EXPLORING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING
COMMUNITIES AMONG ARABIC
LANGUAGE TEACHERS IN THE UAE
INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

An Interview-based study with a Wengerian perspective

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Abstract

This study is an exploration of professional communities of practice among Arabic language teachers in the international schools of United Arab Emirates (UAE) through the lens of Wenger's CoP conceptual framework which is related to his situated learning theory. The research aims to explore the formation, dynamics, and impact of professional learning communities (PLC) among Arabic language teachers in these international schools, through understanding the factors that facilitate the formation of these communities, their impact on teaching practices of teachers as professionals, and their significance for professional development in the context of Arabic language education within these international schools. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with six Arabic language teachers from diverse educational backgrounds that perform the most common nationalities (Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, Palestine, and Syria) who work as Arabic language teachers in the international schools of Abu Dhabi, Dubai, and Sharjah. Through theoretical analysis, findings reveal that educators actively participate in communities characterized by regular meetings, collaborative learning activities, resource sharing, and positive relationships. These communities serve as platforms for continuous learning, support the development of teaching skills and practices, and enhance student outcomes. The challenges of strategies and qualifications for teaching Arabic as a second language, and limited resources were an emerging issue of concern for teachers. The study contributes to the existing literature by providing insights into the role of professional learning communities (PLC) in promoting a culture of continuous improvement among Arabic language teachers in the UAE. Recommendations are provided for educators, school administrators, and policymakers to further support the development and sustainability of professional communities and enhance learning outcomes within the UAE educational context.
I dedicate this work to my father for believing in me, for my mother who never stopped praying for me, my supportive supervisor Adrianna Nizinska for her guidance and constructive feedback, my children: Deima, Yazan, Reima, Adam and Jasmin who were my backbone in every phase of my life.
List of Abbreviations

COP  Communities of Practice
PLC  Professional Learning Communities
PD   Professional Development
PL   Professional Learning
CPD  Continuous Professional Development
MSA  Modern Standard Arabic
SLT  Senior Leadership Team
UAE  United Arab Emirates
MOE  Ministry of Education
ALT  Arabic Language Teachers
AR   Action Research
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Chapter 1: Introduction

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) international schools are recognized for their multicultural and eclectic student populations (Curricula and Language of Instruction | The Official Portal of the UAE Government, n.d.; Gallagher, 2011; Stephenson, 2010). The educational system there is characterized by a strong emphasis on quality education and continuous development to meet the needs of a rapidly growing and diverse population. The UAE government allocates significant resources to education, with substantial investments in infrastructure, technology, and professional development programs. International schools in the UAE are known for their well-funded facilities (Bray & Ventura, 2022) and resources, offering a wide range of curricula such as the International Baccalaureate (IB), British, American, and Indian programs. These schools attract a diverse student population from various nationalities and cultural backgrounds, reflecting the multicultural nature of the UAE society (Gallagher, 2011). Girls’ participation in education is actively encouraged and supported, with initiatives in place to promote gender equality and empower female students to excel academically and pursue higher education and career opportunities (Majumdar & Varadarajan, 2013). Additionally, the UAE educational system accommodates migrant students, providing access to education for children from expatriate families living and working in the country. Efforts are made to ensure inclusive and equitable education for all students, regardless of their background or circumstances, fostering a learning environment that values diversity, cultural exchange, and academic excellence (Bray & Ventura, 2022).

1.1 Background:

Every emirate has its own inspection boards that follow an Inspection framework according to the UAE ministry of education (UAE Ministry of Education, 2023). A number of different bodies (Kamal, 2018), or several distinct bodies control education in the UAE. On the federal level, the Ministry of Education (MOE) establishes admissions standards, graduation requirements, and curricula; within each Emirate, particularly in the larger ones, there are individual regulatory bodies, such as the Abu Dhabi Department of Education and Knowledge (Adek) or Dubai’s Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA), while in the Sharjah Private School Authority (SPEA) is the entity that inspects these schools in Sharjah (AlKutich & Abukari, 2018).

Educators at these schools confront the unusual difficulty of teaching Arabic as a foreign language to students from a variety of linguistic origins, as well as Arabic pupils who have been immersed in English language curricula in their international schools. Continuous professional development of Arabic language educators is critical to satisfy the needs of this changing educational milieu. Educators in international schools with diverse curricula who work with students from various nationalities and backgrounds. Each school’s unique mission and vision contribute to the global pursuit
of enhanced learning and teaching through continuous professional development, aimed at achieving optimal student progress and achievement. This is the fundamental domain that called for communities of which those educators and their schools to be involved in to bring up a change to their professional practices (Wenger, 1998).

Based on the educational experiences that resulted from the COVID-19 epidemic, distant education or the use of technology (Abdellatif et al., 2023) in teaching. Arabic became an essential aspect of policies embraced by those educators, as a result new Communities of Practice (COPs) occurred in some online platforms such as What’s App or telegram groups. Although these professional learning communities have existed long before COVID-19 outside online spaces, the topic has emerged again in recent times due to the UAE’s 2020 Vision initiative (National Agenda 2021, n.d.), which placed a premium on the establishment of a world-class education system, and will necessitate a total overhaul of the current educational system and teaching methods. As a result, a great demand for a professional development program across UAE schools took place, particularly Arabic language departments.

1.2 Problem:

The field of Arabic language teaching faces challenges in effectively supporting the professional development of teachers and enhancing the learning experiences of Arabic language learners. Despite the existence of professional learning communities, there is a gap in understanding the dynamics within these communities and their impact on teacher growth and learning. Additionally, the identification of suitable informants (participants) within organizations for research purposes presents a persistent obstacle, hindering the exploration of Arabic language teachers’ experiences and practices. This study aims to address these gaps by investigating the dynamics of the Arabic language teachers’ community of practice and its influence on professional development, while also exploring effective strategies for identifying and recruiting informants within organizations. Through a comprehensive examination of the experiences, perspectives, and practices of Arabic language teachers, this research seeks to contribute to the advancement of Arabic language teaching and learning practices and the enhancement of professional development strategies within the field.

1.3 Aim of the study:

The teaching of Arabic language in international schools in the UAE is a complex and dynamic endeavor that requires continuous professional development (CPD). This research aims to explore the formation, dynamics, and impact of professional learning communities (PLC) among Arabic language teachers in these international schools. Employing the Communities of Practice CoP as a theoretical framework, the study attempts to explore how these communities contribute to the professional learning and growth of Arabic language instructors. Overall, the aim of this study is to explore the formation, dynamics, and impact of professional learning communities (PLC) among Arabic language teachers in these international schools, through understanding the factors that facilitate the formation of these communities, their impact on teaching practices of teachers as professionals, and their significance for professional development in the context of Arabic language education within these international schools.

Through insights gleaned from the experiences of Arabic language teachers, and to contribute to the advancement of professional development practices within the field by exploring the dynamics of professional learning communities in the international schools’ settings and their impact on teacher growth and learning.
1.4 Research questions.

To explore the involvement of these Arabic language teachers’ involvement in the present PLCs I will be asking the following research questions: How do UAE Arabic language teachers involve in professional learning communities? What are the factors that influence their involvement? What benefits and challenges do they experience in these communities?

1.5 Limitations

While an exploratory interview study of 6 Arabic language teachers in UAE international schools using Wenger’s Community of Practice (CoP) concept embedded in the situated learning theory through semi-structured interviews provided valuable insights, there were limitations to this study, the small sample size of six teachers may have limited the findings but it worth mentioning that this is what Distinguishes qualitative from quantitative research, as qualitative inquiry prioritizes delving into the intricacies, context, and underlying meanings of observed phenomena, rather than relying solely on numerical data (Dodgson, 2019). Rigor and truth remain paramount in qualitative research endeavours (Cypress, 2017), with ensuring trustworthiness being essential to establishing the credibility and reliability of findings, given their inherently subjective nature (Ahmed, 2024), yet, this limitation was avoided by choosing teachers from the most common nationalities that work as Arabic language teachers in the UAE (Jamal, 2017), that were from: Lebanon, Egypt, Palestine, Syria and Jordan which enriched the cultural background of the participants.

The experiences and perspectives of these teachers may have not fully represented the diversity of Arabic language teachers in different international school settings from a males’ view as the respondents to the study were mainly female teachers. The study's focus on UAE international schools has its own specialty compared with other cultural and educational contexts. The unique characteristics of the UAE education system and international schools may not be fully transferable to other settings, yet it is believed to be a role model for many other countries in terms of seeking quality learning for both students and professionals, promoting education for sustainable development as a goal.

Conducting interviews through Zoom has posed some technical challenges such as connectivity issues, audio quality problems, or difficulties in non-verbal communication yet what happened with this study’s interviewees was a minimal issue.

1.5.1 Time constraints, transcription, and translation:

Since the interviewees in this study were Arabic speaking participants who work in UAE international schools, with a different time zone which needed several attempts to find a suitable time for meetings that worked for the participants considering their availability and comfort during the interview, all the interviews had to be transcribed, then translated, I chose to use Notta AI for transcribing the Zoom meetings to written Arabic first, then spending days in matching the voice notes to editing these transcripts as there were issues in detecting Arabic language that had to be manually fixed. I then spent more time to translate every interview in terms of assuring that transcribing had the exact phrases of the interviewed teachers. It was imperative that the data collected are trustworthy (Kiger & Varpio, 2020).

1.6 Ethical considerations:

Several ethical concerns were considered while conducting interviews with Arabic language teachers in the UAE. These factors are critical for preserving the participants’ well-being, dignity, and rights particularly in terms of their culture and context (van den Hoven & Carroll, 2021). Before starting with setting a schedule for the interviews in a study and to comply with research ethics, the
interviewees had to send their informed Consent (Vanclay et al., 2013). Participants were given explicit information about the research's aim, procedures, risks, rewards, and voluntary nature (Farrell, 2017). Throughout the study process, participants' privacy and confidentiality was safeguarded (Bliss, 2013). As a researcher, I had to guarantee that any data acquired is kept secret and securely preserved. To ensure the anonymity of participants, all identifiable information was deleted or anonymized throughout data processing and reporting (Chernick et al., 2023).

Because of the Arabic and Islamic culture that governs interactions in this context, it was imperative to show respect for the rights and well-being of the participants. Special consideration was given to creating a secure and supportive research setting that met their requirements while avoiding any possible unsatisfaction or exploitation (Dixon & Quirke, 2018) particularly that the interviews were conducted during the month of Ramadan. Participation in the study was voluntary, and participants had the freedom to withdraw from the study at any moment without penalty (Bliss, 2013).

Researchers should be aware of the cultural background and customs of the UAE, as well as respect the participants' cultural beliefs and traditions. Engaging with the community and key stakeholders is critical for gaining a deeper knowledge of cultural sensitivities and ensuring that the study is performed in a culturally acceptable way (Cohen et al., 1996). The study could benefit the participants' and the larger community's well-being and empowerment as this is the core of any conducted educational research. Participants were informed that the research findings could be communicated with relevant stakeholders and that they may benefit from the study's findings (Hostetler, 2005). This guaranteed the study met ethical guidelines.
2 Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

2.1 Theory choice:

Analysing data collected from exploring Arabic language teachers’ professional learning communities in UAE international schools could have been approached using various theoretical frameworks, depending on the specific focus and goals of this research. In this chapter,

Developed by Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger, the CoP framework emphasized the social nature of learning and the importance of communities in the professional development of individuals (Wenger, 1998). For over three decades, the conceptual framework developed by Wenger has been instrumental in advancing the theory and practice of social learning. Wenger’s work embodies a profoundly humanistic perspective, emphasizing the importance of social interactions and collective knowledge creation in learning processes. While grounded in humanistic principles, I have endeavoured to provide sufficient theoretical rigor to ensure its practical applicability. It is my aspiration that this work will prove valuable to individuals and organizations seeking to promote social learning as a means of addressing contemporary challenges, both at the individual and collective levels, within local and global contexts (Erickson et al., 2022).

2.2 Professional learning communities’ Relationship to communities of practice

In this part I present the specialty of teacher professional learning to ground my research and justify my choice of Etienne Wenger’s Communities of Practice (COP) as a theoretical frame of work and a Lense for my analysis. As stated by Kathryn Strom, Tammy Mills and Linda Abrams in their editorial on Professional Development in Education (Strom & Viesca, 2021), there is a “non-Linear perspectives” on teacher development, numerous scholars concur that education is intricate or “complex” and placed inside an environment “situated” and the application of such learning in real-world settings, tend to be reductionist and linear. Developing a complex theory of teacher learning-practice is also practically an ethical need, given the profound effects that oversimplified conceptualizations of teaching activities have on educators, learners, and educational institutions. In this regard, many complex theories on teacher learning-practice have emerged to constitute “three theoretical perspectives” that are: sociocultural perspectives CHAT, complexity theories and Rhizomatic perspective.

