global leader who encouraged such learning initiatives in the past, as typified in this comment:

For me, since I also have been a teacher, I know the difficulties and demands that are part of the teaching profession. I know the roles that teachers have to play are changing at a fast pace. And I understand that the capacity building of teachers can make much difference to their practice. And therefore, with this leadership position that I have reached, where I can influence and bring changes, where I can take decisions and make a difference in the lives of the teachers, I have taken on this role with responsibility towards my teachers and the dedication and commitment to global excellence of the school. I am known as a global educator in this community. I have always been open to changes. I think it is important for teachers to have global mindsets in these changing times. This school is known for adopting international programs. We have sent more than 30 teachers abroad on various exchange programs, more than 30 teachers to various countries. (Principal Deepak)

This comment reflects two important insights into the role that the BRIDGE principals possibly play in the professional development of the teachers involved in this study. The first of these insights is that the principals acknowledged the importance of teacher professional development in preparing teachers for globalized teaching and learning environments. The second is related to the role principals played in setting expectations and ensuring that the structures and provisions were in place to support teacher professional learning in these schools. Like Principal Deepak, all the principals strongly endorsed the practices of globally-oriented teacher professional learning. These principals belonged to schools that were reputed in the local education market for its high standards and globally-oriented learning cultures. Their views on innovative approaches to teacher professional learning were aligned with what was already promoted and practiced in the classrooms. The principals' views on education and their leadership position in schools could have shaped the prospects for teachers to participate in the BRIDGE program. For instance, Principal Deepak shared that he was interested in the program as it was congruent with his own beliefs as well as the school ethos:

I consider myself a global citizen and any effort in bringing global partners together is something that I would like to be a part of. That is something very close to my heart. That is why I am very happy about this project. (Principal Deepak)

Indeed, the principals played an important role in interpreting the BRIDGE program or making sense of the program for the teachers and their schools, by positioning the program within the organizational narrative or pedagogical vision. According to Cosner (2009), “principals place particular emphasis on ‘making connections’ between people and fostering collaboration as a part of their capacity building work” (p.268). In this study also, the principals seemed predominantly supportive of collaborative teacher professional learning, and had a global vision of education. Moreover, all the principals mentioned that they understood the features and benefits of professional development programs, such as BRIDGE, as they also had participated in transnational programs for their professional development. Based on their own experiences, they perceived that such programs are very useful and, therefore, wanted the teachers to take part in similar opportunities, as typified in these comments:

As a principal, I have been lucky to be part of a lot of international exchanges... These exchanges are so beneficial to understand education from various perspectives and understand one’s own potential. I feel that I have almost done my innings and I need to have the next set of leaders ready in my school. That is why I encourage my teachers to take part in such projects. (Principal Rashmi)

I also had attended a professional learning program for school leaders in Australia. So I knew about the Australian Education System and when I came to know about the BRIDGE program, I felt very happy and excited that we are invited again and our school will again get the opportunity to collaborate with Australia through another program. I immediately decided to send one of my teachers there. I have complete positivity and confidence in these programs. (Principal Anita)

The principals were involved at the forefront in terms of identifying and choosing teacher candidates for participation in the BRIDGE program. Each principal had his/her own criteria for selection, wherein teachers with knowledge, experience, and skills were taken into consideration. These included: 1. Years of teaching experience; 2. subject matter knowledge; 3. English language fluency; and/ or 4. ICT competency. The principals selected the teachers who they deemed ‘fit’ to participate. In many ways then,

the teachers' engagement in the BRIDGE program mainly seemed as a consequence of their principals' interests and choices. Maybe this was because the teachers were representing the schools globally. The principals might have thought of sending someone who would not just represent their schools in the best possible way, but would also have the skills to do so. This lends support to Lima's (2010) study, where it is suggested that:

....organizers/network managers should take care of recruiting members whose network properties in their home institution make them adequate for the dissemination of change initiatives and innovative practices. To rely solely on voluntary participation in this respect is to risk assuming a change potential that may not actually exist. (p. 13)

Although the BRIDGE teachers acknowledged the importance of their professional learning, and although their expectations to improve teaching and student learning through the BRIDGE program was apparent, their involvement in the program was largely based on their schools' needs and interests and arranged by those in leadership positions. The teachers learned about the program through their school principals and applied to participate following their principals' suggestion. This implies that the protocols and procedures for teachers to participate in professional learning networks, such as the BRIDGE program, relies heavily on dynamic school structures and features. Nonetheless, this does not mean that the teachers were forced to participate in the program. Their selection could have been favorable (in their principals' views) to realize the overall usability and resourcefulness of the program. It is in this context that Anderson (2010) explains:

Having a similar network and network orientation would not ensure similar teaching excellence nor similar commitment to students; to the contrary, a similarly resourceful network and efficacious network orientation in the hands of teacher without pedagogical skill and ideological clarity could do more harm than good. (p. 562)

In this study, the principals' enthusiasm and their tangible or intangible support for their teachers' participation in the program were presumably a motivation for the teachers. Nevertheless, if the principals only selected highly knowledgeable, experienced and skilled teachers for participation, this draws attention to the issues of equity, particularly

if their selection of the teachers was predisposed, unfair, and lacking. In this regard, Lima (2010) warns that:

There is nothing inherently positive or negative about a network: it can be flexible and organic, or rigid and bureaucratic; it can be liberating and empowering, or stifling and inhibiting; it can be democratic, but it may also be dominated by particular interests. (p. 2)

If the principals had involved their teachers in the BRIDGE program as simply a means for realizing the schools' interests other than teacher professional learning (Veugelers, 2005), the principals' involvement in teacher selection could have established a hierarchy to which the teachers might have felt compelled. In that case, the teachers might have also struggled to find a balance between their own understandings and expectations and their schools' understandings and expectations of the program. Lima (2010) describes this network imbalance as a wicked problem:

The lack of balance may usually occur in officially sponsored networks where teachers are thoroughly selected and trained to operate as key players and advocates for specific reforms in their schools, using a variety of proactive influence strategies to seduce principals and colleagues into their perspectives (p. 16).

The role of school principals in their teachers' involvement in the BRIDGE program can be explained by the organizational cultures of these schools. All these schools were privately owned and managed. The teachers in such schools often have temporary jobs and are mostly obligated to those in leadership positions; in an attempt to maintain their employment and meet certain demands and expectations of their schools (Singh & Sarkar, 2012). If that is the case, the teachers' purposes and motivations towards the BRIDGE program could have been more driven by the structural processes of their schools, the dynamics of their professional roles and responsibilities, and the demands unique to their schools' contexts, and less driven by their professional learning needs and interests (Lima, 2010).

Consistent with the literature, it is clear that several factors, not always coherent with each other, influenced the teachers' expectations of the BRIDGE program. At the same

time, many overlapping conditions shaped these expectations and the prospects of their participation. As indicated in Chapter 3, school context (Stoll, Bolam, et al., 2006; Stoll & Louis, 2007; Westheimer, 2008), school leadership (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006; Penuel et al., 2009), and positive beliefs and perceptions (Bolstad, 2011; Opfer et al., 2011a, 2011b) were cited as contributing factors at various stages in the interviews. Teachers' interests in the BRIDGE program seemed to emerge from their schools' contexts and culture rather than their own beliefs and expectations. In all, certain factors and conditions, such as positive attitudes towards teacher professional learning, belief in the importance of globally-oriented collaborative education, support from those in leadership positions, combined with the ICT infrastructure maintained and ICT training provided by these schools, could have been favorable for teacher participation in the program. The interplay of these elements could have shaped their understanding of the program and the ways in which they perceived that the program would be useful for their professional learning.

5.9 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented an analysis of the qualitative data related to the pre-existing conceptualizations of teacher professional learning which understandably framed the principals' and teachers' expectations of the BRIDGE program. The interviews I conducted with them involved an attempt to find out what the teachers expected to gain from their BRIDGE experiences, and how their expectations related to their perceptions of professional learning. In other words, why did the teachers participate? The aim was also to identify the factors at play that possibly influenced the principals with respect to their choice to engage their teachers in the program. I found that positive expectations around the BRIDGE program were significant. Taking into account the various complexities associated with interview data, the teachers' and principals' expectations of the program reflected three main beliefs about the schools' participation in the program. Overall, these expectations possibly could have shaped the nature of the teachers' actual participation in the program, the enthusiasm they displayed, and the attempts they made to learn from their participation.

Firstly, each of the teachers considered themselves to be well-positioned and equipped to effectively use the resources of a transnational professional development program. They viewed their participation as a unique opportunity for learning from the Australian education system, which many of them considered stronger than the Indian system. This belief highlights the nature of the teachers' pre-existing beliefs about the parlous state of professional learning in Indian education and the perception that Australia is possibly better. The level of support from their principals and the schools' socio-cultural and economic capacities was relevant in the ways in which they interpreted and approached an Australian professional development program.

A major insight driving this study is that existing practices within a school have an influence on other possibilities. These schools were making deliberate choices about their teachers' participation in the BRIDGE program, based on positive beliefs and views on globally-relevant education, the schools' prior engagement in such programs, and the schools' infrastructural features. All the principals seemed keen to see their teachers participate in a global program so the teachers' experiences could be used to inform and drive the globally-integrated philosophies and cultures of these schools. Therefore, how the program was anticipated by the teachers can be seen as mainly located along a continuum of the schools' global practices, where global means a certain and sophisticated way to enhance pedagogical practices. What none of the teachers and principals do, however, is give a clear picture of what globally-integrated education practices mean to them, except that it is something advanced and previously imagined in their schools. Nevertheless, the schools' capacity can also be seen to be a key determinant of the extent and the ways in which teachers' participation in such programs were encouraged and facilitated. All the BRIDGE schools displayed a level of resemblance in their infrastructural capacities and globally-oriented education dispositions, with all the teachers and principals assuming the globally-integrated mantle.

Secondly, the teachers expected that the BRIDGE program resources would be of considerable benefit to their schools and students. Resources, mainly in the forms of teaching materials, ICT ideas, and pedagogical guidance would justify the investments for participation. Further, the principals hoped that the teachers would make effective use of ICT components of the program that would be accessed within the ICT environments of their schools and classrooms. They wanted their teachers to focus most strongly on ways to transform pedagogy when using ICT in their classroom practices. In this way, they viewed the nature of the resources that BRIDGE could provide in material, symbolic, and cultural terms. The symbolic significance of their participation should not be underemphasized. It marked them as privileged, enjoying transnational links for professional learning that few teachers in India are able to forge. However, their enthusiasm for the program focused as much on its transnational character as it did on actual professional learning useful in their pedagogy. Against this backdrop, it was found that the teachers were confident in their abilities to use the ICT components of the program. They also had prior experiences of globally-extended education environments and were confident that they could work well with any similar form of learning in a new learning environment. Prior teacher skills and confidence in using such programs is, therefore, an enabler, and a big one, for teacher participation in programs, such as BRIDGE.

Thirdly, while the teachers valued the opportunities for transnational collaborations, they insisted on the importance of reciprocity. Although they highlighted the social distinction they derived from transnational collaboration within India, they were also reluctant to admit the asymmetry of power relations across Indian and Australian teachers. They talked repeatedly about the sharing of transnational activities and tasks. Through the reciprocity of these transnational processes, they believed, the resources of the network would be widely disseminated across other schools. Accordingly, the teachers and principals shared positive attitudes towards the program, expecting a whole range of outcomes, but most definitively in relation to the possibility of improving the teachers' ICT knowledge and skills.

Nevertheless, teacher participation in the BRIDGE program seemed to be a consequence of certain organizational conditions and objectives that should not be overlooked. Across the eight schools, school cultures, philosophies, and governance arrangements played a critical role in the schools' decision to participate in the program, and in setting up teacher expectations. For the teachers, their initial decisions to get involved in the program were not only based around expectations of what the program would offer to their schools and their students but also driven by a curiosity to gain new experiences in Australia. They had high expectations of the program since they believed that an Australian professional development program had quality resources and a strong support base of pedagogical expertise. In particular, BRIDGE was seen by both teachers and principals as a resource capable of providing better opportunities for teaching and learning than they previously had. As such, teacher participation in the BRIDGE program emerged as a planned initiative and was influenced by the school administration and other school-related internal as well as external features and factors.

The schools' contexts, dispositions, and aspirations influenced the principals' decision to involve their teachers in the BRIDGE program because it was perceived to realize learning about new approaches to pedagogy and possibly generate better student learning experiences. Nonetheless, the possibilities of 'globalizing the students' learning experiences' also emerged as a strong motivation. But exactly what the notion of 'globalizing the students' learning experiences' meant for the teachers is unclear. The school practices and expectations contributed to the professional context in which the BRIDGE teachers were situated and evidently contributed to the teachers' beliefs and concepts of what was expected of them and what their professional learning should involve and bring about. While it is the case that the expectations of the teachers were largely positive and linked to their teaching agendas, the socio-cultural dynamics of their schools and the broader concept of the schools as global institutions also had a great deal of sway in relation to the prospects of their participation in the program. However, the rhetoric of globalization seemed ubiquitous, and articulated more strongly by the principals than the teachers, though teachers too framed their understandings and

expectations of the program in terms of the importance of global networks in professional learning. In the next chapter, I will describe and analyze if and how the teachers' experiences of the BRIDGE program were shaped by these understandings and expectations.

Chapter 6

EXPERIENCES

6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I provided an account of the expectations that the teachers and principals had of the Australia-Asia BRIDGE School Partnerships Project, as a way of understanding the potential of transnational learning networks for teacher professional learning in India. I found that the teachers and principals had positive expectations of the BRIDGE program. The hopes they had mainly related to their beliefs that the Australian education system and its traditions of Australian professional development were strong and robust, and that they could benefit greatly by learning about the ways in which Australian schools create and sustain their learning cultures and environments. Each of the teachers and principals expected that the program would provide useful and relevant educational resources that could help them develop the teachers' knowledge and skills. Moreover, they believed that ICT resources provided through the program would be most valuable, in particular. Teacher participation in the program was thus seen as a way of developing teacher skills in the use of technology and in experimenting with new technological resources. Moreover, there was also an openness to the idea that the BRIDGE program might instill much-needed enthusiasm and awareness that some teachers in the Indian schools might have lacked.

The principals, in particular, believed that the nature and objectives of the BRIDGE program were in line with the schools' own educational vision and values, expressed in the ideas of collaboration and 'globally-relevant' learning. There was a strong expectation that participation in initiatives developed in a more advanced system of education would further globalize the schools and its teaching-learning cultures. For the principals, their teachers' participation in the program was a further example of their school's commitment to global education. Many of them viewed that their attempts to encourage the teachers to forge transnational learning networks represented an act of their leadership. So, in many ways, the teachers viewed their engagement in the BRIDGE

program as an affirmation of the schools' already existing pedagogical beliefs and practices, and their desire to meet 'global standards'. Against these expectations, how did the teachers find their actual experiences of the BRIDGE program?

In this chapter, I provide an analysis of the data relating to the teachers' experiences of the BRIDGE program and the dynamics surrounding these experiences. I seek to understand how teachers viewed their experiences as the means to meet their professional learning needs, while also contributing to other more instrumental expectations that the principals had of the program. This would help me to delve into the factors that possibly influenced the teachers' engagement in the program, not only concerning professional learning, but also with respect to the demands, expectations, and aspirations derived from these schools.

6.2 Teacher induction and program orientation

In this section, I provide an account of the teachers' experiences of being introduced to their partner teachers in Australia and look at their first impressions and understandings of alignments between their worldview and the worldview of the Australian teachers. It is illustrative to note at the start of this chapter that the teachers' experiences of the BRIDGE program included both online and face-to-face components and each of these components is taken into consideration in this study. At the very start of the program, all the teachers had undergone a pre-departure orientation and training session in Delhi. Many teachers expressed that these sessions were useful in knowing the BRIDGE team and getting a brief overview of the objectives, expectations, and requirements of the program. Nevertheless, connections before the teachers' departure to Australia were planned and established among teachers as well as students.

The BRIDGE team had allotted a BRIDGE partner teacher in Australia for each Indian teacher involved in the program. The teachers were not necessarily teamed-up with their partner teachers within the same subject areas or same teaching levels. The

teachers perceived that this was done to help them form an interdisciplinary understanding of other subject areas and teaching levels. Before the teachers' departure to Australia, the teachers exchanged email ids with their partner teachers and introduced themselves via emails. The teachers also arranged synchronous online sessions in their classrooms to introduce themselves and their students to teachers and students in Australia. They exchanged a series of questions as part of their introductions, discussed their hobbies, school activities, and their cultures. In these sessions, they also shared their hopes and anticipations about their future experiences of the program.

Exchanges during the initial stage of network participation are often one of the more prominent aspects in the formation of professional partnerships and trust relationships, which are known to be imperative for teacher engagement in such networks (Edge et al., 2009). Many teachers acknowledged in their interviews that the introduction sessions were useful in establishing new links in a transnational learning environment and making the participants comfortable in this process. For Teacher Nisha and Teacher Poonam, this was an easy and convenient way to initiate links and develop rapport among both teachers and students. Teacher Priya found that online face-to-face sessions created a positive and friendly learning environment and helped in "opening up" more easily to a new culture. Teacher Reema too ascribed significance to informal exchanges in new learning environments and found them to be the "right way" to "break the ice and build the bridge". In this regard, Veugelers (2005) notes that "networks cannot be proclaimed, they have to be built through formal and informal processes" (p.290). In this study too, the teachers perceived that the formal-informal nature of the induction and orientation communications and activities were an enabling factor for the teachers as well as students to develop an openness, enthusiasm, and curiosity towards the program. A similar view is accounted for in research that stresses the importance of informal interactions in teacher professional learning environments (Moolenaar, 2010):

Social interactions among teachers in professional communities may shape the context in which trust can flourish by providing a blueprint for future interactions, shaping expectations and conveying information about the norms and values of social interaction within the community. (p.142)

The teachers then left India to meet as a group in Sydney for face-to-face teacher induction and program orientation sessions. The BRIDGE team conducted workshops and presentations, and hosted strategic planning sessions to prepare the teachers for participation. All the teachers felt that these sessions gave them a chance to discuss and understand the guidelines and instructions for participation, and get a brief understanding of the nature and purpose of the program, best exemplified by Teacher Seema:

The first intercultural session by the BRIDGE program was on why we are here, what are we doing? That was a really good workshop which made us receptive and familiar with the program and other teachers. Learning is endless when you are receptive to learn with each other, when you change mindsets to learn new things together, and when you get to know about other mindsets in this way. Then the learning is endless. And that is why the workshop was helpful. (Teacher Seema)

Key learning from these sessions was centred on task design, which helped the teachers to start planning their co-operative learning projects for their students. Other than participating in the induction and orientation sessions arranged by the BRIDGE team, the teachers also toured the city with the rest of the Australia-India cohort as part of the program. The teachers together visited the Sydney Opera House and were also led by The National Museum of Australia through a briefing on accessing virtual excursions and robot telepresence programs. After that, the teachers departed to the respective regions of their BRIDGE partner teachers in Australia to complete the school visits and homestay components of the program.

