PARAPROFESSIONALS AND REFUGEE SCHOOLING: A PRIMARY SCHOOL CASE STUDY

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Statement of Originality

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

(Signed) 

Name of Student: Nandini Dutta
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<tr>
<td>AITSL</td>
<td>Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership</td>
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<tr>
<td>CALD</td>
<td>Culturally and Linguistically Diverse</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAT</td>
<td>Creative Art therapy</td>
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<tr>
<td>EAL/D</td>
<td>English as an Additional Language/Dialect</td>
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<td>ESL</td>
<td>English as a Second Language</td>
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<tr>
<td>HDR</td>
<td>Higher Degree Research</td>
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<tr>
<td>ILC</td>
<td>Intensive Language Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>MDA</td>
<td>Multicultural Development Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>NAP</td>
<td>New Arrivals Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>QPASSTT</td>
<td>Queensland Program of Assistance to Survivors of Torture and Trauma</td>
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<tr>
<td>RPC</td>
<td>Responsible Planning Classroom</td>
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<tr>
<td>SEL</td>
<td>Social and Emotional Learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>SEP</td>
<td>Special Education Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNHCR</td>
<td>United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees</td>
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<td>US</td>
<td>United States</td>
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Abstract

This thesis examines the role of paraprofessionals in the provision of education for refugee students in a state school in Queensland. Paraprofessionals, often also referred to as home-liaison officers, are employed in schools to assist teachers in the provision of educational services to refugee students. Refugees are described as people who have been forced to leave their country because of persecution, war, violence or natural disasters (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2016). Paraprofessionals are often respected members of local communities, speak the same first language as the refugee students and are familiar with the cultural, religious and other aspects of their backgrounds. As a result, they are well placed to form meaningful bridges between home and school (Lewis, 2004) and to promote better understanding of refugee students’ needs within school settings. Keeping this in mind, this study explores the work of paraprofessionals in contributing to the flows of knowledge across the boundaries of home, school and the local community to enhance the educational outcomes of refugee students. Specifically, the thesis explores three interrelated questions, namely:

1. What school knowledge is selected and organised by paraprofessionals and communicated to refugee families?
2. What knowledge is selected and organised by paraprofessionals from local communities and refugee families and communicated to school staff?
3. How do paraprofessionals translate or recontextualize knowledge across the boundaries of school, home and local community?

This research project employed a case study research design which involved interviewing six paraprofessionals responsible for working with refugee students and their families in one primary school in Queensland. Additional data for the study was collected
through field notes including my own experience of working with refugee students, their families and paraprofessionals at the case study school.

The findings of the study revealed how the paraprofessionals who often work closely with refugee communities can assist teachers in understanding the unique needs of refugee students, developing a broader vision and thereby creating a conducive environment that can provide better educational outcomes. The project’s analysis uncovered the subtle ways in which paraprofessionals contribute in overcoming the barriers between refugee students and their new school environment facilitating cultural integration, positive relationships and sense of belonging.

This study has made new contributions to the empirical studies using Bernstein’s theoretical concepts while exploring the work of paraprofessionals in refugee children’s primary school education. The data analysis has revealed how the assimilation of instructional and regulative discourses can be profoundly influenced by new understandings of the ways in which paraprofessionals assist in the flows of knowledge between refugee students, their families, the school and the community.

This research study makes a significant contribution to the field of refugee education, revealing new ways to design pedagogic practices in collaboration with paraprofessionals, which will make a positive difference to refugee students’ educational outcomes. The research study has informed how the differences in the modes of pedagogy between home country and host country, as well as the socio-cultural differences in pedagogic practice, can influence the pedagogic discourse that may impede refugee students’ learning.

Despite adopting different strategies in bridging the gaps brought about by cultural and communication differences, several policy and practice recommendations emerge from the themes in this study that would further enable the paraprofessionals to act as
intermediaries between refugee students, their families and school communities to promote better understanding in the educational context.
Chapter 1 : Statement of the Research Problem and Its Significance

This chapter presents definitions of the terms used to describe the problem of this research study and outlines the context in relation to the problem and the significance of the study. The structure of the thesis is mentioned at the end of this chapter.

1.1 The Problem Defined

The research focus of this dissertation is refugee students and paraprofessionals who work with these students in a primary schooling context in Queensland. This research is about how paraprofessionals contribute to overcoming various barriers in the context of refugee schooling, and how paraprofessionals assist in flows of knowledge across the boundaries of home, school and the local community to enhance the educational outcomes of refugee students.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) classifies refugee as an individual who is outside his/her country of nationality or habitual residence and “owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion…. is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself/ herself of the protection of that country” (UNHCR, 2016, p. 14). This study employs this definition while acknowledging that it is not inclusive of all situations and experiences of forced migration. On arrival in Australia, refugee students and their families experience many challenges in adjusting to their new environment. The unfamiliarity of the Australian education system, coupled with pre- and post-migration experiences, create barriers to accessing and acquiring school curricula. While refugee students face many challenges within a system that is often completely foreign to them, the
education of this diverse student population also creates many challenges for schools and education departments.

Studies suggest that links or relations between home and school play a significant role in helping refugee children settle and do well in school (Vincent & Warren, 1998; Warren & Dechasa, 2001), and that these links provide opportunities for parents and their children to access support. Paraprofessionals, alternatively known as para-educators or home/community liaison officers are employed by schools to facilitate these links and to establish relations between the schools, students, their families and the local communities. These paraprofessionals are often deemed as having the requisite cultural and linguistic resources to undertake this bridging work. This research specifically explores the knowledge work that paraprofessionals undertake between refugee students, their families and the school communities to facilitate refugee students’ learning.

1.2 Context

1.2.1 The global context

Every year, millions of people are forced to leave their homelands to seek refuge from violent conflict or human rights abuses. According to the UNHCR, by the end of 2016 the number of refugees throughout the world was 65.6 million (UNHCR, 2016). When these refugees leave their homelands, they leave behind not just their homes but their families, social structures, cultural understandings and familiar environments. As they resettle in a new country, they need to reconstruct their lives and learn to navigate and adjust to an unfamiliar social and cultural environment and to overcome language barriers. Pugh, Every, and Hattam (2012) argued that while humanitarian aid tends to prioritize food, water, shelter and medical supplies, the skills and knowledge acquired through education is inextricably linked with the future security of individuals and societies. Education creates a sense of hope and belonging,
teaches self-reliance, helps to provide safe spaces for new encounters and to achieve stability, security and normalcy for refugee children through periods of stress and trauma (Matthews, 2008).

The school provides one of the first experiences for a new life for refugee children and their families in their new country. The school also plays a vital role in promoting equity and social justice for these vulnerable students, and is a stabilizing influence in the life of a refugee child (Matthews, 2008). Children, particularly, are more vulnerable to outside interference and they are less able than adults to reign in their emotional responses (Bunge, Dudukovic, Thomason, Vaidya, & Gabrieli, 2002; Gaillard et al., 2000). Children from refugee backgrounds have often lived through years of conflict and their education has been limited or disrupted (Jacobsen, 2006). Frequently, they have had no opportunities for formal schooling. Those who have some experiences of formal education, might have attended school sporadically due to a variety of reasons related to war, environmental disasters, civil unrest or political instability (Miller, Mitchell, & Brown, 2005). Moreover, the learning environment in any of these situations would have been very different from the formal schooling environment in their host country. As these students have gaps in their formal education, they are often unfamiliar with the conventions of a school or a classroom. They may not understand the expected behaviours that are usually taken for granted by other students who have been socialized into schooling since an early age.

Due to the reasons mentioned above, refugee students may also have difficulty accessing and acquiring school knowledge. As they may have limited experience in developing their analytic thinking skills, they may depend on adults’ examples of cognitive, social and emotional development in order to enhance their learning skills. Though parental support is crucial to a child’s education, many parents from refugee backgrounds are not able to provide the necessary assistance as they themselves have often had little access to
schooling. Moreover, the parents’ unfamiliarity with the school system of their host country, limited literacy and numeracy skills, and often limited English language skills, make them unable to help their children with school work. On the other hand, teachers’ insufficient knowledge of refugee students’ varied backgrounds, along with their inadequate understandings of cultural identities, may cause hindrances in teaching these students effectively (Standage, 2015; Taylor, 2008). To address more effectively the needs of these students, many schools have begun to use services provided by different settlement and community based agencies in order to facilitate collaboration between refugee families and schools.

1.2.2 The Australian context

Since 1996, Australia's humanitarian intake has remained steady at around 12,000 to 13,000 people per year. The exception happened in 2012-13 when the former Labor government increased its intake to 20,000. With the current crisis surrounding refugees from Syria, Australia is under pressure to ‘do more’ about this global issue. During 2015-16, the total number of people accepted by Australia under the refugee program was raised to 25,750 (Australian Broadcasting Corporation & RMIT University). Australian schools, particularly those servicing low socio-economic communities, are increasingly expected to cater for a culturally and linguistically diverse student population. One category of students which has contributed to this diversity are refugee students arriving in Australia on humanitarian visas. While it is difficult to find the exact statistics of the number of refugee students attending Queensland schools, approximately 31% of the total of 1,257 refugees who arrived in Queensland from 1st July, 2010 to the end of February 2011, were between 5 and 17 years of age. Around 42% of this population were from Asia, 27% from Africa and 31% from the Middle East, which includes Afghanistan (Multicultural Development Association, 2012). In
addition to experiencing the trauma of war and displacement, these students and their parents are unfamiliar with the Australian school system and often have limited literacy and numeracy skills in their first language. Additionally, they have limited English language skills. Refugee students are required to confront the challenges of learning a new language, negotiating unfamiliar customs and different expectations and understanding new and complex education services and systems. Thus, these students are highly likely to be disadvantaged when attending schools in Australia. So, the way in which a school identifies the specific needs of these children and develops appropriate intervention strategies plays an important role in the development of their feelings of belonging and acceptance in the host country, and contributes significantly to their adjustment and future success.

While explicit assistance is needed to meet the specific needs of refugee students, several studies (Brown, Miller, & Mitchell, 2006; Matthews, 2008; Pugh et al., 2012; Standage, 2015) have identified that teachers also need guidance and support to create a safe and predictable environment and to address different barriers to refugee students’ learning. Many teachers often feel ill prepared to meet the challenge of educating refugee students. Watkins, Lean, Noble, and Dunn (2013) recognized that the work of teachers with refugee students is complex. They argued that although policy documents detail the general responsibilities and expectations of these teachers, there are very few resources which can assist them to navigate the complexity of the job. There is very limited information suggesting how effectively the educational policies transfer to teachers, the major stakeholders or even the refugee students themselves (Sidhu & Taylor, 2007). While teachers may be broadly aware of the issues concerning refugees in Australia, deep consideration has not been given to how these issues can influence their everyday educational decisions and impact refugee students’ learning (Standage, 2015). Due to inadequate knowledge and understanding of the difficulties and experiences of refugees, teachers often misinterpret the
students’ and their families’ attempts to succeed through ways considered culturally inappropriate in their new environment (Hones, 2002; Trueba, Jacobs, & Kirton, 1990).

In this context, paraprofessionals, like, community liaison workers or educational cultural brokers, can play an important role in overcoming misunderstandings or miscommunications between teachers and students and their families. Paraprofessionals often play an important role in translating the academic subculture to the students and their families and the students’ subculture to the teachers and to the school community (Rueda & Genzuk, 2007; Yohani, 2013), thus facilitating the process of educating refugee students. However, these issues related to the specific needs of refugee students, and the different strategies required in order to meet their needs effectively, have been ignored by education policy makers who have focused more on migrants and multicultural education (Taylor & Sidhu, 2012). The educational needs of refugee students are either conflated with other students with English as an Additional Language background (EAL) or are not mentioned at all.