CHAT theory has been developed from the Vygotsky (1987) theory of practice (Strom & Viesca, 2021), which was approached by many other pedagogical researchers to be studied in a more intricate manner as Strom stated. The Rhizomatic thinking/approach which is a concept that was firstly introduced by (Deleuze and Guattari 1987) as sited (Strom & Viesca, 2021) was describes as a “tree’ thinking” that has its roots and trunk, then grows unexpectedly in different directions. When discussing “linear thinking,” we’re talking about rational humanism, a form of logic from the Enlightenment that sees reality in terms of either/or distinctions or separations. As presented in the article, Rhizomatic thinking led to an emergent complex framework of the teacher learning through
practice. Most perspectives still reflect a rationalist approach, even though the teacher learning literature includes a variety of theories and models, some of which account for context and other influencing factors to varying degrees.

In this approach, the human/non-human elements of the classroom are relatively stable and passive, and there is a one-to-one correspondence between teacher practice and teacher learning (Strom & Viesca, 2021). This is what constituted my choice of theory based on this book’s diagram presenting the shifts in perspectives on learning and practice, as you can see below: Table 1: (From Being To Becoming Different), these two are non-separated process (Alneyadi, 2022; Johannesson, 2022; Strom & Viesca, 2021; Wenger, 1998).

Thinking Rhizomatic Ly was meaningful as a researcher, and by grounding this study into the complexity of these shifts Etienne Wenger’s COP was chosen. the need for a more complex understanding of teacher learning and practice. Wenger's CoP theory aligns with the call for a shift away from linear and reductionist conceptions of teaching towards more dynamic and multiplicities’ perspectives. It is imperative to realise the limitations and negative repercussions of linear thinking on educational systems (Strom & Viesca, 2021), emphasizing the ethical imperative to develop a more nuanced theory of teacher learning-practice which was the purpose of adapting Wenger’s theoretical frame of work for this study.

PLCs could be considered as one form of communities of practice, Wenger (1998) presented the social learning theory addressing learning issues and assuming that learning is an “individual process”, yet it cannot be separated from the other human activities(Wenger, 1998), discussed the social context of interaction through a conceptual perspective: COPs as a space where learning happens through social participation revolving around its core elements: meaning, practice, community and identity. He further defines CoPs as a conceptual frame of work that was driven from social learning theory that was not meant to replace other learning theories rather than to provide a cogent level of analysis that supports a set of guidelines and suggestions that aid in comprehension and facilitate learning(Wenger, 1998).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shift</th>
<th>Implications for Teacher Learning-Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>From Dualism to Unanimity</td>
<td>• Learning and teaching practice are entangled processes. • These processes occur via connections and interactions with multiple other human, non-human, and intangible elements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From Individuals to Multiplicities</td>
<td>• Teaching activity is not done by an individual, but is highly mediated activity actively negotiated within a larger multiplicity of factors. • The teacher herself is a multiplicity of which her learning is a part.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From Autonomous to Collective and Distributed Agency</td>
<td>• The entire collective contributes to the production of teaching activity • Agency is collectively enacted and distributed among the multiplicity, although not necessarily equally.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From Human-Centred to Human-and</td>
<td>• Teaching is shaped not just by human actors but also by non-human/material and discursive factors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From Neutral and Universal to Political and Situated</td>
<td>• The factors that shape teaching are not neutral, but connected up to specific, situated political, cultural, historical, and material conditions and power flows, which requires attending to micropolitical interactions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From Being to Becoming (Different)</td>
<td>• Teaching and learning are vital and ongoing processes that are constantly changing as different elements in teaching assemblages come into composition and develop/transpire in relation to all other elements of an assemblage. • Teaching is emergent phenomena, or becoming, that are a joint, temporal product of a teaching-assemblage. • Teacher development is a non-linear activity that occurs not as a stable trajectory but as a series of &quot;becomings&quot; – temporal realizations of teacher-self, instances of learning, and/or practice events that occur as thresholds within a larger ongoing process of 'becoming different'.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From Sameness to Difference</td>
<td>• Because teaching is a collective product produced by the joint activity of heterogeneous elements, instances of learning practice are necessarily hybrid. • The reigning characteristic of teacher learning-practice is difference.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Table 1. A complex framework of teacher learning-practice.
PLCs are groups sharing a common interest, engaging in collaborative activities, and fostering social interactions. It is a CoP in an educational setting (Wilhelm, 2016). Within CoPs, the "domain" signifies the shared focus, the "community" refers to membership and belonging which characterizes professional identity, and the "practice" encapsulates collective activities and resources, and this is when learning happens through practice and practice informs learning, they overlap to cause a change which Wenger calls competence that is a certain degree of a constituted practice. Emphasizing intrinsic learning, Wenger underscores that CoPs promote shared experiences, shared enterprise, collective identity, and continuous knowledge creation through collaborative engagement in a common interest domain. This is what a PLCs are, in their ways of both being communities in which educators aid each other in pedagogical practices. They are a tool for teachers PD and continuous growth.

The theory of domains within CoPs can be used to explore the aims and benefits of PLCs. They are both built on the grounds of collaboration; It fosters an environment where educators can combine their ideas. It’s a matter of establishing a common interest, and this helps the community thrive. However, gathering people who share a history in a room with a set of tools and documents does not necessarily mean that a CoP exists; CoP is also characterised by the relations and the mutual engagement that are organised around the group’s tasks (Johannesson, 2022). This relationship between CoPs and PLCs helps add onto the later qualitative analysis of upcoming of the research.

The effectiveness of PLCs was studied in neighbouring Gulf countries Oman and Bahrain in two private schools (Al Mahdi et al., 2023). The study aimed to explore the implementation of PLCs and its benefits and concluded with an encouragement of the usage of PLCs. This study gives insight on PLCs in UAE schools by giving perspective from other Gulf countries that have largely the same learning environments. Another study that gives insight into these kinds of PD practices was conducted in Al Ain, UAE; which concluded that the most prominent strengths of PD were the development of student-centred practices and technology integration (Alneyadi, 2022). These kinds of practices are possible topics of discussion that could be brought up during professional learning community meetings. Essentially, these studies give insight into the kinds of environments that PLCs create, as well as improvements it makes on teachers’ PD.

2.3 Theoretical Analysis Approach:

Theoretical analysis involves examining interview data through the theoretical lens of Wenger’s CoP framework. This approach enables a deeper understanding of how Arabic language teachers in the UAE engage in professional learning within their school communities. Wenger's CoP framework emphasizes the social nature of learning, the role of participation and identity in community membership, and the importance of shared practices and knowledge creation.

Etienne Wenger's Concept of communities of practice is driven from his situated learning theory provides a lens through which to understand how individuals engage in collective learning and knowledge creation within social contexts, the social dimension is a natural part of it as it represents a strand of socio-cultural approaches to learning (Erickson et al., 2022). According to Wenger, a community of practice is characterized by three key elements: mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and a shared repertoire. Mutual engagement refers to the interactions and relationships that members
of a community have with one another as they collaborate and share experiences. Joint enterprise represents the common goals, interests, and activities that bind members together and give purpose to their interactions. Finally, a shared repertoire encompasses the resources, tools, and knowledge that are collectively developed and utilized by community members to support their endeavours (Wenger, 1998). Through this framework, Wenger emphasizes the social nature of learning and highlights the importance of participation, collaboration, and shared meaning-making in the construction of knowledge within communities of practice.

I used this theory to identify and define the communities of practice among Arabic language teachers (Wenger, 1998). This involved recognizing groups of teachers who share a common interest in enhancing their teaching practices and professional development in the international schools of UAE. I used the concepts and key points of this theory to analyse how social interactions and collaborative activities within the identified communities contribute to the professional learning of Arabic teachers looking for evidence of shared experiences, joint problem-solving, collaborative knowledge, and identity construction to inform the design for learning in the discussion and recommendation.

I explored how teachers actively contributed to discussions, share resources, and engaged in collaborative projects (Wenger, 1998). This has provided insights into the strength and vibrancy of the communities. I examined the mechanisms through which knowledge is shared within the communities. This included the use of shared resources, collaborative lesson planning, or informal mentoring relationships (Wenger, 1998) if applicable. Identifying how these knowledge-sharing processes impact the professional development of Arabic language teachers have helped investigating how participation in these communities influenced the professional identity of Arabic language teachers, exploring how being part of a community contributed to a sense of belonging and professional growth based on Wenger’s theoretical framework.

In examining the impact of communities of practice (CoPs) on Arabic language teachers' teaching practices, it was crucial to assess the influence of community engagement on instructional strategies, the integration of new teaching methods, and the adoption of innovative approaches. Additionally, identifying barriers and facilitators was essential (Wenger, 1998), as this involved recognizing challenges that impede effective community formation and knowledge sharing among Arabic teachers, while also pinpointing factors that support the development and sustainability of these communities. Ultimately, drawing implications for professional development programs for Arabic language teachers was a key outcome of the analysis, enabling consideration of how the findings have informed strategies to foster and support CoPs within the specific context of UAE international schools.
Chapter 3: Literature Review:

3.1 Introduction

The review synthesizes empirical studies from the broader domains of education, shedding light on the professional trajectories and collaborative dynamics within PLCs. By exploring theoretical frameworks and methodological approaches pertinent to the UAE context, the review aims to elucidate the factors influencing PD and collaborative learning among Arabic language educators in international school settings. This literature review aimed to collect the information that help answering the research questions in a way that inform the settings, policies, and existing knowledge about these teachers. Therefore, it was essential to introduce the rationale of this literature review:

3.1.1 Context and Importance of the Study

Teaching Arabic in international schools within the UAE presents a unique educational landscape characterized by a blend of cultural heritage and globalized educational standards. As the UAE strives to balance the preservation of its linguistic identity (UAE Ministry of Education, 2023) with the demands of globalization, understanding the experiences and professional development needs of Arabic language teachers becomes crucial. This study focuses on the professional learning communities (PLCs) of Arabic language teachers in UAE international schools to explore how these communities influence teaching practices in these international schools, through understanding the factors that facilitate the formation of these communities, their impact on teaching practices of teachers as professionals, and their significance for professional development in the context of Arabic language education within these international schools.

3.1.2 Specific Context of the UAE International Schools

This study is also more explicit in naming professional learning communities, which aids in narrowing the scope of references of this research down to fit within my research questions. It also fits into my model of interviewing working teachers rather than inexperienced participants, which I found to be more suitable as teachers are more present in professional communities that include sharing their expertise and practices.

3.1.3 Gap in the Existing Literature

While there is extensive research on teacher professional development and PLCs in various educational contexts, studies specifically focusing on Arabic language teachers in UAE international schools are limited. The existing literature often overlooks the unique challenges and opportunities faced by these teachers, creating a gap that this research aims to address. By focusing on this specific group, the study seeks to provide insights that are directly applicable to the UAE’s educational landscape, which allows for a better understanding to the phenomena on focus.

3.1.4 Formation of Research Questions

The formation of the research questions was guided by the identified gap in the following literature review and the specific needs of Arabic language teachers in UAE international schools. The study aims to answer the following questions: How do UAE Arabic language teachers involve themselves in professional learning communities? What factors influence their involvement? What benefits and challenges do they experience in these communities? These questions are designed to uncover the
nuanced experiences of these teachers and provide a deeper understanding of their professional development within the unique context of UAE international schools.

3.1.5 Literature Review Scope and Theoretical Framework

The scope of this literature review is focused on Arabic language teachers in UAE international schools. While recognizing the potential insights from studies on language teachers in other international contexts, this review focuses on the unique experiences of Arabic language teachers in the UAE international schools that are a unique mix of different educational forms that follow different international curriculums (Alhashmi et al., 2022; Taha Thomure, 2019; Taha-Thomure, 2008) such as IB, British, American, and Indian curriculum. This adds significance to the experiences of these teachers as international teachers as well as professional learners.

This specificity is critical due to the situated learning theory (Erickson et al., 2022) underpinning this research, which emphasizes the importance of context in understanding professional development and learning processes. Wenger’s Communities of Practice (COP) framework is employed to analyse these dynamics, providing a lens that highlights the situated and communal aspects of teacher learning in this unique educational setting.

3.1.6 the Focus on Arabic Language Teachers in UAE International Schools

Focusing on Arabic language teachers in UAE international schools is essential for several reasons. Firstly, the UAE’s commitment to maintaining Arabic as a core component of its cultural identity (Cook & Amilan, 2017; Curricula and Language of Instruction | The Official Portal of the UAE Government, n.d.; Stephenson, 2010) amidst a rapidly globalizing educational framework makes this a critical area of study. Secondly, Arabic language teachers in these schools face distinct challenges that are not adequately addressed in the broader literature on teacher professional development. By homing in on this specific group, the research aims to provide targeted recommendations that can enhance educational practices and support the professional growth of Arabic language teachers in the UAE.

In summary, this study addresses a significant gap in the literature by focusing on the experiences of Arabic language teachers in UAE international schools. By exploring the dynamics surrounding their professional learning communities, the research aims to contribute valuable insights to the field of teacher professional development and support the UAE’s educational goals through this exploration. The following literature review will provide a comprehensive overview of the existing research related to this study’s focus, highlighting the key themes and findings that inform the research questions.