6.3 Reciprocal homestays and school visits

After attending the induction and orientation sessions in Sydney, the teachers departed to their respective regions in Australia for a 10-day homestay at their partner teachers'

residence, and for school visits to their partner teachers' schools. Veugelers (2005) explains that "despite modern ways of communication, the personal meeting is important in the process of constructing knowledge" (p. 286). The teachers perceived the homestay experiences as a firsthand and informal opportunity to learn about another culture and build a personal rapport. Nonetheless, irrespective of the teachers' enthusiasm for the prospects of establishing learning partnerships with teachers in Australia, some of the teachers initially felt skeptical about the cultural differences. At the beginning of their homestays, these teachers were doubtful about the effectiveness of the informal and impersonal processes in developing professional ties with their partner teachers from a different culture. In spite of this, and in no time, it was through these processes that the teachers started to feel more comfortable and positive about a different cultural experience. For example, Teacher Priya joined the program with a certain mindset and expectations which, according to her, were quite different from her Australian partner teacher. As a result, at first, she was somewhat overwhelmed by the thought of the homestay experience. Teacher Priya had hosted a 10-day homestay in India for her Australian partner teacher before her homestay in Australia. Following her hosting of homestay in India, she reflected on the informal interactions and friendly experiences that she had with her partner teacher, and started to form deep respect and professional admiration for him. Many of these interactions and experiences could have aided Teacher Priya's homestay experience in Australia. It could have helped her in openly exploring and negotiating the many ways in which she could form a better professional learning relationship with her partner teacher, as explained in this comment:

My apprehensions were there from the very first day... I was a little bit overwhelmed and wondered how this partnership would form and grow. But when [...BRIDGE partner teacher] came to my house to stay, he became part of my family. The atmosphere was friendly and the defense was down. He stayed in my house for ten days. And we all kind of missed him the day he left. Everything ultimately turned out very well and very smoothly. So the doubt that I harbored in the first few days just vanished. And then when I went to Australia, I had no doubts at all and it was beautiful from day one and we met like long lost friends. (Teacher Priya)

It is also possible that during many of such experiences, the teachers related to their partner teachers in ways that made them question previously held assumptions about themselves and others. Seemingly, the informal aspects of their experiences with their partner teachers made a difference to what the teachers learned and how (Day & Hadfield, 2004). Equally important, informal practices in collaborative learning environments were viewed as crucial also for overcoming the potential complexities and cultural differences that are known to be commonplace and often follow in transnational learning partnerships (Martin & Wyness, 2013). Teacher Priya, for example, believed that although her partner teacher had views and understandings quite different from hers, the unpretentious nature of the reciprocal homestay experiences gave her the chances to have more friendly exchanges of different views around various topics with her partner teacher; mainly related to appreciating the uniqueness of each other's culture. These reciprocal activities and casual exchanges could have possibly enthused Teacher Priya's openness and optimism towards the prospects of professional learning with her partner teacher. It is evident, in most of the teacher interviews, that the teachers' positive homestay experiences had stimulated their confidence and ease towards their school experiences of Australia and their experiences of the program.

As part of the BRIDGE program, each teacher also visited their partner teacher's school in Australia. They toured the schools, explored their infrastructure, met the teaching staff, discussed teaching-learning techniques with other teachers in the schools, and also observed lessons in the classrooms. Some of the teachers also took the opportunity to conduct a teaching session in their partner teachers' schools. According to most of the teachers, their school visit experiences not only familiarized them with the best practices in these schools but also made them aware of the schools' materialistic and cultural features, which they found to be similar to their own schools. Interestingly, when talking about their school visits, the teachers used the words 'difference' and 'similarity' frequently. For example:

I did not see much difference between our school and theirs. There were a lot of common areas and concerns that I could relate to. The kind of learning environment I saw in the classroom was very much similar. How the teachers established communication with their students and the other way around. The school infrastructure and the classroom set-up. I could see a lot of similarities in those aspects. What sophisticated infrastructure you see here in private schools, probably a similar type of infrastructure is there in public schools. But there are some differences too. The way of planning and working in both schools is definitely something different. And our key priority in the program is to work together with those similarities and differences (Teacher Sneha)

Like Teacher Sneha, other teachers and principals also expressed a perceived sense of some similarities between the features of their own schools and their partner schools in Australia. However, they often interpreted these features in terms of the material infrastructure and resources, rather than on issues of pedagogical approaches and practices. Nevertheless, as Teacher Sneha's comments demonstrate, the focus was on both similarities and differences and how they could work their way through the differences in cultures. In this regard, Wilson et al. (2007) explain that teacher professional learning networks are often composed of professionals who do not necessarily share the same knowledge, skills, practices, and views, but who are committed to learning together and from each other. Moreover, teachers' experiences of these networks might be driven by how they identify similar strengths and concerns and negotiated differences (Trust, 2012). The BRIDGE teachers in this study also worked, and in some situations struggled, their way through these commonalities and differences. This resonates with views of Veugelers (2005), who advocates that networks are:

...created by shared common concerns. Teachers from different schools become partners in a joint exploration of experiences and new possibilities. School networking links institutions that maintain their own autonomy while seeking collaboration and cooperation. In networking, we see processes of both accommodation and profiling of schools. Teachers become part of a broader educational community. (p. 286)

Another significant aspect discerned during the Indian teachers' reciprocal homestay and school visit experiences of the program was their own observation of the importance that the Australian teachers attached to reflection in the process of teacher

professional learning. Some of the Indian teachers mentioned that the reciprocal nature of their experiences with their partner teachers stimulated their reflection and awareness about their own school practices. The hands-on exposure of Australian pedagogical and cultural environments possibly enabled teachers to adopt a more reflective perspective of the program and understand its relevance in improving their classroom practices (Gu, 2005; Hanraets et al., 2011; Smith, K., 2013). Teacher Seema's comment echoed this view:

When I went to the BRIDGE partner school in Australia, I found that their curriculum and infrastructure are absolutely the same but the delivery is different from ours and much better. We are still in the superficial stage of delivering the curriculum with a theoretical approach and more teacher-centric, whereas in Australia it is more practical and student-centric. So that was challenging initially as I realized that the core of our educational practices is very different from them. But with time spent during the school trips and homestay, I got a chance to observe, experience, reflect and understand its relevance to my school. I soon realized that we have a lot of things to share and learn from each other and a lot of things in common too. (Teacher Seema)

The emphasis on understanding their professional selves through these experiences also illustrates how these teachers perceived the processes of a transnational professional development program, which is based on sharing, reflecting, and learning. This is consistent with the views of Krutka et al. (2017) and Smith, K. (2009), which suggest that by reflecting on their network experiences and the arbitrations of purposes, processes, spaces, and ideas, teachers collectively enhance their learning experiences. It is generally accepted that, without proper reflection, the teachers can often fail to recognize the importance of experiences beyond their professional practice. Krutka et al. (2017) affirm:

There is no one right way to cultivate a PLN. However, by identifying and reflecting on their PLNs, teachers may discover that, given their own specific purposes, their PLN consists of so many spaces or people that they are stretched too thin to implement new ideas in the classroom. Or on the other hand, teachers may realize they are not connecting with the types of people who can help them meet their professional needs. Without scaffolded analysis of their PLNs, educators could miss out on potentially beneficial PLN activities beyond their habits or norms...By identifying their PLN experiences and activities, teachers can become more mindful of the people, spaces and

tools that shape their learning experiences. Teachers can then reflect, and critically examine, how their PLN activities shape their teaching and learning. (pp. 248–250)

The process of reflection seemed integral to teachers' awareness and professional understanding. Their view was that the reciprocal nature of their experiences in the program influenced their understanding of the strengths and concerns of their work contexts, particularly in relation to the school policies, work ethics, institutional structures, and the professional roles teachers played inside their classrooms. Like Teacher Priya, other teachers hosted their Australian partner teachers in India for homestays and school visits. The majority of the teachers viewed such reciprocity as a core aspect of the BRIDGE program since it provided them a valuable opportunity to introduce the BRIDGE program and their partner teachers to other teachers and students in their schools. The principals, in particular, felt that the Australian teachers' visit of their schools 'brought the program to life for other stakeholders also', that is, for other teachers, and students and their parents, as shown in these comments:

Naturally, when my teacher went there, he brought a lot of valuable knowledge and skills, and he shared with his colleagues and students. She [partner teacher] came here, shared her ideas with other teachers and taught our students also. I am sure she might have gone back and shared what she learned. This brought a lot of value to our partnership with the school and also our future partnership. With her visit, we could extend the benefits of the program to other students and teachers, and bring it to life and meaning for all our stakeholders. (Principal Deepak)

When the BRIDGE teacher came here she shared about the practices in her school. Our students and teacher were excited to meet her. She even taught some of our students. Many things she liked about our system, and many things we liked about theirs. My teacher also, when she went there, she did the same. All this is highly appreciated by the students' parents. They like that our school is doing something unique, useful and interesting for the teachers and students. (Principal Anita)

The principals valued the reciprocity of the teachers' transnational learning experiences of the BRIDGE program. They regarded the reciprocal process of teacher participation in the program as ideal because it provided more options for strengthening the transnational learning partnership and sharing it with the school community. The reciprocal nature of the teachers' homestay and school visit experiences also seemed to

have developed a sense of responsibility and belongingness in the teachers; of being important to each other's learning and a belief that their learning needs can be met by the mutual and ongoing commitment to learning together and from each other. The teachers were consistent in their positive descriptions of these experiences, as exemplified by this comment from Teacher Asha:

It has been such a nice journey with my BRIDGE teacher in Australia. When she had come to our school, she enthusiastically went around the whole school and interacted with the staff. She even went to various classrooms and interacted with the students. I remember she had taught a French song to some of our students from the music class and how much she and our students enjoyed. It was very nice to see our students gelling with her. She took back lovely memories. I also had brought back lovely memories from Australia and we are still in touch. (Teacher Asha)

The teachers were simultaneously learning with and from their Australian partner-teachers. They were also learning about each other's cultures of learning, that is, about each other's attitudes, values, and beliefs about learning and teaching, and developing teacher practices and professional relationships. The teachers also noted that the reciprocal school visits and homestay experiences gave them the opportunity to "practice and understand" (Teacher Poonam) their BRIDGE program involvement in "real-world conditions" (Teacher Poonam). Through these reflective experiences, the teachers seemed to have "mutually and more amicably" (Teacher Reema) understood different cultures, beliefs, and practices.

The BRIDGE teachers had previous experiences of globally-relevant education projects as their schools often promoted and supported such practices. What was exceptional about the BRIDGE program was however that it was fully supported, both professionally and monetarily, and did not incur any personal costs to the teachers. Their homestay and school visit experiences of the program was partially funded by the AEF and partially by their schools. With the schools' interests in such programs and with the schools' financial support for the teachers' participation in the BRIDGE program, the teachers felt an obligation towards the success of the program, assuming a responsibility to ensure that any possible benefits from the program are realized in their schools. This is

consistent with Lima's (2010) observation that teachers' previous collaborative learning practices and related abilities, which are mainly developed through the schools' involvements and arrangements, prompt the teachers to accordingly integrate their learning in external networks into the context of their schools' learning communities.

From a similar standpoint, Varga-Atkins et al. (2010) contend that school-based teacher professional learning and external professional learning must not be examined as separate because they are often interdependent, influence each other, and are mutually beneficial. In their study, they found that perceptions about professional learning networks and its use were "influenced by the way teachers located their experiences of learning networks in the context of their own school-based CPD experiences" (Varga-Atkins et al., 2010, p.265). Lima (2010) also notes that the potential of educational networks "depends strongly on their members' connectedness within their local work environments". He cautions that "if they are not at least relatively central actors in their own schools, the so-called 'inter-organizational' networks may be little more than mere networks of acquainted individuals who happen to belong to different organizations" (pp. 12–13). In the same manner, the BRIDGE teachers played key roles in their schools' involvement in the BRIDGE program as they represented their schools, led the schools' partnerships with schools in Australia, and directed their reciprocal homestay and school visit experiences of the program, and integrated these reciprocal learning experiences of the program in the contexts of their schools' learning communities.

6.4 Integration of ICT

One of the objectives of the BRIDGE program, which was most valued by the teachers and principals, was the development of teacher capacity to use ICT in the classroom. Both teacher and principal interviews illustrate that the utmost significance was ascribed to the ICT exposure gained through the program. They considered the program to be an efficient tool for ICT skills development. This could be because ICT was the major component of the program through which the teachers collaborated with their partner teachers, and planned and implemented activities, tasks, and projects. This is

why at the start of the program (during the induction and orientation sessions), the teachers were also provided ICT training. According to some of the teachers, this made it possible for them to develop new ICT skills simultaneously and hence possibly engage more effectively in the program.

The teachers' learning experiences of the program mainly revolved around ICT. The teachers discussed with their partner teachers about ICT resources and learned to use the latest educational apps and Websites. They had also observed their partner teachers' use of ICT in teaching during their school visit experiences in Australia. For most teachers, irrespective of the level of their prior ICT knowledge skills, the ways in which ICT was used in Australian schools was way more advanced than their own practices; although many felt that their schools' technology infrastructure was more advanced than the technology infrastructure in Australian BRIDGE schools. Teacher Asha shared that even with years of teaching experience and ICT knowledge that she had, the ICT exposure through the program helped her develop new insights about ICT and this had enriched her teaching practices and students' learning experiences, as illustrated in this comment:

Now I am more motivated to use technology more regularly and in many different ways, which wasn't always the case before the program. I try using different apps and soft wares in my class. My students thoroughly enjoy these sessions. I have been using technology earlier also, but that was very different from the ways I use it now. Earlier it was very basic. Now I am using more variety of resources and in different ways. (Teacher Asha)

The teachers' use of ICT in the BRIDGE program was quite understandable given that the program comprised teachers from India and Australia, which are distant from each other, and therefore the teachers relied more on ICT for developing and maintaining their participation in the program. The ICT component of the program was also regarded as a safe platform for student participation under the supervision of their teachers. All the principals felt that their teachers' awareness about the latest ICT resources had increased due to the program. Then again, learning about ICT through the program

tended to add to the teachers' already existing knowledge rather than contest their previously held beliefs, as Teacher Rohan puts it:

I have realized one thing after participating in the Australia-India BRIDGE School Partnerships Project that I cannot survive without the use of technology. I mean before participating and going over there I knew the importance of technology, but that was more externally driven. But after coming back from Australia and seeing the extent of the ways technology is being integrated into the curriculum, teaching practice, and pedagogy. That made us realize that we cannot survive as a teacher if we don't keep ourselves open to technology. So I started using technology much more. (Teacher Rohan)

All the BRIDGE teachers had very positive attitudes towards the use of technology in education. Most of them shared that they had prior knowledge and skills to use ICT in their classroom practices. Nonetheless, the teachers and their principals were already highly receptive to ICT learning opportunities as professional learning in these schools often focused on ICT skills development of teachers, which ascertains their interests in the ICT components of the BRIDGE program. The teachers felt that the online components of the program eased and developed their professional connections with their partner teachers and ensured better student learning activities and sustainable school-to-school learning links. In this aspect, the schools' ICT features could have supported the teachers' use of the ICT components of the program. It is important to mention that these schools, including all the classrooms, were equipped with advanced ICT infrastructure and high-speed Internet. Considering that, the schools' ICT provisions could have promoted the teachers' use of the program.

Development of teachers' ICT skills and their confidence to use new technologies were viewed by many teachers as significant outcomes of their participation, especially by those who had few ICT skills at the beginning. And although most of the teachers had pre-existing ICT knowledge and skills, following their experiences of the program, the teachers seemed to have reformulated their understandings of what ICT meant for their professional practice, shifting the focus from ICT proficiency to learning about how ICT improved their pedagogical and professional practice.

6.5 Involvement of students

If this BRIDGE program continues, I intend to call 6–7 children from Australia to India for a month. And I will fully sponsor the students for one month, that's not a problem. But well, the embassy should look into it, the Australian Government should look into it. Other than the teachers coming, let the students also visit India, because when they grow up they should have love, knowledge, and understanding of each other's country. (Principal Pooja)

The involvement of students in the BRIDGE program was another valued and realized feature of the program activities. The principals often expressed a strong preference for student-centred teacher practices of the program. Similarly, the teachers seemed to have positioned their professional roles, their professional learning needs, and their subsequent experiences of the BRIDGE program in response to their students' learning needs and interests (Daly et al., 2010; Moolenaar et al., 2012). They felt supported by their schools to participate in a transnational professional development program. Nevertheless, it is likely that the teachers were supported to use the BRIDGE program with the hope and expectation that they would extend that same support to the students, plan the program activities around student learning, and engage the students in the program. Student involvement was frequently cited as the main benefit of BRIDGE program—to engage students in globally-relevant learning in the “best possible” (Teacher Poonam) way, as typified by this comment:

We [BRIDGE teacher and her partner teacher in Australia] have a common goal—our students. I want to create the best possible learning experience for my students. For this, my principal knew that we needed the best possible training of teachers as global professionals to prepare our students for a global world. And BRIDGE is the one. This is an opportunity and a time where I can better my teaching practices and help my students. (Teacher Poonam)

According to the teachers, their students took interests and actively participated in the program tasks and projects. It is likely that the students' involvement in the program possibly shaped and directed the teachers' experiences of the program. The teachers mainly planned and worked with their partner teachers on various activities involving the students. One of the main teacher activities of the BRIDE program was to

help students understand and develop their global awareness and understanding, mainly concerning Australia. Similarly, the principals valued the program activities as an opportunity for students to learn through a partnership with an Australian learning community, as a platform for the students to develop a sense of shared identity with Australians, as a member of a global society. Since BRIDGE is an Australian professional development program, the participants linked the prospects of developing global awareness with Australia. They viewed global and intercultural understanding as one of the key outcomes of the program. The BRIDGE activities were based on student discussions, projects, and tasks on history, art, culture, climate, science, literacy, and numeracy, and focused on sharing of current, dominant and common issues in both India and Australia. For most of the teachers, they were using the program and finding it useful mainly because their students were using it and finding it useful. For example, Teacher Seema and her partner teacher continued working together because:

Our students are most enthusiastic about this collaboration. There is so much we learn from each other. Our students take pride in sharing about India's culture and diversity. And their Australian peers are very appreciative. We meet and talk about common concerns. We talk about new ideas. How can global issues be tackled and what are the odds? There is no one teacher. All are learners and all teach each other. Even the Australian students are so open to learning something new from my students. This makes my students very happy. They are enjoying this partnership. (Teacher Seema)

When using the program with their students, the teachers observed high student enthusiasm and eagerness. Some of the teachers and principals also perceived that the students' positive attitudes and inclinations towards learning about Australia were useful in enhancing the students' learning experiences. They seemed hopeful that as the students will get the exposure of a 'globalized' learning environment, they will be compelled to exercise their skills of sharing and negotiation, as expressed in these statements:

They were extremely excited about Australia, and, no doubt, there was learning involved. I mean I can't express it in words. They are always excited about the projects. They focus on common and important things. They also like to share something new about their culture. I see a lot of rapport and unity. The students eagerly wait for online

sessions. There is so much they learn and want to learn about Australia. I am sure the Australian students feel similar. (Teacher Rohan)

Especially the video conferences which we hold between the Australian school and our school is something fabulous because I see so much enthusiasm in their students and our students. They have become more competitive in a good way. They want to share their knowledge and there's so much the Australian students know. It is a two-way joint learning effort for our students. I am sure that this way their learning process is more enjoyable. (Principal Pooja)

As the first step to promote their students' engagement in the program, the teachers had tasked their students to write a letter each addressed to their counterparts in Australia, an activity which, according to the teachers, helped their students to develop rapport with students in Australia and also improve their literacy skills. Teacher Poonam described that her students fondly discussed with Australian students about Indian sports, festivals, art, and nature and so on. Whereas, Teacher Reema's students shared stories about their daily lives, literature, and history. For example:

Some of my students have friends from all over the world through many such partnerships we had earlier with other countries and other schools. But, it was amazing to see the excitement level of my students about life in Australia and about making new friends from Australia. They wrote interesting letters. Expressive, creative and curious. It was nice to see that new friendships were forming. (Teacher Reema)

Against this backdrop, Moolenaar (2010) advocates that "improving the quality of education and student learning becomes both an individual and collective enterprise, which motivates teachers to engage in instructional change..." (p. 141). Teacher Poonam mainly used the program with her partner teacher to improve her students' classroom experiences. She believed that the program has made her a better teacher and improved her teaching practices. She felt that her participation was beneficial for all her students in "some way or the other", especially "in the long run", as typified by her comment:

This has given me an inner satisfaction. I am involved in an international project. All my students have benefitted in some way or the other. Some have developed their general knowledge, some have developed their literacy skills, and some have become globally competitive, while some have made new friends from Australia. I am feeling enriched, my school is enriched, my students are enriched through the program. All their experiences will be more useful in the long run. We are preparing the students to make

their mark globally, to face with confidence the global set-up in the long run. (Teacher Poonam)

The principals also were sure that their teachers' use of the program had benefitted the students the most. When asked about the program's influence on the teachers' professional practice, most of the principals strongly aligned their teachers' experiences of the program with the students' learning experiences, as exemplified by Principal Deepak's comments:

The students benefit through the teachers, in the ways teachers use the program. My teacher has learned new techniques and prepares lesson plans which are more diversified now; looks after the interests of the students, has more of technology integration, involves the students in the program activities and projects. So whatever learning has come to the teacher and if the teacher transmits that learning in the classroom and includes the students, it directly improves our students' learning. (Principal Deepak)

As discussed in the previous chapter, the principals believed that their teachers' experiences of the program and the program resources would be useful as it would be relevant to the schools' teaching-learning environments and would support classroom practices. Similarly, the teachers showed a strong interest to use the program mainly to enhance their teaching practices and improve their student learning experiences. Perceptions about what professional learning entails could have perhaps influenced the teachers' selection of what, when, and how they chose to apply their learning experiences of the program and why. The teachers in Cave and Mulloy's (2010) study also used a professional development program more positively because their schools believed that "the program's tasks could help motivate their students to achieve greater academic success and could be relevant to their future career and life development" (Cave & Mulloy, 2010, p. 15).