Furthermore, Australian education policies, programs and strategies reflect the findings of national and international research which shows that when schools, families and the communities work in partnership, students achieve better educational outcomes and refugee children are no exception. As argued by McBrien (2005) that parents’ involvement in children’s learning is a crucial factor in refugee students’ success. Yohani (2013) contended that collaboration between families and schools is vital when addressing the educational needs of children, especially for newcomer families who are confronted with various cultural and linguistic differences, and who have had limited exposure to learning in formal school systems. Researchers such as Rah, Choi, and Nguyễn (2009); Yoder and Lopez (2013) argued that although parents of refugee students are hopeful about engaging in their children’s education, they often fail to become actively involved because they feel marginalized. Refugee parents need support from people who can understand them, have
knowledge of refugee life and can help them to overcome feelings of marginalization. Keeping this in mind, this study investigates how paraprofessionals assist in flows of information between refugee students, their families and schools and how they might play a crucial role in the provision of inclusive education for refugee students.

1.2.3 The context of personal experience

My interest in this research study has emerged through my experiences of teaching refugee students during the last nine years. I have been teaching refugee students in a primary school that has more than 600 students from 30 to 40 cultures including students from Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Burma, Sudan, Congo, Burundi, Somalia and Tanzania. In such a multicultural school setting, the challenge is to value diversity, honour it with integrity and to preserve the cultural dignity of the students (Campbell-Jones, Lindsey, & Roberts, 2005). Through my hands-on experience in teaching refugee students, I see how migration experiences together with linguistic and socio-cultural differences, can negatively impact the process of communication, not only between students and teachers, but also between students and the wider community. Such communication difficulties, in turn have a great impact on students’ learning processes, as they adapt and settle into Australian society (Berry, 1997). I see how the community liaison officers can make these issues explicit, allowing schools, students and families to discuss their differences and similarities as they learn from each other. Due to insufficient knowledge and understanding about refugees, many people often assume that refugees are illiterate, but most refugees do have language skills, just not necessarily in English. I have discovered that refugee students are often keen observers because they want to fit in. But their traumatic past experiences, along with their linguistic and cultural differences, can make them hypervigilant. Often, they are afraid to leave the classroom and they become withdrawn and silent. They are afraid of being misunderstood and they prefer to
remain silent. Their silence is frequently misinterpreted as being an inability to learn. From my experiences, I have observed how liaison officers, or paraprofessionals, can contribute significantly, filling the gaps in communication between refugee students and teachers, which in turn helps to develop relationships of trust and connectedness.

As an international student studying in Australia, I also went through experiences which made me feel like an outsider, that ‘I did not belong’ (Dutta, 2017, p. 26). To some extent, I have walked in the shoes of refugee students. However, my migration from Kolkata, India, to Australia was not forced. I was not left homeless by war, nor traumatized by such experiences as many of the refugee students have had. In addition, I completed my tertiary level education studies in India, was proficient in the English language and had experience in a schooling system relatively similar to that of Australia. My edgy, embodied memory of a racialized minority student has led me to reflect deeply about how these refugee students must feel when they experience the isolation, anxiety or fear of being misinterpreted in their new schooling system. This concern has motivated me to write a recently published article (Dutta, 2017) focusing on the importance of building connections and trust between teachers and students in the process of learning. Based on my experiences as a student from a different cultural and linguistic background to mainstream Australia and my experiences as a teacher of refugee students in Australia, in this article I mentioned the importance of the teacher-student relationship. Trust can foster a positive relationship that enhances students’ learning skills, whereas criticism or misunderstanding can lead to a feeling of alienation. I understand the importance of creating safe, comfortable spaces for refugee students where they can find their voice and ameliorate feelings of powerlessness. This study builds on my previous article by exploring the knowledge work that paraprofessionals undertake between schools, refugee students and their families to facilitate refugee students’ learning with better educational outcomes.
1.3 Significance of the Study

This research study is intended to facilitate further discussion about the support and
development of collaboration between schools and local communities, which is critical in
educating refugee students. In the context of the increasing numbers of refugees and asylum
seekers in Australia, recognition of the importance of the school environment for the
promotion of successful settlement outcomes and the inclusion of young refugees is growing.
Yet schools may be poorly equipped to recognize and respond to the multiple challenges
faced by young people who must learn a new language while grappling with unfamiliar
educational and social systems. Much research into refugee education in Australia has
focused on the need for an integrated approach to the education and welfare of refugees, an
approach which includes parental and community involvement and one that works with
different community agencies (Cassity & Gow, 2005; Matthews, 2008; Pugh et al., 2012;
Taylor & Sidhu, 2012). Many schools are trying to find new ways to encourage the full
participation of refugee students by ensuring that misunderstandings about their involvement
and engagement do not occur.

Refugee students’ education in state schools in Queensland has also involved the
development of policies that consider home-school connections, trauma counselling and
group support strategies to enhance their educational outcomes (Watkins et al., 2013). While
these refugee students and their families may be keen to engage with regular academic and
social practices within schools, they face a dilemma in meeting the schools’ expectations.
Though, many parents often have high education aspirations for their children, parents from
refugee backgrounds may have had limited access to schooling themselves, have different
cultural expectations of parental engagement with schools, and may be unsure about the
contribution that they can make to their children’s education. They may need additional
time and intensive support to negotiate the range of challenges which they face on their resettlement. These challenges could include dealing with trauma and a disrupted education, adapting to a new culture and learning a new language.

Paraprofessionals, also referred to as para-educators, often play a key role in assisting teachers, refugee students and their families with the transfer of knowledge to improve communication, practice and relationships (Yohani, 2013). Today, many schools in Queensland are using paraprofessionals and other services provided by settlement and community based agencies to facilitate refugee students’ learning and enhance relational family-school collaboration. Many researchers have discussed the important role of paraprofessionals as school liaison workers or community workers in the context of refugee schooling (Matthews, 2008; Naidoo, 2009; Pugh et al., 2012; Taylor, 2008). However, none of the previous studies have addressed paraprofessionals’ perspectives of their roles or provided any insight into their role in creating connections among students, their families and schools. Several research studies have advocated that paraprofessionals, who often reside in the same community as their students, have the potential to act as bridges between refugee students, their families and school communities (French & Lou Pickett, 1997; Genzuk & Baca, 1998; Nittoli & Giloth, 1997; Pickett, 1989; Rubin & Long, 1994). This view is supported by more recent research which highlights the important role of school liaison workers in brokering the intercultural knowledge that is needed to be embedded in school culture, curriculum and policy (Matthews, 2008). Yet very little is known about the actual role of these paraprofessionals in community liaison or ‘connections’ in the context of refugee education.

There has been limited research into paraprofessionals’ accounts of their roles and responsibilities in the provision of refugee education, their contribution towards establishing links between refugee students, their families and school communities. This thesis aims to
address this gap in the research literature by focusing on the role of paraprofessionals in assisting with the communication flows between refugee students, their families and schools, and how their contribution might play a crucial role in the provision of refugee education.

1.4 Research Questions

The research focus is to examine how paraprofessionals contribute in maintaining and developing two-way communication between refugee students, their families and school communities with the common goal of enhancing refugee education. Specifically, the study investigates paraprofessionals’ contribution to flows of knowledge across the boundaries of home, school and local communities to enhance the educational outcomes of refugee students. The three research questions that the study addresses are as follows:

1. What school knowledge is selected and organized by paraprofessionals and communicated to refugee families?
2. What knowledge is selected and organized by paraprofessionals from local communities and refugee families and communicated to school staff?
3. How do they negotiate what is considered important knowledge to relay or communicate across these spaces?

1.5 Structure of the Thesis

The research thesis is structured in six chapters. Chapter 1 provides a statement of the problem. The research problem is defined, and the context impacting on refugee schooling, the significance of the study and aims of the research are discussed. Chapter 2 outlines the breadth and depth of the current literature that informs the research study. The literature review is grouped into the following categories: forced migration and educational outcomes,
the funding system and its impact on resources and pedagogies in relation to refugee schooling, educational policies and their impact on refugee schooling, social justice in pedagogical practice and a holistic approach towards refugee education and lastly, teachers’ perspectives and experiences of teaching refugee students. **Chapter 3** outlines a theoretical model for this study. The research problem of this dissertation necessitates a review of the relationship between power, symbolic control, knowledge and the transmission of knowledge. The study is influenced by Basil Bernstein’s theories (1975, 1990, 1996) on the selection, organization and distribution of school knowledge and his work on the relation between social class, modes of pedagogic practice and educational attainment. These theories and the place they have in this research study are explained in detail in Chapter 3. **Chapter 4** presents the research methodology which includes a justification for choosing a case-study for this research, a description of the case study school setting, participants in the study and data collection procedures. In **Chapter 5**, the collected data are analysed by applying the theoretical framework discussed in Chapter 3. **Chapter 6**, discusses, lists and comments on the data analysis from Chapter 5 and provides suggestions for further research.

In order to explore how the paraprofessionals can potentially make a contribution in the context of refugee schooling, a review of the literature related to different aspects that affect and influence refugee education is undertaken in Chapter 2.
Chapter 2  : Literature Review

To investigate the issues identified in Chapter 1, a review of the relevant literature is undertaken. This dissertation aims to analyse the role of paraprofessionals in assisting communication flows between refugee students, their families, and their schools, and how their contribution might play a crucial role in the provision of refugee education. The study also analyses the ways paraprofessionals select, organize and negotiate what is considered to be important knowledge to be relayed or communicated across these spaces.

The objective of this chapter is to review the existing literature in the context of refugee schooling in order to explore the complexity of issues facing refugee education and the importance of a comprehensive, whole school, integrated approach. Crucial to such an approach is the work of paraprofessionals who act as communicators between schools, families and local communities. This literature review examines the issues that challenge refugee students in the context of their schooling in Australia. Its focus is on the different aspects of forced migration and its impact on educational outcomes, the funding system and the educational policies that influence refugee schooling. It also focuses on the implications of social justice in pedagogical practices and a holistic approach towards refugee education. Lastly, this chapter focuses on the experiences and challenges faced by teachers in the context of teaching refugee students. The review analyses how a whole school integrated approach in conjunction with community organizations, might play a crucial role in providing refugee students with access to an equitable education.

2.1 Forced Migration and Educational Outcomes

This section discusses how the phenomenon of forced migration influences and determines the educational success of refugee students in Australia. Recent studies (Pugh et al., 2012)
have found that forced migration, which is distinct from economic migration, has become a prominent feature of global movements across borders and has increased dramatically in recent decades. As noted by Matthews (2008), refugee status is a legal and bureaucratic category and it encompasses people from a very broad range of national, linguistic, cultural, ethnic and racial backgrounds, all of whom have different experiences of forced migration. In investigating how state high schools, local communities and state and federal policies met the educational needs of young refugee students, Matthews (2008) observed that certain factors such as multilingualism, limited literacy in the mother tongue, unfamiliarity with English language, and interrupted schooling are common to many refugee students, but the cohort still cannot be assumed to be homogenous. This argument was asserted by Rutter (2006) with reference to the UK context when he argued that this generalisation has prevented detailed examination of pre-migration and post-migration factors. These factors are crucial in understanding the particular needs of refugee students in order to provide appropriate educational support. As discussed, lack of schooling and pre-migration experiences have severe consequences for refugee students’ language and literacy development. Some pre-migration factors include the length of time spent in refugee camps or as asylum seekers in other countries, the severe trauma of war, the absence of an intact family, the harsh and often insecure experiences in camps, interrupted schooling or no schooling. In addition, factors such as lack in literacy in the first language, lack in parental education, undernourishment and high levels of stress, inadequate opportunity to socialise, highly assertive and even aggressive behaviour and unrealistic expectations and goals also make each cohort of refugees very different (Miller et al., 2005) and have a dire effect on their learning outcomes. Furthermore, on arrival refugees experience financial hardship, accommodation difficulties, uncertainty about permanency of settlement, changing family circumstances and structures, unfamiliar bureaucratic procedures and limited prospects for employment (Burgoyne & Hull,
Research studies undertaken by Brown et al. (2006, pp. 150-162) suggest that as the education of these students is influenced not only by their pre-migration experiences but also their post migration experiences, these students face a “double disadvantage”. This can create some real challenges at different levels of the education system.