3.2 Exploration of Professional Learning Communities amongst other Professional Development Practices within UAE contexts

There is no agreed definition of PLC yet (Al Mahdi et al., 2023), however, many studies reference narrowed definitions. McLester (2012) has defined a PLC as a group of educators who work together to enhance strategies for instruction and student learning outcomes. He states that PLCs are frequently characterized by collaborative planning, introspective debates, and a dedication to ongoing development and several other key elements. Firstly, they engage in collaborative inquiry, fostering an environment where educators collaborate to explore and analyse teaching practices as well as student
learning outcomes. This collaborative effort forms the foundation for a shared vision and Goals within the PLC, as its members collectively embrace a common vision and specific goals aimed at enhancing student achievement and overall educational practices. He most importantly declares that PLCs operate on the principle of collective responsibility, instilling a shared commitment to the success of all students; members work collaboratively to address challenges and jointly shoulder the responsibility for student learning.

Within the context of the UAE, several studies allude to PLCs, not always explicitly, when discussing leadership and PD within international schools. Meaning, there is a general understanding or allusion in these studies to some form of learning community or community of practice, which can be a base to help understand the developments and benefits of PLCs. For example, in 2010, Stephenson published two papers, both with very similar methodologies and themes. The first presented three ethnographic case studies using autoethnographic techniques, showcasing the reality of curriculum leadership development initiatives in three different educational institutions which advocated a focus on long-term solutions for educational leadership in the UAE with no evident focus on teachers or middle leaders (Stephenson, 2010). The methodology of this study interested me because it was the first research attempt to showcase PD in the UAE, as the topic professional learning in the UAE is an emerging field (Robison, 2021).

As for the other paper, Stephenson carried out her research about PD in the UAE using “narratives of self” to the undergraduates’ progressive evaluation in higher education to make meaningful contributions to professional practice and educational transformation in the UAE, to contribute to the application of a better understanding for teachers’ education and future challenges (Harold & Stephenson, 2010). Its participants were mainly undergraduates with no previous experience, and their knowledge about the reality of students, teaching and learning was needed in the collected data to gain valuable input into their expected contribution to that development. The participants were Emirati students; in this respect, an account to other nationalities is required, as most of the teaching staff in UAE schools are expatriates in both national and international schools in the UAE.

Stephenson stated that the data was analysed through an “inductive process of identifying themes”. This type of analysis is not foreign to a qualitative study; however, I have decided to utilize a theoretical analysis, which allowed for a deeper understanding of the gathered data, still with a huge emphasis on the teachers’ voice. Unlike the first study, which examined teachers in educational institutions, another limitation could be that this study utilizes undergraduate participants. Although the study makes a point to validate the importance of undergraduate research with reference to socioeconomic objectives in the UAE, undergraduates do not encompass the entire range of full-time pedagogical leader and teacher experiences within UAE schools. It can be argued that their input would be more nuanced and specific when it comes to working in educational environments involving students and learning communities; this is not similar to Al Tunaiji study that was both qualitative and quantitative where the researcher was able to gather extensive explanations from a wide sample of UAE teachers for the elements that contribute to or inhibit the formation of professional learning communities in the selected schools through the interview.

The last Stephenson study that is to be referenced came out two years after the two 2010 previous ones, which looked at two different UAE governmental schools using a longitudinal case study methodology (Stephenson et al., 2012). It employed comparable techniques for data collection, alongside a consistent approach to the inductive process of pinpointing key themes through thorough examination of the data. The aim was to identify which themes and content areas that affected professional learning. Findings revealed that cultural issues, shared motivation, formal and informal roles, content and pedagogical knowledge, critical reflection and interpersonal skills had impacted the efficacy of professional learning which was described as leading “cultural shift to collaboration as
the ‘‘new normal’’’ (Stephenson et al., 2012). Stephenson’s studies were a huge contribution to the understanding of professional learning in the UAE, and their findings help establish ground to comprehend PLCs within the context of UAE schools.

Teaching and learning the Arabic language in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is a topic of significance given the country's commitment to preserving its cultural and linguistic heritage while also promoting modernity and globalization (Cook & Amilan, 2017). The government, through the Ministry of Education, mandates Arabic as a core subject in schools, with emphasis on both its traditional significance and its modern relevance. While the country embraces bilingualism, especially with English (Gallagher, 2011; van den Hoven & Carroll, 2021), efforts are directed towards ensuring proficiency in Arabic among students (Curricula and Language of Instruction | The Official Portal of the UAE Government, n.d.; Taha Thomure, 2019). The Ministry of Education oversees the national curriculum, which includes Arabic as a core subject. The curriculum aims to develop students’ reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills in Arabic. Various initiatives and training programs exist to promote and enhance Arabic teaching, despite challenges posed by the diverse expatriate population and the influence of technology. The UAE's commitment underscores its dedication to preserving its linguistic heritage while navigating the demands of a globalized era.

This commentary on educational reform in the UAE is mentioned in a study published in 2018 that explored the microsystem of teachers’ experiences with education reform within the action research (AR) model for professional development (PD), and it utilized interviews as its way of collecting data from teachers. (Hathorn & Dillon, 2018). The study references Grundy’s 1994 article in which she talks about action research as well. Grundy's research emphasizes the centrality of teachers in the educational process, noting a tension between the expectations of responsibility placed on teachers and the limited autonomy granted to them. She highlights the increasing challenge of maintaining teacher autonomy over time, suggesting that current educational reforms may offer opportunities for enhancing teacher autonomy through targeted professional development (Grundy 1994). Additionally, Grundy underscores the value of AR as a tool that empowers teachers to make informed decisions, emphasizing that AR provides a framework for procedure rather than prescribing a specific methodology. The study aligns with previous research, affirming that AR contributes to recognizing the importance of the teaching profession and facilitates positive changes in teachers' language, actions, attitudes, and classroom management. As participants engage in a community of practice centred on AR, their interactions foster critical engagement with pedagogy and promote professional growth (Hathorn & Dillon, 2018).

The study faces several limitations that impact its overall findings and applicability. Firstly, the translation of seven survey responses from Arabic to English introduces potential nuances that may alter original meanings. Additionally, the variability in participant numbers and return rates across two cohorts complicates direct comparisons, and the small overall sample size restricts generalizability. Coupled with the reliance on self-reported data and basic statistical analysis, these factors collectively limit the depth and broader applicability of the study's insights.

3.2.1 Cultural and Linguistic Perspectives Surrounding Arabic Language Focus

Based on the focused literature that was found about Arabic teachers’ professional learning, as well as the Arabic language proficiency level amongst students, the United Arab Emirates was rated 34th out of 45 nations in 2012 according to the results of the 2011 PIRLS test. The goal of PIRLS is to assess pupils' abilities to read in their native language and comprehend both literary and informative materials (Ina V.S. Mullis, n.d.). It is worth mentioning that Arabic public schools perform this test with Arabic language as the instruction language while in the international schools students perform the test with Arabic as the instruction language for Arabic speaking students and in English language.
as the instruction language for non-Arab students; Although the UAE outperformed other Arab countries in the PIRLS 2011, it still fell short of the international scale average of 500 (Taha Thomure, 2019). This data could entail that there’s a lack of attentiveness from Arab youth when it comes to their mother tongue. English is also used amongst Arabic speakers of different dialects (Siemund et al., 2021). This is a driving factor for my research as student participation and attention greatly contributes to the overall tone of teaching, as well as a discussion topic in many Arabic language learning communities. PLCs are one way to moderate and help with this.

Taha discusses Arabic language in a previous paper way back in 2008, where it is stated that most schools or institutions are left on their own to come up with what looks like an acceptable set of standards, guidelines, and skills to teach Arabic (Taha-Thomure, 2008). This point is crucial, as it highlights the importance of implementing some form of PD practice to aid in Arabic language teaching. However, it highlights steps that need to be taken into consideration before the discussion of any kind of learning community.

The paper, in essence, suggested that while there is growing global interest and initiatives to enhance Arabic language education, particularly outside the Arab World, there is a need for introspection within the Arab World’s education system. Before investing in reforms, key considerations include crafting clear standards, establishing quality teacher training institutions, creating research-driven instructional materials, allocating adequate funds to Arabic language education, and launching national campaigns to educate parents on effective child-rearing practices. Achieving these goals requires appropriate allocation of both human and financial resources to uphold and advance the Arabic language and identity (Taha-Thomure, 2008).

Owing to the modernization push in the Arab world and efforts to advance economically and educationally, the prominence of globalization, global English, and English as a medium of instruction (EMI) has escalated (Taha, 2017). There is growing concern within the Arab world, particularly in the UAE, about the dominance of global English as a lingua franca, given the rapid expansion of EMI throughout the educational landscape. Essentially, this prominence of English in the UAE is arguably one of the reasons why Arab youth are struggling with Arabic language in school, which could be one of the factors making Arabic language teaching difficult. Moreover, impacting discussions within professional communities amongst Arabic language teachers.

Taha’s 2017 chapter in the book ‘Applied Linguistics in the Middle East and North Africa: Current practices and future directions’ explores aspects of language and identity within the UAE when it comes to the usage of English as the lingua franca. In general, individuals in the UAE accept a well-defined power structure, with inherent views about the subordination being accepted as part of culture. Additionally, because of the group mentality of the culture, socially tied allegiances are strong commodities that have an impact on every part of an individual’s life (Mordock, 2022). All these recommendations and suggestions have not explicitly addressed the Arabic language teachers’ perspectives and experiences in that specific context which was a gap in itself that needed to be researched.

3.2.2 Gaps and Future Research Directions
The main gap that was found through the scientific articles that the previous research findings are scented to the process of teaching, Arabic students’ outcomes, and performance, however there is no focus on the facilitators of Arabic language, their perceptions as a group of professionals in the UAE international schools, as well as the challenges that they face as a part of that process of the development. The previous research is mainly centred around students and their performance.
Although this is crucial, I was interested to explore the Arabic language teachers’ perceptions regarding forms of PD and learning communities to commentate on their insights and experiences.

Therefore, I would like to argue, based on the literature, that expanding the scope to include studies on language teachers in various international schools is not necessary and may not serve the purpose of this research, and the reasons behind that are as follows:

3.2.2.1 Specificity of Context:
The educational context in UAE International Schools is uniquely influenced by the country’s cultural, linguistic, and educational policies. Arabic language teaching in these schools operates within a specific framework (UAE Ministry of Education, 2023) that differs significantly from other international contexts and if the focus would be directed to Arabic language teaching, I would miss any other aspects that are related to PLCs. It was argued that the context and the place of a person get influenced by the place they are located when it comes to Academics, work and identity (Sinor & Kaufman, 2007). Therefore, including studies on language teachers from vastly different educational systems might not provide relevant or applicable insights.

3.2.2.2 Relevance of Existing Literature related to Arabic language teaching in the UAE:
The existing literature on Arabic language teachers in the UAE International Schools has not covered the nuances of their experiences related to their PD through their PLCs, and a limited provision for understanding their professional experiences and challenges. Studies such as those by Al Mahdi et al. (Cook & Amilan, 2017, 2017; Gallagher, 2011; Taha Thomure, 2019; van den Hoven & Carroll, 2021) (2023) and Taha Thomure (2019) offer detailed insights into the specific dynamics around Arabic language teaching in the UAE, which directly brings up this study’s research questions.

The UAE educational system is very particular about the way they teach Arabic; not just as a language, but its cultural relevance and history (Cook & Amilan, 2017; Curricula and Language of Instruction | The Official Portal of the UAE Government, n.d.; Gallagher, 2011). For this reason, it deserves to have its own study. Including other foreign languages would require an entirely different methodology and framework because of the way the UAE prioritizes and views Arabic language. Foreign languages teaching such as English, French, or Spanish are taught based on their context and specialty, which may not apply to Arabic language teaching and the indicator performances of the inspection boards in the UAE(UAE Ministry of Education, 2023). Despite all that, none of the presented literature or studies have in-depth explored the Arabic language teachers’ experiences nor perspectives about their own involvement in these professional communities, and their PD.

3.2.2.3 Focused Research Questions:
The research questions are specifically designed to explore the involvement of Arabic language teachers in professional learning communities (PLCs) within the UAE context. These questions address unique factors that influence their participation, as well as the specific benefits and challenges they face. Broadening the scope to include language teachers from different international contexts could dilute the focus and precision of this study.

3.2.2.4 Depth Over Breadth:
Focusing on the specific context of UAE International Schools allows for a more in-depth analysis of the issues at hand. By concentrating on a narrower scope, this study can provide more detailed and actionable recommendations that are directly relevant to the stakeholders involved. This approach ensures a richer and more nuanced understanding of the professional development needs of Arabic language teachers in this unique setting.
3.2.2.5 Practical Considerations:

Expanding the scope to include a wider selection of studies would require additional resources and might introduce variables that are not pertinent to the UAE context. Given the complexity of educational practices and policies in the UAE (Cook & Amilan, 2017; Stephenson et al., 2012; Taha Thomure, 2019), maintaining a focused scope ensures that the analysis remains relevant and manageable.

One study that is relevant to Arabic language teachers in the UAE observed how teachers perceived a newly implemented curriculum in Abu Dhabi. Arabic teachers in Abu Dhabi expressed positive views on the standards-based Arabic curriculum, emphasizing its purposefulness, relevance, and potential for student engagement (Alhashmi et al., 2022). However, they also identified challenges such as the extensive range of performance indicators, broad skill requirements, limited memorization scope, and unclear standards progression. The study underscores that an overwhelming number of prescriptive documents may impede teachers' ability to maintain a common focus. Therefore, the success of standards-based reforms hinges on establishing clear, coherent standards centred on key skills and strategies rather than exhaustive lists (Alhashmi et al., 2022). Both studies give important insight into my research as I am interested in filling the research gap of the perspectives and interests of Arabic language teachers in their PDs within their schools’ PLCs.