Nonetheless, data presented in this chapter also reveals that the teachers rarely moved beyond their skills-development experiences of the BRIDGE program and spoke of the ways in which the program influenced their self-efficacy, self-confidence, professional understanding, and professional practices other than teaching. For most of them, their

experiences of the BRIDGE program revolved around the contexts of their classrooms and were mainly skills-focused and student-centric. The teachers had a mostly pragmatic and operational understanding of the BRIDGE program, maybe because, in their schools, professional learning was commonly associated with those activities that improved teaching skills, including the use of ICT in classroom practices, and supported student learning experiences.

That being said, although the teachers' and principals' primary interest in the use of the program was mainly to improve teaching practices and student learning, this interest seemed reasonable, as after all, the teacher profession involves teaching as the main practice and student learning as the main agenda (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Wei et al., 2009). However, teacher professional learning is known to be more than the mere transmission of knowledge in the classroom (Opfer et al., 2011a) as "[professional] practice is not, or not simply, the application of knowledge; it is not a simple consequence of learning" (Boud & Hager, 2012, p. 23).

6.6 Conflicts and other challenges

Partners need to share a sense that there is mutual responsibility for, as well as mutual benefit from, the project and that all partners are prepared to contribute expertise, effort, and resources. Without this, partnerships can feel one-sided, and resentment may build if one partner becomes dominant, either through trying to impose ideas or by raising barriers to new ideas. (Bovill, Jordan, & Watters, 2015, p. 19)

Understanding how teachers made their way through the BRIDGE program involves an understanding of how its realization was both enabled and constrained by various conditions as encountered by the teachers. The previous sections illustrate that several features, both intrinsic and extrinsic, shaped the teachers' experiences of the program. Nevertheless, teachers also faced certain other barriers. At the start of the BRIDGE program, the teachers had planned with their partner teachers and mutually committed to coordinate regularly and conduct classroom activities frequently. However, many of the teachers reported insufficient and infrequent communications with their partner

teachers. These communications were constrained by several factors such as different time-zones in India and Australia, different school terms, different holiday schedules, different examinations schedules, as well as high teaching workload, and other school-related commitments. Many teachers expressed their helplessness in this regard, as exemplified in this comment:

The biggest challenge is different time-zone. And not only time-zone but we have different time-tables, different annual calendar. And to work around that within the immediate responsibilities of your own is not easy to make time for the projects to keep running. (Teacher Sneha)

However, the intermittent nature of these communications was negotiated collectively and successfully by some of the teachers, often with mutual understanding, co-operation, and proper planning with their partner teachers. For example, Teacher Rohan and Teacher Nisha commented that variations, namely in time zones, time-table, curriculum, and term dates, should be mutually understood and adjusted by teachers, within the contexts of their professional situations:

Different time-zones mean more interactions with each other, more emails, more exchanges, and more planning about just managing the time difference. Completing the tasks required less time. But organizing and making a common time was more challenging as compared to the actual participation itself. So it was difficult and we took some time and understanding to adjust. And we did adjust. (Teacher Rohan)

Initially, it [different time-zones] was a barrier. But we somehow managed and found the best suitable time. There was an understanding between me and my fellow teacher in Australia. And there was so much of ongoing communication taking place between us, back and forth, that we easily came to a consensus that yes this is the best time. (Teacher Nisha)

Cooperation among teachers to deal with different time-zones seemed to be an important indicator of the ways in which the teachers valued the program, worked through the challenges, and maintained their participation. Nonetheless, some of the teachers reported that low Internet connectivity was a barrier during the synchronous learning sessions in the classrooms that they organized with their partner schools in Australia. Interestingly, some of the teachers felt that the problem of low Internet

connectivity was an issue mostly in the partner schools in Australia and not in the BRIDGE schools in India, as illustrated in these comments:

Yes, initially we faced difficulty in connecting, but this was not from our side. This is a stereotype that if it is India, the connectivity is going to be very poor and not give enough bandwidth. But on the other hand, our school was quite equipped to have high-speed internet. However, from their side, they had an internet problem and they could not connect. (Teacher Sneha)

At times the Internet is not that fast in the BRIDGE school in Australia. So, at times they have to shut down the Internet in one part of their school just to be able to connect to India. (Teacher Asha)

Moreover, the teachers' experiences of the program were not free from attitudinal concerns and reservations. Knowing about these negative accounts of the teachers is also important since these form an important aspect of knowing why these concerns and reservations stemmed, and how the teachers dealt with them. For instance, Teacher Sneha shared that initially in the program, she had major differences with her partner teacher. She found that both she and her partner teacher could not reach a consensus on what mediums of communication would be best for both to coordinate with each other on a regular basis. Following a few discussions, Teacher Sneha adjusted to her partner teachers' communication preferences. However, some of these disagreements and subsequent adjustments could have impeded her enthusiasm to learn and could have shaped her overall engagement in the program.

Data in previous sections show that the teachers had mostly positive experiences of the BRIDGE program. Moreover, they had managed to work their way out of some of the barriers, such as lack of time, different time zones, and ICT barriers, with proper coordination and planning with their partner teachers. The inherent impediments of the program seemed to have been transcended by the teachers' understanding and cooperation with each other. For instance, Teacher Asha, Teacher Priya, and Teacher Seema continued their engagement in the BRIDGE program, mainly because of the professional and personal ties they formed with their partner teachers, which were positive, reciprocal, and amicable. These ties formed through the BRIDGE program could

have enhanced their attitudes towards the program and their interests in being associated with the program. Moreover, these positive ties could have influenced their use of the program and also supported their participation in the long run. This implies that the challenges in a professional learning network, when reflected upon and mutually negotiated by the teachers through positive and collaborative strategies, can support their engagement in the network and their professional learning experiences (Baker-Doyle & Yoon, 2010; Moolenaar, 2010; Smith, K. 2009).

6.7 Continuing participation and how?

What do we do after this? Once the relationships are forged we have to allow it to flourish. We have to widen the scope of this partnership. (Principal Deepak)

For most of the teachers in this study, their engagement in the program was ongoing, while for few, it ended after the program duration (12 months). Most teachers stated that they used various mediums, such as Whatsapp, Skype, and Gmail, to maintain contact with their partner teachers. They believed that being open to using a variety of communication mediums to maintain contact with their partner teachers had helped in maintaining their engagement in the program. In particular, the teachers who had maintained professional and personal connections with their partner teachers prolonged their use of the program. These teachers perceived that they successfully planned and implemented various tasks, activities, and projects with their partner teachers and schools in Australia, and that they continued to do so after the program duration because they valued the program as a learning team. In doing so, the teachers managed to maintain and sustain their professional learning links with their partner teachers. For instance:

We had a yearlong plan, so during that time we frequently interacted with each other. And after the completion of that program, we have again started new projects and activities with the BRIDGE school in Australia. But this is not just a part of the BRIDGE program. We both are equally involved and want to continue this learning partnership for us, our students, the teaching staff, for the entire school. This is part of our school program now. (Teacher Nisha)

Like Teacher Nisha, most of the teachers maintained a receptive and amiable professional learning team with their partner teachers. Alongside shared learning values and pursuits, many teachers also spoke about the importance of friendship and respect in terms of identifying themselves as important members of a collaborative and globally-integrated learning community. For example, Teacher Nisha spoke in terms of the collective context of the program and how she had maintained a strong and long-term relationship with her partner teacher, which was through trust, respect, and understanding. This was to the extent that she considered her as a close friend and not just a professional learning partner. According to Teacher Nisha, this personal bond helped her in building her professional bond with her partner teacher and supported her experiences of the program. Other teachers also felt that rapport, trust, and positive working relationships with their partner teachers influenced their current and future involvement in BRIDGE, and shaped most of their experiences and practices within the program. Their emphasis on teacher bonding for teacher professional learning is noteworthy as it suggests that the personal dispositions in professional rapport building experiences among teachers can have a motivating effect on their learning experiences. In this context, Keevers, Bell, et al. (2014) point out that the success and quality of education programs depend on the component of trust relationships among the members.

It is evident in this study that a central aspect when looking at the teachers' ongoing use of the program seemed to be linked to the personal processes of their involvements. According to most teachers, their experiences of the program involved the building of relationships beyond the professional. In this light, Lima (2010) asserts that networks should be viewed as a broad and comprehensive process, as they are achieved through the professional and personal processes of interactions among the participants, that is, "through processes not only of coercion and imposition, but also of negotiation, interpersonal influence, acceptance and even active compliance" (p. 18). In this study also, it was the "intensive interaction" among the teachers that sustained their engagement in "opening up their beliefs and practices" (Katz et al., 2008, p. 118). Most

of the teachers' perceived understanding of the nature of the BRIDGE program was one of the professional and personal connections formed among the members. The teachers often enthusiastically shared their experiences of establishing these connections with their partner teachers. These formal and informal processes possibly enabled the teachers with a broader sense of self and the perceived importance of their roles in this learning partnership. This understanding could have consequently enhanced their engagement in the program, including their ongoing participation. This is consistent with research by Risser and Bottoms (2014), which accentuates the importance of member relationships in professional learning spaces. Likewise, Keevers, Bell, et al. (2014) point out that "strengthening social relations and trust" amongst members of transnational learning spaces "enhances their capacity to create collaborative learning spaces amongst students studying in diverse cultural contexts, different geographical places, and shared cyberspaces" (p. 246). This study also implies that teachers' social and emotional connections in learning networks can stimulate their understanding and enthusiasm for professional learning, and their engagement and use of these networks, and can also support their ongoing professional learning efforts, as explained by Teacher Asha:

I have earned a friend for life. And the same goes for every teacher. We have a Whatsapp group of the BRIDGE teachers and we don't forget to wish each other on anniversaries and birthdays. We remember each and everything we did together—all the learning and fun too. Some of the teachers visit their partner teachers in Australia even after the BRIDGE program is over. So the connection is still there. That was just the BRIDGE but the road has been made with these relationships. Whenever we talk to each other we always learn something new. So it has been a beautiful learning experience for both of us. In case I have some problem and I am trying to figure out how to take up a particular thing, I don't hesitate to call up my BRIDGE partner or send her an e-mail. You see BRIDGE had happened for one year but we have taken it forward. (Teacher Asha)

Teacher Asha's rapport with her partner teacher produced a climate that possibly helped her to enhance her professional learning experiences in the program. In Teacher Asha's view, the effectiveness of her experiences of the program was "through informal socialization into the culture, norms, and ways of working" with her partner teacher and partner school (Wilson et al., 2007, p. 291). Like Teacher Asha, other teachers had also

worked together with their partner teachers over time, and this could have led to a deeper understanding of what these educational collaborations meant to them (Carmichael, Fox, McCormick, Procter, & Honour, 2006; Opfer & Pedder, 2011; Pickering, 2007). And possibly, it was this process of forming deeper connections, understandings, and subsequent reflections of the nature and purpose of their experiences with their partner teachers that possibly contributed to their understanding of the program and their ongoing engagement. This is in congruence with Veugelers (2005), who emphasizes that:

Learning in networks is a collegial, horizontal way of learning. Teachers reflect together on their experiences and construct new knowledge. Learning in networks is a social-constructivist practice. Knowledge from outside...is presented as a conceptual tool for helping teachers to analyze their own practices. (p. 286)

In this study also, reciprocity was a major aspect of the teachers' learning experiences with their partner teachers. Similarly, all the principals perceived that a professional learning network required teachers to be vested in each other, and, according to them, the establishment of strong relationships among teachers was even more crucial since the context of the program was international and intercultural. For instance, Principal Pooja states:

It takes a lot of effort on both sides. Clarity and communication have to be there, right from the start. Our views and understanding can be different and clashes can happen more easily. So it all comes down to the teachers, their efforts to form a bond, a team. I think they [the teachers] have become very good friends through the program. And what I find most interesting and satisfying is that they plan and execute as a global team. (Principal Pooja)

Similarly, most of the teachers felt that since they took the time to learn about each other, not just about teaching styles and beliefs but about who their partner teacher was as a person, this helped to build better professional relationships and learning partnerships among the teachers. They believed that as the program involved teachers from different backgrounds and cultures, the building of teacher relationships was most essential for the long-term success of the program. Teacher Seema articulated her trust in the importance of teacher friendships and expressed that a "lack of teacher trust and

understanding can create conflicts and jeopardize the partnership”. She believed that she continued using the program because she coordinated well with her partner teacher, through the personal rapport she shared with her, as pointed out in this comment:

I learned to make great friendships. I think the entire project fails if you are not able to make human connections and relationships. My BRIDGE partner was with me and my family and now she is family. And not just the teacher, I also connected with the principal and other teachers in Australia. This friendship has extended our professional association. (Teacher Seema)

Some of the teachers’ social interactions with their partner teachers seemed to have also stimulated their understanding and appreciation of their personal cultures and practices, and also motivated them to use the program after the program duration. For instance, Teacher Seema commented that after she got to know about the culture, life, and traditions of her partner teacher, she started to think more positively about her own culture and traditions. According to her, the program was so meaningful to her, and would continue to be that way, because it developed in her a sense of “self-worth” about her ethnicity and customs, as revealed in this comment:

There was an Australian teacher who connected with me so well that she wanted to learn some mantras from me. Though I am not very religious, the interest of that teacher in our mantras made me reflect on how wonderful and unique my country is. Going out brings you closer to your country. When you see these people value your country, you realize that your country is really good. So you come back with a new understanding and self-worth. (Teacher Seema)

Through positive rapport with her partner teacher and moments of self-reflection, Teacher Seema was able to reinforce the value of her Indian traditions, and use it as an opportunity to communicate them to others. It is likely that these moments of positive self-worth could have positively influenced Teacher Seema’s engagement in and understanding of the program. Like Teacher Seema, other teachers reconsidered their professional understandings, cultural biases, and other implicit assumptions in light of their ongoing experiences of the BRIDGE program, as illustrated in these comments:

My experiences were so engaging that I had enough time to overcome stereotypes. Sometimes teachers can still have stereotypes they had in the beginning because they didn't get sufficient time to clear them. Stereotypes such as our perceptions about the attitudes of Australians. But with the program, I got sufficient time and opportunity to interact with them and got to know them well. The program is so engaging that you overcome these stereotypes and you clarify these doubts very well. The program was very engaging with the common platform where I and my partner school worked on a common project for our students. It is so engaging that even after the teacher exchange is over, the collaboration for learning continues. (Teacher Rohan)

I had a wonderful time. My partner teacher was very supportive and enthusiastic. I've met friendly and helpful teachers in Australia with great learning environments at school. We work as a team...We have learned the best practices from each other. This was possible because we were open to learning from one another. It can never happen one way. (Teacher Asha)

Teacher Rohan and Teacher Asha seemed open to new understandings and environments. With positive and supportive learning environments, the teachers adopted new practices and perspectives. Even so, it is worth noting that both these teachers and their schools had prior exposure to globally-integrated education environments. They could have been well aware of and familiar with the conflicts and challenges that possibly emerge in transnational professional development programs and their schools' expectations in these situations. In moments of doubt, this awareness and/or experience could have also shaped their capacity, interest, and openness to change during their participation in the BRIDGE program. As discussed in the previous chapter, the teachers and their schools had prior experiences in collaborative learning projects and partnerships. Moreover, globally-integrated learning culture was promoted and practiced in these schools. It is possible, that the teachers' experiences of the program, and their ongoing engagement, possibly centred on the schools' interests in Australian education systems and the schools' further interests in the transnational nature of the program. This reinforces ideas put forward by Leask (2004), that global learning programs are often seen as an opportunity for teachers and students to become global learners, thereby improving the globally-relevant cultures and practices of their schools. These cultures and practices promote the use of these programs. In this study also, for instance, Principal Radhika felt that her teacher's engagement in a transnational

professional development program gave the school an opportunity to be “more exceptional” in vision and practice. Moreover, she was pleased that her students enthusiastically shared their BRIDGE-based experiences with other students, that the school’s engagement in the program was known and appreciated by the parents, and that the school’s partnership with Australia was recognized by the wider local community. Due to the globally-relevant value of the program in her school, Principal Radhika seemed interested in her teacher’s ongoing engagement in the program.

The teachers assumed an imperative and responsible role in establishing strong school-to-school links through the program. They also had the assumed responsibility to share their learning experiences and program resources with their co-workers, so that other teachers, students, and the school benefits from their participation. The teachers felt completely responsible and confident to lead the program and establish learning partnerships, as expressed in these comments:

I came back much more confident, much more aware. It's like the vision has broadened as I carried home practices that they [Australian teachers] followed in their own schools. I shared my experiences with the other teachers and other departments in my school. So it's not just my teaching which has benefited, it's the other subject teachers as well. If it goes beyond you and your unit, it can have an everlasting impact. (Teacher Priya)

I am so excited to share with my colleagues and students about my experiences in Australia. I have realized that there is so much more to learn and so much we can improve. With the classroom observations and other activities, now I know a lot about Australian culture and teaching and learning practices there... We have included a chapter on Australia in our Social Science curriculum, just to have that feeling that now we are a part of Australia. (Teacher Asha)

I think that the BRIDGE program has been a very unique opportunity of its kind and any school must recognize this as an opportunity, not just for the teachers, it is also an opportunity for the organization to grow, for the principal, for administration, even for the parents. So it is helpful for everyone. (Teacher Rohan)

With the responsibility of sharing their learning with the wider school community, the teachers also talked very enthusiastically about their schools’ acknowledgment of their roles in developing and maintaining their engagement in the BRIDGE program. Based on my observations, all the schools had cited in their school magazines, newsletters, and

notice-boards about their teachers' involvement in the program; supported with photographs of school visits, field trips, and homestays with their partner teachers and schools in Australia and vice versa. Their use of symbolic recognition to acknowledge the teachers' engagement in the program could have positively influenced the teachers' sense of responsibility, self-worth, and accomplishment, and could have also motivated them to continue their engagement in the program. Moreover, if recognition and appreciation of teacher participation in such programs was a common practice in these schools, this could have also contributed to the BRIDGE teachers' expectations and experiences of the program. In this way, the broader school culture and practices seemed to play a crucial role in enhancing the teachers' use of the program. In this context, Veugelers (2005) notes that:

Most networks are made up of schools, not individual members, because networks aim to build the capacity of the school for educational change. Networks try to bridge personal and school development. Different methods of professional development are part of most networks...reflecting on personal experiences and visiting other practices are used to permanently challenge educational practice and stimulate educational change. (p. 287)

Based on my observations, the schools' pre-existing cultures and the symbolic display of the student and teacher participation in international education programs possibly shaped the teachers' understandings, interests, and use of programs, such as BRIDGE. The teachers possibly used the program more unreservedly to globalize their classroom practices and the schools' learning cultures; by linking their schools with schools across national borders. In this context, if the schools had assumed that the program globalized their students' learning experiences, it is more likely that they supported their teachers with the necessary time and money to participate in the program and sustain their engagement. In a similar study, it was found that "recognizing the value of a particular educational intervention is a powerful, intrinsically motivating reason for teachers to implement a program" (Cave & Mulloy, 2010, p.15). In this study though, against this background of the schools' globally-relevant learning agendas, which largely seemed to characterize the teachers' use of the program, there could have been a risk of possibly losing sight of the key nature and purpose of the program, which is teacher professional

learning, the program's relevance for meeting the teachers' learning needs, or its usefulness in the long run. This sheds light on how teacher perceived roles and responsibilities in their unique work contexts can shape their engagement in professional learning programs and the future use of these programs (Park et al., 2007).