While interviewing refugee students in metropolitan Melbourne about their education experiences, Brown et al. (2006) found that the students struggled with subject-specific language, assumed cultural knowledge of school topics, the pedagogical approaches and practices used in Australian classrooms and the resources used. According to Tangen (2009), many teachers are often unaware of the processes of second language acquisition and may not adjust their expectations or their pedagogical practices in appropriate ways to take refugee students into account. Taylor and Sidhu (2012) examined forced migration and its links with globalisation and the barriers to inclusion which confront refugees. They observed that the specific needs of refugee students have been ignored by education policymakers, who have focused on migrant and multicultural education, and this has worked against their cultural, social and economic integration. They argued that the categorisation of refugee students as a homogenous group has been premised on an undifferentiated ethnoscape which has often significantly ignored the different learning needs and sociocultural adjustments faced by refugee students compared with those faced by migrants and international students.

The Community Relations Commission Report (2006) affirms that despite the overwhelming challenges faced by refugee students in the context of their schooling, these young people bring with them considerable personal strengths and potential to do well in their new environment. Two key elements identified as contributing to the optimism and self-esteem of young refugee people are family and community (Major, Wilkinson, Langat, & Santoro, 2013). But a gap that prevails in the literature is how the social, cultural and
emotional resources they bring to their settlement process are being used to support their educational achievements. Recent studies outlined by Standage (2015) also found that Queensland has never had an EAL policy or a refugee policy that can ensure consistent access to funding, programs or strategies effectively designed for refugee students. Standage (2015) also discussed the Multicultural Action Plan 2007-2008 that has supported the education of Cultural and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) students through developing an EAL policy. The policy’s purpose is to enhance access to quality service delivery for EAL clients throughout Queensland. The policy employs different community engagement strategies to enhance migrant and community understanding of EAL. Standage (2015) argued that despite the measures adopted by the Plan, a vacuum remains in the policy, which has resulted in uncertainty, inconsistencies and ambivalence around the education of refugee students.

2.2 The Funding System and its Impact on Resources and Pedagogies in Relation to Refugee Schooling

This section discusses and analyses the views of researchers about the system of complex funding mechanisms and appropriate resources and pedagogies that influence the process of the education of refugee students in Australia. While investigating policy and provision in relation to refugee education, Taylor (2008) found that the programs and funding to support refugee education came from multiple and fragmented sources such as the Commonwealth and states and also local government. She argued that while schools play a crucial role in supporting the transitions to belonging and citizenship for refugee students, this role requires more support from government and systems in the form of appropriate strategies and funding, and the provision of adequate resources. In this regard, Matthews (2008) also conducted a detailed study based on semi-structured and focus group interviews with policy makers in the
education sector and with community workers in the government and non-government agencies responsible for supporting refugee education. Reviewing the results of her study on refugee education, Matthews (2008) found that the funding mechanism the policymakers and agencies work with is overtly complex with very few English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers and without adequate resources or pedagogies required for working effectively with refugee students. This issue has been asserted by Taylor and Sidhu (2012), who argued that the funding system in many Queensland schools is based on a complex submission-based allocative model. Under such a model, schools are required to provide detailed information on teaching innovations to secure small grants to assist with refugee education. Taylor and Sidhu (2012) suggested that this funding policy system does not cater for the long-term education needs of refugee students. Supporting this view, Matthews (2008) contended that submissions are time-consuming, reactive and that they stymie strategic planning, and so a more rational way of funding refugee education is needed.

Taylor’s (2008) interview-based study into refugee education provisions found that ESL teachers bore the “brunt” of short-falls in funding. As she observed, many ESL teachers face difficulties and often feel ill-equipped to provide holistic support for refugee students’ needs, which are beyond their normal role of English language support and their usual pedagogical approach. Her interview study with the community sector revealed the increased complexity of tendering which seemed to give larger organisations competitive advantage. Despite these organisations’ inadequate expertise or experience necessary for refugee support, their corporate management strategies have seemed attractive to DIMA as they could employ specialist staff to write submissions. Standage (2015) found that since 2005, although the Queensland Government has provided additional resources to Queensland state schools under its Refugee Program, how this funding of works in individual schools is not transparent. She further stated that many teachers and schools are not aware of the amount of
funding for English as an Additional Language (EAL) provided, or how this funding is determined on the basis of students’ needs. She expressed her concern that this lack of transparency in funding, and its access, may mean that many refugee students are missing out on funding to which they are entitled. Importantly, Sidhu and Taylor (2007) noted that underfunding forces schools to seek support from community or other government or non-government agencies to deliver on needs other than educational needs. These range from school trips and uniforms to professional development and therapeutic interventions. In this context, Matthews (2008) argued that these inadequately resourced community agencies, are often encouraged to compete for scarce funding and partners; but these partnerships cannot be considered as replacements for comprehensive long-term educational projects and commitments to effective educational outcomes.

2.3 The Impact of Educational Policies on Refugee Schooling

Taylor and Sidhu’s (2012) study into policies and provisions for refugee students in Australia revealed that policies regarding multiculturalism have a major influence on the schooling of refugee students. These policies are targeted at promoting ethnic harmony in schools by making ethnic students feel that their cultures are respected within mainstream Australian schools. It has been found that the multicultural policies and programs of the 1970s still influence the system of refugee education in Australian schools. Noble and Watkins (2010) argued that the policies have not focused on the intercultural dynamism of the cultural identities of refugee students. Policies which only celebrate difference influence teachers’ perceptions of refugee students and their assumptions about these students’ abilities and attributes. Noble and Watkins (2010) focused on the need for new policies which assist teachers to navigate the complexities of cultural identities that influence refugee students’ learning. Noble (2011) further stated that policies and programs that encourage the examining
of the practices through which people negotiate cultural differences can prove to be more effective than policies which simply celebrate and respect diversity. In this context, it is important to mention that the increased focus on professional standards for teachers (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2014) highlights the importance of strategies that enhance teachers’ understanding of students’ diversities, which play a predominant role in framing their pedagogical decisions (Professional Standard One of the Australian Professional Standards, “Know students and how they learn”). The Standard’s aim is to interrogate how teachers’ understandings of cultural identity interact with their job of teaching in order to optimise the learning needs of refugee students. In addition to Queensland teachers’ ethical standards, national documents such as the National Goals for Young People also focus on teachers’ responsibilities in upholding diversity (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training & Youth Affairs, 2008). For instance, Goal One of the Australian Professional Standards promoting equity and excellence, clearly states that schools must, “provide all students with access to high-quality schooling that is free from discrimination based on gender, language, sexual orientation, pregnancy, culture, ethnicity, religion, health or disability, socioeconomic background or geographic location” (MCEEDYA, 2008, p. 7). Goal One also mentions that schools must “reduce the effect of other sources of disadvantages, such as disability, homelessness, refugee status and remoteness”, and must, “ensure that schooling contributes to a socially cohesive society that respects and appreciates cultural, social, and religious diversity (MCEEDYA, 2008, p. 7).

However, although major policy documents outline the expectations and responsibilities of teachers in relation to refugee students, researchers have found that the work of teachers who teach refugee students is complex and there are still not enough resources to assist teachers to effectively navigate through this complexity (Watkins et al., 2013). As claimed by Sidhu and Taylor (2007), accessible online materials for school policy and practice guidelines for
teaching practitioners do not include specific or explicit details about supporting refugee students; they are subsumed with other migrant students, or EAL or ESL learners, and the education of refugee students in Australia is being “left to chance”.


Pugh et al. (2012) provided another insight into the teaching of refugee students. They argued that schools and education departments have attempted to respond to the complex and diverse needs of refugee students through a variety of policies, practices and programs - for instance, the most widely implemented New Arrivals Program (NAP). However, the influence of contemporary neoliberal policies in education, which focus on competition, choice and performativity, undermines a commitment to social justice and create barriers to refugee students (Pugh et al., 2012). As claimed by Matthews (2008), over the last decade the Australian policy landscape has been fundamentally reshaped by neoliberal practices which have resulted in a shift from social responsibilities to self-managing autonomous individuals and market distribution. As Sidhu and Taylor (2007) highlighted the education market militates against the provision of a caring and welcoming learning environment for refugee students from a diverse background.

In this context, Rutter and Jones (1998) argued that the pressures resulting from the competition for high achieving students, coupled with a policy and consumer environment have led to the rejection of disadvantaged students in many schools. Supporting their view, Sidhu and Taylor (2007) argued that many Queensland state schools which market themselves to fee-paying international students often express their concern that within their schools, the presence of refugee students with complex educational needs may compromise their performance in the academic league tables. As a result, these schools may be less
attractive to fee-paying clientele. This questions the concern for social justice and, more precisely, educational justice. In this context, Matthews highlighted the need for theoretical directions to advance understandings of refugee education by providing a holistic whole school approach.

As advocated by many other researchers, discussions of holistic approaches that pay attention to school ethos, good induction procedures, community links, racism, pastoral care, English language support, and first language support are absent in Australia (Office for Standards in Education, 2003; Rutter, 2006). These researchers contended that such approaches create a welcoming environment enabling students to create a sense of self-worth and belonging, and at the same time giving them confidence to form new relationships and to make new friends. This, in turn, helps to promote intercultural understanding and enhance commitments to justice and equality. Thus, practical and emotional measures that do not overstate vulnerability and helplessness but build on strength and resilience are required through whole school interventions (Matthews, 2008). In contrast to the findings of the researchers mentioned above, Taylor and Sidhu (2012) found through their more recent research that social justice has been adopted by many schools as the key factor to support the educational needs of refugee students. The schools they included in their study have established comprehensive support systems to address the learning, social and emotional needs of the refugee students and their families. In their holistic approach to the delivery of education, they also noted the importance of fostering links with the community and inter-agency collaborations through different activities. For instance, schools may utilise school interpreters to provide key information in different languages, use teacher aides and liaison staff to work with parents and the broader community and organise programs that empower parents to participate in their children’s education.
2.5 The Challenges Faced by Teachers of Refugee Students

Recent studies outlined by Standage (2015) suggested that teaching pedagogy, significantly, involves the relationship between teaching and learning. This relationship influences teachers to think about students’ varied needs and cultural identities and then reflect on their understandings to negotiate ways to best design learning and teaching. Several researchers have argued that most refugee students are unfamiliar with the pattern of the workings in schools, and they have not had the scope to develop the metacognitive skills or social and cultural understandings that are assumed of students (Anderson, 2004; Cassity & Gow, 2005; Freebody, Maton, & Martin, 2008). In this context, it is important to investigate the approaches used by teachers working with refugee students. While investigating four Australian schools, the features that emerged to Taylor and Sidhu (2012) as specifically important for educating refugee youth were school ethos and an inclusive approach. These features highlighted the importance of maintaining an appropriate balance between students by providing adequate support for the specific needs of the refugee students without “othering” them.

Standage (2015) contended that the challenge for teachers who teach refugee students is to provide them with an environment where students feel they can speak fearlessly. Therefore, to work with diverse students in a collaborative way, teachers must know how to employ the pedagogy that establishes and builds on being social. As suggested by (Hattam, 2007, p. 3), “the experience that refugee students have in schools is very much determined by the way that refugees are thought about and represented in the public culture”. This promotes the idea that teachers should not simply reproduce practices in the classroom but they also need to negotiate the public discourses alongside educational policy, curriculum documents and their own personal understandings about the diverse needs of refugee students (Standage, 2015). Reviewing the results of her research, Standage concluded that the ways in which
cultural identity is accounted for by teachers in a refugee-inclusive classroom, and the ways in which understandings of cultural identity inform pedagogies, have not been explored in greater depths in the teaching-learning context of refugee education.

Gentemann and Whitehead (1983) stated that as the rules in a system are often implicit and not clearly articulated, they are often learned over time by taking part in the system. Students born and raised in the mainstream culture may start learning these rules in their home and then continue learning them throughout their schooling. Bourdieu (2011) referred to this skill of acquiring knowledge, experience, and social connection that helps certain individuals to succeed over less experienced individuals as cultural capital.

