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Art Teacher Learning Communities: Lessons Learned from Initiating, Building and Sustaining Professional Connections

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Abstract

This study examines the successes and challenges of initiating, building, and sustaining Art Teacher learning communities in Singapore, analysing cases at cluster (7–8 schools) and zonal (35–40 schools) levels. Drawing on social learning theory and communities of practice frameworks (Kneebone, 2020; Littlejohn, 2019; Koch & Fusco, 2008), the research employs case study methodology to investigate how networks serve as critical structures for collaboration, support, and pedagogical innovation—particularly for Art Teachers, who often work in small departments and experience professional isolation within a rapidly evolving educational landscape. Three cases form the basis of the analysis. The first examines a mature, ground-up community that has sustained engagement over several years, highlighting collaborative practices and intentional learning structures supported through both digital and low-tech approaches. The second investigates a dissolved community that, despite clear purpose and strong professional alignment, was unable to maintain momentum—identifying structural, relational, and contextual factors that hinder sustainability. The third presents a decentralised “oases model” that envisions a constellation of interconnected communities supporting art teachers across varying career stages. Two additional cases of emerging communities led by Art Teacher Leaders further illustrate how social learning principles and technology-mediated interactions can shape community-building efforts. The study contributes to ongoing discourse on designing resilient, inclusive, and discipline-specific learning communities for Art Teachers. Findings will also underscore the strategic importance of robust professional networks for teacher retention and growth, particularly amid anticipated manpower shortages and the increasing shift toward online professional learning.





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