The BRIDGE schools involved in this study had a history of involvement in global education partnerships. These schools had invested sufficient resources and time in grounding the global nexus as a way of life and learning, which was strongly embedded in the school culture (Kenway & Fahey, 2014; Koh & Kenway, 2015). The schools' contexts, where the current study was carried out, were places where the teachers had the prospects and provisions to participate and sustain their engagement in programs, such as BRIDGE. In this respect, Penuel et al. (2007) maintain that teachers are more likely to engage genuinely in a particular innovation if it matches the capacities, vision, and needs of their schools with which they already identify. Similarly, from their research on Chinese student returnees, Gu and Schweisfurth (2015) found that the students developed transnational attitudes, skills, and contacts, which they found to be valuable when structuring and reorganizing their lives and careers in their home country. Gu and Schweisfurth (2015) also learned that this was, to some extent, because almost all aspects of life and work in China involve increased transnational connections and ties. In this study, it is most likely then, that since most of the principals essentially recognized the teachers' participation in the BRIDGE program as a sophisticated and effective medium for supporting the schools' globally-integrated learning cultures, needs, and aspirations, this recognition influenced the teachers' use and ongoing engagement in the program.

Rajagopal et al. (2012) aver that some learning networks are more valued as they ensure to develop a reputation for quality and authenticity with their members, and to the outside world. In this study also, the principals valued the BRIDGE program because they believed that the program had positive impressions on the students and parents. The program was demanded and appreciated in their schools, and, therefore, the principals

expected the teachers to continue their use of the program to meet the students' and parents' interests and expectations of the program. Principal Pooja and Principal Deepak explain their views in similar terms:

The children talk about the BRIDGE program and share with their parents about the video conferences. And we have been successful in imposing faith in the parents that yes living in India our students can visit an Australian school. (Principal Pooja)

A parent requested that since some of our students have taken part in this, can his son also be part of it. Another parent told us to organize a career orientation program to impart knowledge to students who wish to study in Australia. (Principal Deepak)

All in all, most of the teachers continued their engagement in the BRIDGE program, even after the program duration of 12 months. They felt that such a program would be useful as a lifelong learning practice in supporting their teaching practices, enhancing the students' learning practices, and developing learning partnerships. They believed that they had, in many ways, successfully used the program to establish learning connections and thus would like to use it further. This is similar to research done by Stoll, McMahon, et al. (2006), where it was found that reported outcomes of teacher participation in professional learning networks and communities include more enhanced teacher capacity to support student learning, greater enthusiasm for collaborative learning practices, commitment to develop and maintain learning partnerships, and more openness to attempt new learning possibilities.

The teachers' perceptions about the value they added to transnational teaching and learning environments seemed to have had positive effects on their professional development more generally. Additionally, it built their confidence and their sharing of ideas and concerns during the reciprocal school visits and homestay experiences. The teachers admitted that they felt that were competent to take part in the program. These experiences intensified as they seemed to value the process and assume positive outcomes of their participation. Findings show that participating teachers were aware of the importance attributed by their schools to transnational education programs, such as BRIDGE. Moreover, the educational aspirations and provisions of their schools expected that they engage in a form of professional learning that could lead to global

skills acquisition and contribution to globalized teaching and learning environments in their schools. The teachers had prior experiences of transnational education from which they seemed to approach new avenues for their professional learning. The principals admitted that their schools had a global outlook and transnational education programs, such as BRIDGE, could help them maintain this outlook. These schools were already working to integrate global awareness and competence into their school culture and practices. However, it seemed that most of the teachers had pragmatic experiences and transactional understandings of the nature and purpose of the BRIDGE program.

6.8 Conclusion

Broadly speaking, the Indian teachers reported having positive experiences of the BRIDGE program. They valued those activities and opportunities that helped them improve their knowledge and skills related to teaching and in particular with the use of ICT in classroom practice. Repeatedly the teachers commented on how they had developed new ICT knowledge and skills through the online components of these experiences and sharing of ICT ideas and resources with their partner teachers. Most principals believed that their teachers' experiences of the program increased the teachers' capacity to lead globally-integrated education projects in their schools. In the same vein, for the principals, their teachers' experiences of an Australian professional development program meant learning of new approaches to collaborative learning across national borders that enhanced the schools' pedagogical practices in general, and especially those relating to the development of globally-relevant learning cultures; through interest in establishing school-to-school partnerships with schools in Australia. In particular, student enthusiasm for the program seemed to be central to the teachers' use of the program, which mainly focused on the planning of classroom activities to support effective and globally-relevant student learning experiences. The teachers' main emphasis was on planning and executing collaborative projects, tasks, and activities that involved the students and also on developing their learning links through the program. Commonly cited by all the teachers and principals was the development of positive global connections, not just among the teachers and students, but also

among the schools. Even when the teachers' use of the program was difficult, restrained by different time-zones and ICT barriers, it had the potential for learning new skills of collaborative problem-solving.

Data in this chapter indicate the immense potential of transnational learning networks, such as the BRIDGE program, for teacher professional learning in Indian schools. It is important to note, however, that the teachers' experiences of the program were based on various resources, both material and symbolic, which these schools already possessed, and which teachers could draw upon when faced with the day-to-day challenges. The BRIDGE schools involved in this study were already known to promote education programs, such as BRIDGE. They were already committed to pedagogical practices that stressed the importance of globally-relevant learning. In this way, these schools conformed to practices that are common in similar schools in India. Accordingly, their experiences of the BRIDGE program were not entirely unexpected. These experiences reproduced the current pedagogical practices modeled in these schools. The practices of collaborative learning and learning from a wide variety, of course, were already valued and promoted by those in leadership positions at these schools. Moreover, these schools had the ICT provisions in place, which supported the teachers' use of the online components of the program. Adequate school resources and facilities were thus advantageous to the teachers' engagement in the program.

Furthermore, the BRIDGE schools in India were chosen because they had strong learning cultures aligned with the program's objectives. These cultures were often characterized by their commitment to globally-integrated education and collaborative approaches to teacher work, with a focus on student learning. Just the same, the BRIDGE program did make a difference in teaching practices and student learning experiences at these schools. Moreover, some of the teachers began to develop a more elaborated understanding of what is known about professional learning, particularly the importance of developing self-confidence, self-reflection, and overall teacher professional practice.

Most of the teachers felt that, through the program, they were able to enhance their students' learning interests towards globally-relevant learning initiatives.

At the same time, however, the teachers' experiences of the program often appeared as transactional and pragmatic, and sometimes elitist. Most of the teachers took for granted their schools' capacity to participate in the program. Materially, they had resources that are absent in most Indian schools, and they were supported by symbolic resources such as certain beliefs, expectations, and assumptions about realizing the ambitions of the program. The teachers made assumptions about new learning that they derived from their participation in the BRIDGE program could be transferred across most schools in India and often had a dismissive attitude towards those teachers who did not have similar levels of teacher knowledge and skills and the capacities to ensure better student learning experiences. In the next chapter, I turn to a discussion of these views and the possibilities of transnational networks for teacher professional learning in India, beyond its elite private schools.

Chapter 7

POSSIBILITIES

7.1 Introduction

In the last two chapters, I have attempted to identify the ways in which a group of school teachers in India interpreted and experienced the BRIDGE program, including their motivations for participation. I have suggested that most teachers I interviewed regarded their experiences of the program as mostly positive. They reported that BRIDGE has provided them with additional learning materials and resources; enabled them to share information about pedagogical trends with Australian teachers; and helped to enhance their student learning experiences. They have noted in particular, that the program has enabled them to develop their ICT skills and consult more effectively with international trends in education. A number of teachers identified the challenges they faced in taking full advantage of the program, relating most notably to the issues of availability of common time and unreliability of technology. For these teachers, the possibilities of transnational learning networks for their professional development are still noteworthy: they have had to learn new problem-solving skills with the use of ICT and consider ways of negotiating the professional possibilities inherent in transnational learning environments. However, these teachers also recognized that they worked in highly privileged schools and similar opportunities are unlikely to be available to the majority of teachers in India. In this chapter, I discuss how the possibilities of transnational learning networks are unevenly distributed in India, and how initiatives, such as the BRIDGE program, further reinforce and even extend the profound inequalities that characterize India's system of school education and teacher professional learning.

In India's shifting educational landscape, school education and the economic and socio-cultural roles it plays are changing. Around the clock connectivity has become possible even in the remotest parts of India, and the prospects of parallel existence in virtual space are now seamlessly assimilated in actual lives, dreams, and desires. With the

Indian Government allowing the forces of the market to infect most sectors of education, many private schools have turned into skillful businesses, especially in urban areas, navigating fierce competition in the education market with ease, capably generating and manipulating new possibilities, and experimenting with new and seemingly global versions of themselves in their local education market. The Indian middle-class has become an implicit, inherent and immersed consumer in this market, deeply reshaping the expectations it has for the education of its children. The middle-class, with its global aspirations, is increasingly posing new demands on schools, which is driving the schools' engagement in new learning possibilities, such as transnational networks. Many private schools in urban India have begun to experiment with these networks, independently of Government intervention or support. The possibilities of teacher professional learning in India through transnational networks are located within this emerging and dynamic space. In this chapter, I examine these possibilities, focusing not only on the social and economic conditions under which they exist but also on the extent to which it might be possible to expand the reach of such networks for teacher professional learning across India, to its underprivileged schools.

The gap between schools in India catering for the new urban middle-class consumer of education, who is financially capable and globally-aspired, and alternatively 'others' is growing rapidly, as a number of recent scholars have pointed out (Baviskar & Ray, 2011; Brosius, 2010; Sancho, 2015a). The question arises then as to how transnational teacher professional learning programs, such as BRIDGE, might serve to further accentuate this gap. Who embraces the possibilities of such networks as exciting and enabling and under what conditions, and who cannot and why? To explore these issues, it is necessary not only to consider how affluent schools benefit from them, as has been shown in the previous two chapters, but also to explore how socio-cultural and economic considerations define the wider possibilities of transnational learning networks in India. I, therefore, look at the discourses in terms of which their potential is couched, as well as the limitations of such networks in Indian schools. Based on this analysis, I reach certain conclusions about the future of these networks in India.

7.2 The idea of possibilities

Education should concern itself with possible futures. There is certainly more to education than focusing on future perspectives, but it should not be neglected in the sense and to the extent that it has been...the weakness lies in the lack of formalized effort to foster on-going professional development including perspectives toward possible futures. Sustained and effective development of new knowledge and competencies within the teaching profession needs an effective system, anchored also within the schools and their practices. (Jónasson, 2016, pp. 2 & 9)

A couple of decades ago, how many would have believed that India would successfully compete with many countries in areas of technology, trade, and commerce? Or that many of India's aspiring youth would be studying and working abroad? According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS] (2017), India has been one of Australia's biggest source of migrants since 2016. The number of Indian students studying in Australia too increased to a seven-year high in 2018, according to data from the Australian High Commission in New Delhi⁷. The rate of change in India over the past two decades and its influence across the globe seems very fast, and possibly farfetched, for many people today, yet the factors that have shaped these changes are accelerating. Perhaps, the changes over the next two decades would be even greater.

Today, policymakers and educational managers in India face the same kinds of changes and choices, that is, to look ahead seeking emerging educational opportunities beyond national borders or just to work within the frameworks, which are defined by long-established norms and practices that characterize the local educational context. Of course, the context of Indian schools is extremely diverse, with public and private sectors competing to gain ascendancy, with relatively little interactions between the two. If this is so, then the possibilities regarding the use of transnational learning networks cannot be assumed to follow the same logic. Different schools can be expected to have different demands and priorities. To consider the issues of the potential of these networks in diverse Indian contexts, it is crucial to understand the ways in which this

⁷ SBS 2019, <https://www.sbs.com.au/language/english/number-of-indian-students-studying-in-australia-at-a-seven-year-high>

potential is realized within and outside the context of their lived circumstances, both social and economic.

In the next sections of this chapter, I, therefore, look at these circumstances, against the backdrop of the data discussed in the previous two chapters about what worked for the BRIDGE teachers and why, how the program's possibilities were linked to the cultural and organizational dynamics of their schools. To understand these possibilities, it is necessary also to appreciate how the cultural and organizational dynamics of these schools are a function of the rapid economic and social changes taking place in neo-liberalizing India, and how these changes now determine the prospects that those associated with the schools are able to imagine. It is in this broader context that it is possible to generally understand if programs, such as BRIDGE, have the potential to support the professional learning practices of teachers from a more diverse range of schools in India. If not, then, what other possibilities might emerge, where such networks might be adapted and how, to suit local circumstances.

7.3 The new middle-class

The big development in India is the rapid expansion of a prosperous middle-class increasingly dictating the country's political and economic direction...This new vanguard is mobile, driven, consumer-oriented, and, to some extent, forward-looking. This group includes prosperous farmers, white-collar workers, business and professional people, military personnel, and a multitude of others, all enjoying decent homes, reasonable incomes, and educated and healthy children. Most own televisions and telephones, and many possess cars and computers. Large numbers have close ties with prosperous relatives living abroad. (Jacobsen, 2004, n.p.)

As I have already noted in Chapter 4.8, all the BRIDGE participating schools in Delhi and all the schools involved in this study are private, high-fee charging, and located in the affluent suburbs of Delhi. Although private schooling in India does not necessarily equate to elitism as such, high-fee charging private schools in Delhi invariably serve a highly affluent class. Against this backdrop, Arnold (2018) stresses that enrolments in such schools are desired and can be afforded by the middle-class, and that these

enrolments are generally associated with their socio-cultural and economic privilege, and elite preferences and aspirations. Sellar and Gale (2011) define aspiration as “the capacity to imagine futures” (p. 122) and mobilize resources to realize it.

With India’s socio-cultural complexities, the possibilities of transnational teacher professional learning networks in elite private schools need to be understood in light of the middle-class aspirations that the schools and their teachers serve and the ways in which these aspirations influence these possibilities. In this regard, Javalgi and Grossman (2016) observe that “in India, the environment for the middle-class is changing and the population is more motivated by financial successes, personal ambition, and desire for achieving life goals” (p. 665). As a result, their “rising incomes and education levels appear to be associated with the ability to achieve life goals and aspirations” (p. 665). They explain what these aspirations entail:

Middle-class consumers in India are an important and growing segment of global middle-class consumers. [Their] tastes, preferences, and aspirations are changing...While aspirations are determined by the individual, they are grounded in society...Aspirations, which people set for themselves, reveal their dreams and goals, what people expect of life and what is needed for them to be satisfied and happy...more consumers in emerging markets, such as India’s, are experiencing better opportunities for fulfilling life aspirations. (pp. 657–658)

Nevertheless, to understand the relevance of class-related educational aspirations in this study, it is important to understand the dynamics of class relations in India, particularly in urban Delhi. It needs to be noted that while a growing number of people in India are entering the middle-class, the nature of class relations itself is changing. Substantial numbers of this population are from extensively diverse backgrounds, but are now identified as middle-class (Baviskar & Ray, 2011; Fernandes, 2006). Roy (2018) observes that the concept of “‘middle-class’ in a given nation is dependent upon purchasing power, educational levels, perceptions of who constitutes ‘the wealthy’, and levels of social services, as well as other factors” (p. 32). The rise of the urban middle-class in India and perceptions of social class have influenced thought and action relating to their educational preferences and choices. Kraus, Piff, and Keltner (2011) explain that

“observable symbols of wealth, education, and occupation are the most direct signals of social class” (p. 246). They posit that “through signaling, individuals provide the information necessary to compare their own wealth, education, occupation, aesthetic preferences, and behavior to those of other individuals” (p. 247). In this way, cultural capacities and identities indicate educational capacities and identities and vice-versa, as this process “separates people into different social-class categories and is the basis for the individual’s subjective understanding of his or her social class rank” (Kraus et al., 2011, p. 247).

As India’s capital, Delhi is regarded as the nation’s most significant hub of politics, commerce, and employment. Urban Delhi is known to provide better infrastructure, healthcare, and education, upon which the lifestyle of the urban middle-class largely depends. Brosius’ (2010) detailed analysis of Delhi’s spatial topographies identifies urban Delhi as a space of leisure and high-style living. Following Walter Benjamin, Brosius calls them “sites of consumption and Utopian imagination” (p. 57) and argues that these urban spaces are linked to “the experience of modernity, of which the key experience is the consumption of fetishes, and the cultured, hedonistic flâneur—the protagonist of emerging modernity and urbanity, of taste and distinction” (p. 57). These spaces bring vivid portrayals and promises of an urban lifestyle to small-town dwellers surrounding Delhi, and also affect the migration of millions from rural to the urban region. Brosius (2010) observes that Delhi is a city that has a rich social and political history with extraordinarily class diversity, which is both complex and dynamic. She further notes that the city’s new middle-class relies heavily on the discourse of aspirational new India, and is also, in a profound sense, marked by self-definitions of belonging to the world-class. She argues that through these dimensions of class, the act of consumption, including the consumption of education, has become a way of asserting class identities. Nonetheless, she also believes that these middle-class imaginations of belonging to the world-class and seemingly practicing ‘the best of the West’ are inflected by colonialism and neoliberalism, which normalize the act of consumption.

In urban Delhi, the changing socio-cultural and economic forces and the remarkable growth of the middle-class population have driven the establishment of a series of private arrangements for the provision of school education. In a country poorly served by grossly inadequate and/or outmoded state systems and provisions, private schools are assumed to provide better learning options and improved access to quality education (Desai, Dubey, Vanneman, & Banjeri, 2008). These schools are preferred also because of the provision of better school infrastructure, the use of advanced educational technologies, and the use of the English language as the only medium of instruction (Sancho, 2017). Many private schools in India also offer a foreign curriculum or foreign board examinations, such as IB (International Baccalaureate) or IGCSE (International General Certificate of Secondary Education), and, usually label themselves as 'global schools' or 'international schools', possibly to establish a niche in the education market, and to mark themselves apart from the rest (Desai et al., 2008).

Having said that, the emergence of the private school phenomenon in India does not consist of only the privileged anymore. The rise of low-fee private schools is equally significant. Up to 80% of private schools in India were low-fee-charging schools when compared alongside per capita and daily wagers' incomes of their household, the data shows, and only 20% of private schools in India were high-fee-charging elite schools (MHRD, 2016). However, although urban Delhi has better functioning Government-aided schools, many parents still prefer to send their children to high-fee private schools, as a marker of their privilege and status. In Delhi, demand for low-fee private schools has not grown as it has elsewhere in the nation (Kingdon 2017). In this way, Delhi appears to represent a social laboratory for India's complex processes of class formation.

Singh (2004) explains these trends as a consequence of the proliferation of the processes of privatization, liberalization, and globalization witnessed in the wake of India's New Economic Policy adopted in August 1991. Kumar (2008) contends that these changes are suggestive of a neoliberal onslaught on education in India, which is facilitated by

Government privatization policies. Neoliberalism as an ideology postulates that the upsurge of privatization is built on a perception that market-based efficiency is the most effective means of improving services such as education. Although the growth of private schools in India is driven by neoliberal market forces (Kumar, 2008), it is a market in which local advantage is pursued by desiring global practices. Both educationally and commercially, it is a market that claims to offer, through high standards of education, substantial economic returns for the middle-class parents and students. As Javalgi and Grossman (2016) note:

Since the economic reform in the 1990s, the Indian middle-class has been celebrated for its economic transformation in the new global economy. This new middle-class, which has become an important economic, historical, and sociological category in modern India, is showing a greater need for achieving life goals...Middle-class consumers in India are an important and growing segment of global middle-class consumers. Rising incomes, exposure to international lifestyles and media, access to information and telecommunication technologies, and willingness to try foreign products and services are fueling [their growth. Their] tastes, preferences and aspirations are changing...education is an important value...they believe that investment in education leads to better jobs and ownership of assets...Many Indian families believe that educating their children is extremely important because education is a vehicle for achieving life goals and for seeking opportunities for growth. (pp. 657 & 664)

This emergence of a large section of Indians, with increasing incomes, is known to be the most vital consumer in the private school education market in India. The growth of private schools in urban India has thus proliferated new viewpoints and dynamics of education in terms of its role and objectives in meeting certain demands and aspirations of the new middle-class. India's aspirational middle class is mainly focused on gaining social and economic status through education. In many ways, the quality of education is viewed by the middle-class not only as the symbol of their superior capacities but also as a pathway to more power and privilege. This mindset has turned private education into an exclusive commodity in urban India. Middle-class families in India often use their class privilege to gain access to exclusive educational environments. Within these changing circumstances, an improved provision and better allocation of resources are promised by private schools, often through perceived exclusivity of its educational access and outcomes (Rizvi, 2014a). It is important to add here that "social class, social

exclusion, and social exclusivity are all intertwined in urban educational choices” (Reay, 2004, p. 539). In this light, Reay further points out that “possession of economic, cultural, and social capitals...by middle-class habitus, meant their families were engaged in a range of exclusive and exclusionary practices that provided their offspring with real as opposed to illusory choices” (2004, p. 541).