Supporting this view, Yohani (2013) argued that refugee students are often placed at a disadvantage as they lack this cultural capital needed to navigate through the educational system of their host country. She contended that educational brokers often offer practical assistance and support to students to acquire cultural capital. A substantial body of research literature (Gentemann & Whitehead, 1983; Rueda & Genzuk, 2007) suggested that paraprofessionals or educational cultural brokers can contribute to the translation of academic subculture to refugee students and their families on behalf of schools and also the students’ subculture to the schools on behalf of the students’ families. Yohani (2013) argues that because language translation helps in facilitating the communication between speakers of different languages, similarly, cultural translation also eases communication between schools and students and their families. But debate exists about the importance of paraprofessionals or educational brokers who share a similar cultural heritage with the students with whom they work. Lewis (2004) argued that though this may seem to be a simplistic approach, it takes more than a common language and culture to form meaning bridges with student families. This has been emphasized by several researchers (Singh & Sinclair, 2001), who have contended that paraprofessionals need to possess cultural sensitivity and a thorough
understanding of the group’s cultural norms to enable them to promote better understanding between schools and families.

While focusing on the practical approaches to teaching refugee students, Miller et al. (2005) argued that the common teaching techniques such as an over-reliance on note taking or video watching have been found to be ineffective and difficult for refugee students due to their lack of literacy skills and lack of understanding about the processes of these techniques. This concept was further supported by Naidoo (2009), who concurred in her writing on pedagogic action and stated that teachers need to be more aware not to engage in any actions that unwittingly disempower students. Even immersion and mainstreaming practices are of prime concern as argued by Matthews (2008, p. 36)“because they just can’t do the work in class”. While investigating how State high schools are meeting the educational needs of refugee students, she found that even with systematic support, refugee students can’t cope with the mainstreaming practices because they are new to the power dynamics of literate cultures. This unsuccessful integration may result in frustration and alienation and may become a major hindrance to their learning process. As mentioned in an early research, taken-for-granted literate practices encapsulated in everyday classroom practices may not prove to be very appropriate for refugee students (Luke & Freebody, 2003).

Taylor (2008) while interviewing teachers in state high schools in Brisbane found that the teachers were struggling to cope with the diverse needs of the increased numbers of refugee students. She claimed insufficient resources as the major problem which has resulted in shortages of ESL and general teaching staff and a lack of professional development appropriate to the needs of the refugee students. While discussing about the type and quality of teacher professional development, Standage (2015) found that teacher professional development that is based on co-inquiry and co-problem solving, and that helps teachers to think about social justice, cultural identity and linguistic diversity with conceptual toolkits,
can prove to be more effective in shifting classroom practices in wider schooling cultures. This reflects what Ball (2012) has suggested that there is a gap between what educational researchers know and what is actually happening at the grass roots of education. He asserts that teachers need to be able to learn about useful concepts that would enable them to improve their teaching of refugee students in more practical and meaningful ways.

Pugh et al. (2012) conducted an ethnographic study of a South Australian primary school that has positioned itself within the whole school reform approach. They found that although that school implemented different strategies for skilling teachers working with refugee students, the structural aspect of the school’s response to the needs of the refugee students is also shaped by government teacher placement policies and funding. Thus, policy directives sometimes limit individual schools’ freedom to appoint appropriate teachers. Besides, Pugh et al. (2012) also claim that many effective teachers are sometimes lost due to their short term appointment because their appointment is based on student numbers in NAP (New Arrival Programs) which constantly fluctuate. As rightly observed by Taylor and Sidhu (2012), policy reform that appoints teachers based on their skills to NAP schools, needs to allow for a more stable teaching body in order to support localised school reforms. While analysing the teacher interview data, Miller et al. (2005), noted that teachers, besides feeling ill equipped with the strategies and resources to cope with the demands of refugee students, also feel tense relationships between ESL language school staff and high school mainstream staff. The tension centred on the different roles and expectations within these two school contexts. So, these researchers are of the opinion that in order to avoid such negative constructions, it is important to name the pedagogical strategies, professional learning needs, and policy responses relevant to this critical situation.

This literature review has highlighted the various issues faced by the refugee students in their schooling context and how could the schools provide a whole-school approach
towards refugee schooling. However, how the schools utilise community involvement and liaison workers and enhance their participation to meet the different learning needs and sociocultural adjustments faced by refugee students and how this approach is supported by the current policies and provisions, has not been explored in any great depth within educational settings. This is the case especially within the refugee schooling context. So, this research project aims to explore how paraprofessionals can contribute in linking the flows of information between refugee students, their families and their school towards providing the intensive support needed by refugee students. It also explores how their role might prove to be crucial in the provision of inclusive education for refugee students.

In trying to understand the role of paraprofessionals in the provision of inclusive education for refugee students, specifically through communication flows between teachers, students, parents and local communities, a theory that encapsulates pedagogic communication is needed and this is discussed in detail in Chapter 3, Theoretical Framework.
Chapter 3 : Theoretical Framework

This study examines the role of paraprofessionals in relation to refugee education. Specifically, the study explores the knowledge work that paraprofessionals undertake between the school, the refugee students and their families in a case study context of one primary school in South-East Queensland. This study examines how the organization and distribution of knowledge affects the schooling of refugee students. The research problem is focused on how the knowledge that the paraprofessionals bring into the school and out of the school is included or excluded from the official pedagogic discourse of the school or classroom and how it contributes towards effective schooling of refugee students. Basil Bernstein’s theories of pedagogic discourse (1975, 1990, 1996, 2000) are used as a basis for developing conceptual categories for data analysis in this study.

3.1 Pedagogic Discourse

Bernstein’s theory of pedagogic discourse (1990, 1996) provides concepts for exploring, understanding and defining learning in social contexts. It provides a framework for exploring how interactions in learning can create, legitimize and reproduce boundaries between different stakeholders to produce punctuations in social space. In his theory of pedagogic discourse, Bernstein focused on the ways in which discourse, especially the discourse concerning education, functions in society and its important role in maintaining social order. His theories highlighted the ways in which the structure of social relationships influences the structure of communication. In turn, how the structure of communication shapes people’s consciousness and identity – particularly through the curriculum.

Bernstein’s theories of pedagogic discourse form the foundation of this research. This study examines how the structure of social relationships between refugee students, their
families and the school community influence the structure of pedagogic communication, as perceived by paraprofessionals in a primary schooling context. As a significant element of pedagogic practices in the context of refugee schooling, social interaction is a key point of exploration in this research. This study aims to identify the salient features of pedagogy that may address the educational disadvantage experienced by refugee students in the schools of their host country. It explores how paraprofessionals can facilitate the communication of school knowledge between refugee students, their families and the local community, and in turn how they can facilitate the communication of local community or place-based knowledge into the school. These processes of knowledge communication significantly influence how the pedagogic discourse is shaped, and it is critical in educating refugee students.

Bernstein defined pedagogic discourse as the form of communication which transforms and links other discourses to successfully transmit the acquisition of school knowledge (1996). Thus, the principles of selection, adaptation and modification of knowledge and discourses that suit the specific needs of the learners are at the centre of the pedagogic discourse. Bernstein’s theory establishes pedagogic discourse as a set of principles that embeds two discourses: instructional discourse and regulative discourse. Instructional discourse is mainly concerned with knowledge selected for teaching and learning. It is “concerned with the transmission/acquisition of specific competences”. Regulative discourse is “concerned with the transmission of principles of order, relation and identity” (Bernstein, 1990, p. 211). Thus, regulative discourse generates the principles of selection and organisation of knowledge and skills, and how they are sequenced and paced for the purposes of teaching and learning. In this study, regulative discourse refers to the ways in which paraprofessionals can assist in shaping the discourse allowing refugee students to adapt in the context of their learning.
As stated earlier, pedagogic discourse is comprised of both instructional and regulative discourse. As instructional discourse becomes embedded with regulative discourse in schools, regulative discourse becomes dominant. Regulative discourse, as a discourse of social order, influences instructional discourse in the selection of knowledge, skills and competencies. Regulative discourse also influences how instructional discourse is produced in the learning context. Thus, regulative discourse “provides the rules of internal order of the instructional discourse” (Bernstein, 1996, p. 49). Hence, it plays an important role in determining what is selected and how it should be sequenced and paced for successful transmission. This recontextualizing process creates one pedagogic text from the two constituents of pedagogic discourse: instructional discourse and regulative discourse. In this way, pedagogic discourse becomes the recontextualized discourse that “selectively appropriates, relocates, refocuses and relates other discourses to constitutes its own order” (Bernstein, 1996, p. 47). However, during this process of recontextualization, a discourse may fail to maintain its original discursive form, or it may potentially provide space for the original discourse to change to suit the needs and abilities of learners (Exley, 2005). This perspective provides a way of understanding how successful teaching and learning might occur in a refugee inclusive classroom. Here, knowledge can be recontextualized to suit the needs of refugee students in a primary schooling context.

In their analysis of Samoan students’ narratives of schooling, Singh and Sinclair (2001) claim that ‘recontextualising agents’ who constitutes the pedagogic discourse includes community representatives, as well as curriculum producers and teachers. This study analysed how paraprofessionals, including community liaison officers, community hub leader and refugees’ case workers, act as recontextualising agents. In the context of refugee schooling, these paraprofessionals influence the regulative discourse. This regulative discourse operates not only at the level of general school objectives and rationales, but also
through administrative practices, disciplinary measures and organisation of space and time. This study examined how paraprofessionals assist refugee students, their families and the school with the development of a pedagogic discourse that responds to the needs of refugee students.

In this context of refugee schooling, pedagogic discourse is guided by three interrelated hierarchical rules which enhance or restrict the realization of forms of identity. These rules have the potential to affect positive communicative outcomes for students who are identified as refugees. First, there are the distributive rules which regulate the power relationships between different social groups by distributing different forms of knowledge. Thus, these rules constitute different orientations to pedagogic identities. Second, there are the recontextualizing rules that regulate the formation of a specific pedagogic discourse which no longer resembles its original discursive form. These rules are for “delocating a discourse, for relocating it, for refocusing it” (Bernstein, 1996, p. 47) Thus, recontextualizing rules regulate the theory of instruction from which the rules of transmission are derived (Clark, 2005). Third, there are the evaluative rules, which regulate the transmission and acquisition of pedagogic knowledge. These rules are interrelated and hierarchically related because recontextualizing rules are derived from distributive rules, whereas evaluative rules are derived from the recontextualizing rules and there are also power relationships between them. Thus, these rules influence the distribution of power and the principles of control between different agents of pedagogic discourse within the primary schooling context. These rules play an important role in understanding the generation, production and reproduction of legitimate principles which regulate communicative practices in the context of refugee schooling.

Bernstein and Solomon (1999, p. 267) contend that pedagogic relations are constituted within principles of communication “where there is a purposeful intention to
initiate, modify, develop or change knowledge, conduct, practice by someone… who already possesses or has access to the necessary resources and the means of evaluating acquisition”.

A moral discourse involving the arbitrary social order and relations between agents, that is, teachers, paraprofessionals and students, is an integral part of pedagogic discourse. Thus the conduct, character and manner of these agents are constituted by the principles of moral discourse. So, any contradictory or conflicting moral discourse related to appropriate conduct, character and manner of teachers and students may be recontextualised by different members of the community. According to Bernstein (1996), the process of recontextualization opens a space for changes in the power and control relations in pedagogic communication. This, in turn, leads to changes in ideological meaning. Through this concept of recontextualization, this study analyses how the dominant power and control relations influence the practices of pedagogic communication. These practices, in turn, regulate cultural reproduction and change. Based on this discourse, this study primarily focuses on how paraprofessionals contribute to establishing and maintaining the social order and relations in framing pedagogic practice in the context of refugee schooling. The study examined how paraprofessionals can contribute to the movement of discourses between the school, refugee students and their families to facilitate refugee schooling.