The literature review illuminated the pivotal role of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) in facilitating Professional Development (PD) for Arabic Language Teachers within UAE’s educational landscape. Specifically, PLCs were found to enhance teaching practices and amplify student outcomes through collaborative Inquiry and a shared vision. Moreover, the review highlighted the nuanced interplay of cultural and linguistic factors within PLCs, underscoring the need for strategies to ensure inclusivity and sensitivity in international school settings. Addressing the research questions, the literature provided insights into the foundational elements of PLCs that contribute to PD and student outcomes while also acknowledging the complexities arising from cultural and linguistic diversities. Moving forward, the review identified gaps, emphasizing the need for more inclusive PLC participation and tailored PD programs, offering recommendations to foster robust PLCs tailored for Arabic Language Teachers in the UAE context that this study was an attempt to cover.
Qualitative research is an approach to inquiry that aims to understand complex phenomena within their natural settings (Brizuela et al., 2000; J. W. Creswell & Creswell, 2013), focusing on the exploration and interpretation of subjective experiences, meanings, and perspectives. Unlike quantitative research, which relies on numerical data and statistical analysis, qualitative research emphasizes depth over breadth, seeking to uncover the underlying nuances and intricacies of human behaviours, social interactions, and cultural contexts (J. Creswell & Poth, 2018). In the context of this thesis, which employs qualitative methods for an interview-based study, the focus is on capturing the rich and diverse perspectives of participants through in-depth interviews along with a theoretical analysis of the collected data.

In educational settings, specific research methodologies are frequently presented as rigid guidelines to adhere to, with the implication that strict adherence to these methods will result in high-quality research. However, there is scant evidence to support the notion that blindly following methodological rules guarantees the quality of research outcomes (Orenstein & Luken, 1978). The theoretical analysis approach is chosen as a method for research analysis due to its efficacy in providing a comprehensive understanding of complex phenomena and uncovering underlying patterns. This approach enables the researcher to critically engage with existing theories and frameworks, facilitating the exploration of multiple perspectives and interpretations. By employing theoretical analysis, the researcher can deconstruct and examine the underlying assumptions and conceptual foundations that inform the research topic, thus enriching the analysis and contributing to the advancement of theoretical knowledge in the field.

4.1 Theoretical Analysis Approach:

Theoretical analysis involves examining interview data through the theoretical lens of Wenger's CoP framework. This approach enables a deeper understanding of how Arabic language teachers in the UAE engage in professional learning within their school communities. Wenger's CoP framework emphasizes the social nature of learning, the role of participation and identity in community membership, and the importance of shared practices and knowledge creation.

This approach allows for a holistic exploration of the research topic, enabling the researcher to delve into the lived experiences, beliefs, and perceptions of individuals within their specific contexts (Brizuela et al., 2000; Chernick et al., 2023; J. Creswell & Poth, 2018; J. W. Creswell & Creswell, 2013). Interview-based studies within qualitative research involve engaging participants in open-ended conversations, where they have the freedom to express their thoughts, feelings, and experiences in their own words. Through careful probing and active listening, researchers aim to uncover deeper insights into the phenomenon under investigation, drawing out themes, patterns, and meanings embedded within the participants' narratives (Chernick et al., 2023; Kalu, 2019).

Central to qualitative research is the notion of reflexivity (Dodgson, 2019), which acknowledges the researcher's role in shaping the research process and interpreting the data. As the interviewer engages with participants, their own beliefs, biases, and assumptions inevitably influence the interactions and subsequent analysis. Therefore, researchers must maintain awareness of their subjectivity and continuously reflect on their positionality throughout the research process.
Furthermore, qualitative research prioritizes the principles of trustworthiness (Ahmed, 2024; Brizuela et al., 2000; Cypress, 2017), which encompass credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility refers to the extent to which the findings accurately represent the participants' experiences, while transferability pertains to the generalizability of the findings to other contexts. Dependability relates to the consistency and reliability of the research process, while confirmability concerns the neutrality and objectivity of the findings, ensuring they are not unduly influenced by the researcher's biases.

4.2 Interviews:

It makes ideal sense to choose interviews as a tool for data collection for several considerations (Valentine, 2005). Firstly, conducting interviews provides a distinctive chance to interact directly with participants, enabling a thorough examination of their viewpoints, experiences, and understandings. This methodology renders it more straightforward to obtain rich qualitative data, which makes it possible to comprehend every aspect of the phenomenon being studied. Additionally, interviews provide flexibility in probing for detailed responses and clarifications, allowing for nuanced exploration of complex topics. Moreover, interviewing based on open questions allows for the exploration of diverse viewpoints and the discovery of unexpected themes or patterns, essential aspects of an exploratory study.

On the other hand, as sited in (Valentine, 2005) questionnaires are often uniform and not situation-specific. Instead, they use a "now go to" structure in an effort to accommodate different people's replies, and as sited in Valentine’s suggestion, questionnaires are not usually designed to suit individuals’ perceptions so that they are easily replicated and when they are analysed based on statistical techniques they turn into numbers and they lose their “explanatory power” particularly due to their design which is targeting the best possible candidates (Valentine, 2005).

Therefore, using interviews methodology with a narrative approach can be a valuable and effective way to explore the involvement of Arabic language teachers in UAE international schools. This combination allows for a deep and contextualized understanding of the experiences, perspectives, and practices of teachers within their specific context.

4.3 Participants and Sampling strategy:

The participants of my study were 6 of at least 5 years’ experience Arabic language teachers from two different schools from Dubai, Abu Dhabi, and Sharjah. I have interviewed six Arabic language teachers that were chosen purposively as experienced in teaching Arabic language in the international schools, two teachers from the three main emirates: Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Sharjah, in order to have a snapshot from every professional environment of these emirates, and because every emirate has its own inspection boards that follow an Inspection framework according to the UAE ministry of education (UAE Ministry of Education, 2023). A number of different bodies (Kamal, 2018), or Several distinct bodies control education in the UAE. On the federal level, the Ministry of Education (MOE) establishes admissions standards, graduation requirements, and curricula; within each Emirate, particularly in the larger ones, there are individual regulatory bodies, such as the Abu Dhabi Department of Education and Knowledge (ADEK) or Dubai’s Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA), while in the Sharjah Private School Authority (SPEA) is the entity that inspects these schools in Sharjah (AlKutich & Abukari, 2018).

This what helped grasping the nuances of these Arabic teachers’ experiences in their international schools. Purposive sampling is used to better match the sample to the research's goals and objectives,
boosting the study's rigour and the reliability of the data and conclusions (Campbell et al., 2020). This sampling strategy distinctly position this study with respect to the reliability of data collection and analysis. The chosen method of purposive sampling in each case corresponds to the research methodology, goals, and objectives, effectively addressing each facet of rigor which matches the Rhizomatic thinking about learning and the complexity of its endeavours is particularly relevant when delving into the Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) of Arabic language teachers in UAE international schools.

4.4 Recruiting participants:

As Gill states, identifying suitable informants within organizations is frequently challenging due to the uncertainty surrounding the most suitable contact person. Correspondence seeking interviews, whether through letters or phone calls, tends to yield better results when addressed to a specific individual rather than generic recipients such as "whom it may concern" within a company. Conducting thorough research on the organization beforehand can assist in determining the most appropriate person to approach for interviews. For this reason, I used LinkedIn as a space where many Arabic language teachers present themselves through as it is very popular in that context. To announce about the study, its aim and the qualities required for the participants. After days of negotiations with the respondents to that announcement, an email was sent to the volunteered teachers who met the inclusion criteria, to inform them with the purpose, information, and the consent form to be signed in preparation to the interview time setting.

4.5 Data Collection

In this study, an Oral type of data collection is used, after received responses from the teachers who showed their interest to participate in this study, an email with an attached consent form was sent to the participants included an explanation of the aim background and interview information. A semi-structured open-ended question through interviews took place through Zoom with the chosen Arabic language teachers; the meeting was set as 45 minutes for its maximum time. Eight questions were prepared for the participants. Those questions were designed for the data collection on explore the interviewee’s experiences on their PD and their involvement in their Arabic language PLCs considering Wenger’s COP theoretical frame of work and its key points.

It is believed as powerful method for exploring the involvement of Arabic language teachers in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) using Etienne Wenger's CoP conceptual framework. It allowed for a flexible yet focused exploration of teachers' experiences within PLCs. Participants were able to provide detailed insights into their engagement, learning experiences, and interactions within the community. Semi-structured interviews enabled participants to share their experiences within the specific context of UAE international schools, shedding light on how the cultural and educational environment influenced their involvement in PLCs.

Wenger’s Cop theory often involves the sharing of stories and narratives within a community. Semi-structured interviews provided an opportunity to probe for these stories, allowed teachers to articulate their journey, challenges, successes, and collaborative learning experiences within their PLC. Semi-structured interviews served as a versatile tool for exploring key concepts of Wenger's Community of Practice (CoP) framework, such as mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire, allowing teachers to articulate how these concepts manifest in their participation in Professional Learning Communities PLCs. Moreover, Wenger's emphasis on identity development within a
community was probed through these interviews, unveiling how teachers perceive their roles within the PLC, contribute to collective learning, and witness the evolution of their identities through participation. These interviews were transcribed for analysis.

4.6 Data Analysis

Theoretical data analysis will be applied (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). Applying theoretical analysis to the responses from semi-structured interviews with the Arabic teachers will involve familiarizing myself with the data, generating initial codes related to Cop theory, and identifying meaningful patterns or relevant themes. After grouping and refining these themes, the process will include defining, naming, and extracting relevant data for each theme. I will carry out a continuous review and refinement ensuring the accuracy and coherence of the themes. Writing a detailed report that provides the identified themes, supported by illustrative quotes, and ties back to the study questions or objectives constitutes the final analysis. This systematic approach allows for a nuanced exploration of patterns in teachers’ experiences within Professional Learning Communities, aligning with the objectives of understanding their involvement using Wenger’s Community of Practice framework.

An invitation for participation in the study was sent through LinkedIn platform as most of the participants are following their schools’ accounts there, emphasizing that many professionals are active online and are keen to present themselves professionally ((Bus, 2019; Chiang & Suen, 2015; Gibson, 2020).

4.7 Sustainability statement:

As a University of Gothenburg master student, I am committed to advancing sustainable development through rigorous research and meaningful engagement with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This research initiative aims to investigate and enhance the involvement of Arabic language teachers in UAE international schools in their communities of practice, aligning our efforts with several key SDGs.

The United Nations’ 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (THE 17 GOALS | Sustainable Development, n.d.) provides a global framework for addressing pressing challenges, and research project directly contributes to the realization of several SDGs, including:

SDG 4 - Quality Education: recognizing that education is fundamental to sustainable development research aims to improve the teaching and learning process by fostering communities of practice among Arabic language teachers. This will enhance the quality of education and contribute to achieving SDG 4.

SDG 8 - Decent Work and Economic Growth: Acknowledging the importance of promoting decent work and economic growth, this research seeks to empower Arabic language teachers by exploring the present Arabic language teachers’ opportunities for professional development, which in turn can contribute to economic growth and improved teachers’ working conditions in this specific context.

SDG 16 - Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions: Understanding the significance of peace, justice, and strong institutions in creating an environment conducive to sustainable development, this research project aims to promote the professional development and collaboration of Arabic language teachers, which can contribute to stronger educational institutions and, in turn, to peace and justice within the educational communities.
In alignment with the United Nations’ 17 Sustainable Development Goals, this research is committed to promoting education for sustainable development. By addressing its critical issues such as quality education, professional learning opportunities, and sustainable professional communities, this research endeavours to contribute to the global efforts aimed at fostering a more sustainable future. Through rigorous inquiry and dissemination of findings, this thesis seeks to raise awareness, inspire action, and advocate for positive change within educational systems and communities. By prioritizing inclusivity, equity and teacher empowerment through providing a space for their voice, this research aims to empower teachers and educational institutions to become catalysts for sustainable development. As an integral part of the broader sustainability agenda, this thesis aspires to make meaningful contributions towards building a more just, resilient, and sustainable world for current and future generations in terms of Professional learning through practise.
5 Chapter 5: Presentation of Research Results

In this Chapter, I will be presenting the findings of my research using data collected through interviews, the second part is the results of this study through two phases of analysis, the first part will be a presentation of the results in light of the study’s settings. The second part will unfold what emerged from the interviewees’ answers to deepen the understanding of how these teachers learn, the final part will be second phase of the analysis where I will analyse the interviews in light of Wenger’s perspective, unfolding the direct relationship between the results, and their implications and contributions to the previous literature using Wenger’s COPs as a Lens.

5.1 Background information:

The interviewed six Arabic language teachers that were chosen purposively as experienced Arabic language teachers in the international schools, were two from each of the three main emirates: Abu Dhabi, Dubai, and Sharjah, to have a snapshot from every professional environment of these emirates. Worth mentioning that these Teachers, Work in international schools that are leading educational business across the UAE: GEMS Education, Taaleem, FORTES, Aldar, and another private schools in Sharjah, this is to inform that I have chosen the sample to present a diverse picture that comes from several people.