Indeed, there is an unequivocal link between the rising aspirations the urban middle-class evidenced over the last two decades in India, the rise of globalization, and the rise in the privatization of schooling. Sancho (2013) also considers the emergence of high-fee private schools in India as an exclusive provision for middle-class investors. Sancho (2012) insists furthermore that elite private schooling in India is not just a choice anymore; it is a strong statement of one’s preferences based on one’s economic standing and social image. The key drivers for this uptake also represent a mix of class identities and the privilege of the urban middle-class to aspire for a global future. Middle-class parents in India desire a stable and sophisticated socio-cultural and economic position for their children, and to achieve this, they rely on high-fee private schools as a pathway to class positioning and profile building (Mathur, 2010).

Private schooling in India is also shaped by the beliefs of the urban middle-class parents that private schools could render better prospects for work and livelihood in India and abroad. For example, Sancho’s (2017) study on Indian overseas students in Australia observes that “there is an intricate connection between class and migration processes” (p. 515), and that “education and migration are not only connected in the Australian context but also in India, where a highly competitive and exclusionary middle-class culture of education drives many to consider migrating as an alternative path to social mobility” (p. 530). Javalgi and Grossman (2016) observe that this is mainly because:

Many Indians, having attended colleges and universities, are moving up the economic ladder and are hopeful for a better future for themselves and their children. More than ever before, Indians feel confident about leading a good life. Stated simply, having wealth, power, prestige, and possessions are often viewed as means to ‘the good life’. Indian middle-class consumers are beginning to fulfill their dreams of financial success,

by earning advanced degrees from respected schools abroad, starting new businesses, and connecting to the global community. (p. 659)

The students in high-fee private schools commonly view these schools as a pathway to acquire Western university degrees, as the means to secure global mobility and professional success in the global labor market (Javalgi & Grossman, 2016). In many aspects then, these understandings often reflect broader projects of global identity formations and capacities to identify with the West (Mathur, 2010). Sancho (2017) notes that this is because middle-class Indian parents continue to believe, as one of the legacies of colonialism, that Western ideals and values are more sophisticated and better, and that English-medium private schools offer modern learning environments based on internationalized education standards. With the globally-aspired new middle-class, there is a demand for internationalized education that promises to develop globally-relevant understanding and skills in students and help them to make informed decisions, solve problems, think critically and creatively, and learn collaboratively in globally-integrated environments (Sancho, 2017). In this study also, the BRIDGE program was viewed by principals as compatible with their globally-integrated system of schooling. They 'deemed' the program suitable to their school environments. Irrespective of the schools' curriculum, the BRIDGE schools claimed to largely adopt globally-oriented practices. The BRIDGE principals' use of phrases, such as "we develop global mindsets" (Principal Deepak) "global thinking is nourished in our schools" (Principal Anita), "this world is one global school and our students are global citizens" (Principal Pooja), is indicative of this trend.

The BRIDGE schools are high-fee private schools located in urban affluent suburbs of Delhi. Such schools are largely known to cater to middle-class investors (parents and students). The urban middle-class parents have the capacities and interests to have global aspirations for their children. These aspirations influence their educational preferences and the choices they make for their children (Sancho, 2013). These preferences and choices create certain demands and expectations which can shape the choices schools make to meet them (Rizvi, 2014a, 2014b; Sancho, 2015a, 2015b). For

example, Principal Pooja hoped to take her teacher's participation in the BRIDGE program "to the next level" by hosting an exchange program with the students from BRIDGE partner school in Australia. Principal Deepak too noted that "more and more parents want the school and their children to take part in such programs so that their children get more global exposure". For several reasons, therefore, the middle-class preference for private schooling and their demands for globally-relevant teaching-learning cultures seem to be one of the key pivots for the use of transnational learning networks for teacher professional development in Indian schools. This also means that the teachers' expectations and experiences of transnational learning networks are in many ways tied to certain socio-cultural and economic structures, aspirations, and capacities of their schools. It is within this context that the teachers' use of such networks mostly mediates within certain interests and demands of the schools and communities they serve. It is important to note that the teachers' involvement in the BRIDGE program seems to be socially and culturally situated, with geography also having an influence as the schools were located in a globally-aspired urban region of India. Moreover, the teachers' views of the transnational nature of the program and the purpose of their participation could have been largely influenced by their organizational values, visions, and goals, which were not mainly pedagogical.

It is commonly believed that India's middle-class shapes many aspects of the private schools' practices, and the ways in which these schools understand the pressures and aspire for new opportunities associated with globalization (Brosius, 2010). Therefore, the use of transnational networks for teacher professional learning in Indian schools cannot be simply understood through the trope of optimism; rather, it needs to be interpreted with a critical eye on how contemporary middle-class discourse gains ground and entrenches the workings and strategies of schools and teachers, such as the BRIDGE schools, mostly within the scope to meet the demands and expectations of the urban middle-class, globally-aspired investors.

7.4 Marketization of education

In the rapidly liberalizing educational markets in India, middle-class abandonment of state schools for private schools has resulted in the rise of fully private schools that are differently funded and operated by international agencies, entrepreneurs, or local communities/actors. Such developments have led to the increasing atomization of the schooling population into various levels of access. (Sancho, 2015b, p. 28)

In India, “State Governments’ passivity in the provision of education since the 1990s’ fiscal crisis and the gradual relegation of the schooling sector to the market” (Sancho, 2015b, p.28) have flourished the private provisioning of education. As India's economy grows and the middle-class thrives, the number of private schools in India is increasing considerably. Gradually, commercial interests are penetrating the profitable education market in India and are in the practice of building and managing exclusive and premium schools or chains of high-fee private schools (Kingdon, 2017). In the last five years, these schools have gained attention and enrolments have increased at a rate much higher than the nation’s Government-aided schools (MHRD, 2016). Private schools have proliferated in several parts of India. In the last three decades, Delhi also has witnessed a discernible growth of the private schooling system. In Delhi, for example, private school enrolment in Delhi has been rising rapidly with 39.1 percent of the rural students and 29.4 percent of urban students were reportedly enrolled in these schools (Kingdon, 2017). These numbers are becoming more or less similar to the overall private school enrolments in India. Based on the District Information System for Education [DISE] 2015–2016 survey (MHRD, 2016), 35% of all school-going children in 20 Indian states received their education from private schools.

Of late, school education in India is evidently reconstructed as a consumer market that is driven by the resultant fierce competition among high-fee charging private schools (Kumar, 2011; Sancho, 2015b). The privatization of education is largely based on market ideology (Kumar, 2011). In this ideology, Kumar notes that education is treated as a consumable commodity and experience. In such a context, education has become “increasingly fragmented and commercialized” (Sancho, 2015b, p.28), and mainly caters to certain class affiliations and capacities (Sancho, 2013, 2015a). In particular,

privatization of school education in urban Delhi has assumed a great role in response to the mostly low quality of Government schools and the ways middle-class parents perceive these schools. In this context, Sancho (2012) notes that:

Although some critical voices denounce the commercial motive and the alleged neglect of the local culture of the rising unaided sector, contestations are to a large extent out-sounded by a distinctively middle-class discourse that dismisses the state's competence in the field. The dismissal of the state in favor of the private sector is part of a larger neoliberal project, the same that envisages India's new middle-class as no longer interested in public sector employment in favor of careers in global, private enterprises. Within this context, many middle-class families no longer see the state machinery as the primary provider of education. (p. 74)

The private schooling market in India, on the other hand, has increasingly known to be viewed, especially by the urban middle-class, as the most efficient means through which school education is delivered and better careers can be achieved (Sancho, 2012). Accounts of inadequacy and unevenness of most Government-aided schools in India for fulfilling the educational needs and job aspirations of today's youth often appear in educational research, policy literature, and local newspapers (Sancho, 2012), as well as in people's everyday conversations. On the contrary, educational achievements of some of India's most reputable high-fee private schools, such as the schools involved in this study, are frequently mentioned in the media, and in some cases notoriously publicized (Sancho, 2012).

The highly competitive private education sector has also given rise to an education that is commonly referred to as having global or international standards (Roy, 2018). As a consequence, despite following a national curriculum, many private schools carve out their stake and market share by claiming to be international in philosophy and practice (Sancho, 2015a). These schools often rebrand themselves through deliberate repackaging of the schools' nationalist cultures, practices, and agendas (Sancho, 2015a, 2015b). Influenced by the international turn in urban globally-aspiring India, where high-fee private schools compete with each other, the schools engage in market branding

practices that portray their standards as international and globally-relevant (Sancho, 2015b).

[The] schools' rationales to engage [in internationalization] can be characterised by their pragmatic versus ideological approach to internationalization, their need for recognition from various stakeholders, and their use of the image of excellence that internationalization provides in marketing and branding. (Yemini & Fulop, 2015, p. 536)

The discourse of international standard draws heavily from the common belief of the middle-class parents that internationalized education is of superior quality (Sancho, 2013). Aligning with this understanding, the provisions for globally-integrated educational practices seem all the more associated with the processes of corporatization, marketization, and internationalized branding of such schools in the local education market. In these competitive and demanding settings, schools are mostly big businesses, which are always marketing themselves locally to establish an exclusive brand image. In this study, the principals shared that the globally-integrated practices of their schools were commonplace. These schools had been part of several globally-integrated education partnerships in the past. The principals' views were that transnational learning programs, such as BRIDGE, have a high quality and are useful for maintaining and enhancing the schools' education quality and standards.

Private schools for the urban middle-class in India are known to endorse modern practices, particularly through the use of technology in the classroom, and espoused notions such as global education partnerships and global citizenship (Sancho, 2015a). However, these advanced provisions and practices are also found to be a core strategy for such schools to secure their market positions (Arnold, 2018). In this study, all the teachers shared that they used technology in their teaching practice. In all the BRIDGE schools, the classrooms were equipped with advanced educational technologies. The principals also often spoke about the importance of technology integration in classroom practice. Moreover, the teachers' professional learning practices revolved around the development of their ICT skills and knowledge. For example, Teacher Asha and Teacher Seema commented that their teaching has transitioned from a chalk-and-talk approach

to an ICT-based approach, where the use of ICT was the centre of their teaching practices. In these schools, technology was promoted and viewed as the means to modernize and enhance teaching-learning environments, and meet the emerging trends in education, which, according to them, were largely inclined towards the use of technology in the classrooms.

Within highly competitive local education markets, high-fee private schools in India are increasingly “seeking to appeal to (and at the same time shaping) the aspirations of the city’s middle-classes wanting to offer their children the best possible education” (Sancho, 2012, pp. 75–76). In response, schools are “becoming more obviously internationalized, increasingly promoting an international agenda and concepts such as global citizenship and seeking to prepare youth for futures that are not constrained by national boundaries and national issues” (Sancho, 2012, p. 92). Yemini and Fulop’s (2015) study collected data from four schools in Israel to analyze the schools’ expression of internationalization, understand who is involved in the implementation process, and discuss the wider effects of this process. The principals and teachers interviewed “perceive of internationalization as offering both cosmopolitan capital to the students and a distinctive feature to the school” (p. 528).

The understanding that children are growing up in extremely competitive societies and labor markets leads parents and schools to make certain choices and adopt particular strategies to reinforce a culture in which every practice should ensure high-quality standards and provisions for the students. Parents invest in their child’s future by paying high school fees and they have high demands and expectations of such schools. As a result, the schools adapt image-building practices to substantiate the parents’ investments, meet their expectations, and guarantee sophisticated outcomes. Some of these dynamics might also drive the schools’ agendas and practices of teacher professional learning. In this study, the BRIDGE teachers were from high-fee private schools, with certain obligations and demands concerning the middle-class parents as the key investors. Given the investments that parents make in their children and the

expectations they have from such schools, including the teachers, these schools could have made certain choices, and teacher professional development programs, such as BRIDGE, might have been one of those choices.

In urban Delhi, private schools are known to relentlessly assert their image through an 'internationalized' culture, in order to survive competition and rivalry in the education market. Such schools function in "a kind of transnational 'bubble' within a wider local and national context" (Gu & Schweisfurth, 2015, p. 950). Many of these schools are reputed and popular in the local community as they offer facilities that are exclusive and extravagant, often identical to the exceptional provisions offered by five-star hotels (Kumar, 2008; Rizvi, 2014b; Gilbertson, 2017). Such schools are "intentionally, self-consciously and de facto international in its outlook and composition" (Gu & Schweisfurth, 2015, p. 950). Some of these schools also intentionally market and brand themselves through internationalized arrangements with the promise to prepare the students and facilitate their future global mobility (Kumar, 2008; Sancho, 2015a). Together with state-of-the-art facilities (Kumar, 2008), these schools promise to give students an internationalized learning experience to develop the students' global knowledge and life-skills that are necessary for their future in the global labor market (Rizvi, 2014b; Gilbertson, 2017). The BRIDGE schools in this study also gave the impression of being globally-integrated through their facilities and practices. All the principals strongly believed that their schools prepared the students to be global citizens, based on their claims that many of their former students lived and worked in several countries around the globe. Their language seemed to be deeply influenced by the perceived futures of their students in the global labor market. They often referred to students as "future entrepreneurs" (Principal Pooja) and "future global leaders" (Principal Rashmi), and, according to them, the schools' role is to "develop global citizens" (Principal Radhika).

Transnational teacher professional development programs, such as BRIDGE, might be the result "of a context in which private schools compete to capture a growing local

market of parents seeking to provide ‘global exposure’ to their children” (Sancho, 2012, p. 92). The schools’ globally-relevant ethos and practices are “particularly reflective of change in the last few decades in which education has been reframed through the middle-class discourse of international standard” (Sancho, 2012, p. 75). Through these networks, such schools possibly give proof of their professed globally-relevant standing and related organizational development in the local education market. Drawing mainly from my observations, the BRIDGE schools widely displayed their international arrangements and achievements. For example, the schools’ notice boards and annual magazines were full of picturesque descriptions of several international partnerships, projects, and competitions that the students and teachers had been part of. These experiences were portrayed as the schools’ major achievements in the development of quality and standards. Depictions of the teachers’ participation in the BRIDGE program was one of them. The schools’ cultures and features seemed to be intentionally designed to promote and enable ‘international and advanced’ learning experiences for the students. The promotion of global understanding and modern outlook among students was highly evident in the context of all the BRIDGE schools. Even the teachers’ expectations and experiences of the program seemed mainly about grounding their students in globally-integrated understandings and identities through Australia’s best practices.

The internationalization strategies of schools, such as the BRIDGE schools, also reflect the pressures that such schools face in a highly competitive education market in urban India. Enrolments in these schools are mostly afforded by the urban middle-class parents, who are self-sufficient, aspirational and consumerist enough to pay high fees with the expectations of better educational provisions for their children. Private schools are proliferating in urban India’s education market. If schools do not meet the parents’ expectations and demands, they do not survive the cut-throat competition and easily lose enrolments to other schools that perform according to the parents’ interests and preferences. The pressure to meet certain demands and survive fierce competition creates a very materialistic and mainly commercial culture in these schools. In this study

too, the principals, when describing their school community, often employed the language of business (target, stakeholders, investments, and returns) to position the schools as 'competitors' and parents as 'targets'. The principals' language and assumptions of business suggest that learning in these schools was essentially a commodity in which parents invested high fees and the schools' responsibility was to offer the best possible returns. The transactional nature of the relationship between the schools and parents' investments in high fees could have exemplified the transactional nature of the schools' interest in the BRIDGE program and their teachers' participation.

The extremely transactional and competitive nature of urban India's private school market means that the schools are often expected to be responsive to new possibilities and accordingly adopt innovative and advanced teaching-learning practices. Against these expectations, the transnational nature of programs, such as BRIDGE, might be the product that high-fee private schools might seek. If that is the case, then these schools would mainly identify a highly internationalized and market-oriented value proposition in such networks. In many ways then, the teachers' use of professional learning networks might be more commoditized and marketed and less pedagogical. In this study, the BRIDGE teachers strongly embodied the school's ethos of global education and global excellence through their use of the BRIDGE program. Nevertheless, their experiences of the program seemed to be mostly a navigation of their schools' high expectations placed upon them to internationalize their teaching and student learning experiences through such programs. Data presented in Chapter 5 show that although both teachers and principals had positive expectations from the BRIDGE program, it was seen not only as a tool for developing the teachers' pedagogic knowledge and skills but also as a practice to forge international links with schools in Australia. The market pressures pressure faced by these schools and the schools' market ideology of education could have compelled the teachers to use the BRIDGE program as a medium to maintain their schools' internationalized learning culture and organizational status in the education market. If so, the teachers' use of the program could have been a part of schools' larger agenda for marketization.

In understanding the possibilities of transnational networks for teacher professional learning in India, therefore we firstly remain aware of the educational changes and developments, particularly the increasing internationalization of education in urban India, which are presumably manifestations of globalization, privatization, and marketization of education (Sancho, 2012). Secondly, as discussed in the previous section, we also consider the ways in which the teachers' participation in such networks are actually driven by the socio-cultural and economic capacities of the urban middle-class, and the forces of their class-identities and aspirations Brosius (2010), which have discerned in India since the colonial period or even earlier (Jacobson, 2004). Class-based aspirations are known to drive exclusive provisions in India's high-fee schooling sector. In this burgeoning trend, schools often exhibit their superior quality in relation to other schools in the market, mainly through internationalized practices and representations. Against this background, the use of transnational networks for teacher professional learning in such schools might be mostly dominated by the cultural dynamics of class, capacities, aspirations, and market imperatives. In that case, it is ironic, that transnational professional learning networks, which are designed and implemented to promote greater learning collaborations between teachers around the globe, might rather locally contribute to a growing exclusivity for the socio-culturally and economically advantaged, and thus to the growing educational inequality in India.

7.5 The appeal of new technologies

In different ways, these [private] schools based their marketing practices around key rhetoric relating to the skills necessary for success in the national and global economy. In the numerous advertisements, I encountered on billboards or in newspaper/magazines, English language learning and high levels of academic success appeared to be central to the offer of these private schools...The more prestigious private schools also emphasized technology, global/life skills, and international awareness...(Arnold, 2018, p. 5)

All the schools involved in this study were equipped with technology. Many principals shared that their schools were known in the community for its state-of-the-art

infrastructure, including the schools' ICT infrastructure. A key focus in these schools was the teachers' use of ICT in classroom practices. The teachers often spoke about technology as the most valued means to enhance their students' learning experiences. According to Teacher Poonam and Teacher Nisha, students nowadays are globally aware and interested. Teacher Asha too viewed that students are expected to "be up-to-date or be left behind in the competition", therefore "teachers also have to work hard". Teacher Reema felt that the demands on teachers concerning the need for them to be innovative is something that was not apparent during her early days of teaching. For the principals, this meant that the teachers aimed to "move beyond the textbook approach of the past to embrace modern and advanced trends in teaching and learning" (Principal Rashmi). In the views of Principal Deepak, "education has changed over the years with major changes in teaching" and new demands for teachers' use of education technologies in the classrooms. For Principal Pooja, "we have the latest and advanced technology in our classrooms. We support our teachers' efforts to be innovative". All the teachers and principals shared that their schools had adequate ICT infrastructure to support their teachers' use of the BRIDGE program. Moreover, many teachers shared that they used ICT in their teaching practices and received regular training in their schools to update their ICT knowledge and skills.

The schools' arrangement and maintenance of its ICT infrastructure and the teachers' prior perceptions and competencies related to ICT-based pedagogy were favorable conditions that possibly supported the teachers to use the BRIDGE program. However, the majority of schools in India have ICT infrastructure in disrepair, and, therefore, might be deprived of these professional learning networks. Moreover, few Indian teachers might be skilled to use them effectively in their professional practice. Therefore, equally important to recognize are the ways in which the possibilities of new technologies are intensified or impeded by the schools' infrastructural structures and teachers' ICT capacities.