In the field of recontextualization of pedagogic discourse, Bernstein (1996, 2000) highlighted the importance of distinguishing the transformation between two texts in the schooling context. The first is the transformation of knowledge from the field of production to make it appropriate in the official field of recontextualization. The second is the adaption of pedagogised knowledge by teachers and students in the recontextualizing field of the classroom. As Singh (2001b) stated, in the process of recontextualizing, teachers may use the help of the families/communities to make the regulative moral discourse more appropriate for students’ learning. Conversely, parents/family/community can exert influence on this
recontextualizing field and this may affect students’ learning outcomes. Based on this theoretical construct, the intention of this research is to explore how these transformations occur in the context of refugee schooling. Are refugee parents/communities contributing in this process? How can paraprofessionals contribute in linking the school and the home/community, teachers and refugee families in this process of recontextualizing knowledge? How do paraprofessionals ensure curricular justice for refugee students?

Bernstein has highlighted the need for a comprehensive model of pedagogic communication to ensure curricular justice. In this context, he contended that pedagogic communication needs to be socially just and democratic. This is only possible when parents and students feel that they are a part of their school and that their interests are being taken care of. To meet these conditions, three interrelated rights must be institutionalised in schooling practices: enhancement, inclusion and participation (Singh, 1997). Enhancement is possible when social, intellectual and personal boundaries are unlimited and new possibilities are accessible. This means that parents can access the best knowledge that the educational system can provide. The second right is the right to be included, socially, culturally and individually, which means the right to have a personal identity. The third right constitutes the right to participate in constructing and maintaining pedagogic communication. But how can these rights be fulfilled in the context of refugee schooling? Refugee parents’ limited knowledge of the education system, and their linguistic and socio-cultural differences, have constrained their participation in their children’s education. Who can mediate between home and school to establish effective democratic pedagogic communication? In the light of this question, this study examines how paraprofessionals can assist refugee students’ parents in fulfilling these interrelated rights to enhance the learning outcomes of their children. In this context, this study explores how power and control relations between home, school and
community structure the communication channels, and influence and establish legitimate forms of communication in the context of refugee schooling.

3.2 Principles of Power and Control

Bernstein’s framework has made it possible to understand and specify how and why issues and difficulties are formed at the level of the acquirer during interpretation (1996). He introduced a framework for classification and framing to enable the examination of power relations between different categories in pedagogic discourse. Bernstein focused on the necessity to examine the symbolic boundaries that insulate the forms of knowledge. This, in turn, assists in interpreting or understanding the power relations between different categories. His theories highlight the ways in which the principles of power (classification) and control (framing) constitute pedagogic relations which create, legitimise and reproduce boundaries between different categories of groups, different categories of discourse and different categories of agents. “Boundaries provide possibilities, potential space for power positions, oppositions, and strategies’ (Diaz, 2001, p. 84). This theoretical construct is useful for this research as it helps in examining how power and control relations in a refugee schooling context create, legitimize and reproduce boundaries which influence refugee students’ learning.

Bernstein identified classification and framing as the two most important components which are very much interrelated in the structuring of pedagogic discourse. As he said, “……… control establishes legitimate communications, and power establishes legitimate relations between categories (2000, p. 5). Thus, classification refers to the strength of insulation between symbolic boundaries, and framing refers to the control relations of interaction within and between symbolic boundaries. So, classification is the relation between different categories which is determined by the insulation between different categories. For
Bernstein, a category can only be a category when it can be related to other categories (Burke, Crozier, & Misiaszek, 2016). This classification can be strong or weak. Strong insulation is characterised by distinctive features and explicit boundaries, whereas this distinctiveness is reduced when the insulation is weak. These concepts and ideas support the premise of this project as it explores why, what and how the insulation of boundaries is created in the context of refugee schooling and its implications for pedagogical practices.

While analysing Bernstein’s concept of classification at the micro level of the classroom, Morais (2002) found that it is extremely important to establish a close relationship of communication between academic and non-academic discourses. This is important as it has the potential to make knowledge more meaningful and more applicable to the needs of the students. Morais (2002) argued that this is particularly important for disadvantaged children, as they are primarily socialised into strong classifications between home and school. This concept is useful to this study, as it examines how the strong classification between home and school impacts upon refugee students’ learning.

Bernstein (2000) referred to framing as the process by which communication in pedagogic relations can be regulated or legitimised. “Framing is about who controls what” (Bernstein, 2000, p. 12). In this study, framing or principles of control, refers to the communication relations within the school (between teachers, refugee students and paraprofessionals) and the home/community (between refugee children, parents and the paraprofessionals), and it also includes the relations between these institutions (Singh, 1997). Through the structuring of pedagogic work between the school, refugee families and the local community, paraprofessionals attempt to address the unequal distribution of discursive resources in the context of refugee schooling. The term ‘discursive discourse’ refers to the complex symbolic system of information, including both instructional discourse, that is, the content and skills of various kinds and regulative discourse, which, constitutes the style and
manner of knowledge production, transmission and acquisition (Bernstein, 2000; Singh, 2000). This paper explores the potential consequences of different modes of pedagogic communication in terms of redressing the distribution of resources in the context of refugee schooling.

Based on Bernstein’s beliefs, Singh (2001a) asserted that through relations of power, the categories of pedagogic agents are established. These are the categories of those who interact in pedagogic communication (the teachers-students, and the parents-children), the categories of informational resources transmitted in these interactions, and the categories of institutional contexts (family, community and school). In this study, power relations refer to the strength of insulation between the symbolic categories, such as between the teachers, paraprofessionals, refugee students and their families. Power relations also refer to forms of knowledge (transmitted through the contexts of school, refugee families and local community), and spatial and temporal contexts (organization of time and space in refugee families, community and the school).

The principles of power and control at the organisational level is determined by the distributive rule of the pedagogic discourse. This distributive rule influences the relationship between power, social groups, forms of understanding and practice through distribution of forms of identity knowledge. Therefore, this distributive rule influences the consciousness of pedagogic or educational identities. In this context, Bernstein (1975) provided a theoretical framework in relation to the description and analysis of pedagogic encounters. These encounters regulate the realisation of what is considered as legitimate text, context and interaction, and how one particular group may come to control power relations at the organisational level of socialisation. Recent studies (Singh & Dooley, 2001) have suggested that students who do not recognise the principles of power and control structuring the context of communication within the classroom are likely to experience difficulties in
meeting the teacher’s criteria of ‘competence’. Similarly, a teacher may also misread the ‘competence’ displayed by a student if it does not meet the regular conventions of the classroom communicative context. This conceptual framework is extremely important for this study as it explores the ways in which paraprofessionals contribute to refugee students’ learning. Paraprofessionals help these students and their families to recognise the principles of power and control in the context of schooling of refugee students. They help to bridge the gap between refugee students, their families and the schooling system, resulting in better educational outcomes.

Bernstein contends that each person possesses an analogic potential that contributes to expanding one’s repertoire from the known to the new. An important responsibility of the school is to facilitate the expansion of each student’s repertoire to incorporate more and more of the culture’s reservoir of potential meanings (Martin & Rose, 2013). For some students, the expansion of their skills builds steadily in sync with the curriculum sequence of the school. For other students, this may take time and external support. For refugee students with little or no formal schooling and, vast socio-linguistic differences, establishing and utilizing the skills that are needed in their educational context demands extra time and special support. This study explores how paraprofessionals assist refugee students to establish and expand the skills which are crucial to their learning. This research project seeks to understand the influential learning connections between refugee students, their families and the school. This study also seeks to understand how the paraprofessionals mediate these communication flows between families and the school, and vice versa. Through this study, the intention is to explore paraprofessionals’ contributions to inclusive school pedagogy. The study will examine the ways in which paraprofessionals assist with the development of a pedagogy that is responsive to the needs of the refugee students, thereby producing effective outcomes.
As noted in the literature review in Chapter 2, an understanding of refugee students, of their cultural and socio-linguistic differences, and of their pre- and post-migration experiences, plays a crucial role in designing pedagogical practices to teach these students more effectively. Standage’s study (2015) revealed that often what the teachers think would benefit the refugee students is the reverse of what these students feel they would need to participate fully in their classroom or their school lives. She argued that teachers need more extensive support in order to be able to understand the cultural identity of refugee students, and to interrogate the issues of misrecognition and misrepresentation. They need assistance in creating deliberative pedagogical practices that include social learning. But what has not been discussed in previous literature is how paraprofessionals can contribute to this social learning, how the relations between school and community can impact pedagogical practices, or how schools can deploy paraprofessionals’ skills. An understanding of these issues is vital in assisting refugee students to avoid misrecognition and misrepresentation which impact upon inclusive pedagogical practices.

Bernstein’s theory of pedagogic discourse (1996) is the central matrix within which many scholars have examined and analysed students’ learning in relation to the sociological characteristics of the contexts of family and school contexts. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Singh (2001b), and Singh and Dooley (2001) used Bernstein’s theory of pedagogic discourse to analyse the accounts of pedagogic work provided by Samoan paraprofessionals in the context of Samoan students’ schooling. Smith and Sadovnik (2010) used Bernstein’s perspective to examine the social mores teachers adopt to construct their role as instructors and facilitators, and their impact on the development of cognitive and non-cognitive skills in young children. Through Smith and Sadovnik’s (2010) study, it is apparent that the notions of cultural deprivation and cultural differences along with language differences can profoundly influence the teaching of young children.
Whatman (2004) used Bernstein’s theory to investigate the nature of community participation in producing good outcomes for Indigenous students. Her study revealed how the unequal power and control relations between different stakeholders including students impact pedagogic decision making. She contended that teachers need to acquire knowledge about students’ cultural background and education aspirations from the perspectives of students’ families/communities. This, in turn, contributes in negotiating the regulatory discourse through an integrated curriculum comprising contents “that stand in open relation to each other”, without strong boundaries (Bernstein, 1975).

Barrett (2017) used Bernstein’s notion of classification and framing to examine the reasons for gaps in educational achievements among students in urban schooling. He contended that children’s academic and social success in school is influenced by their level of acquisition of “recognition” and “realization” rules (Bernstein, 2000). This depends on how the students are supported by an “open” relationship with their teachers and peers “where reasons for contents, competences, and procedures are explained and discussed” (Morais & Neves, 2001, p. 214). Particularly, in terms of communicative relations between students and teachers, the facilitation of a weakened framework can therefore give students some control and flexibility in the timing of knowledge acquisition.

Several scholars have deployed Bernstein’s theories in relation to understandings of inclusive curriculum and pedagogy for students attending schools which service disadvantaged communities. No research, however, has explored how Bernstein’s theoretical framework can be utilised in investigating the ways in which paraprofessionals organise or re-organize pedagogic work in the context of refugee schooling. Thus, this study offers a new contribution to the research field.

Thus, the theoretical concepts discussed in this chapter serve as a model for analysis of the problem that is identified in this dissertation. In terms of the research problem,
Bernstein’s (Bernstein, 1975) concept of power and control relations in recontextualising pedagogic discourse has been used to analyse the strength of boundaries between school, home and community in the context of refugee schooling. In addition, the pedagogical relations between teachers, paraprofessionals, refugee students and their families and how these relations impact refugee schooling have been analysed using Bernstein’s framework.

The following chapter, Chapter 4, provides a description of the setting and participants. Chapter 4 also describes the research methodology that has been employed to collect the data to explore the problem of this research study.
Chapter 4 : Research Methodology

This study explores the role of paraprofessionals in contributing to the flows of knowledge across the boundaries of home, schools and local communities, and how their contribution might play a crucial role in the provision of refugee education. Specifically, it examines how the paraprofessionals select, organize, translate or recontextualize knowledge across school, home and local community boundaries. The research has adopted a case study approach to frame the data collection for this project.

This chapter, Research Methodology, is structured in five parts: the research design; data collection tools and the justification for them; description of the context of the case study school; participants in the study and recruitment; and data analysis procedures. The section on research design outlines the rationale for adopting a case study approach for this study. The next section on data collection describes the methods employed for the collection of data. This section also outlines the justification of a case study approach and mentions the benefits of adopting a teacher-as-researcher approach. A detailed description of the context of the study is outlined in the third section of the chapter. The fourth section specifies the reasons why the six chosen paraprofessionals were considered as potential participants in this research study and the recruitment process adopted. Finally, the last section of the chapter discusses the data analysis procedures used to explore the research problem.