How do UAE Arabic language teachers engage in a professional learning community? What are the factors that influence their level of involvement? What benefits and challenges do they experience in these communities?

The collected data showed that most of the interviewees were involved in a way or another either in their schools’ PDs or in some external PD sessions that they hear about or get invited to through their schools or on some online groups that they are joining, which confirmed the existence of PLCs for Arabic language teachers across the UAE in different shapes and forms that were divided into Internal and external PDs that schools forces upon their Staff to meet the inspection boards’ requirements and to present Arabic teachers’ performance to show progress in their students’ outcomes.

5.2 Results:

In this part I discuss and examine the results of this research with respect to the research problem and questions I outlined at the beginning. In the collected data, several consistent information emerged from the interviewee’s answers regarding their understanding and involvement with professional learning communities (PLCs) in the context of teaching Arabic language in the UAE. In every interview, educators were extensively invested in their schools’ Plc. They reaffirmed their dedication to lifelong learning and development, seeing professional development as an essential instrument for raising teaching standards and improving student outcomes. They underlined the significance of incorporating contemporary teaching methods, such as the use of technology, and adjusting to the changing requirements of students while maintaining cultural relevance in their instruction as well as
complying the UAE’s mission and vision in regard to sustaining Arabic language level of students’ progress.

To overcome challenges and exchange best practices, professional learning communities and organisations were shown to require collaboration and mutual support. The interviewees from The Emirate of Dubai showed a notion of competition in their identity change that was present in their answers.

Teaching Arabic as a second language, negotiating its best practices and gaining its professional skills was pinpointed and clear in the challenges faced by Arabic language teachers which needed an ongoing negotiation of the practice. Professional learning communities of Arabic language teachers in the UAE were shown to require cooperation and shared support and effective leadership to overcome obstacles and exchange best practices. Additionally, the interviewed Arabic language educators valued the diverse range of PD opportunities available, including workshops, seminars, and networking events, which provided platforms for ongoing learning and skill development. Overall, these findings underscored a collective dedication among Arabic language teachers to professional growth and excellence in teaching practice, with a shared belief in the transformative power of PD in the educational landscape of the UAE.

identity and membership qualities were extensively present in Arabic language teachers’ PLCs in the UAE which positively impacted their involvement in their PD bearing in mind their personalized and variant views to their PDs.

The United Arab Emirates’ international schools are extensively invested in Arabic language teachers’ PD throughout facilitating PLCs and sustaining an informal social learning experiences through formal initiatives and policies. This confirms what have been previously mentioned in the literature overview about accepting the hierarchical powers by individuals as a part of UAE culture.

Both teachers confirmed that being a part of their PLCs has impacted their teaching practices. (Teacher 3) mentioned that continuous involvement in her school Arabic language community meetings enhanced her teaching effectiveness and student engagement in learning Arabic language and “improve teaching skills and stay updated on best practices in Arabic language education”.

The collected data was characterized by the following.

5.2.1 An emphasis on collaboration:
All participants emphasized the importance of collaboration and interaction within the Arabic language teachers’ community. Whether through regular meetings, collaborative projects, or informal gatherings, they highlighted the value of working together to enhance teaching practices and promote cultural understanding. Both teachers from Dubai who will be referred to as Teacher 1 and Teacher 2 in this text have highlighted their work interactions with their environment within a team, yet they do not have a similar view of collaboration, Teacher 1 said:

“We put Arabic teachers or Ministry of Education subjects Teachers (MOE teacher), Arabic Islamic and Social Studies teachers under the same spot because the requirement is almost similar than ENC teachers. And at some point, the teachers need to follow the whole program, the CPD of the whole school.”, she added: “and if Arabic teachers are not understanding the language that, for example, the data there is a CPD and there is no need to put my team in a place where they are not understanding or getting any benefits.”.
Despite that Teacher 2 has confirmed that she is working together with her colleagues saying:

“And in terms of working with colleagues, some of them. Are not aware of methods of teaching a second language”.

, yet she does not see that this collaboration is happening,

“We're open to work together, to collaborate and to exchange experiences. I don't think this is what is happening.” (Teacher2).

This showed that collaboration was a bit problematic on the one school department level in the Emirate of Dubai, I will be referring to them as Teacher 3 and Teacher 4. While it was positively pinpointed through the other teachers’ answers, Teacher 3 said:

“We meet weekly to discuss the points each teacher needs”, teacher 4 said:
“collaborating with colleagues helped me find creative solutions to engage students effectively”.

Teacher 5 and Teacher 6, who work in the Emirate of Sharjah, did not have the same view about collaboration, when Teacher 5 had appositive view about collaboration with her colleagues saying:

“We work as a successful team...... we were able to work together as a team to overcome them.”

Teacher 6 presented a very individual perspective about her PD and referred that to the lack of time that she had. Overall, collaboration was an evident involvement and facilitating factor in the interviewee’s responses.

5.2.2 Shared Goals and Objectives:

All the Participants expressed a shared commitment to common goals and objectives within their local experiences with professional community building, so you gather different stories, tales of different communities of Arabic language teachers (ALT). This included a dedication to improving their teaching practices through integrating modern Technologies that favours Arabic language teaching and enhancing the learning experience for students of Arabic language and preserve its culture and to meet the UAE’s Arabic language teaching frame of work, Teacher 1 said:

“Targeted at some point for the need of the teacher, based on the needs based on the department needs and based on the if you want to stay based on the UAE framework requirements”.

Teacher3 said that her objective was to “How do we present the scientific material in a useful way for the students? We utilize modern technologies, techniques, and strategies, especially in teaching Arabic language.”, Teacher 4 said: “adapt to the diverse needs of students and integrate modern teaching techniques while preserving cultural relevance”.

Teacher 5 stated that her purpose was for the advancement of: “keep pace with technology and society. It's a constant change.”.
Despite of the six teachers’ way of narratives, their objectives and goals were aligned in respect of their participation in their PD.

5.2.3 The Use of Resources:

There was a consistent mentioning of utilizing shared resources and materials within the community. the resources that were mentioned by teachers were mainly themselves and their teaching practice, Teacher 1 said:

“Resources are very important tool for our development”.

Teacher 6 stated that teachers could be a “or to be a source of inspiration” for each other, while Teacher 4 highlighted that resources were limited, she said:

“I once faced difficulty in integrating technology into my lessons due to limited resources”.

which led her to seek the help from her colleagues. In respect of the study, this emphasise that being a member in a professional community, who socially interact with its members has facilitated ways by which resolving problems was possible, as a part of negotiating the meaning to developing componence of the practice.

5.2.4 Informal networking under a formal umbrella:

The form of which Arabic language teachers communicate and share their knowledge about their professional practice within their schools’ PLCs has a special setting, most of the interviewed teachers follow their schools’ network of teachers which, as mentioned before, was their source of information and mutual engagement but, some of the participants have revealed the presence of informal learning networks within the Arabic language teachers' community’s significance was not explicitly specified until Teacher 2 from the emirate of Dubai explicitly said that

“We created our own community, and we had this monthly meeting to share best practices and to share concerns, to come up with ideas, et cetera, honestly, it was not very effective because you need come to face the fact that I don't know why”.

In this answer the teacher stated that the reason was the face-to-face meetings that was a reason behind this initiative to not be successful, this also could be reflected upon what she said:

“Arabic teachers in the UAE. You do not find that people are eager to share everything they know or everything they do or all of What they gained through their experiences. Sometimes they just share the very common general things, and they keep the important things. Just like top secret of the recipe of their schools. And this is why these communities are not very effective.”.

which explicitly states that the schools keep their PD recipe to be their Brand or trademark for these schools to stand out.

Teacher 1 stated that herself was a member of different ALT communities in her school at the same time, she said:
“So, it was yeah it was between being an Arabic teacher and then I was curriculum leader and then had a different at the beginning I started from the scratch reaching a level where I can now train the teacher to be to be a teacher.”;

when Teacher 5 and 6 confirmed their only involvement and commitment to their schools’ ALT communities through the analysis of responses from the interviewed Arabic language teachers in the UAE reveals a cohesive framework and united vision of targets within Arabic departments across various educational institutions.

Through the shared experiences and perspectives of the interviewed teachers, their responses showcased their commitment to align with the overarching goals and objectives set forth by the UAE’s educational authorities. This alignment underscores a unified approach to Arabic language teaching, where educators strive to uphold common standards, methodologies, teaching strategies, and unified learning outcomes. The portrayed unity in vision and targets among Arabic language teachers lends credence to the suggested title of this part of the analysis, affirming the harmonious and collective efforts within Arabic departments towards achieving shared educational objectives.

5.3 Theory Analysis in terms of Wenger’s COPs and identity:

5.3.1 Identification of Communities of Practice (CoPs):

Both teachers from Dubai Teacher 1 and Teacher 2 have identified their PLCs as their school departments, analysing their understanding of their PD as Arabic language teachers among their schools’ PLCs involved CoP’s main Key concepts: the community, practice, and Identity in relation to practice. Both teachers’ understanding of PD varies in terms of their approaches to collaboration, learning, and professional growth, yet they still see that, as they both separately stated, it is “an opportunity for professional growth” Teacher 1 identifies herself as part of a community focused on Arabic language teaching, this community shares a common interest or shared enterprise and expertise in teaching Arabic. She views her colleagues and school leadership as “integral parts” of her community of practice.

They collaborate to assess their needs, plan PD sessions, and implement targeted interventions. Teacher 2’s practice approach involved self-study, attending workshops, peer’s lesson observations or seeking mentorship from experts. Her professional identity showed when calling herself a “proactive learner” who is committed to “personal and professional growth”. Teacher 2’s understanding of PD reflects a more individualized approach within the CoP framework.

The Emirate of Abu Dhabi’s Arabic language teachers’ responses were similar in their understanding and identification of their PD within their COPs. I will be referring to them as Teacher 3 and Teacher 4’s understanding and identification of their PD within their schools’ PLCs as they both consider it as opportunities to grow. Teacher 3 particularly describes her domain as

“The teaching of Arabic language, particularly in the context of education in the UAE”;

she described her journey from traditional teaching methods to utilizing modern technologies, techniques, and strategies for teaching Arabic language effectively which aligned with Teacher 4 when she said, “Professional development as an Arabic language teacher in the UAE involves ongoing learning to adapt to the diverse needs of students and integrate modern teaching techniques”, which reflected what Teacher 3’s domain when she said:
“Convincing our students that Arabic is a living language, a language that won't die”.

Both teachers’ interest was adapting new teaching strategies, including modern technologies, to guarantee students’ utmost progress and both highlighted preserving cultural relevance of the Arabic language.

Being a member of their school communities was present in their responses as they both recognize themselves as part of a professional community dedicated to teaching Arabic language, which includes colleagues within their school as well as educators across various schools in the UAE, Teacher 3 said:

“We meet weekly to discuss the points each teacher needs. We prepare to attend workshops aimed at identifying and improving weaknesses, providing us with information and tools for professional development.”,

which confirms the existence of her community practice and confirms regular and rigorous meetings, while Teacher 4 stated that she is actively involved in various professional development opportunities provided in her workplace, such as workshops, seminars, and mentorship programs tailored to Arabic language teachers’ needs, indicating her engagement with her school’s Arabic language and wider professional community. Both teachers confirmed that being a part of their PLCs has impacted their teaching practices.

Teacher 3 mentioned that continuous involvement in her school Arabic language community meetings enhanced her teaching effectiveness and student engagement in learning Arabic language and

“Improve teaching skills and stay updated on best practices in Arabic language education”.

The teachers in the Emirate of Sharjah’s responses aligned more with Teacher 3 and 4’s understanding identification to their PD as Arabic language teachers in UAE, I will be referring to them as Teacher 5 and Teacher 6 in this text. Both teachers identified their understanding as gaining new technology skills to integrate them into their lessons to make Arabic language teaching easier and enjoyable.

Teacher 5 said:

“Professional development means learning everything in its time. I can be a successful teacher for a certain period, but if I stop working, I stop learning. There’s always development; people go through many stages, but if I stop working, I’ll reach a point where I find myself professionally weak.”,

she views her workplace as the source of her PD where she can grow to sustain professional competence while Teacher 6 viewed her understanding as an improvement to general skills to receive work promotions and gain higher work positions, she says:

“Once you prove your skills as a teacher and achieve progress with students’ performance, you are eligible for further development. It can progress gradually from being a coordinator, gaining more experience, becoming a supervisor, and eventually heading the Arabic language department, based on acquired skills and individual aspirations.”,

yet she stated that her school urge teachers to regularly meet to address “certain issues” with no mention to any tailored Arabic language teachers’ support.
Referring to Teacher 5, PD as an Arabic language teacher was more present in her previous school in Dubai as learning was a “continuous process” as she said. Here, the presence of a domain/shared enterprise as an Arabic language PLC, which is the purpose of meeting in a community (Wenger, 1998), was barely evident and most of the teachers’ PD meetings were directed towards enhancing ICT skills to be integrated in lessons with much less focus on Arabic language teaching, while communities in schools are not tailored for Arabic language teachers in Teacher 5’s case. Teacher 6 said:

“Meetings for general departmental matters, each lasting half an hour at the end of the week”, she continues: “Many teaching methods and strategies are used to engage students in learning Arabic, especially with international curricula that are not Arabic based”.