In the area of school education, many elite private schools are experimenting with ways to integrate ICT into their education processes; from providing a laptop/tablet to every student, to smart classrooms and integrated on-line school systems. Central and State

Governments have attempted to implement ICT education in schools through different programs. The potential for ICT to improve the quality of school education is generally accepted...However, the measures adopted to achieve these objectives have been inconsistent and inadequate. There are also gaps between policy and program design, and between program design and program implementation. (IT for Change, 2018, pp. 6 & 7)

In recent years, the potential of technology to strengthen and reform education has been widely accepted by the Indian Government. Major reforms to encourage the use of ICT in schools have been witnessed through the centrally sponsored ICT@Schools Scheme in 2010, the formulation of a National Policy on ICT in School Education in 2012, and the formulation of the National ICT Curriculum by NCERT in 2013. However, a variety of constraints are known to affect the possibilities of learning with new technologies in India's Government schools:

Policy and Government commitment are existent but all is lost on the road to implementation. Educational projects, set up by conventional Governments as part of a broad educational agenda, tend to reflect the conventionalism of existing institutions with their hierarchical and bureaucratic systems of administration when the need is for creative and innovative management. Access and availability of technology is another issue as various implementing agencies that need to cooperate are not coordinating enough. Lack of stable electric power, non-existent or unreliable telecommunication lines and a mismatch between funding allocation and actual needs all add to the problems. Sustainability is also a major obstacle, with many initiatives failing because Governments have not anticipated the cost of maintenance and upgrading of technology and services...Most importantly, however, the proper means for implementing an ICT-backed educational model has not been developed, with undue attention being paid simply on the process of setting up ICT labs. (Banerjee, Mandal, & De, 2014, pp. 366 & 367)

Although other schools might be interested in using transnational learning networks, whether teachers from those schools would participate in these networks might also depend on the availability of technology resources in the schools. As discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, the schools' interests in such networks is a small part of the overall participation process. Substantial investments by the schools in the development and maintenance of ICT infrastructure is essential for teachers to use these networks effectively. For several schools in India, which do not even have basic ICT infrastructure,

their teachers' participation in transnational professional learning networks would seem an unwise investment. Moreover, for many schools that face severe teacher shortage, spending money on recruiting more teachers is more needed than spending money on teachers' participation in transnational learning networks. However, schools with basic ICT infrastructure, teachers with basic ICT skills, and openness to the use of new technologies for teacher professional learning are conditions that might favor the future possibilities of these networks in the broader context of India's school education system. Nonetheless, if these networks are used mainly for reinforcing certain capacities and realizing certain aspirations that are beyond teacher professional learning needs, the potential of these networks might be more compelling in certain school contexts only and would be adopted by certain schools and teachers only.

7.6 Extending transnational networks

I also asked teachers and principals about how transnational teacher professional learning networks might be 'received' by underprivileged schools in India; how far they might be embraced and sustained by other teachers? Whether such networks might be mediated or interrupted and how? Teacher Poonam felt that the BRIDGE program mainly includes "good schools" and should reach out to other schools. Whereas, others believed that certain school-related provisions and conditions need to be aligned with the teachers' use of these programs, as illustrated by Teacher Nisha's comment:

So far as my school is concerned, all teachers are tech-savvy and very confident because they have been exposed to other programs. But I know that in some of the other schools, teachers are hesitant. So number one, it is all the more important that we must spread awareness about the benefits of such exchange programs. The schools have to be equipped and the teachers have to be trained in technology. (Teacher Nisha)

Nevertheless, most teachers and principals were certain that Government-aided schools in India might lack the funds and infrastructure to support their teachers' participation in programs such as BRIDGE. For example, Teacher Priya perceived that "funding for such programs is a very big issue in most schools and is often delayed or overlooked by the Government". Principal Rashmi's comment echoed similar views:

Many schools in India may not be able to take part in these programs because they may not be able to afford it financially and have the infrastructure and resources. Also, they would not be supported by management. So that is a very big constraint, where teachers are not able to afford the expenses and so cannot take part. (Principal Rashmi)

Some of the teachers also felt that the Indian Government might not have positive attitudes towards such programs. They suggested that a major change in the attitudes of policymakers and educational managers of Government schools towards teacher professional learning is firstly needed. For example, Teacher Sneha said that other schools and teachers in India will have to “open their minds” and be “ready to accept new things and not just focus on academics, grades, and performance. She felt that external programs, such as BRIDGE, will be possible in Government-aided schools only if they are aligned with Government policies and approved and supported by the Government. In this light, Veugelers (2005) observes that:

A difficult point with educational networks is that education is part of a national policy that despite all discourses on autonomy tries to regulate educational practices. In an era of standards, assessments, and inspectorates, these regulating forces become even stronger and penetrate more into concrete educational practices. (p. 290)

Teacher Nisha’s views were that it is easier and more common among schools in Delhi to participate in programs such as BRIDGE, but India has a diverse system of education, and therefore specific programs that related to the needs of other schools’ teachers should be developed. However, she perceived that not all schools and teachers would be able to meet certain requirements for participation. And therefore, she believed that new programs will have to be designed and implemented according to the facilities available in those schools and the pre-existing abilities of the teachers.

We need to think about connecting with schools in our community also. And also if we are having the BRIDGE program, let it be to more schools. Let not just the elite schools be a part of it, let us reach the Government schools and the schools where teachers and students would not even imagine going abroad and getting global exposure. (Teacher Asha)

Many teachers and principals were doubtful if Government-aided school teachers will be able to afford the BRIDGE program features, such as school visits and homestays.

They suggested the use of only online networks to overcome the funding constraints of such networks. However, they were not sure how online-only transnational learning networks might work in schools with insufficient access to technology. The comments below illustrate these views:

They should come up with some online-based programs that would connect other schools in India with schools in Australia. But this will work in schools with good technology available and maintained, and also have technical support staff. They can start a discussion forum or portal, not low investment and 2-3 people managing the portal and updating it for the teachers. They work, maintain resources and connections between various schools. (Teacher Seema)

Communication skills, confidence, open-mindedness is the key. See if you are not flexible and open to ideas, it doesn't work, so one has to be very flexible and acceptable to changes. If one is not flexible, it becomes a problem. The teacher should be open to trying new things, to develop her skills, to use such programs based on what is available. Though I must say that flexibility and availability could be an issue in other Indian schools. What is flexible and available in our school might not be the same in other schools (Principal Radhika)

Although some of teachers and principals suggested new programs, with an online-only component, to extend the use of transnational learning networks in other schools in India who might not be able to afford the travel component of such networks, they seemed oblivious to the stark difference between the facilities of high-fee private schools and those of Government-aided schools. Their schools were equipped with technology and the teachers were skilled in using it. However, the possibility of using these networks in the broader context of Indian schools could be highly problematic in many schools in India. While ICT is now the norm in Indian school education and the teachers' use of ICT is largely promoted in India's educational policies, several teachers in India are yet to incorporate technology in their professional practice as many schools in India are yet to equip their schools, teachers, and classrooms with basic ICT infrastructure (Bolitho & Padwad, 2012). In view of this, Scott and Scott (2010) observe that barrier to technology is a barrier to the use of professional learning networks:

Insufficient or inadequate technological infrastructure is a barrier particularly in remote locations where technology may not be accessible or stable. When the technology fails or is interrupted, so too are the operations of the communities of practice. (p. 173)

In India, the capacities and lifestyles of urban poor, rural poor and rural middle-class is in stark contrast to that of urban middle-class (Brosius, 2010). This disparity involves significant differences in the preferences and choices that other parents and schools make in education. These differences might shape the potential of transnational networks for teacher professional learning in Indian schools as its use might be driven by certain factors and conditions related to capacity. Nevertheless, the specificity of these networks in isolated pockets of urban India and high-fee private schools could perhaps negate the potential of its ubiquity in several other Indian schools. As Sellar and Gale (2011) explain:

...a focus on capacities draws attention to how social position and access to resources mediate what ends are felt to be possible and desirable. For the elite, these conditions are such that desire tends to inform possibility: what is imagined as desirable is simply made possible. For the marginalized, possibility tends to inform desire: what is possible limits the desirable to what is 'realistic'. (p. 129)

Different schools in India might have different responses to transnational learning networks. Their paths, motivations, and expectations might be different. Different teachers might have different understandings and experiences of these networks. The potential of these networks can be understood in India only when it is extended to other schools. Where the majority of schools in India are Government-aided, mainly high-fee private schools' use of such networks gives a partial and unrealized picture of its potential for teacher professional learning. From this perspective, Little (2005) notes that:

Individuals arrive at networks via different paths, not always of their own devising; regardless of the espoused purposes of formal networks, the felt motivations and purposes of the participants—and thus what they attend to—will vary more widely... participants bring their existing cognitive, social and material resources to network activity; what is and might be learned in networking draws upon prior learning and the pool of resources thus collectively available. (p. 281)

The wider establishment of transnational learning networks in Indian schools, whilst attractive, also depends on organizational readiness, which is based often on levels of agency and autonomy. Bridwell-Mitchell (2019) comments that “individuals and organizations do have choices and can exercise agency, but they do not have access to all possible choices because they exist within a structure that determines what choices and opportunities are available” (p. 36). It is within this situation that policymakers and school leaders can play their part in being aware of such learning avenues and also supporting its use as a part of teachers’ formal professional learning practice. In this regard, Rizvi (2009) suggests that:

Policymakers need to consider how, in transnational spaces, the idea of intercultural relations might be re-interpreted, for these relations are now appropriately viewed as complex and inherently unstable products of a range of historical factors, as well as of the contemporary experiences of the cultural economies of globalization. Such cultural economies are increasingly restructuring our established ways of looking and working across cultures, even if some policymakers and institutions appear reluctant to recognize this. And such is the pace of cultural change that the politics of looking and working across cultural differences involves inherent fluidity, indeterminacy, and open-endedness. (p. 285)

If transnational learning networks are extended to other schools, these networks would not remain merely an educational privilege of India’s limited sector. Moreover, if they are also used by teachers in low-fee private schools and Government schools, this might increase the networks’ pedagogical potential over commercial potential. However, it needs to be explored whether and how this might work for teachers in these schools and under what conditions as:

Contrary to the scenario in private schools, where situation is somewhat better, the govt. schools are in a pathetic state. Children of these Govt. schools are far away from having access to ICT. Children are still engaged in traditional learning process. In fact, they are deprived from the basic facilities such as seating arrangement and toilets. ICT facility is a farfetched dream in such schools. Later come barriers like electricity crisis and internet connectivity, etc. Shortage of teachers with ICT training is also there. And the most important—will power of the stakeholders in the educational process of Govt. school system seems missing. (Thakur, 2014, p. 36)

Not surprisingly, therefore, when I asked about the use of programs, such as BRIDGE, in Government-aided schools, all the teachers and principals were doubtful. They believed that certain school-based provisions and conditions had to exist for such programs to be viable in India's large Government-aided sector. Many were certain that Government-aided schools in India would lack the funds and infrastructure to support their teachers' participation in such programs, and could not imagine how transnational learning experiences might nonetheless be possible, in their less expensive forms. Some even suggested that a major change in the attitudes of policymakers and educational managers of Government-aided schools towards teacher professional learning was needed. Nonetheless, most teachers and principals were unsure about the ways in which transnational professional learning programs could work in the broader context of the Indian school education system. They believed that, in India, the future use of programs, such as BRIDGE, would continue to be based on the schools' resources and the capacities of teachers.

Most teachers and principals were unsure about the ways in which transnational professional learning networks could work in the broader context of India's school education system. They believed that, in India, the future use of programs, such as BRIDGE, would be largely contextual and based on the schools' capacities and interests to use these programs. It is only when transnational forms of teacher professional learning are recognized, understood, and supported within educational policy and practice, more schools and teachers might be inclined to its use (Hanraets et al., 2011). In these circumstances, transnational teacher professional learning networks might extend to other Indian schools when few enabling conditions are met and mainly planned and supported around teacher professional learning. If not, in a highly uneven education system such as India's, these networks might widen the social-economic and educational divide rather than bridge them.

7.7 Convergence of capacities, aspirations, and accessibilities

Capacities for cultivating networks are closely associated with capacities for aspiration and voice. (Sellar & Gale, 2011, p. 121)

Transnational learning networks might be an advantage to those schools and teachers who can access it within certain conditions. However, the teachers' access to these networks is based on their organizations' capacities and aspirations. The BRIDGE schools in this study had certain cultures, arrangements, and connections in place to support their teachers' use of a transnational professional development program. These schools funded their teachers' travel and stay in Australia and also provided ICT infrastructure to support their teachers' use of the online components of the program. These schools were interested in promoting globally-relevant learning cultures and had the capacity to aspire for such cultures. Other than self-sufficiency, these schools had the organizational freedom to take part in the BRIDGE program as they were unbounded by Government reforms and regulations. These schools had the autonomy to avail of new learning opportunities, including transnational networks, without obtaining Government approval and support. The teachers' access to programs, such as BRIDGE, could have been influenced by the power of these schools to exercise their own choices and preferences in their practices. This independence could have enabled the teachers' prospects to participate in the program. Nonetheless, if schools provide this access with the intention to position their brand image in the local education market, this raises concerns about the unfair use of these networks. In this light, Boud and Hager (2012) affirm that:

A false notion of continuing professional learning is embodied in the practices of those very organizations that seek to promote it. While there is a move towards the keeping of portfolios and records of reflective practice by more sophisticated professional bodies, suspicion sometimes arises that these promote skills of self-portrayal rather than other forms of learning and that the over-formalizing of professional activity will lead to a loss of personal investment and a disposition of compliance. (p. 28)

With the rise in India's private schooling culture and growing competition among high-fee private schools, it is likely that many teachers in such schools will have access to transnational learning networks. However, if the teachers' engagement in these

networks is mainly a consequence of their schools' branding interests and capacities, this might stifle the networks' inherent purpose, which is teacher professional learning. Moreover, if transnational networks are mainly accessed by teachers in India's affluent private schools, the majority of teachers in India, who need professional learning opportunities, might be deprived of its use. This possible unevenness in access would contribute to the prevailing unevenness in teacher professional learning opportunities in India (Justice Verma Commission, 2012). Similarly, Bridwell-Mitchell (2019) found in her study that:

Partnerships did not tend to go to the schools with the greatest needs...Rather, partnerships tended to go to schools that had less acute needs. That is, partnerships were more likely to go to schools with fewer students from low-income backgrounds, greater numbers of experienced teachers, and locations that exposed students to a wider range of possible occupations. (p. 34)

In India, there exists a major unevenness and inadequacy in the access to quality education among urban and rural, and among the rich and poor (Sancho, 2017). In such a situation, transnational learning networks mainly for socio-culturally and economically privileged schools might have a Matthew Effect, sometimes summarized by the proverb—the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. Coined by sociologist Robert Merton in 1968, the Matthew Effect derives its name from a verse in the New Testament (Matthew 25:29), which roughly means that, those who are successful are most likely to be given the special opportunities that lead to further success, and those who aren't successful are most likely to be deprived of them. If transnational learning networks are mainly used by teachers in high-fee private schools, this creates certain assumptions about the demands for and accessibility to these networks. If so, this also means that since affluent private schools have the economic and cultural capacities to use these networks, access to teacher learning opportunities would grow mostly among teachers in the high-fee private education sector. In this context, Bridwell-Mitchell (2019) cautions that:

On one hand, encouraging school partnerships seems like a reasonable thing to do. If schools do not have resources, then they should secure resources from people and

organizations that do. On the other hand, this assumes that the schools most in need of resources will be the ones most likely to receive them. Unfortunately, research across a variety of sectors suggests the opposite: When organizations start out with more resources, they tend to continue accruing more resources...In other words, the rich get richer. (p. 33)

High-fee private schools might view transnational learning networks as a game-changer that can dramatically internationalize teacher learning, teaching and student learning, prepare students for global environments, and make schools more market-efficient. In that view, transnationally-aspired school ethos, in conjunction with the enabling cultures, conditions, and features, can produce significant possibilities for teacher participation in such networks. This also means that the teachers' use of transnational professional learning networks might be much more convincing in schools that have the financial and aspirational capacities to participate. However, it is possible that many of the conditions that are fueling the use of such networks in high-fee private schools in urban India might not be present in other scenarios.

The schools that are driven by certain aspirations and equipped with network infrastructure and transnational arrangements, might successfully enable their teachers and students with exclusive access to internationalized learning through these learning networks. That being said, programs, such as BRIDGE, might be available mainly only to those whose capacities and resources allow them to make such choices. Therefore, it seems that the use of such programs can be deeply divisive, its unevenness ensuring unequal professional learning opportunities for the majority of teachers in India.

It is not too difficult to trace the cause of high-fee private schools in urban India being interested in and able to participate in such programs. These schools have the socio-cultural and economic capacities to put into practice what they aspire, to the extent that they gain a major hold in local education markets. These factors can motivate these schools and its teachers to participate in transnational professional learning networks in the future. Nevertheless, the processes of globalization are posing undisputable

challenges and benefits in education, which need to be grounded in equality and integrity across all levels:

Globalization has unleashed aspects of life that can no longer be overturned. There is no turning back from the new technologies; nor is it wise to reject the opportunities that they have opened up. Global mobility of people, ideas and media has brought great benefits to most communities, but clearly in ways that are uneven and unequal. In this way, globalization needs to be imagined in new ways that are not constrained by neoliberalism—in a manner that is underpinned by moral and intercultural concerns, and not shaped only by its economic possibilities; and this has to happen in every community, at each of the local, national and transnational levels. (Rizvi, 2017, p. 12)

Against this imperative, the potential of transnational networks for teacher professional learning can only be achieved through education systems and practices that aim at satisfying the learning needs of the teachers over market needs. On the face of it, transnational networks do have the potential to support teacher professional learning, with the conditions of positive school culture, support of the school leaders, transnational collaborative environments, and ICT accessibility and exposure. However, this study points out that these possibilities are mostly contextual and at times counter-intuitive. The access to and use of these networks by teachers in high-fee private schools is related to the nature of the schools and their capacities and aspirations, and mainly grounded in middle-class capacities and aspirations. In this respect, the participation of mainly high-fee private schools in transnational networks, such as the BRIDGE program, possibly consolidates classist predispositions and representations because such schools are able to aspire, afford, and have access to these networks. Moreover, the use of such networks for selective consumerism and intentional privileging for the marketization of education might run the risk of losing its nature and purpose of teacher professional learning. The exclusive use of programs, such as BRIDGE, might add to the existing unevenness in the access to teacher professional learning opportunities in Indian schools. It is the use of these networks by teachers in certain exclusive schools only that needs to be addressed more justifiably. This calls for fairer approaches to using transnational networks across other schools in India that are mainly focused on supporting teacher professional learning and providing equal opportunities for learning.

7.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined the potential of transnational networks for teacher professional learning in India. I have shown that in urban India's high-fee private schools, these networks are perceived to provide opportunities for improving the quality and standards of teaching and learning. However, I have also pointed out that a focus on teaching and learning is secondary at these schools. More important to them is the fact they these networks deliver on the aspirations of the urban middle-class parents who seek a global future for their children. The schools' everyday practices are planned to ensure that their teachers prepare the students for a global future. To realize these practices, the participating schools highly value transnational learning networks, such as the BRIDGE program. In doing so, these schools aim to have the standards that set them apart from other schools in the local education markets. Their participation in such programs becomes a further marker of their social distinction.

High-fee private schools in urban India are highly responsive to market demands and often adopt a business approach to fulfill the expectations of the globally-aspiring middle-class parents. But, within this context, although the practice of teacher professional learning is supported as a pedagogical act, this practice is also assumed to play a deeply commercial role. Under the pressures of highly competitive local education markets and under the global aspirations of the middle-class communities that private schools mostly cater to, these schools view transnational learning mainly as a market positioning exercise and a 'value for money' provision for the urban middle-class investors. This implies that the schools' socio-cultural, economic, and global aspirations play a major role in the wider strategies of network participation that straddle exclusive arrangements and capacities. If that is the case, transnational teacher professional learning networks are valued by those schools that constantly engage in brand management and marketization through their teachers' use of these networks.