4.1 Research Design

The aim of this study is to explore paraprofessionals’ contributions to refugee schooling in one case study school in Queensland. The study is based on paraprofessionals’ experience in their regular dealings with refugee students, their families and the school community. This study has specifically chosen the case study approach for its ability to explain, describe and
explore events in everyday contexts (Yin, 2009), to provide “an in-depth exploration and description of the issue and to comment on the issues and reflect on the main points” (Fry, Kettridge, & Marshall, 2008).

The most important goal of case study research is to conduct an in-depth analysis of an issue with the aim of understanding the issue from the perspective of the participants (Merriam, 2009; Simons, 2009; Stake, 2006; Yin, 2014). This study analysed the work and experiences of paraprofessionals in the context of refugee schooling. Like any other form of qualitative research, in a case study, the researcher seeks to explore, understand and present the participants' perspectives and get close to them in their natural setting (Creswell, 2013). In this present study, I have explored the ways in which the work of paraprofessionals contributes to the flows of knowledge across the boundaries of the home, the school and the local community, thereby enhancing the educational outcomes of refugee students.

An important distinction between case study design and other qualitative approaches is that a case study is defined by the unit of analysis, whereas most of the other approaches are defined by the focus of the study (Merriam, 2009). For instance, when a researcher is interested in the lived experience of a phenomenon, they may prefer to pursue a phenomenological framework, or when a researcher is trying to generate a theory about a process, they may adopt a grounded theory framework (Starks & Trinidad, 2007). On the other hand, when a researcher is interested in a particular unit of analysis, for example, a group of individuals, program, a community or specific policies, then the most appropriate method would be a case study (Merriam, 2009). This view is further asserted by Yin (2009), who affirms that the case study design is best suited for research studies that answer “how” and “why” questions. For my study, a case study approach was appropriate given that this study explores “how” paraprofessionals contribute to refugee schooling and “why” it is important/ needed in refugee educational context.
Moreover, findings revealed through a case study approach provide detailed
descriptions of multiple variables and interactions that can lead to new insights (Merriam, 2009). The aim of these findings is not just to test theories but to acquire new information that gives opportunities to expand readers’ knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon. Readers can extend their knowledge of a particular case through gaining new information that may have not been previously accessible. These new findings may help to expand theories, influence policies and inform future research (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2009). Information regarding the ways paraprofessionals assist in communication flows between schools, refugee students and their families may help all stakeholders to better understand the conditions needed to generate inclusive education practices.

The next section outlines the use of interviews for data collection and provides justification for this study. It also discusses the benefits of my position as a teacher researcher in this study.

4.2 Data Collection

This section details the data collection methods and their justification, and outlines my position as an insider-researcher while undertaking this study.

4.2.1 Methods and justification

Case study researchers use different instruments for data collection and data production. These methods include interviews, observations and collation of written documents and other artefacts from a specific research site (Thomas, 2011; Yin, 2014). This study has selected semi-structured interviews as the primary method of data collection. One of the primary goals of this study was to understand how the participants (paraprofessionals) made meaning of their experiences while assisting in flows of information between refugee students, their
families and the school in the provision of inclusive refugee education. This is difficult to accomplish through structured interviews or questionnaires, as they may tend to pre-specify the range of responses that might be elicited. In this context, Esterberg (2002) commented that semi structured interviews are less rigid in nature than structured interviews, allowing for a freer exchange between the interviewer and the interviewee. Thus, the flexible nature of semi-structured interviews allowed me to change the sequence and forms of questions in order to follow up on specific information provided by the respondents.

In semi-structured interviews, the researcher has the scope to prompt, probe and ask questions as the situation or the flow of conversation demands and this helps to “elucidate and illuminate that particular subject” (Patton, 2002, p. 434). This form of interview has helped me to establish a conversational style, to word questions spontaneously and even to rephrase questions if the respondents were not clear about them. The interviews were conducted individually with the aim of gaining an in-depth understanding of each participant’s experiences.

Kvale (2008) contended that the form of open questions in semi-structured interviews helps in obtaining more detailed descriptions and interpretations of some phenomenon in respect to the life-world. In the case of my study, this was constituted by the role of paraprofessionals in providing inclusive refugee education. The use of open questions encouraged the respondents to provide extensive and developmental answers that helped me to establish the facts related to the problems this study is attempting to solve.

Additional data for the study was collected through field notes, including my own professional experience of working with refugee students, their families and the paraprofessionals at the case study school.
4.2.2 Benefits of teacher-as-researcher

Through this research study, I examined paraprofessionals’ roles in the pedagogic context of refugee schooling within a case study primary school where I am employed as a teacher. Hopkins (1994) encouraged teachers to involve themselves in research, as he believed that researching the pedagogic context provides teachers with a valuable tool to test the assumptions of educational theories. But as argued by several researchers, a researcher as an insider can have both advantages and disadvantages. In regard to the disadvantages, a teacher as researcher can be problematic, as greater familiarity can result in loss of objectivity (Unluer, 2012). Unconsciously, wrong assumptions can be made based on the researcher’s prior knowledge (DeLyser, 2001; Hewitt-Taylor, 2002). This biased attitude may prevent the researcher being unable to receive or see an important piece of information.

Moreover, an insider researcher is confronted with a dual role - their role as an insider and the role as a researcher (DeLyser, 2001; Gerrish, 1997). In this dual role, researchers may find themselves being caught between “loyalty tugs” and “behavioural claims” (Brannick & Coghlan, 2007, p. 70). This may result in role confusion where the researcher may become confused while responding to the participants or while analysing the data from a perspective other than that of a researcher. Asselin (2003) contended that role confusion can occur in any research study but the risk is higher when a researcher is connected with the setting or participants through a role other than that of researcher.

On the other hand, Dwyer and Buckle (2009) mentioned that one of the important advantages of this dual role is acceptance. The status of being an insider-researcher allows the researcher to be accepted more easily and more completely by the participants. This increases the possibility of the participants being more open with the researcher, so that there may be greater depth to the data gathered. As a researcher, I have a dual role; that of an
insider understanding the profession of teaching in the context of refugee education and as an outsider in the field of educational sociology, searching for an understanding of how to develop better practices in this profession, thereby providing better educational outcomes.

In this context, I need to mention that although I was an accepted member of the case study school, I did not have much professional contact with the interviewees, excepting a few times when I needed their help to communicate with students’ parents. Moreover, as I was not involved in any administrative role, I had inadequate information about paraprofessionals’ regular contribution in the context of refugee students’ schooling. The school principal’s positive attitude and trust in me and my research helped in the comprehensive collection of data required for the study. Throughout the study process, I maintained professional ethics in my role as a teacher, and at the same time, in my role as a teacher researcher, found ways towards better educational outcomes for refugee students.

Hopkins (1994) encouraged teachers to be involved in research, as he believed that researching the pedagogic context provides teachers with valuable tools to test the assumptions of educational theories. Bonner and Tolhurst (2002) identified three significant advantages to being an insider-researcher: a) gaining a better understanding of the culture and context being studied, b) having fewer chances to unnaturally alter the flow of social interaction, and c) having an established relationship that promotes both telling and judging the truth. As the insider-researcher possesses a better understanding of the culture and context being studied, the researcher is helped to reach the core of the research group or the environment. An absence of culture shock helps the researcher to enhance engagement and participation with participants, and to develop a relationship of trust. A productive relationship between the researcher and the participants helps the researcher to underscore the truth that is being sought and to understand its impact on the process.
In the context of the advantages of the teacher as a researcher, Kolb (1991) suggested that, as teachers possess good listening skills and are experienced in asking questions and establishing rapport with students, they can prove to be very skilled interviewers. The intention of this study was to make the interviews conversational in order to create an optimal interviewing environment. As a researcher, I shared information about my experience related to the problem of this study in order to establish the trust and rapport necessary for these conversations. Conducting interviews in this way, put my respondents at ease and created an optimal interviewing environment.

The insider researcher has knowledge about the politics of the institution, the formal and informal power structure, and this knowledge helps to deal with situations in a more productive way (Smyth & Holian, 2008). As I have been working at the case study school for more than nine years, I possess a good understanding of the school’s culture and context. As an insider, my existing knowledge and my experience related to the problem of this study has helped me to develop a greater propensity to reflect deeply into the issues relating to paraprofessionals’ roles in refugee schooling, and to frame the interview questions accordingly. Moreover, through my professional work as a teacher, I have built relationships of trust and support in the school community. These relationships have helped me to understand how to approach people, who to approach and how to ask probing interview questions. In the context of this study, my relationship with the school community facilitated an easy rapport that has enabled rich data collection through semi-structured interviews. This chapter now describes this study school’s setting.

4.3 The Context of The Case Study School

Context provides a framework that shape educators’ way of knowing and undertaking education, (Seddon, 2015) as the concept of context arises from people’s reflection and
interpretation of their own experiences. Thus contextualisation becomes a discursive practice produced by institutions, determining what should be considered to be real and relevant and what should be dismissed as being irrelevant (Exley, 1997). Therefore, context plays a significant role in understanding the role of paraprofessionals in the provision of inclusive education for refugee students. A detailed description of the context of the case study school is discussed below.

This study is conducted at a public primary school located in Queensland, Australia. The school has earned a reputation for being exceptionally culturally diverse in its student population. This government funded primary school serves a low socio-economic community. It opened its doors to the local community in 1924 with only 21 students and now caters for more than 700 students from more than 30 different countries. Nearly 75% of the school’s students speak English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D). It has now become a magnet school for refugee children, as many refugee families live in the catchment area. The refugee students are from 30 to 40 different countries, including Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Myanmar, Sudan, Congo, Burundi, Somalia and Tanzania.

The school is comprised of well-maintained buildings and gardens. The classrooms are spacious, airy and are equipped with adequate resources. The school has a special art room, Creative Art Therapy (CAT) room, a large library, conference rooms, computer laboratories and a spacious science room well equipped with science materials and resources. There are also large ovals, a basketball court, a tennis court and a spacious hall which is used for different indoor activities.

The context of the school constitutes more than a collection of buildings or resources, particularly because of its rich culturally and linguistically diverse student population, and thus the need for greater emphasis on inclusiveness. The staff strive to work together with different community agencies to develop and strengthen a sense of belonging and to nurture
the values of respect, responsibility, unity and caring. In addition to teaching students, academic skills and knowledge in different subject and content areas, students are also encouraged through different social and emotional learning (SEL) programs. These programs include: You Can Do It, Random Act of Kindness and Mind Mapping to enhance their skills of confidence, persistence, getting along, and resilience. Students are encouraged to take part in different intra- and inter-school extra-curricular activities and the school staff takes pride in their students’ impressive achievements in these activities. The school’s commitment to inclusive education has been articulated through its recent achievement of the Showcase Awards for Excellence in schools for inclusive education, and a state award for taking the initiative for education towards global citizenship.

To cater to the varied needs of students, the school has a separate special education program (SEP) for students with special needs and an Intensive Language Centre (ILC), which mainly services students from refugee backgrounds. The ILC holds twelve classes organised in a three-tier system of New Arrivals, Intermediate and Transitional classes. On their arrival, refugee students are enrolled in this system on the basis of their abilities and educational background. The school has also developed and implemented other programs, including Positive Behaviour Learning and Kids Matter, which primarily focus on appropriate, respectful and healthy relationships. The school has a community hub and community liaison officers who assist newly arrived refugee and immigrant families to settle into school life and to enhance understanding between the school and the home.

The school values parent participation in students’ learning outcomes. Its Parents and Citizens Association (P&C) raises funds through different activities and provides a forum for parents to enter into discussions about issues related to the improvement of the school. Many parents show their interest by voluntarily contributing to different activities such as sports group supervision, assisting in tuckshop and various fundraising ventures and sometimes
working as teacher aides. Although the school encourages parents to mingle with the school community, the number of refugee parents who do participate is minimal.

There are important implications for this study in examining paraprofessionals’ roles in refugee schooling, and these implications are a direct result of the school’s focus on inclusive education and on involving parents and paraprofessionals. The following section details the participants and the recruitment process followed for this study.

4.4 Participants and Recruitment

The selection of potential participants forms an integral part of any research study. Questions arise around who to include and who to exclude from a potential research project. An explanation of how and why participants were selected for this particular research study follows.