Teacher 6 stated that Experiences, especially those derived from the educational environment “are always beneficial”, the teacher perceives PD as the tool to reduce the burden of teaching traditionally, being aware of the interconnection of between teaching practices and student outcomes, which resonates with the CoP principle of shared practice and collective learning within a community (Wenger, 1998). This matches the ‘themes’ section, and shows how these twofold analysis are meaningful.

5.3.2 Social Learning Dynamics:

In this part I analysed how social interactions and collaborative activities within these identified communities contribute to the professional learning of Arabic language teachers. There was evidence in the interviewees’ responses of shared experiences, joint problem-solving, and collaborative knowledge construction or what is called shared repertoire that are the core aspects of Wenger’s social theory of learning.

In Teacher 1 and Teacher 2’s responses sharing experiences was evident in different situations through their schools’ PD, Teacher 1 spoke about her targeted PDs that was addressing certain needs for Arabic language teachers that were planned by the school’s senior leadership team (SLT) after conducting lesson observations to the whole department and using the students’ progress based on their data driven from results.

This gave the sense of a directed and enforced interaction more than a collaboration. Teacher 2 spoke about her social experiences especially the ones that she had at the very early stage of her career because “wasn't trained or I wasn't ready after graduation to teach Arabic for non-Arabs” after being given this task at her school suddenly and had “no idea” about which practices works well with that. Interaction and collaboration with the school’s counsellor or a consultant that was always in the school, helped her understand and “get there in terms of teaching Arabic as a second language”, which led to collaborative knowledge construction for both teachers.

Social learning dynamics elements of both Teacher 3 and Teacher 4’s responses aligned with Teacher 1 and Teacher 2,

“Yes, we exchange experiences”, says Teacher3, “We occasionally hear from all teachers from various schools about the Arabic language curriculum”, the teacher added “and we discuss the challenges we may face while teaching this subject. We also discuss what things we can benefit from, what experiences we can share, and what
procedures we can add to each other through our regular meetings in this wonderful community.”.

Teacher 4 stated that these continuous meetings with colleagues benefited her in sharing knowledge and collaboration, she said: “I have exchanged ideas, shared best practices, and built a supportive professional network.”.

Teacher 5 and 6 varied in their responses, Teacher 5 said:

“Yes, we work as a successful team”,

yet she highlighted that they meet and consult each other when they “face certain challenges” and that was because the teacher worked “for a long time in the same school. The reason for this is that I have colleagues whom I am very comfortable working with”,

while (Teacher 6) viewed collaboration and knowledge sharing as a personal challenge, she said: “It's crucial to avoid imposing oneself on colleagues and maintain focus on the common goal of student achievement and progress.”.

5.3.3 Knowledge Sharing Mechanisms:

In this part of the analysis I present the mechanisms through which knowledge is shared within the communities (Wenger, 1998). Wenger stated that Knowledge is a “matter of competence with respect to valued enterprises”, this competence is hard to be built without knowledge sharing or negotiation (Wenger, 1998), (Azaza et al., 2023), (Al-Taneiji, 2009). All of my interviewees confirmed that their schools provide a variety of what they called Professional learning opportunities that were presented internally (inside the school premises), or externally (presented by professional entities based on the SLT’s judgements on teachers’ lesson observations (Brown & Zhang, 2017) or the vision of the school/school cluster) when the school belongs to a larger educational company. This included sharing resources, lesson planning and formal and/or informal mentoring (Janssen et al., 2016).

Teacher 1 stated that this started with the teacher on learning what teachers tell through reading and through research,

“The second one is through the school CPD, which is based on the school needs”, and she said: “I can say by experience, that teacher when they observe each other, they really learn from each other.”

This teacher mentioned that professional learning was not about “only talking about the strategy”, rather than she could see it through observation and “see how they interact on it” referring to teachers.

Teacher 1 spoke about how the schools that she worked in provided PDs in different shapes, forms, and periods; she received professional training that was based on the curriculum of her schools as an international inquiry. This aligned with what Teacher 2 mentioned that her PD meetings were not always successful and beneficial, she said:

“I did many, many professional developments that I didn't gain any benefits from”,

the teacher described that knowledge sharing took place through sharing best practices and concerns, she said:
“We had this monthly meeting to share best practices and to share concerns, to come up with ideas.”

This revolves around Wenger’s assumptions and suggestions that Professional learning happens through sharing knowledge and negotiation of meaning through engagement (Wenger, 1998).

Teacher 3 and Teacher 4, who work in Abu Dhabi positively spoke about their experience in knowledge sharing mechanisms utilizing their personal approach in that mechanism. Teacher 3 said:

“Everything I attend, I record”, she continued: “we discuss the challenges we may face while teaching this subject. We also discuss what things we can benefit from”,

this reminds with Wenger’s statement that Knowing is a matter of participating in the pursuit of such enterprises, that is, of active engagement in the world and shared histories of learning (Wenger, 1998). Teacher 4 illustrated the shapes of mechanisms by which her learning took place in the community, she mentioned that it happened within: “workshops, seminars, and mentorship programs” that were tailored for Arabic language teachers' needs.

Teacher 5 and Teacher 6, who work in Sharjah drew their knowledge sharing mechanism that followed the previous interviewees, they both stated that their new professional learning happened through workshops and out of the school visits. Teacher 5 said:

“We share experiences and develop in them”, the meetings that take place in the school are “what will change, and what happens is a result of these meetings”,

she mentioned workshops and courses outside the school where teachers go to Sharjah Private Education Authority or other institutions, yet the teacher did not explicitly describe how teachers interact and share knowledge. She came across online workshops that take place once every week, and continued:

“So, from my friend's experience, I learn what she does and benefit from it. My team also contributes to professional development”.

On the other hand, Teacher 6’s responses revolved around the word discussion, in her school community discussing “specific developmental issues” was an unclear indication to the mechanisms used in that community, the teacher presented a non-detailed responses in regard to Arabic language teaching strategies.

In other words, most of the interviewees’ presented knowledge sharing mechanisms were discussions and mutual collaborations, collaborative lesson planning and involving becoming creative when approaching their PD that resulted from their community engagement as Arabic language teachers who became inspired to conducting successful teaching practices.

5.3.4 Identity and Membership:

In this part I have investigated how learning as participation (Wenger, 1998) in these schools’ PLCs influenced the professional identity of the Arabic language teachers in the UAE. Wenger states that: “Communities of practice should not be reduced to purely instrumental purposes. They are about knowing, but also about being together, living meaningfully, developing a satisfying identity”, it is about “being human” (Wenger, 1998).
As learning in Etienne’s theory is the vehicle for the evolution of practice, that draws parallels for a social formation of identity, his assumption that there is a between the social and the individual which claims that Tension must be alive to guarantee the sustainability of these communities, were conflicts serves in favour of both: the Individual and the community(Wenger, 1998), Teacher 6 said:

“Relationships are always governed by the work's purpose, this is the goal to prove oneself at the expense of colleagues, or to be a source of inspiration”,

as a sense of conflict that arises from practice and is a result of participation.

the interviewees’ answers have presented a variety of identity and membership qualities that were evident as follows:

All the Arabic language interviewed teachers spoke about their being part of a community that had contributed to form their self-fulfilment, or what Wringer called: “sense of belonging”. It is very important to highlight that participation is a source of identity (Wenger, 1998), as it involves all types of relations and shape the communities’ form of practice which is a crucial part of participation in that community and forms the sense of membership, or in other word, belonging. I will be dividing the identity analysis into identity change and the sense of belonging.

Teacher 1 spoke about her professional growth journey and how being involved in her school’s PLC has constructed her professional development since she arrived in the UAE saying: “I came first in 2008, it was like me having a plan, teaching the letter down the board, that would he say after me and that's it”. She continued saying that she thought that : “ this is how we learn, and this is how we teach”, which indicated that her identity as a teacher was formed based on her background and culture at that given time, then the teacher explained how she changed her view to herself now saying: “when I watch myself now seeing after all these years, how we develop throughout the year and how important is development plan, that take in place I see my growth as human being and for the growth of the future, this is the main part of my journey ”.

The teacher’s sense of belonging was evident when was asked about her feeling in her workplace, she said: “It's a good friendly environment”, the resemblance of her community to be like an “international cuisine and everybody brings their own dish” was remarkable and portrays the sense of competence that results from participation of the practice .Teacher2 had a different experience when was asked about her relationship experience, particularly as an Arabic teacher in Dubai, she said: “I am a qualified Arabic teacher”, she continues: “Yet, across Arabic teachers in the UAE. You do not find that people are eager to share everything they know or everything they do or all of What they gained through their experiences. Sometimes they just share the very common general things, and they keep the important things. Just like top secret of the recipe of their schools. And this is why these communities are not very effective”. (Her professional identity formation differed in dimension, from what Teacher 1 has experienced, yet I can explain more about this experience in terms of culture and place in the discussion part, while the teacher’s identity change was a personal endeavour that was evident when she mentioned herself seeking the school councillor for individual teaching techniques’ support.

Teacher 3 and Teacher 4 are presenting a very high sense of belonging to their communities, Teacher 3 said:
“I love it. My profession, my love for this profession, through my work, through my relationships with my colleagues, as well as through my dealings with school management and officials”, “I enjoyed teaching Arabic in the UAE”.

Teacher 4 stated that her relationship with others in the professional community is characterized by collaboration, mutual respect, and a shared commitment to student success, she added that this fostered her collaboration and professional growth.

Teacher 5 and Teacher 6 demonstrated a variant picture of identity change and sense of belonging. Teacher 5 said:

“I have good relationships. I mean, all school members have good relationships with all other members”,

what was interesting about this teacher identity change was her reflection about her school leadership change, she said:

“I have learned a lot because over ten years, and this tenth year, I have had many changes in administrations. I have learned and absorbed many cultures from different administrations”,

the ability to change is governed by the facilitators for change and that would be reflecting Etienne’s final part of the book Design for learning that I will mention in the discussion part.

5.3.5 Challenges and facilitators:

In this part I present the factors, from the interviewees’ perspectives, that hindered their involvement in their PLCs or even hindered community formation: the first factor occurred in (Teacher 2)’s answers about her involvement in her school and even external PLCs where she did not benefit from every PD opportunity that took place as they were not always tailored for teaching Arabic or they might not have addressed her personal needs rather than entertaining the international schools’ inspection requirement or could be addressing a non-department issues. This could be reflected on Wenger’s design for learning, he stated that design takes two social shapes and organization should design their PDs in relation to practice (Wenger, 1998).

In this respect, Teacher 1 and 2 who work in the emirate of Dubai highlighted the variation of Arabic language students who exist in UAE international school, shading the light on their Arabic dialects that they had to deal with while learning, as language teachers, they are to be held accountable for teaching the modern standard Arabic (MSA) four different skills: Reading, writing, listening and speaking to show a continuous progress, which will always be there in her students school data and was addressed in her recent PD. Teacher 1 said: “each one of the students are coming from different backgrounds and they speak their own Arabic language.

So, this is the type of people that I'm working with every day”. Teacher 2 stated that Arabic as a second language is getting high attention in Dubai which puts more pressure on teachers especially because of the context of the city, she said: “There are many challenges we face as Arabic for non-Arab teachers. One of these. Is the environment. I mean, the context of the UAE, because. The context does not support learning Arabic. I don't mean by support in courage. In the city environment. So, wherever students go, they will speak English. Arabic is not the first language. However. It is meant to be the first language. But even Arabs here do not speak Arabic.”.“
This issue was highlighted by Teacher 3 who works in Abu Dhabi. She explicitly spoke about her need as well as her participation in her school’s PLC to be informed and learn about new technologies, teaching strategies and best practices for teaching this category of students, she said: “We regularly meet, especially since I teach Arabic language to non-native speakers. We occasionally hear from all teachers from various schools about the Arabic language curriculum for this category, and we discuss the challenges we may face while teaching this subject. We also discuss what things we can benefit from, what experiences we can share”.

The same challenge occurred in one of the two teachers from the Emirate of Sharjah, (teacher 5) who spoke about how her continuous participation changed her professional identity as an Arabic for non-Arabs teacher and how competent she became in this field despite of needing more. This leads me to highlight back on what Teacher 1 and Teachers 2 and 3 about not being trained enough in their countries before being Arabic teachers in the UAE which could be addressed in other research endeavours. Additionally, limited resources was highlighted as a challenge through teaching by Teacher 4, yet was resolved when consulted her colleagues, she said: “as an Arabic language teacher requires flexibility and resilience. For example, I once faced difficulty in integrating technology into my lessons due to limited resources, but collaborating with colleagues helped me find creative solutions to engage students effectively.”.

In addition, another factor that hindered effective community formation and knowledge sharing among Arabic teachers occurred in the interviewees’ answers that was time constraint. Teacher 1 mentioned the load of classes and timetables are challenging for her as an Arabic for Arabs and non-Arabs at the same time, she said: “I think the variety of the curriculum and the load of the timetable, it is the biggest challenge in terms of teaching”. Teacher 5 said that she did not participate in any external PLCs because of time constraints, she said: “Learning in networks or studying in other networks while working as a teacher is difficult”, she mentioned the difficulty of Arabic language teaching due to the difficulty of the language itself and this could be considered as a personal a hindering factor for this teacher.