In India, the demand for internationalized education has increased as a consequence of the rising urban middle-class, marketization of education, globalization, and

technological innovations. It is the schools that are mindful of these hegemonic forces, as well as its opportunities, that are to a great extent driving their teachers' participation in such networks. This suggests a tension between the schools' apparent commitments to support teacher professional learning and their agendas beyond these commitments. If these networks continue to interpret the purposes of transnational networks largely in terms of image building and reinforcing class identities, then their use, even at the economically privileged schools, is likely to have unrealized consequences for teacher professional learning,

If transnational networks are pursued to meet the neoliberal ends of marketization and internationalization, this would encourage further class-based inequalities and educational capitalism in India. The use of these networks mainly in India's private education sector will add to the existing disparities in educational opportunities and attainment by the 'rich' and the 'poor', foreclosing the chances to imagining the possibilities of such networks by teachers and schools that do not have the socio-cultural capital and economic support enjoyed by elite private schools. It is fundamentally mistaken to assume that transnational learning networks can only be used by teachers in India's affluent and urban schools. It is possible to extend its application to other schools that are not so focused on their participation in India's expanding educational markets but on building professional networks for the purposes of improving the quality of teacher learning.

Chapter 8

CONCLUSION

The research discussed in this thesis relates to an investigation of the potential of transnational networks in enhancing the quality of teacher professional learning in India. This potential is explored through a case study of the BRIDGE program, created by the Asia Education Foundation [AEF] in Australia, aimed at forging productive professional learning relationships between Australian teachers and teachers in a number of Asian countries. India is one of the more recent countries to which AEF has attempted to introduce the program. This thesis is not, however, a study of the BRIDGE program as such; nor does it seek to examine its origins and its impact on Australian teachers. Instead, it focuses on teachers from eight schools in India that participated in the BRIDGE program, in order to explore what potential such programs have in enhancing the quality of teacher professional learning in Indian schools. In this way, the object of this research is how teachers and principals at these schools think about the challenges and possibilities of transnational teacher professional learning networks and imagine its potential for schools across India.

In this chapter, I provide an overview of the study, its background, theoretical framework, research questions, and methodological design. I then discuss the key insights from the study: how Indian teachers perceived their professional learning; their expectations of a transnational professional development program; what they thought about their experiences of the program; what were their motivations in agreeing to participate, and what challenges they faced? From this illustrative case study, I then discuss the broader dynamics that possibly shape the potential of such programs in Indian schools and discuss under what conditions they could be effective. The chapter ends with a discussion on the significance of the study and some main implications for further research into the use of transnational teacher professional learning networks in the broader context of India's school education system.

8.1 Overview of the study

The Indian Government recognizes that teachers are at the heart of quality education. As such, its key priority is to raise the quality and professional status of teachers through more effective teacher professional learning opportunities than are currently provided. Accordingly, the Government has introduced a range of policies and programs of teacher professional learning in recent years. These policies and programs recognize and respond to the current challenges and demands that the teaching profession in India faces (NCERT, 2005; NCTE, 2009). These reforms emphasize that through teacher professional development programs, teachers should be encouraged to “explore, reflect on, and develop one’s own practice” (NCERT, 2009, p. 64), “break out of intellectual isolation, and share experiences and insights with others in the field” (NCERT, 2009. p. 65).

Even with such reform rhetoric and considerable investments, the evidence suggests that actual practices of teacher professional learning are mostly outdated, inadequate, insufficient, and, in some cases, non-existent (Batra, 2005; Kumar et al., 2012; Sriprakash, 2011). Most of the programs are known to be one-off, large-scale, and excessively theoretical (Bolitho & Padwad; 2012; Prince & Barrett, 2014). Moreover, these programs, which are organized and funded by the Government, only cater to teachers in Government-aided schools, and not much is known about the arrangements and systems that are in place for the professional learning of teachers in unaided schools. Some studies also reveal that most teachers in low-fee unaided private schools do not receive any professional development at all (Verma Commission, 2012; Mehta, 2012). This indicates that there are not just drawbacks in the quality of teacher professional learning in India but also unevenness in opportunities.

Given the limited success and reach of the Indian Government’s attempts to improve the quality of teacher professional learning, a number of educational policymakers and researchers, in both India and abroad, have argued that new models of teacher professional learning are needed, with new possibilities imagined and considered. In the

past two decades, several scholars and organizations have supported collaborative approaches to teacher professional learning (Baker-Doyle & Yoon, 2010; Day & Hadfield, 2004; Lima, 2010; OECD, 2009). Teacher collaboration is believed to promote a more effective learning culture, with the sharing of professional knowledge, communication, experimentation, and collective reflection (Boud & Hager, 2012). A whole-school improvement process is thus advocated, with teachers given opportunities to increase their knowledge and expertise by learning together as, it is widely acknowledged that, when this happens, all students benefit (OECD, 2011).

Moreover, with the onset of communication technologies in education, it is argued that teachers can now forge using online networks across schools and school systems to meet their professional learning needs (Baker-Doyle & Yoon, 2011; Scott & Scott, 2010; Trust, 2012, 2015). It is broadly agreed that these networks have the potential to provide teachers with increased access to new ideas, best practices, and more resources. Moreover, the processes of globalization are helping to make the world more connected and informed than ever before (Popkewitz & Rizvi, 2009; Rizvi, 2014a), by opening up new possibilities for teacher professional learning through the emergence of transnational learning spaces (Trust, 2013). Discussing the ways in which globalization has given rise to new possibilities in education, Rizvi (2017) explains that:

Globalization has transformed the social space in which education takes place. Most educational policy-makers realize that educational institutions can no longer promise their students professional lives that are predictably secure. They admit that the profound transformations associated with globalization have raised the issues of legitimacy and trust in educational institutions. They maintain, however, that globalization has not only given rise to a set of new challenges for educational institutions, but has also created a range of new opportunities for rethinking education. (p. 2)

Given this broader theoretical understanding, this study is driven by my professional experiences as a school teacher in India. As a teacher, I experienced professional learning sessions that mostly did not relate to my learning needs and interests, and of my students. The schools, where I worked in India, often encouraged collaborative

student learning practices, but rarely gave teachers the chance to learn through collaboration with each other. Even since, I have been interested in exploring the new possibilities of learning through teacher collaboration, and, more recently, the ways in which transnational networks could support teacher professional learning in Indian schools. It is the latter that is the focus of this case study, which I have attempted to explore by using the Australia-Asia BRIDGE School Partnerships Project as an illustrative case of such networks in India (Stake, 2005, 2010). It has been my hope that by using the BRIDGE program as a case for this research, new dialogues about the possibilities of similar programs for teacher professional learning in the Indian context might open up.

Accordingly, the participants in this research included teachers and principals from eight BRIDGE schools in the Delhi region of India. Data were drawn from interviews, observations, and examination of relevant documents. The key questions that guided the study included: (1) What views did the teachers and principal had about professional learning in general? (2) What expectations did the teachers have from their participation in the transnational learning network, namely as the BRIDGE program? (3) How did the teachers describe their experiences of the program, and what challenges did they encounter? (4) To what extent did their experiences assist in meeting their professional learning needs? (5) What, in their view, are some of the factors and conditions that determine the potential of transnational networks for teacher professional learning in India?

My data analysis was largely inductive as I utilized thematic coding for analyzing qualitative data. The analysis of the data I collected from this case study has enabled me to understand the teachers' and principals' general perceptions surrounding the growing importance of teacher professional learning in Indian schools. I was able to explore the challenges that the teachers faced in meeting their expectations of the BRIDGE program, and also examine how they regarded the generalizability of such a program. Theoretically, this helped me to explore the broader potential of transnational

networks for teacher professional learning across the complex diversity of India's school education system.

In very general terms, I found that all the BRIDGE teachers and principals had positive expectations of the BRIDGE program. The principals hoped that the teachers would gain knowledge of Australian school cultures, establish their schools' global learning links with schools in Australia, and strengthen the schools' commitment to globally-integrated learning ethos and practices. The teachers assumed that they would learn how their counterparts teach in Australia. More curiously, however, they were more interested in Australian teachers' use of ICT in classroom practices. While the teachers perceived that their experiences of the program were mostly positive and beneficial as it helped them improve their ICT skills, they also faced a number of hurdles, including those relating to different academic cultures in India and Australia. Most of the principals, on the other hand, were more inclined to view the schools' participation in the program as a branding exercise, an opportunity to display their schools' commitment to internationalization, and its portrayal as schools with extensive global networks, which they viewed as a marker of quality, high status, and prestige in the local education market. Accordingly, they felt that transnational learning networks had limited application in the Indian context, as it was restricted to elite private schools.

8.2 Key insights

This study concurs with studies by Huang (2016) and Trust (2013), which observe that transnational professional learning networks provide a space, where teachers may learn and grow as professionals, with access to and support from a diverse network of people and resources. Nevertheless, the study also supports the notion of teacher professional learning as highly contextual. It corresponds with views of Opfer and Pedder (2011), who advocate the influence of school contexts, cultures, features, and conditions on teacher professional learning. This study further extends this position by suggesting that the nature and magnitude of the influence of the schools' socio-cultural, economic, and material features on the potential of transnational teacher professional learning

networks might vary in India's diverse school education system. That is, how teachers in high-fee private schools are able to use these networks is influenced by a range of favorable conditions that are mostly unique to the cultures of such schools (Sancho, 2015a). In this section, I elaborate on these conditions to show how they influence the potential of teacher participation in such networks across the diversity of India's school education systems.

In this study, I have shown how the teachers' use of transnational learning networks is driven by the specificities of their school cultures. Choices around these practices are shaped by the prevailing beliefs and practices within a school. Particularly, those in school leadership positions play a significant role in structuring the ways in which teachers make use of such networks for their professional learning (Earl & Katz, 2007; OECD, 2009; Sun et al., 2013). The positive attitudes and expectations of school leaders towards teacher professional learning, collaborative models of teacher learning, and globally-integrated teacher practices enable the prospects and shape the purposes of teacher involvement in these networks. The principals in this study encouraged the teachers to participate in the BRIDGE program and had similar positive views towards their teachers' professional development. This suggests that the possibilities of transnational learning networks in Indian schools depend on how those in school leadership positions perceive and value not only the program but also their teachers and opportunities for their professional learning.

Transnational teacher professional learning networks have considerable potential in schools that place emphasis on their teachers' ICT skills development. Indeed, the principals' expectations of the BRIDGE program seemed dominated by a disproportionate focus on ICT, their schools' advanced ICT features, and the ways in which their teachers' participation in the program would improve their use of ICT in classroom practices (Harris & Jones, 2012; Krutka et al., 2017; Trust, 2013, 2015; Trust et al., 2016). Nonetheless, the teachers' perceptions of the BRIDGE program and their use of the program's ICT components were also mediated by their own professional

capacity to use ICT, based on their ICT knowledge, skills, and classroom practices. That being said, their participation in the program was strongly influenced by the schools' infrastructural features, including access to ICT and the Internet. This indicates that transnational learning networks might have potential in schools that have the ICT resources to support their teachers' use of the online components of these networks. However, an excessive focus on ICT is not entirely appropriate to realize the potential of such programs for teacher professional learning as the practice of teacher professional learning and the potential of online professional learning networks are widely recognized as being beyond mere ICT skills development (Harris & Jones, 2012; Huang, 2016; Lima, 2010).

This study also establishes that the use of transnational learning networks for teacher professional learning might have a complicated potential in Indian schools, where the complexity of the prevailing unevenness is known to dominate India's school education system. The BRIDGE schools involved in this study were perceived as 'doing well' in the local education market. Academically, the schools performed well; they had superior ICT infrastructure and resources; the schools had a history of being involved in international partnerships. These schools had features that were highly favorable for their teachers' participation in a transnational professional development program. Not surprisingly, therefore, the teachers' general perceptions of teacher professional learning were positive. Their principals supported and promoted new learning initiatives for teachers. The teaching staff was provided with regular professional learning opportunities. All perceived the integration of ICT into teaching as the most significant outcome of effective teacher professional learning. Each of the eight schools had globally-integrated cultures, supportive school leaders, infrastructural provisions, and funds to support their teachers' participation in the BRIDGE program. Undeniably, these schools had the setting and certain provisions that seemed to have promoted their teachers' participation in the program.

In many ways then, there is a complex interplay of certain conditions that might contribute to the potential of programs, such as BRIDGE, for teacher professional learning in the broader context of India. Understanding the complexity of this interplay is crucial if the potential of transnational networks is to be realized for teacher professional learning. The data discussed in Chapter 7 identified a range of factors and circumstances that possibly shape this potential in Indian schools. In Chapter 3.3, it is established that school culture is widely recognized in literature as one of the most essential factors in teacher professional learning initiatives (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2013; Huang, 2016; Stoll, Bolam et al., 2006; Varga-Atkins et al., 2010). Similarly, this study has shown that, to a great extent, the cultural context of the schools shapes the dispositions and choices made for teacher participation. The BRIDGE principals in this study strongly promoted 'globally-integrated learning' in their schools (see Chapter 5.8). As a result, new opportunities to form international education partnerships were valued and used strategically. Nevertheless, international programs, such as BRIDGE were promoted, most likely, to further enhance the reputations of these schools in urban Delhi's highly competitive educational market. Such programs were commonly idealized and exhibited as part of the schools' pedagogical philosophies and practices. This indicates that teachers in India from schools with globally-integrated cultures welcome transnational networks and are happy to incorporate these networks into their professional learning practices. This also implies that teachers in such enabling and favorable school contexts respond more confidently to the potential of these networks. Nevertheless, in a diverse education system, such as India's, other schools might not be in a position to use these networks. This suggests that transnational teacher professional learning networks are not inherent to all learning cultures and contexts of schools in India.

The principles underlying the BRIDGE program, which focused on teacher capacity building through collaborative teacher-to-teacher transnational links and partnerships, were clearly aligned to the learning cultures of all the eight BRIDGE participating schools. However, the possibility of establishing school-to-school partnerships was the biggest expectation, rather than teacher professional learning as such. Moreover, although the

teachers were interested in knowing about Australian schools, teaching practices, and ICT resources, learning was not their greatest expectation. The prospect of forming a partnership with schools in Australia was perceived as more significant, not only by the principals but also by most teachers. Professional learning was considered incidental. Even the teachers, who described their experiences of BRIDGE as mostly positive and valuable, viewed the building of international partnerships for their schools and students as more significant than their own professional learning and development. Testimonials of the schools' participation in programs, such as BRIDGE, were exhibited by the schools as the key symbol of the schools' achievements, globally-relevant learning cultures, and international standards.

What also became clear in this study was that the potential of transnational learning networks was mainly linked to its benefits for the schools' main stakeholders, namely the students. However, more attention was paid in considering how the transnational nature of the BRIDGE program could meet the students' global interests and aspirations. The analysis of data in Chapter 7 indicated how teacher participation in transnational learning networks rests on a range of socio-cultural and economic factors. Therefore, to understand the motivations of Indian teachers in their participation in these networks, it may be necessary to consider recent developments in Indian education and how education is viewed, preferred, and aspired by different classes of parents and students in the different contexts in India. Educational preferences in India are widely known to have a major class component, with middle-class cultures tending to have global aspirations, in urban areas in particular (Arnold, 2018; Baviskar & Ray, 2011; Sancho, 2015a).

While India's system of education is increasingly shaped by neoliberal assumptions and market rationalities, in urban Delhi's private schooling sector, this is particularly the case. The middle-class private schools often tend to have a more decisive market disposition towards educational provisions and practices (Brosius, 2010; Sancho, 2015b). These schools charge high-fee and are privately owned and managed. They have

elaborate buildings with advanced ICT infrastructure. They cater to parents who have the capacity to pay high-fee and expect high returns. Increasingly, in recent years, the middle-class parents in urban India are relying on high-fee private schools, mainly as the pathway to future global mobility of their children (Javalgi & Grossman, 2016). Consequently, it can be reasoned that based on the nature of power relations of class, the middle-class parents have certain capacities, preferences, and aspirations for their children, and high-fee private schooling is a consequence (Sancho, 2013).

The high-fee private schooling phenomenon is also driven by the belief that the “West knows best and is the best” (Kenway & Fahey, 2014, p. 190). These schools often take part in international learning opportunities, mostly as a way to display their internationalized standards and practices to the urban middle-class investor-parents within the highly competitive local education market (Sancho, 2015a). Such schools are known to often work within these dynamics to meet certain globally-oriented demands and expectations, which are largely based on the power and representation of class and capacity. In these circumstances, teacher participation in transnational learning networks is clearly a response by the schools to these demands and expectations. This implies that the use of transnational learning networks is desired by schools where international standards of education and internationalized student learning experiences are demanded and expected by the parents. If that is the case, the potential of transnational learning networks might be caught up in this cycle.

In this way, high-fee private schools can be expected to view a transnational teacher professional development program as part of their market-centric and related internationalization agendas, to internationalize their school environments in order to enhance their brand image. As it is shown in Chapter 5.7, all the eight BRIDGE schools were known to be major players in the local education market and most of their teachers have had prior experiences of international travel and links. Almost all the principals viewed their teachers’ participation in the BRIDGE program as a further affirmation of their schools’ membership of a global education community (see Chapter 5.8). Indeed,

most of them regarded the invitation that came from the Australian High Commission itself as a recognition of their social distinction, and not only educational excellence.

While all the BRIDGE schools enjoyed conditions that were favorable for teachers to participate in the BRIDGE program, it was less clear as to how the teachers translated their experiences into their professional practice. As I have already noted, the teachers mostly spoke about the program's importance in their use of ICT in classroom practice. As such, their ICT-centred understanding of the program seems to be indicative of the ways through which ICT is provided in such schools, as a set of resources to display middle-class aspirations of supposedly high education quality, standards, and practices. However, less clear was the ways in which technologies were used for the purposes of teacher professional learning. The use of ICT seemed commercially driven and transactional, rather than pedagogically and professionally motivated. That is not to say that these schools did not have the drive to improve the quality and practices of learning. But this drive did not appear to be mainly aligned to their participation in the BRIDGE program, which was more clearly linked to the beliefs of the urban middle-class parents with internationalized lifestyles and interests, who often assumed to be already doing well. The BRIDGE was thus seen as a 'cherry on the top', as part of the schools' market-positioning strategies, rather than as a key driver for professional learning of teachers. Most of the teachers and principals had a transactional understanding of the nature of the program. In this context, Casinader (2017) cautions that "to confine transnationalism to such an imperfect perspective of the transactional, however, is to deny its capacity and power to describe and explain patterns of human behaviour and action in far more complex ways" (p. 12).

As the Indian middle-class embraces the romantic and optimistic discourses of globalization, by enrolling their children in elite private schools, an increasing number of schools and teachers are likely to demand opportunities for similar transnational learning networks as the BRIDGE program. However, their agendas are likely to be dominated by aspirations beyond pedagogical and professional. If this is so, then clearly

the nature and purpose of these networks need to be reconsidered so that they are more decisively directed towards teacher professional learning. Moreover, if such networks are only available in exclusive schools in India, then its broader potential may remain unrealized, and these networks would inevitably only add to the prevailing unevenness of teacher professional learning opportunities in India. An inherent paradox thus lies at the heart of the transnational professional learning model. However, if it is designed to improve the quality of teacher professional learning, then it cannot remain exclusive. But, if the opportunities associated with globalization are only available to a small sector of the Indian school community, then the reproduction of social inequalities in India will be further exasperated.

This study has shown that the potential of transnational learning networks in Indian schools is influenced by organizational beliefs and understandings about the value of these networks. However, they might be mainly grounded in the aspiration to internationalize the school culture against the socio-cultural and economic features and market pressures in urban India's private school education sectors. If that is the case, the teachers' expectations and use of such networks are primarily based on meeting the schools' interest in internationalization to meet the aspirations of students and parents, and, in doing so, maintain the schools' quality and reputation in the local education market. While teachers in high-fee private schools often bring positive predispositions to their professional learning and participation in transnational learning networks, their interests are not always driven by concerns of learning from other teachers in other systems, but in extending their international links, an aspiration that appears to have become a permanent feature of India's growing middle-class, especially in the urban settings.

8.3 Limitations of the study

Like any study, this research has a number of limitations. This study is contextual. It is based on the beliefs and accounts of teachers from a specific region in India—urban Delhi. This scope is thus contextual, focused on a transnational learning network and

how a small number of school teachers in India perceive and use the network for their professional learning. The contextual nature of this study, however, has allowed for a deep, naturalistic inquiry into the Indian teachers' experiences of these networks and the range of external influences on these experiences. The interpretation of the data is therefore localized, and several insights from this research are not be generalizable to Government-aided schools and low-fee private schools in urban Delhi, rural Delhi, or other regions of India. However, the study does reveal some of the contradictions that such learning networks are likely to encounter in India's diverse system of school education.