4.4.1 Ethical considerations

Ethics approval was received from the Human Research Ethics Committee at Griffith University, based on the National Settlement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research, and also from the principal of the case study school (see Appendix A and B). The participants were provided with an information sheet and a consent form (see Appendix C and D) with details about the aims and ethical requirements relating to the particular nature of this research project.

Signed informed consent form were received from the participants prior to the interviews taking place. The participants were also reminded of the voluntary nature of the study and their right to withdraw from the research project at any point. The participants were reminded of the voluntary nature of the follow-up interviews, for which verbal consent was obtained.
4.4.2 Participants in the study

This research project’s main aim is to explore the role of paraprofessionals in facilitating the flows of information between the school, refuge students and their families, and how they assist the school in the provision of inclusive educational practices. The research participants, who have been de-identified and given pseudonyms for this study, included, three community liaison officers: Obato, Azad and Thiri, and the community hub leader, Sofia. All of the participants work within the case study school and work very closely with the refugee students and their families. In addition to these participants, two caseworkers, Linh and Angela who work for an external organisation closely connected to the case study school, were chosen as potential participants for this study. This external organisation is a leading organisation which has more than 30 years of experience in supporting immigrants and refugees in the provision of settlement, housing, schooling, youth support services and social enterprise. I have chosen these people for my research study because:

1. Most of these participants are from the same cultural and linguistic backgrounds as the school’s refugee students. This enables them to recognise the extensive needs of these students, which often remain hidden in the official communication between the refugee children, their families and the school.

2. The paraprofessionals communicate with the students beyond the formal environment of classrooms. This may help the refugee students and their families to be more open in their communication, thereby developing a trusting relationship.

3. Regular communication may contribute to an understanding of the various problems these refugee students face in their new learning environment. This, in turn, could assist the school in developing strategies to improve and enhance their educational outcomes.
The participants in the study came from diverse backgrounds which helped to provide insight into the findings of the research study. Obato, who is from Burundi has been working with the case study school for 10 years. He came to Australia as a refugee, which is one reason why he is able to give a very vivid picture of refugee experiences. Obato speaks four languages besides English, Kirundi, his mother tongue, French because he studied in a French medium school, and Kinyarwanda and Swahili which he learnt through his travels as a refugee. Azad, is from Iran and also started his life in Australia as an asylum seeker. He speaks Persian and Arabic. He has been working with the refugee community in the case study school for more than three years. Thiri is from Myanmar and she speaks Burmese and Karen. She has been working with the refugee community for nearly ten years and has been attached to the case study school for nearly seven years. The community hub leader, Sofia is from Columbia and she has been working with the refugee community for more than four years. Before she started work at the case study school, she worked as a support worker for refugee families with other welfare organizations in Queensland. In Columbia she worked with the families who were displaced because of internal conflicts in the country. Sofia organises different programs for refugee students and families, including homework club, English speaking class, yoga class and sewing lessons, with the aim of encouraging refugee families to be part of the school community. Linh, who is from Myanmar, has been working as a case worker for nearly ten years now. As his experience is mostly with refugee parents, he was able to give a very detailed account of the issues refugee parents face in resettlement. Angela, who is from New Zealand, has also been working as a case worker. She mostly organises the different orientation programs for refugee families on their arrival and school enrolment for refugee children is one of her major responsibilities. She has been working with refugee families for more than seven years.
All participants were generous with their time and demonstrated willingness to share their comments and opinions, and their contributions to my study were extremely valuable.

4.4.3 Recruitment

On receiving approval from the principal of the case study school and the University Ethics Committee, I met each paraprofessional individually to explain my research project. While selecting the liaison officers, I intentionally selected those who had shared the experiences of the school’s refugee students. This gave me the opportunity to obtain more appropriate information about refugee students’ needs, socio-cultural differences, their families’ expectations of the school and the hindrances these students and their families may face in the context of schooling. The school principal and the department head assisted me in contacting the external agency in order to source potential participants for this study.

Each participant agreed spontaneously to be a part of my research study. On receiving the consent forms, the interview time and place was arranged according to the participants’ convenience. Interviews were arranged with the school liaison officers and the hub leader, mostly before or after school hours, in order to minimise interference with other school activities. To interview the two participants who were working with the external agency, I went to their offices as per the time scheduled by them. The interviews were all semi-structured and each went for approximately 30-45 minutes. The interviews were conducted face to face and, with prior consent from the participants, were recorded. The semi-structured format proved to be quite effective as it gave the participants and myself the scope to communicate understandings relevant to the research study.

Prior to the interviews, the liaison officers, particularly Obato and Thiri, requested some details about the topics that would be discussed. I gave short details about the kinds of
topics I hoped to discuss prior to the actual interviews although not the exact questions, as I knew it would be possible that the topics/questions would shift and change during the actual interview process (Rapley, 2004). This prior information gave the liaison officers more confidence and helped them to prepare for the interview, given that many of them spoke English as additional language. Open-ended questions were employed throughout the interviews to encourage participants to respond openly and freely (Bogdan, 2007; Esterberg, 2002). In order to encourage participants to elaborate on or to clarify certain responses, follow up questions were used whenever necessary.

4.5 Data Analysis

There are no specific rules for analysing data in a case study research project. However, similar to other qualitative research approaches, a significant characteristic of case studies is that data is collected and analysed simultaneously. Yin (1998) argued that there must be a logic behind an analysis and therefore a framework is essential. Based on the nature of this study, my analysis was guided by Braun and Clarke’s (2006) thematic analysis framework. They defined thematic analysis as the method for ‘identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within the data’ (2006, p. 79). I chose this method as this “rigorous thematic approach can produce an insightful analysis that answers particular research questions” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 97). Moreover, thematic analysis enables the researcher to identify the socio-cultural components of the problem under study (Braun & Clarke, 2006), which is one of the key points of this research. Therefore, a thematic analysis approach was adopted to analyse the interview data and the complementary field notes.

The data analysis procedure for this study adopted the following steps:

- Recording reflections at the end of every interviews
- Transcribing the interview data
• Readings of transcripts to ensure familiarity
• Identifying codes
• Mapping of codes
• Tabling of codes
• Deriving themes from codes
• Identifying subthemes
• Confirming relationship between themes, subthemes and the research problem
• Writing up analysis

The very first phase in thematic analysis involves familiarising oneself with the data. I started my analysis by noting down any reflections, ideas or hypotheses at the end of each interview. One of the most important steps to conduct a thematic analysis is to transcribe the data derived from the interviews thoroughly (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I sent the audio files of all the interviews to a professional organization (Rev) to ensure accuracy. For additional accuracy and complete familiarity with the data, I reviewed each transcript several times while listening to the audiotapes.

The next phase in thematic analysis involves coding. The main purpose of coding is to identify a basic feature of data that is interpreted to be meaningful in relation to the problem of the study (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I immersed myself in the process of a line-by-line coding technique that involved complete attention to specific words or segments that were relevant to the research problem. Firstly, the codes were highlighted in transcripts and then, through additional readings, they were mapped and tabled for each participant, so that the relationship between the codes and the participants could be understood. Thus, the interview transcripts were analysed in their entirety and the frequency of codes was noted.

The next phase of thematic analysis involves grouping of codes to form themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In this phase, I categorised the codes into leading themes through
mapping and then tabling. Thus, the main themes were identified, which were then detailed through the description of sub-themes (as discussed in Table 1):

Table 1
*Themes and subthemes derived from the interview data*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sub themes</th>
<th>Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Issues faced by students and their families</td>
<td>Language as the main barrier</td>
<td>• Affects parental involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Students feel rejected, become more withdrawal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Influence teaching strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socio Cultural differences</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Cultural views about teachers’ and parents’ role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Traditional method: one sided direction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Rote learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Homework and textbooks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Different symbolic control at home and school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre- and post-migration issues</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Parents’ trauma and mental tensions</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Students’ trauma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Students’ health and hygiene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School’s catering to their needs</td>
<td>Supporting and building relationships</td>
<td>• Intensive Language Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Trainings and workshops</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Bilingual teacher aids, CLOs, community hub</td>
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<tr>
<td>Catering mental issues</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Creative Art Therapy program</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Responsible Planning Classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouraging parents’ involvement</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Activities for parents through community hub</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Multicultural fests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraprofessionals’ roles</td>
<td>Formal supports</td>
<td>• Facilitating cultural integration</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Help in enrolment</td>
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The way of identifying themes was both theoretical and inductive (Boyatzis, 1998). The thematic analysis is theoretical because the interviews were influenced by particular concerns, prompted by the keywords of the research problem: the paraprofessionals’ role in refugee schooling. The process explicated how the theoretical framework presented in Chapter 3 influenced framing of the interview questions to generate data that linked an understanding of empirical realities to theories, and vice versa. The data generated was aimed at analysing how the strength of the insulation of boundaries between school, family/home and the local community influence the framing of pedagogic discourse in the context of refugee schooling. Analysis of the data was also aimed at analysing the principles of control through paraprofessionals’ contribution to the flows of communication within and across boundaries.

The method of identifying themes for this analysis was also data driven or inductive in approach, as the themes were identified through the responses of the interviewees. Throughout the analytical process, the relationship between the themes, sub-themes and the research problem was considered. The validity of the themes in relation to the entire data were confirmed by rereading the transcript as a whole (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The goal of this analysis was to elucidate the various issues faced by refugee students in the context of schooling, strategic approaches adopted for their support and identifying what could be done better, as perceived by the paraprofessionals.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a description of the methods that were employed to research the problem of this study: the work of paraprofessionals in contributing to the flows of knowledge across the boundaries of home, school and the local community. This study explained how the research design of a case study approach has been utilised to analyse the
construction of pedagogic discourse of refugee students by the paraprofessionals within the primary school institutional context in one case study school. The chapter discussed the usefulness of semi-structured interviews to collect data for the purpose of exploring the issues under investigation. The chapter ended with a depiction of data analysis procedure based on a comprehensive network of research questions, theories, literature, data collected and produced in the context of the research study. The details of the findings are analysed in the next chapter.
Chapter 5 : Data Analysis

This chapter analyses interview data produced by the paraprofessionals who are engaged in the para educational network based around one case study primary school, Rejewel State School, in the state of Queensland, Australia. As outlined in Chapter 4, the paraprofessionals interviewed for this study, work either as community liaison officers, community hub representatives in the designated school or as the case workers of the refugee families. The case workers are employed by an external agency which supports refugees with various settlement issues. While the paraprofessionals provided a range of explanations for the settlement disadvantage experienced by refugees, this paper attends only to those accounts that impact explicitly on refugee students in the context of their education. Thus, the paper directs attention to communicative practices in dealing with the issues of refugee students in order to theorise the educational disadvantage experienced by these students in primary school. Moreover, this study focuses on the need for pedagogic practices developed in collaboration with paraprofessionals and other community members that might contribute to inclusive schooling practices.

Three research questions were outlined from the theoretical framework as discussed in Chapter 3, with the aim of exploring how the distribution of power and the principles of control between categories of agents, pedagogic discourse and institutional context influence refugee schooling:

1. What school knowledge is selected and organised by paraprofessionals and communicated to refugee families?
2. What knowledge is selected and organised by paraprofessionals from local communities and refugee families and communicated to school staff?
3. How do paraprofessionals translate or recontextualize knowledge across the boundaries of school, home and local community?

