# Chapter 113
# Online Learning Community:
## Building the Professional Capacity of Indonesian Teachers

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## ABSTRACT

*This chapter describes the role of the online learning community named OLC4TPD (Online Learning Community for Teacher Professional Development) in building professional capacity of Indonesian teachers. OLC4TPD was contextually built to address the challenges of teacher professionalism in Indonesia, which has contributed significantly to students' learning outcome. As an independent informal online learning community, OLC4TPD plays a unique role in schools' professional learning community. The authors investigate the role of OLC4TPD from different pillars that hold the professional learning community edifice. The four pillars are (1) collaborative teamwork, (2) teacher capacity, (3) leadership capacity, and (4) professional development. The chapter explains this unique role by showcasing several authentic examples on how OLC4TPD has improved professional capacity of teachers and teacher educators in an Indonesian context.*

## INTRODUCTION

21st century education has raised the bar of teaching and learning. The priority of education has shifted from teaching just core subjects to incorporating different sets of skills, such as: life and career;

learning and innovation and ICT and media skills (P21, 2004). This situation has demanded that teachers deliver subject content knowledge as well as life skills to improve students' outcomes. Many practising teachers are currently the products of a previous generation, whereby the teacher-centred approach was dominant. Although there has been a shift toward a student-centred learning method

in the 21st century, many teachers find themselves unprepared to face the challenges of this new approach. The gap between teachers' professional capabilities and work demands needs to be reviewed. Darling-Hammond (Darling-Hammond, 1994) suggested that ongoing teacher professional development could lead to the professional and personal development of teachers as well as improvement in classroom practices. However, according to several studies, many of the teacher professional development programs are run as one-off programs that provide teachers with directive and "just-in-case" information (Friesen & Clifford, 2003; Lock, 2006; Scott, 2003). The teachers have a lack of opportunity to reflect on their practice, interact and collaborate with other practitioners to address authentic problems and develop practice improvements on ongoing bases.

In this study, the authors aim to address the challenges of teacher professional development in the 21st century by investigating the concept of Online Learning Community (OLC) for teacher professional development. The concept has been applied in several Western countries to provide ongoing support for teachers (Arvaja, Hämäläinen, & Rasku-Puttonen, 2010; Barab, Makinster, Moore, Cunningham, & Team, 2001; Friesen & Clifford, 2003; Lock, 2006; Scott & Scott, 2010). However, the application in developing countries like Indonesia has not yet been studied. This chapter discusses how the adoption of the OLC, called OLC4TPD (Online Learning Community for Teacher Professional Development), in Indonesia has impacted on the professional capacity building of Indonesian teachers (Sari, 2012, 2010a, 2010b; Sari, Lim, & Pagram, 2010; Sari & Tedjasaputra, 2010).

## ONLINE LEARNING COMMUNITY (OLC)

OLC has been used as a means to support teacher professional development in several Western countries, including Australia (Scott & Scott, 2010; Scott, 2003), Canada (Friesen & Clifford, 2003; Lock, 2006), US (Barab, et al., 2001) and Finland (Arvaja, et al., 2010; Helleve, 2010). Previous studies advocate that OLC is a viable means to cultivate sharing and provide a sustainable support for teachers (Barab, et al., 2001; Dede, 2000; Lock, 2006). It provides opportunity for teachers to reflect and examine their practice which can lead to transformative professional development (Windschitl, 2002). In developing countries, like Indonesia, online community is widely used means for social communication, but a systematic study on the use of online community for professional development of teachers has not yet been conducted.

There are many concepts developed around OLC, however, they have a common ground around the core elements of the OLC. Social learning, which is strongly influenced by Vygotky's social constructivist perspective (Vygotsky, 1978), is the main core element that constructs OLC. In an OLC environment, there is an interdependency between social and individual interaction in the co-construction of knowledge process (Palincsar, 1998). In their study about OLC, Tu and Corry discussed that there are four other elements on the top of the social learning that form the OLC. These are *Community* (community of practice), *Learning* (collaborative learning), *Networking* (social presence) and *Technology* (knowledge construction).

As a *Community* (community of practice), there is an informal bond among OLC members that is built through a common problem and a similar pursuit of solutions, for example: to improve student's learning, a passion for continuous knowledge exchange and sharing (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Tu & Corry, 2002; Tu & McIsaac, 2001; Wenger, 1998). The OLC members involve themselves in a process of collaborative *Learning*, whereby they socially construct new knowledge through communication, activities and social interactions with other members in order to solve their problems and improve their prac-

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