The teachers and principals involved in this study belonged to schools with certain features: they are located in suburbs with unique socio-cultural and economic characteristics. Their understanding and use of the BRIDGE program were therefore shaped by the unique aspects of their schools—the school philosophies, learning cultures, classroom environments, infrastructural provisions, and schools' localities. These insights are not generalizable to schools with different cultures and contexts. Other schools, such as Government-aided and low-fee private schools and public schools, might have settings quite different from the high-fee private schools involved in this study. However, the factors and conditions that possibly influenced the BRIDGE teachers' participation in the program provide a useful framework to investigate the conditions in other school settings that might shape the possibilities of such programs in other regions and locations of schools in India; and what might need to be done to ensure that transnational learning networks are better focused on teacher professional learning rather than market positioning.

It also needs to be pointed out that this study is not an evaluation of the BRIDGE program. It is rather an exploration of the ways in which school teachers in India interpret and experience programs, such as BRIDGE, for their professional learning. The purpose was never to assess its impact on teachers or their use of the BRIDGE program, but rather to understand how and in what ways they perceive that it is useful to them.

Since the BRIDGE program involves teachers from India and Australia, a further limitation of this study is that all the teachers who participated in this study were only from schools in India, and not from Australia. But, it should be stressed that this is not a comparative study. I did not intend to know the BRIDGE-based perceptions and experiences of Australian teachers. This deliberate choice was based on two major reasons. First is related to my own experiences of professional learning as a school teacher in India, which were mostly negative and therefore shaped my interest in this study. Second, in particular, is based on the realization, which is commonly evidenced and acknowledged in Indian research and policy literature, that teacher professional learning programs and practices in India has several drawbacks and inconsistencies. My background as a school teacher in India and the background of India's teacher professional learning reforms seemed to have a significant bearing on my choice to explore only the Indian teachers' version of the BRIDGE program. The main aim was to explore the potential of such programs to support the quality of and access to teacher professional learning in India, which is largely poor and uneven. This unevenness in the quality and access to teacher professional learning in India guided me to seek an understanding of how programs, such as BRIDGE, could be useful in the Indian context.

I acknowledge, therefore, that it could be claimed that by focusing only on Indian teachers, I revealed only one side of the program's potential for teacher professional learning. The other side (Australian teachers) remained unknown. I realize that professional learning in general and transnational learning networks, such as BRIDGE, might have different significance for school teachers in Australia. Their intentions of the program might be different. Their expectations and experiences might vary. The focus on Australian teachers' views and use of such programs might influence how its overall potential for teacher professional learning is interpreted and realized. However, this was not a part of this study, but maybe an area requiring further investigation.

8.4 Looking ahead

Given the substantial socio-cultural and economic conditions across all the BRIDGE participating schools that appeared to drive the teachers' participation in the BRIDGE program, it is likely that certain other schools might use transnational learning networks easily and willingly. Although in this study, the potential of transnational learning networks was not explored in socio-culturally and economically underprivileged schools, it is hard to imagine its use in low-fee private schools and Government-aided schools in India, which are mostly known to lack the resources and conditions favorable for their teachers' participation in such networks (Bolitho & Padwad, 2012; Thakur, 2014). Then again, it cannot be denied that teachers from such schools are in critical need of quality professional learning opportunities such as this: their needs are much more basic (Singh, 2013). In these schools, the Indian Government has a direct role to play over a number of socio-material factors that shape the practices of teacher professional learning, and, therefore, might shape if and how teachers in these schools could use transnational networks to lead their own professional learning. Moreover, in India's diverse education systems and regulatory structures, the use of transnational learning networks might open up greater possibilities of teacher autonomy in professional learning. Nevertheless, to extend these networks in Indian schools, policymakers and educational managers clearly have a significant role to play in the interpretation and implementation of policies related to the integration of transnational networks for teacher professional learning. Likewise, issues relating to the potential of transnational networks in enhancing teacher autonomy for their professional learning in India's diverse educational system, in ways that may be unequal, is an area that needs further research and Government support.

In Chapter 7.3 and 7.4, I have discussed that the use of transnational teacher professional learning networks in high-fee private schools is driven largely by the aspirations of the urban middle-class parents, with the assumption that international links represent status and prestige. Schools in urban India have strategic interests in bolstering the schools' brand image in highly competitive education markets through

such networks. In this study, the schools' involvement in the BRIDGE program seems complex, since it developed against the backdrop of intense market competitiveness. However, if the teachers' use of these networks is mostly aligned to their schools' market-driven and profit-oriented agendas, and to their desire to 'internationalize' their experiences, then the purposes of teacher professional learning in a transnational learning space is likely to be undermined. And although the teachers might develop their professional practices, it is likely to be in ways that are incidental. A more purposive and educationally-focused agenda needs to be articulated if programs, such as BRIDGE, are to be extended to other schools in India and elsewhere.

The benefits of transnational teacher professional learning networks in India seems largely instrumental. Many other high-fee private schools in urban India have expressed an interest in searching out for similar opportunities. In these schools, transnational learning networks are also viewed as a strategic tool to respond to the urban middle-class expectations, educational marketization, and processes of globalization. However, in India's diverse contexts, schools are disparate in their cultures, capacities, aspirations, and provisions, and similarly, teacher learning beliefs and practices vary. Some schools, such as the BRIDGE schools in this study, might be inclined towards transnational learning networks because their students are already imagining transnational futures. For schools that do not cater to students with transnational aspirations, such learning networks might be assumed to be irrelevant for teacher professional learning. However, such an assumption needs to be challenged. There is a failure to imagine how internationalization may be relevant to them as well, although in ways that might be radically different.

Although the use of ICT-based professional learning networks to connect schools and teachers in all sections of the Indian community seems promising, it is true that most schools in India have infrastructure that is not effectively developed and maintained for ICT use (Thakur, 2014). Moreover, in some cases, teachers lack the skills or openness to the use of ICT (Bolitho & Padwad, 2012). Moreover, in India, most teachers are

underpaid, their classrooms are overcrowded, and their schools do not have funds to support new initiatives for teacher professional learning (Ramachandran et al., 2005). Transnational teacher professional learning networks, such as the BRIDGE program, may potentially have a greater role to play within the dynamics of these socio-cultural and economic features of India's education system. We need to ask how these networks might support the quality of teacher professional learning in low-fee private schools and Government-aided schools. In India's diverse contexts, the role of such networks may vary, and this variation should be the subject of further research. How might teachers in India's underprivileged schools use transnational learning networks and what might be the potential of these networks in the broader context of India's diverse school education system is an area that clearly needs both research and policy imagination.

It could be argued that considerable benefits can be derived if high-fee private schools, which cater to globally-aspiring urban middle-class, collaborate with underprivileged schools by forging teacher professional learning networks that are both local, national and international. Schools in India are characterized by considerable diversity across class-cultural and socio-economic circumstances, and cultural dispositions. Significant differences in capacities and aspirations exist in India's diverse sectors of school education and this diversity influences the differentiated choices made for teacher professional learning and its outcomes. Moreover, while some schools might find technology-driven learning networks useful, others might resist them, and some might not be able to afford them. However, if India's commitment to equality of educational opportunities is a serious one, it is important that transnational learning networks are extended to teachers in socio-culturally and economically underprivileged schools. But, if only the teachers from exclusive and privileged schools have access to such networks, inequalities are not only likely to persist but also expand. To avoid this unevenness in teacher professional learning opportunities, the sponsors of transnational learning networks, such as the Australian Government and the AEF, need to consider how to extend their networks across various types of schools in India, and not only to those who look and function mostly like the Australian schools. Of course, language may be a

problem in some of the underprivileged schools in India, but not all. If transnational learning networks are to benefit Australian teachers, then they should be provided opportunities to interact with teachers who teach in schools that look and function very different from their schools.

This study suggests that the use of transnational teacher professional learning networks is likely to grow in India's high-fee private school education sector. Urban India is also witnessing a growth of high-fee private schools. For example, according to the Economic Survey of Delhi 2018–19, the share of private schools in Delhi's school education has been on the rise in the last five years, touching over 41% in 2017–18, having logged an increase of over 10% between 2014–15 and 2017–18 (Government of Delhi, 2019). Moreover, these schools have the resources and environments that are encouraging for the teachers' use of these networks. Therefore, an increase in the number of these schools in India would mean an increase in the conditions that are conducive to the teachers' participation in these networks. However, to overcome the inadequacies and unevenness of teacher professional learning opportunities in Indian schools, a fairer approach to the implementation and development of these networks is crucial. Having said that, a 'one size fits all' approach does not work in a nation with diverse, complex, and rather complicated school education systems (Bolitho & Padwad, 2012). Therefore, new ways of developing and enacting transnational learning networks across diverse sectors of school education in India need to be considered, both by the international partner schools and the educational authorities that sponsor them, and by Indian schools and their systems of education as well.

Through this study, I have shown how the potential of transnational teacher professional learning networks in India is assumed to be applicable only to high-fee private schools in urban India. In these schools, such international links have mainly become a market-centric mode of operating, and a strategy to maintain and extend a brand image. In these settings, the actual purpose of transnational learning networks, which is teacher professional learning, would become lost in the pursuit of market objectives. With the

rise of high-fee private schools in India and with the increasing mobility of Indians around the world, many such schools might be more interested in social positioning rather than educational goals. This rationality complicates the potential of transnational teacher professional learning networks. It disconnects this potential from the wider context of India's school education system. This only adds to the prevailing socio-cultural and economic inequalities in Indian society. If most schools in India and their teachers are excluded from these networks, and invariably remain oblivious to its potential, then these networks will simply become an exclusive fad of the rich schools, or will dismally fade with time by a new trend. To avoid such a possibility, it is important for school systems, both in India and elsewhere, to become acquainted with how diverse conditions demand different types of policy and program interventions concerning teacher professional learning, with which transnational collaborations are but one particular approach.

I conclude that although transnational networks, such as the BRIDGE program, offer new opportunities for teacher professional learning, such opportunities are not equally distributed. Nevertheless, attempts to introduce such networks for teacher professional learning in the broader context of India's school education system might take time and could be messy, considering the diversity of this system. For some of the schools, these networks might align easily with their local organizational culture and their capacity. But for others, more determined efforts and greater levels of investment will be needed. Equally, tentative steps to transnational learning initiatives in Government-aided schools need to be planned and promoted by the Indian Government. This might mean major changes and developments in policy thinking of Indian educational planners and policy makers. It is within this changing landscape, that the potential of transnational networks for teacher professional learning in India's diverse range of schools can be seen as realistic and purposeful.

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Appendix 1 – Questions to guide interviews of teachers

Perceptions

1. Tell me something about your educational background teaching experience. For example, where did you graduate and what was the type of teacher education you completed? Is this your first teaching position? What grade and subjects do you teach? How long have you worked as a teacher? What other teaching experiences have you had?
2. What motivated or persuaded you to become a teacher?
3. What do you enjoy about teaching?
4. What types of professional development activities have been available to you over the duration of your career?
5. Over the years, there have been changes in teacher professional development practices, how did you prepare yourself for those changes?
6. How does professional development happen for teachers at your school and how often? Is professional development mandatory or optional in your school?
7. Could you describe the teacher professional development programs provided by your school? Is it workshop-based? Is it conducted by an external trainer? Is it subject-specific or general? Do you team-up with your colleagues for professional development? How often? Do you use technology in your professional development program?
8. Think back from the beginning of your career until now, and tell me about the professional development experiences that you think have been the most beneficial for you. In what ways?

Expectations and experiences

1. When did you first hear about the BRIDGE program? Do you remember what you thought about the program then and what were your expectations from the program?
2. What motivated or persuaded you to participate in the program?
3. Could you describe your field experiences in the partner schools in Australia?
4. Tell me something about the online and synchronous communications you have with teachers in Australia through the program?
5. How often and how long do you engage in the program?
6. Do you struggle to use the program regularly? If yes, why?
7. How do you use the program for your subject-specific learning needs?
8. What type of infrastructure and technology does your school have to support your use of the program?

9. Think back to when you first used the program in your classroom. Describe your first experience?
10. Do you frequently use the program in your classroom for teaching purposes? If yes, in what ways? If no, why not?
11. Would you describe in what ways, if at all, participation in the BRIDGE program has influenced your teaching practice?
12. Please describe some examples of what other things you learned from participating in the program and how you apply these learnings in your practice.
13. Are different time-zones a barrier to your learning in the program? If yes, what do you do to overcome that barrier?
14. What other challenges or concerns have you encountered with the program? Please explain.

Possibilities

1. What specific knowledge and skills do you think that teachers new to the BRIDGE program would need for future participation?
2. From your perspective, how could future BRIDGE teachers with their diverse backgrounds learn from each other more effectively?
3. What could be done to improve or enhance the program in the future for teachers in India?
4. What advice would you offer to a school in India considering the introduction of the program?
5. Is there anything else you would like to share with me that I have not asked you?

Appendix 2 – Questions to guide interviews of principals

Perceptions

1. Tell me something about your educational background and experience. For example, where did you graduate and what was the type of teacher education you completed? How long have you been a school principal?
2. What motivated or persuaded you to become a school principal?
3. What do you enjoy about being a principal?
4. What do you see as the major role of the principal?
5. How do you motivate your teachers so they will want to try new ideas?
6. What professional qualities do you particularly encourage in your teaching staff?
7. What are the learning expectations you have of your teachers?

Expectations

1. When did you first hear about the BRIDGE program? Do you remember what you thought about the program then and what were your expectations from the program?
2. What motivated or persuaded you to participate in the program?
3. What are the features that you expected to develop in your teachers?
4. In what ways have your teachers benefitted through the program?
5. In what ways have your students benefitted through the program?
6. Please share some of the responses you received from your students' parents about your school's involvement in the program.

Possibilities

1. Do you believe that more schools in India should participate in such a program?
2. What do you see as possible barriers to successfully implementing this program in Indian schools?
3. What specific knowledge and skills do you think that teachers new to the BRIDGE program would need for future participation?
4. From your perspective, how could future BRIDGE teachers with their diverse backgrounds learn from each other more effectively?
5. What could be done to improve or enhance the program in the future for teachers in India?
6. What advice would you offer to a school in India considering the introduction of the program?
7. Is there anything else you would like to share with me that I have not asked you?

Appendix 3 – Screenshots of organizing data with NVivo

Files Search Project

Name	Codes	References
Teacher Asha	36	93
Teacher Nisha	42	96
Teacher Poonam	25	54
Teacher Priya	40	96
Teacher Reema	38	84
Teacher Rohan	37	90
Teacher Seema	36	87
Teacher Sneha	38	102

Teacher Asha

Atiya: What do you believe are the benefits to teachers in India who participate in the BRIDGE program?

Teacher Asha: Benefits are many for sure. I have earned a friend for life. And the same goes for every teacher. We have a Whatsapp group of the BRIDGE teachers and we don't forget to wish each other on anniversaries and birthdays. We remember each and everything we did together—all the learning and fun too. Some of the teachers visit their partner teachers in Australia even after the BRIDGE program is over. So the connection is still there. That was just the BRIDGE but the road has been made with these relationships. Whenever we talk to each other we always learn something new. So it has been a beautiful learning experience for both of us. In case I have some problem and I am trying to figure out how to take up a particular thing, I don't hesitate to call up my BRIDGE partner or send her an e-mail. You see BRIDGE had happened for one year but we have taken it forward. One more thing I will tell you about is that the computer teacher in the BRIDGE partner school in Australia. He being from the computer field and tech savvy, whenever we have had problems connecting he has been helping us, like on my phone he has been sending messages, you do this, you do that. So in that process, I have been learning. The day we were supposed to have the

Files Search Project

Name	Codes	References
Principal Anita	36	63
Principal Deepak	52	114
Principal Pooja	44	78
Principal Radhika	51	102
Principal Rashmi	53	108

Principal Rashmi

Atiya: What specific knowledge and skills do you think that teachers new to the BRIDGE program would need for future participation?

Principal Rashmi: There are lots of people who would love to be a part of this program, but they are not sure how much effort will take to implement it when they come back. And I think in many cases, it is not hesitation in participating in a global project, I think it is sometimes just being in a comfort zone of what you are and not wanting to move out of that comfort zone because it requires a lot of effort and initiative. And then also people might say that this works in that context, it may not work in our context; the number of students there are less and the number of students here are more. But we feel convinced that it doesn't matter in terms of numbers, what matters is what you are doing and how you are doing it and the children respond. It's got to do with your conviction and passion of being well prepared with your work. We are very open to all the ideas and we are very strongly into global exchanges and perspectives. We have so many video-conferences with schools across the globe that we have made it a mandatory part of our internal assessment. So they begin to understand a lot of things globally. But gradually more and more people in India are getting open to

Appendix 4 – An illustration of the manual coding process

INTERVIEW TEXT	EMERGING THEMES
The education field has become very, very dynamic over the years. With the onset and exposure to social media and technology, children are becoming so much aware. Children nowadays have more knowledge and want to know more than we knew a couple of decades ago, so this makes teaching very challenging. All this is a big change and a tremendous challenge for teachers to deal with, and it is also making not just student learning but also teacher learning very dynamic. This is why there are a lot of in-service training programs that weren't there earlier. These programs are followed up very thoroughly as there are new things happening in education. So new avenues to professionally develop are constantly considered and provided to teachers. All that was not happening earlier. (Teacher Priya)	Changes in education - Positive perceptions - New practices ICT exposure - Awareness - Recognition School arrangements and provisions
I find that such programs can open up so many avenues for the teachers to work together as a team. In the classroom, we are limited to our books. These days we can say since that we have access to technology, we can Google things and learn things on our own. But learning with others means that there is a possibility to learn more. We might not be aware that there are so many projects, apps and other resources that can help our teaching become much more effective and easy. It is with sharing and mutual learning that we can have access to more ideas and materials. And I had hoped that BRIDGE could help us in that way with the online projects and interactions. (Teacher Asha)	Positive expectations - New possibilities - New ideas and resources Teacher collaboration - Acknowledge the value - Reciprocal learning ICT exposure
I was thrilled because my teacher will have a link with one school in Australia. And she will have the experience of a new country, the education system of a different country, which she can bring back and link with own teaching in the classroom. And not just my teacher, the school and our students also will be part of this link. I knew that since the students will communicate with students in Australia, they	Positive expectations - Partnership with Australia Transfer of learning - Relevance to the schools Involving students - Beneficial for student learning - Student global awareness

will form new friendships and learning teams. They will bond together on common problems taking place around the world. This will benefit our students and add to their learning and awareness. This is needed to make our students feel like global citizens in today's world. (Principal Anita)	Globally-integrated - Students as global citizens
I was confident because I was going to Australia. I am sure the teaching there is much better than in India and the education standards are for sure high-class. Everything is developed there. Even the smallest techniques used by teachers there must be very interesting and constructive to learn and adapt to. (Teacher Poonam)	Positive expectations - Positive attitudes towards Australia Partnering with Australia - Beneficial as Australia is better
We see our school as the centre of excellence, as the leader of global education, and we have to do it for the sole purpose of fulfilling the aspirations of all the stakeholders—the students, parents, teachers, management, alumni and society at large. Everybody has a global aspiration and the school in its own ways plays a very important role to achieve that. (Principal Deepak)	Globally-integrated - Self-worth - Outlook - History - Aspirations School arrangements and provisions
I know the difficulties and demands that are part of the teaching profession. I know the roles that teachers have to play are changing at a fast pace. And I understand that the capacity building of teachers can make much difference to their practice. And therefore, with this leadership position that I have reached, where I can influence and bring changes, where I can take decisions and make a difference in the lives of the teachers, I have taken on this role with responsibility towards my teachers and the dedication and commitment to global excellence of the school. I am known as a global educator in this community. I have always been open to changes. It think it is important for teachers to have global mindsets in these changing times. This school is known for adopting international programs. We have sent more than 30 teachers abroad on various exchange programs, more than 30 teachers to various countries. (Principal Deepak)	Supportive school leadership - Aware - Values PD - Openness of school leaders towards learning and change Changes in education - New roles - New practices Globally-integrated - Leadership role - School image - School culture