5.3.6 Facilitators of identity formation in this context:

From the interviewees’ answers, factors that facilitated the development and sustainability of Arabic language communities in the UAE international schools occurred as follows:

1. Regular Meetings and Communication: All the interviewed Arabic language teachers mentioned the importance of regular meetings and communication within their professional communities. This consistent interaction and reification to their practice allowed for the exchange of ideas, sharing of best practices, and mutual support among Arabic language teachers.

2. Collaborative Learning Opportunities: Collaborative learning experiences that are Arabic language tailored in the UAE International schools, foster a sense of membership and reciprocal growth among Arabic language teachers.

3. Professional Development Programmes with a Structure: Professional development programmes designed with Arabic language instructors' requirements in mind offer excellent chances for education and advancement. They allow teachers to investigate curriculum planning, negotiate best practices and overcome challenges.
4. **Resource sharing**: one of the assessing factors of the effectiveness of PLCs is the ability to access valuable shared resources which allows knowledge reification and leads to the sustainability of these communities (Wenger, 1998) and (‘Shared Leadership’, 2016).

5. **Positive relationships**: All teachers confirmed that positive ensignships with the other Arabic teachers in their school community played an essential role in their interactions within these communities.

6. **Effective Leadership**: Four of my participants spoke about department/school leadership that happened to “bring about a change” as Teacher 6 answered, Teacher 5 said: “changing leaderships on my school has positively affected my professional learning, I benefited a lot!”.
Teacher 1 was a department leader herself, she mentioned students’ progress data analysis is being used to develop her team’s CPDs to enhance their teaching practices in favour of their students’ progress.

I will follow Wenger’s book (Wenger, 1998) view in my discussion to this study’s **Practice and Identity** (p.17 and p.150), which informs the dimensions and components of the **Design** for learning (Wenger, 1998, p. pp.225-229). I will be as well reflecting on the previous literature in light of this study.

5.4 **Practice:**

This concept is a discipline with itself yet, was portrayed in this study’s teachers’ answers on the first and second questions of the interview revealed and confirmed that this study assembled Wenger’s theoretical and conceptual assumption which combines the complexity of practice-learning and the “process of becoming” or what Wenger called: “shift of focus from practice to identity”. This study confirmed that the interviewed Arabic language teachers viewed their community practices as a source of identity, it appeared in their statements such as “I love this community”, “I am proud”, “I am a qualified Arabic teacher”, this drew more of the interconnection between those Arabic language teachers’ practices in their particular cummingtonites in that special context of the UAE international schools, which had defined the characteristics of COPs as Wenger’s perspective. This practice involves three components: **Meaning, Negotiation and Reification** of the practice (Wenger, 1998), the meaning for these teachers appeared as their teaching practices related to their daily teaching of Arabic language, integrating Technology in their lessons and overcome challenges when it comes to teaching Arabic as a second language and meeting their schools, as well as, the governmental requirements. Their meetings allowed them to negotiate this meaning. This negotiation of meaning is a continuous process in which they learn the histories of other teachers’ practice as well as new situations that emerge through their practice.

Wenger argued that for individuals in a community reaching a phase where they live meaningfully (Wenger, 1998, p.84 & p. 190) which I can name **being competent** involved the capacity to influence and be influenced, targeted at a particular circumstance, and formed by a variety of factors, which results in a continuous shift in these meaning negotiations and impacts every member of that community. I can claim here that **being competent is a level of learning**.

**Reification** (Wenger, 1998, p. 57)in this case is the embodiment of the practice, or as Wenger states: it is what shapes experience” and it is “the process of giving form experience by producing objects that congeal this experience into “thingness”” which complements practice as he argues.
Boundaries and relationships among Arabic language teachers’ COPs can be interpreted through Wenger’s perspective as their community social practice that gains its historical stance. This was the most important link with the Arabic language teachers’ reification of their practice in a mission of an identity formation and transformation in regards of their self-view as competent Arabic language teachers within their international schools’ settings. This informs an imperative dimension that educational institutions, Arabic language development departments and school stakeholders consider when rethinking and designing their CPDs.

5.5 Identity formation and Professional learning communities:

The findings of this study shed light on the crucial role of identity formation in shaping the professional practices and learning experiences of Arabic language teachers within international accreditation contexts. The voices of the interviewed teachers resonated with a shared understanding of the significance of being recognized as qualified professionals within their field. This recognition not only validates their expertise but also serves as a catalyst for their ongoing engagement in professional development (PD) activities within their respective professional learning communities.

One key aspect highlighted by the teachers is the sense of belonging and camaraderie fostered within their professional learning communities. This sense of belonging not only provides emotional support but also facilitates collaborative learning and knowledge sharing among peers. As Wenger suggests, participation in such communities is not merely a passive act but an active declaration of membership, contributing to the ongoing formation of one’s professional identity.

Moreover, the relationships cultivated within these communities play a pivotal role in shaping teachers’ experiences and perceptions of their professional practice. Through interactions with colleagues, teachers engage in reflective dialogue, share best practices, and collectively navigate the challenges inherent in their profession. These relationships serve as a source of inspiration, encouragement, and accountability, reinforcing teachers’ commitment to their professional growth and development.

Furthermore, the teachers’ engagement in their profession's negotiation of practice reflects their active involvement in shaping the trajectory of their field. By participating in discussions, workshops, and collaborative projects within their professional learning communities, teachers contribute to the evolution of teaching practices, curriculum development, and educational policies. This active engagement not only enriches their own learning experiences but also enhances the collective knowledge base of the profession in general.

In essence, the findings of this study underscore the interplay between identity formation, professional learning communities, and ongoing professional development among Arabic language teachers with international accreditation. By recognizing the importance of identity in practice, educators and policymakers can design tailored learning experiences and support mechanisms that empower teachers to thrive within their professional communities. This holistic approach to teacher development not only fosters individual growth but also cultivates a culture of collaboration, innovation, and excellence within the field of Arabic language education.

5.6 Answers to the research questions

In this part I will be answering RQ’s here while discussing the literature and concept of COPs which will unpack the link between the analysis in the previous section and the key components of this conceptual framework to answer the research questions encompassing how identity is a backbone in
this chapter. I am presenting the participants by their locations not as a comparative manner, yet to emphasize their particularity and rich experience.

Now, addressing this study question holds greater significance following the multifaceted analysis that delved into the patterns emerging from the interviews, elucidating the perspectives and experiences of Arabic teachers. Through the lens of the Community of Practice (CoP) conceptual framework, the analysis revealed nuanced insights into the collaborative dynamics and shared goals within Arabic language departments across the UAE educational landscape. By synthesizing the voices of Arabic teachers and exploring their interactions, engagement, and shared repertoire, the analysis provided a comprehensive understanding of how communities of practice shape professional development and instructional practices in Arabic language education. As we embark on addressing the study question, the rich tapestry of findings from the previous analysis serves as a foundation for uncovering deeper insights into the challenges, opportunities, and strategies for fostering excellence within Arabic language teaching in the UAE., answering the research questions went as follows:

5.6.1 How do UAE Arabic language teachers engage in a professional learning community?

The Arabic language teachers are extensively engaged in their schools’ PLCs that are organized by their schools, they meet regularly, to negotiate Arabic language teaching practices through engaging in activities such as, workshops, seminars and conferences with other Arabic language teachers, coaches, and instructors, and socially interact with them which led in this case to an Identity transformation and construction in relation to these Arabic language teachers’ communities. This active interaction allowed those teachers to talk about their ability to change individually and collectively. They perceived their PDs as an opportunity to learn despite of having different attitudes and approaches to that learning. Their participation in these communities was directed towards changing their traditional way of teaching Arabic language to their students, integrating technology use, allowing students to lead learning to be the centre of engagement in Arabic language lessons, in addition to using new teaching strategies. Some of the teachers confirmed that they gained the skill of becoming creative in their teaching approaches after being engaged in these communities. One Arabic teacher from Dubai was more enforced into PDs and thought they were not useful and were not meeting her needs when it came to teaching Arabic as second language /Arabic for non-Arabs which applies sometimes to originally Arab students who do not practice the language because of the context of the city itself where the population use English as a mean of communication. As a result, Arabic as a second language/for non-Arabs was highlighted as a demand for CPDs.

5.6.2 What are the factors that influence their involvement?

The teachers’ responses showed similarities in terms of what influenced their involvement in their PLCs that I classified as follows:

- **Personal motivation and self-recognition**: The teachers’ innate desire and openness to learn new techniques and enhance their teaching abilities is a major factor in how involved they are in their professional development communities. Highly motivated Arabic language teachers are more likely to actively look for, take part in their schools’ professional development opportunities and engage with their communities, and the way they viewed themselves as professional and society members. In light of Wenger’s COP theoretical and conceptual frame of work, this is what he assumed about learning to be meaningful when it happens through practice, meaning is one component of Wenger’s social learning theory which leads to rethinking, deepen and expand learning when it is articulated by the learner and this confirmed Wenger’s assumption that for individuals, learning means “engaging in” (Wenger, 1998, p.
101) and “contributing to” (Wenger, 1998, p. 88) the practices of these individuals’ communities.

Moreover, four teachers in this study mentioned that their schools’ recognition to their efforts by being promoted after their efforts in applying PDs into their practices, had increased their involvements in their PLCs’ PDs.

**Cohesive school culture:** This study revealed a cohesive international schools’ culture and support for Arabic language teachers in the UAE, the schools’ administrations have prioritized and supported PD initiatives which greatly influenced Arabic language educators’ involvement. The schools have provided ample resources, time, and encouragement for PD have produced engaged Arabic language teachers. In this respect Wenger stated that “knowledge is a matter of competence with respect to valued enterprise” (Wenger, 1998, p. 77). Learning is the process of actively engaging in the world and developing our capacity to experience it; it is the act of participating in the search of knowledge.

**Collaboration and peer support:** In this study, All Arabic language teachers presented their relationship with their peers, cooperating and collaboration with them as an non-negotiable factor that influenced their level of involvement in their communities. This factor has placed the primacy of social cultures’ theories.

**Arabic subject relevance:** The interviewed Arabic language teachers in this study’s understanding to the relevance of their PD in their schools’ PLCs varied in their answers which did not mean particularly Arabic subject knowledge, in fact their work in the UAE itself is an identification of competence as they reflected. The teachers from the emirate of Dubai pinpointed that their engagement in their PLCs was a demand because of their accountability to their students’ achievement according to the data results, when the teachers of Abu Dhabi and Sharjah viewed it as a personal development and self-fulfilment journey, their answers yet portrayed that their development is a matter of achieving the lessons’ outcomes which is an indicator for lesson observations. This led to the final influence:

**Governmental policies and requirements:** This was an external factor that influenced the level of involvement of the Arabic language teachers in their PLCs’ PDs, as all the teachers were compelled to participate in their school’s PD to align with their schools’ commitments to the UAE government and the international standards and educational expectations.

5.6.3 What benefits and challenges do they experience in these communities?
All the interviewed Arabic language teachers confirmed their lack of training and study to teach Arabic as a second language/Arabic for non-Arabs. This should inform a new design for Arabic teacher education not only in the UAE but in the Arab region to set a basis for sustaining Arabic language learning for the generations to come. It is worth mentioning that most of the interviewed Arabic language teachers were fully accepting the fact that they follow their PDs as a form accepting the hierarchy of power which confirmed the collected information in the literature review.
6 Discussion

This research has employed interviews as a methodology with a theoretical analysis approach to explore the involvement of Arabic language teachers in UAE international schools using Wenger’s Community of Practice (CoP) theoretical framework, holds significant promise for yielding rich and contextualized insights and deepen the academic understanding of this conceptual framework itself (Kadenge, 2013) and was used for analysis to develop a more conceptual understanding for the concept. By conducting interviews as a methodology along with the utilization of Wenger’s COP for analysis, the research delved deeply into the intricate dynamics of The Arabic language teachers' experiences, perspectives, and practices within the specific context of UAE international schools which helped recognizing the unique cultural and educational milieu that shaped the professional landscape of Arabic language teachers in this setting. The narrative approach in the interviews further enriched the study by allowing teachers to share their stories, providing a qualitative dimension to their experiences within their Professional Learning Communities.

Wenger’s CoP framework served as a twofold guiding theoretical lens, emphasizing the importance of understanding the social processes and shared learning within a community of practitioners yet with the theoretical analysis approach the whole study contributed to a deeper understanding of the COP as a theory- driven concept, as well as adding more to the existing knowledge.

This framework enabled a focused exploration of mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire among Arabic language teachers. Overall, the combination of Interviews as a research methodology and the theoretical analysis approach, grounded in Wenger's CoP theory, not only aligned with the contextual nature of the research but also ensured a comprehensive understanding of the nuanced factors influencing teachers' involvement in PLCs in UAE international schools, which served as a pillar in understanding and confirming the dynamics of Wenger’s social theory.

The teachers’ answers highlighted the significance of participation and engagement in their PLCs which caused new learning to happen through interaction between being experienced and becoming competent. The teachers’ mutual engagements in their shared practices, which was Arabic language teaching, is a complex process between their practice and their competence. The emerging information about the teachers’ dynamics of engagement in their practice, negotiating their experiences, reification of their gained competence served in favour of the COP concept.

Conflict that arose from the communities’ interactions was not a necessity to be present in these communities, yet it served in favour of the communities where it happened which caused new opportunities for mutual learning that should be positively considered as a situated learning which proves Wenger’s assumptions in this regard.

As Wenger argued in his book, those teachers’ PLCs was not a context or a space for the new teachers to join and learn but, a space for their insights to be translated into knowledge. Moreover, the interconnection between learning as a social practice that happened in these communities, and the identity formation and transformation of those Arabic language teachers in the UAE settings was evident and confirmed the theoretical and conceptual frame work’s assumptions. The research has the potential to contribute its valuable insights to the educational practice, professional development,
the broader discourse on the role of PLCs in enhancing teaching and learning in international educational settings.

6.1 This study's contribution considering previous literature:

In this part I present the link of my findings with my choice of theory and pinpoint the rationale of this study. In exploring the impact of the schools’ PLCs on UAE Arabic language teachers' teaching practices, it is crucial to assess the influence of community engagement on instructional strategies, the integration of new teaching methods, and the adoption of innovative approaches, but first and foremost how would this apply to our understanding of learning to be able to design for it to happen.

The investigation into professional development (PD) among Arabic language teachers in UAE International schools is significantly enriched by the insights gleaned from Stephenson’s (Stephenson, 2010; Stephenson et al., 2012) studies. Stephenson's research provides a valuable framework for understanding PD initiatives and professional learning communities (PLCs) within the UAE educational landscape. However, while Stephenson's studies offer foundational insights, they primarily involve undergraduate participants, potentially limiting the depth and specificity of insights relevant to experienced teachers within UAE International schools. In contrast, the findings from the interviews with Arabic language teachers provide a nuanced understanding of PD dynamics specifically tailored to the context of UAE International schools. By focusing on experienced teachers within these schools, the study captures the unique challenges, practices, and needs of Arabic language educators in international settings.

Furthermore, the utilization of theoretical analysis aligns with the research focus on PD among Arabic language teachers, enabling the identification of their involvement, experiences, challenges and emerged information within the data collected from working teachers. Wenger's COP conceptual framework, derived from his theory of situated learning, served the analysis by providing a structured approach to understanding how these teachers engage in and benefit from PD activities within their specific contexts. Thus, while Stephenson's studies offer broader insights into PD in the UAE, the findings from the interviews with Arabic language teachers in UAE International schools contribute directly to the design and implementation of a robust PD tailored to the needs of Arabic language educators in this particular educational setting. These insights serve as a foundation for the development of effective PD programs and strategies aimed at fostering collaboration, professional growth, and excellence among Arabic language teachers within UAE International schools.

The findings from the interviews with Arabic language teachers in UAE International schools contribute significantly to the literature on Arabic language teaching and Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) within the UAE educational landscape. In the context of the UAE's commitment to preserving its cultural and linguistic heritage while embracing modernity and globalization (Cook & Amilan, 2017), the study provided valuable insights into the role of existing Arabic language PLCs as tools for improving Arabic language departments in UAE International schools and bridging the gap of integrating these modern technologies to their practice.

By exploring the experiences, perspectives, and practices of Arabic language teachers within these PLCs, the study sheds light on the mechanisms through which collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and collective learning contributed to the enhancement of Arabic language teaching and learning outcomes.
despite of the existing challenges that emerged particularly for those interviewed Arabic language teachers. Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of PLCs in addressing the challenges posed by the diverse expatriate population (Curricula and Language of Instruction | The Official Portal of the UAE Government, n.d.; Gallagher, 2011; Taha Thomure, 2019) and the influence of technology on Arabic language education in UAE International schools. As the Ministry of Education oversees the national curriculum with a focus on developing students’ Arabic language proficiency, the insights from the study offer practical implications for the design and implementation of effective PLC initiatives aimed at promoting students' reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills in Arabic as well as examining the ongoing change in the demands of Arabic as a second language teaching strategies. It is worth mentioning here that Arabic teachers’ schedule load and time tables due to the mix of roles that those teachers have, as Arabic for Arabs and Arabic for non-Arabs, was highlighted and should be taken into considerations while overseeing Arabic language teachers’ PD reform. Thus, by illuminating the role of PLCs in improving Arabic language departments within UAE International schools, considering Arabic language teachers’ continuous perceptions, the study contributes to the ongoing efforts to preserve the UAE's linguistic heritage while preparing students for success in a globalized world.

Commenting on Grundy’s article that investigated the microsystems of teachers in relation to their professional development (Hathorn & Dillon, 2018), despite the value of Grundy's study results, my exploration of Arabic language teachers' PLCs has filled the gap of the in-depth understanding of their views, which informs the direction in which design and reform should be directed. Grundy underscores the value of Action Research (AR) as a tool that empowers teachers to make informed decisions, emphasizing that AR provides a framework for procedure rather than prescribing a specific methodology. The study aligns with previous research, affirming that AR contributes to recognizing the importance of the teaching profession and facilitates positive changes in teachers' language, actions, attitudes, and classroom management. As participants engage in a community of practice centred on Action Research, their interactions foster critical engagement with pedagogy and promote professional growth, yet it is still imperative to delve in depth of those teachers’ experiences to grasp the full picture of their experiences to be able to generalize our findings in respect to the reform.

In conclusion, the exploration of Arabic language teachers' Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) within UAE International schools has provided valuable insights into the dynamics of professional development and collaboration within the context of Arabic language education. By examining the experiences, perspectives, and practices of Arabic language teachers, this study has contributed to a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities inherent in Arabic language teaching and learning within international educational settings. The findings highlight the pivotal role of PLCs as tools for improving Arabic language departments and enhancing student outcomes. Moreover, by comparing and contrasting with existing literature, this study has filled gaps in knowledge and provided direction for future research and educational reforms. Moving forward, it is imperative to continue fostering a culture of collaboration, reflection, and professional growth within Arabic language PLCs, with a focus on addressing the diverse needs of students and teachers in a rapidly evolving educational landscape. By leveraging the insights gained from this study, educators and policymakers can work towards fostering excellence in Arabic language education while preserving the UAE's rich linguistic and cultural heritage.
7 Chapter 7: Conclusion and Recommendations for Future Research

The culmination of interviews with Arabic language teachers offers profound insights into the dynamics of the Arabic language teachers’ communities of practice within the UAE International schools. Through a lens informed by Etienne Wenger’s Community of Practice (CoP) theoretical and conceptual framework, several key themes emerged, illuminating the collaborative and knowledge-sharing nature of this community.

First and foremost, the interviews underscored the significance of mutual engagement within the Arabic language teachers' community. Arabic language teachers emphasized the importance of regular meetings, collaborative projects, and informal gatherings as essential avenues for fostering meaningful interactions and collective teacher-learning that are Arabic language tailored. This negotiation of their practices not only strengthened interpersonal relationships but also facilitated the exchange of ideas and resources, contributing to professional growth and development as well as the construction of those teachers’ identities in regards of their practice.

Furthermore, the interviews revealed a shared enterprise among Arabic language teachers, characterized by a common commitment to improving teaching practices and promoting cultural understanding. Despite differences in teaching contexts and experiences in this study, the Arabic language teachers expressed a collective dedication to advancing the goals and objectives of the community, aligning with the UAE’ MOE vision in advancing the Arabic language teaching and learning in the favour of providing quality education and sustainable development, transcending individual interests for the greater benefit of all members.

Moreover, the notion of a shared repertoire emerged prominently in the interviews, highlighting the array of resources, tools, and pedagogical strategies utilized by Arabic language teachers within the community. From common teaching materials and lesson plans to storytelling techniques and cultural artifacts, the shared repertoire serves as a cornerstone for enriching teaching practices and enhancing the learning experience for students of Arabic language, culture, as well as identity formation as Arabic language teachers in the UAE international schools.

In conclusion, the findings of this study elucidate the collaborative and knowledge-sharing dynamics inherent within the Arabic language teachers’ community of practice. Through mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and a shared repertoire, this community demonstrates a collective commitment to professional growth, cultural exchange, and pedagogical innovation.

7.1 Recommendations for Arabic language departments in the UAE international schools:

1- Adapting a shared repertoires in Arabic language departments that considers the wellbeing and identity empowerment for Arabic language teachers.
2- Distinguishing between Arabic as a first language teachers and Arabic as a second language teachers it terms of freeing their loads of teaching and specifying their specialties to ensure dedicated professional learning tailored to each in their respective positions.

7.2 Recommendations for Further Research:

While this study offers valuable insights into the Arabic language teachers' community of practice, several avenues for further research warrant exploration:

1. **Longitudinal Studies:** Conduct longitudinal studies to investigate the evolution and sustainability of the Arabic language teachers' community of practice over time. By tracking changes in collaborative practices, knowledge-sharing behaviours, and professional development outcomes, researchers can gain a deeper understanding of the community's dynamics and resilience.

2. **Comparative Analyses:** Compare the characteristics and dynamics of the Arabic language teachers' community of practice across different regions or educational contexts within the specified country. By examining variations in collaborative practices, cultural influences, and resource utilization, researchers can identify factors that contribute to community resilience and effectiveness.

3. **Technology Integration:** Exploring the role of technology in facilitating collaboration and knowledge-sharing within the Arabic language teachers' community. Investigate the use of online platforms, social media networks, and digital resources to support professional development, communication, and resource sharing among teachers.

4. **Teacher Training Initiatives:** Design and implement teacher training initiatives aimed at enhancing collaboration and knowledge-sharing within the Arabic language teachers' community. Evaluate the effectiveness of professional development programs, workshops, and mentoring schemes in fostering a culture of collective learning and innovation among teachers.

5. **Student Perspectives:** Incorporate student perspectives into future research to gain insights into the impact of the Arabic language teachers' community of practice on student learning outcomes and cultural competence. Investigate student perceptions of teaching approaches, classroom experiences, and cultural engagement facilitated by the community.

Through the consideration of these study ideas, academics may delve further into the intricacies of the Arabic language teachers' community of practice, contributing to our knowledge of professional development, cross-cultural learning, and collaborative learning in this dynamic educational setting.
8 References:


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9 Appendices

9.1 Interview questions: PLC for Arabic language teachers in UAE

1. Can you describe your experience as a teacher in the UAE, focusing on your professional development journey?

2. How do you understand professional development as an Arabic language teacher in the UAE?

3. How do you handle challenges as an Arabic language teacher? Can you share a specific situation with fellow teachers or professionals and explain how this impacted your work?

4. Are there any opportunities for Professional development in the workplace and what are they?

5. ? If yes, how often you meet? Could you describe how this looks like?

6. How have these experiences influenced your teaching/professional growth? In which way?

7. -Was there any follow up after you PD?

8. Have you participated in any educational communities or networks in the UAE? If yes, if yes - tell me about the network and your experience in it?

9. Can you describe your feeling, relationship with others in your professional community? How that affect your job?
9.2 Participant Consent Form

Title of Study: **Exploring professional learning Communities among Arabic Language Teachers in the UAE International Schools**

An Interview-based study with a Wengerian perspective

Researcher: [Chireen Jabir Assaf-Aboamir]

Introduction:

I am Chireen Assaf, an international master student in the faculty of education and special education of University of Gothenburg/Sweden, conducting research on the professional development experiences of Arabic language teachers in the international schools of United Arab Emirates (UAE). You are invited to participate in this study.

Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to gain insight into the professional development journeys, challenges, and experiences of Arabic language teachers in the international schools of UAE. Your participation will help us better understand the factors that contribute to professional growth and development in the field of education.

Procedure:

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to take part in a semi-structured interview lasting approximately [duration] minutes. During the interview, you will be asked questions about your teaching experience, professional development activities, interactions with colleagues, and any challenges you may have faced in your professional journey. The interview will be audio-recorded for accuracy and analysis purposes.

Confidentiality:

Your participation in this study is voluntary, and all information collected will be kept confidential. Your name will not be associated with any quotes or findings presented in the study. Data will be stored securely and only accessible to the researcher and authorized personnel.
Risks and Benefits:

Participation in this study involves minimal risk. You may experience discomfort discussing personal experiences or challenges related to your professional development. However, your participation will contribute to the advancement of knowledge in the field of education. There are no direct benefits to you as a participant, but the findings of this study may inform future educational practices and policies.

Voluntary Participation:

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw at any time without consequence. Your decision to participate or not participate will not affect your current or future relationship with the researcher or any affiliated institutions.

Contact Information:

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please feel free to contact me at [gusaboch@student.gu.se]. Additionally, if you have any concerns about your rights as a participant, you may contact the [University of Gothenburg] at Ethics Committee Contact Information:

[https://www.gu.se/en/research/research-ethics](https://www.gu.se/en/research/research-ethics)

Consent:

By signing below, you acknowledge that you have read and understood the information provided in this consent form. You voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

Participant's Name: __________________________

Participant's Signature: ________________________

Date: ________________________

Researcher's Name: ___________________________

Researcher's Signature: ________________________