The first two research questions were aimed at examining how pedagogic discourse and practice are generated by principles of power and control in the context of refugee schooling. The third question aimed at exploring the contribution of paraprofessionals in the process of recontextualisation of pedagogic discourse with better educational outcomes for refugee students. Three key themes that emerged from the data are: the issues faced by refugee students and their families, the ways that the school caters to their needs, and paraprofessionals’ contribution to refugee schooling. These three themes, along with their sub-themes as detailed in Chapter 4, are interrelated in all three research questions, providing an understanding of paraprofessionals’ contribution to communicative practices in the context of refugee education. On the basis of the major themes, the interview data extracts are organised into three sections. In the first section, the analysis details the different issues faced by refugee students and their families in the context of their schooling, as perceived by the paraprofessionals. In the following section, the analysis examines the school’s knowledge of students categorised as ‘refugees’ and how it caters for their needs. Information pertaining to the contribution of paraprofessionals to establish the links between the refugee students, their families and the school are then analysed in detail in the last section. All three components of data analysis are aimed at elucidating the role of the paraprofessionals in communicating knowledge between the school, home and the local community in the context of refugee schooling, in order to facilitating the provision of inclusive pedagogy and curriculum. The understandings of the distribution of power and principles of control are carried via the dominant discourse at the organisational level, which is the regulative discourse.
5.1 Issues Faced by the Refugee Students and Their Families

An analysis of the issues faced by refugee students and their families in the context of refugee schooling revealed that both classification and framing are strong (Bernstein, 1975). Classification is considered to be strong because there are sharp distinguishing features, as discussed below through the elaboration of the subthemes, that create strong boundaries between school, family/home and the local community.

5.1.1 Language as the major barrier to refugee schooling

Active parental involvement in children’s education has been identified as being strongly associated with children’s academic achievement and positive development (Fan & Chen, 2001), and refugee children are no exception (The Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture Inc., 2016). Participants in this study stated that, although parents from refugee backgrounds place great value on their children’s education, there are a number of issues that restrict their participation. They identified language as one of the major issues that restricts communication between students, families and the school.

Parents of refugee students often could not be contacted by the school to communicate important information related to their children’s schooling. School related information is mostly shared with parents via electronic and printed circulars or newsletters. Most of the refugee parents experience difficulties in communicating due to lack of English language proficiency. It is often found that they are extremely hesitant to talk or communicate in English and that they avoid receiving or returning phone calls.

All of the paraprofessionals suggested that their input has led to several modifications to administrative practices at Rejewel State School. The school, in collaboration with the paraprofessionals, has started sending printed circulars in languages other than English so that refugee parents are able to understand the information. Moreover, paraprofessionals in
this school are encouraged to use alternative modes of communicating with parents. For example, Obato mentioned that he is always mindful of the fact that whenever he needs to contact a parent, he calls from his mobile so that the parents can recognise his number and are willing to receive the call.

*If I call a parent from a landline number, they would rarely pick up the call and then, when I use my mobile number, they pick up. When I ask them in our native language ‘why you didn’t pick up the phone?’ they say, ‘I didn’t pick up the phone because I thought may be Australian people calling and I will not be able to understand or talk.*

This extract indicates how parents’ inability to speak and understand English becomes a major hindrance for refugee students’ and their families’ involvement in different school activities, ultimately affecting the learning outcomes of refugee students. In the context of refugee parents’ involvement in their children’s education, Sofia observed that many parents show their willingness to come to different school meetings, but as they have no English, they ultimately do not involve themselves in school activities. In this way, language creates a strong barrier between the school and the families of refugee students, impeding the transmission of knowledge between the home and the school and vice-versa.

All participants agreed that language becomes a major hindrance to refugee students’ integration with their peers. Though the refugee students in this school are enrolled in the Intensive Language Care unit on their arrival, they are required to go to their respective mainstream classes once a week, with the aim of successful integration with their mainstream peers. Both Thiri and Azad commented that often these students feel rejected by their mainstream peers and they are sometimes ridiculed due to their inability to speak proper
English. They become more withdrawn in class, which impedes their learning. Through their everyday experience with refugee students, the paraprofessionals observed that these students want someone to liaise between themselves and the school. In this context, Obato commented that in schools when the students are unable to follow the class, they become afraid, feel neglected, become more withdrawn and may fail to achieve their educational and social potential. He said:

_As they cannot speak English, they cannot communicate to other students or teachers who are English speakers and this make them feel sad, unloved. This feeling pushes them from participating in different activities because they cannot focus or concentrate on listening or following instructions._

From their regular communication with the students and their families, some of the paraprofessionals interviewed understood that often these students, want to participate in class, want to share their existing knowledge but they fear their lack of clear English to expression may result in misinterpretation, and may reveal their lack of ability to their peers.

Language is more than a communication tool; it is linked to an individual’s identity (Lauring, 2008). Refugee students often fail to identify with their peers when they cannot communicate due to lack of English skills, and this may generate negative emotional and cognitive responses (Ebbeck, Yim, & Lee, 2010). Interviewees identified embarrassment, fear and anxiety as the emotions that refugee students encounter due to their language difficulties, which, in turn, impede their learning. They become more withdrawn and are unwilling to participate in learning activities.
The paraprofessionals’ accounts strongly indicated the way in which language barriers could contribute to strengthening the insulation of boundaries in the power and control relations between the agents of pedagogic discourse. Strong differentiation between refugee students and their mainstream peers thus serves to produce dislocations and punctuations in social space for students labelled ‘refugees’, thereby creating a unique reproduction of refugee identities.

Teachers at Rejewel State School are adopting different strategies to resolve these feeling of alienation, to cater for these students’ needs and to support their integration into the mainstream. My field notes demonstrated that teachers are trying to engage refugee students by focussing on topics related to social and emotional learning. These once a week sessions are conducted with the aim of enhancing students’ skills of resilience, persistence, confidence and getting along. Teachers often encourage the refugee students who come from ILC to be in groups with their mainstream peers who speak their first language, so that they do not feel alienated. The teaching techniques that are commonly used, such as videos and small group work, also sometimes present difficulties for these students due to their lack in English language skills. To complete these tasks successfully, students are required to listen, to understand, to interpret and to record key points simultaneously. This becomes a task of overwhelming difficulty for refugee students who are struggling with very limited skills in language and literacy (Brown et al., 2006).

It was also pointed out that when these students are given modified work which is different to that of their peers, they are sometimes unwilling to do it as they think it reveals their incompetence in front of their peers. These students are also reluctant to participate in group activities that require verbal communication. They just sit and watch. Most participants in the study revealed that refugee students are often afraid, confused and bewildered when they are expected to finish a task, as they have very limited skills to understand both the
language of instruction and the contextual expectations. These accounts indicated how refugee students struggle with their limited access to the distributive rule of pedagogic discourse.

In contrast, Thiri commented that the picture is very different when it comes to the CAT room. She stated,

Interestingly, when it comes to CAT room activities where students are encouraged to participate through different hands on activities with required time and space, with more individual attention, they show their willingness to participate and often take pride in exhibiting their hidden talents.

This extract of data confirms that these students are willing to take risks when they are given time and space to develop their feeling of connectedness, when language remains a barrier in the course of their learning. Through such socialisation, students soon learn what outside may be brought into the frame. This shows that weak framing establishes legitimate forms of communication, as it carries the power of reproduction. This adds to the notion that certain forms of pedagogic practice have the potential to enhance or restrict the learning outcomes of these refugee students.

5.1.2 Impact of socio-cultural differences on refugee students’ learning

In all interviews, the paraprofessionals emphasised the need for understanding and recognising the socio-cultural differences which have a significant impact on the pedagogical practices adopted for refugee education. The process of knowledge construction and learning of students is highly influenced by their socio-cultural practices (Billett, 1998). The
interviews revealed that although the school expects more parents to get involved in their children’s education, parents from a refugee background often consider that it is culturally inappropriate and disrespectful to interfere with the work of teachers whom they treat with great respect and hold in high esteem. Angela, who mostly deals with parents from Burma, commented,

_In Burma, parents completely depend on teachers for their children’s education. There, they are never required to go to any parent teachers’ meetings. They are completely ignorant of the system of involving parents in children’s education. They believe it is the teachers’ job to educate their children and if any issues come up related to their children’s learning, teachers are well-equipped with all strategies to handle those issues for their children’s progress. They have the trust that whatever teachers would do is the best for their children’s learning._

This extract indicates that parents, based on their social and cultural beliefs and practices, sometimes misinterpret their involvement as ‘interference’ with a teacher’s job. Culturally they sometimes consider it to be disrespectful to question teachers about anything related to their children’s education. This clearly reveals a dissonance in the mesosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1977) in regard to school expectations of parental involvement in children’s education. The mesosystem consists of interactions between two microsystems- the home and the school - both affecting the child directly. It clearly indicates the need for dialogue that would help to link these two systems effectively.

It is also interesting to note how the differences in the schooling system can cause barriers to refugee students’ learning. Thiri commented that those who had some schooling
experience in their home country, find the teaching system in Australia to be completely
different. In their home country, they are used to the very traditional method of teacher-
directed instruction where the teacher spends more time standing at the front of the class,
directing learning and controlling classroom activities. Students have very limited
participation in class. By contrast, students in Australia are expected to engage in a more
collaborative system of learning and are encouraged to speak out about issues. The
participants pointed out that in Australia, students’ contributions to classroom discussion are
valued and assessed. Refugee students get confused by this more collaborative style of
instruction as they have not been enculturated into these practices. They tend to become very
lost, feel shy and hesitant to contribute. Sometimes their parents also misunderstand the
education system in Australia.

The paraprofessionals interviewed commented that though these refugee students are
keen to engage with the regular academic and social practices within classrooms and schools,
they face a dilemma in meeting the expectations within particular curriculum content and in
relation to specific pedagogical strategies. They face difficulties, not only with the academic
language, but also with the cultural learning context within Australian schools. They are very
much unfamiliar with the approach taken in the Australian education system.

My field notes support the paraprofessionals’ views that these students are often
found to be highly dependent on rote learning, which reproduces what is learnt with little
insight or understanding of the material being dealt with (Purdie, Hattie, & Douglas, 1996).
These students view knowledge as something that is handed down to them by their teacher,
and they are expected to memorise this knowledge. Hence, they are not accustomed to the
practice of questioning teachers. In their cultural context, they consider that it is more
appropriate to show compliance, and to be obedient and passive in their way of learning,
which is more to absorb rather than to understand. In contrast, students in Australia are
expected to be more active in their approaches to learning. They exhibit assertiveness, self-confidence, willingness to question and explore alternative ways of thinking and acting (Ballard, 1987). Students in Australian classrooms are encouraged to use a range of self-regulated strategies to promote their learning.

Refugee students are completely unaware of the strategies that are used in Australian schools, which creates incredible tension for their teachers, who often struggle to create conditions to meet their specific needs. These students can be withdrawn, unable to concentrate or even sometimes aggressive or hyperactive, so the support of paraprofessionals is extremely useful. The findings of this study demonstrate that teachers sometimes do not feel equipped with appropriate concepts and strategies which can assist in their negotiations of differences in pedagogical practice in the classroom.

While talking about pedagogical practice, Linh commented that often the parents of refugee students are confused about the teaching methodologies used in Australia. He shared his experience about his home country, where students are very accustomed to heavy homework loads, whereas here, students have little, or no homework. Parents could rarely see their children studying at home and they often ask him: “Are they learning something in school?” Other liaison officers interviewed for this study stated that sometimes parents request them to talk to the teachers on their behalf, asking them to give their children more homework.

In this context, Azad commented on the perceived differences between pedagogic relations and practices in schools in his home country and in Australia. He stated that many students from the Middle East often find the system to be very easy, with less study pressure making them lazy, which in turn affects their behaviour at school and at home. He mentioned that in their home country, students usually have textbooks for all subjects and here the
students have no textbooks. An absence of text books also create confusion among these students and their parents who often misinterpret it as an absence of a syllabus.

Refugee students’ learning outcomes are also affected by the differences of the forms of symbolic control between their home and the school. Azad explained that in the Middle East, parents, especially fathers, exercise authority in the family and everyone listens and obeys him. By contrast, in the Australian context, school children are encouraged to question authority figures such as teachers, and this freedom sometimes confuses young people. They misinterpret this ‘freedom’ and disrespect their parents by not listening to their instructions, indulge themselves in the activities they like without understanding the negative consequences of this behaviour. For example, leaving home at any time, coming home late, not answering parents’ questions, asking for the money that the family receives from Centrelink for children. In this context, Linh shared one of his experiences:

One day a mother came with her son to me and in front of me the son asked the mother- “Put the money that you get from Centrelink for me into my bank account”....... I was shocked.

He also mentioned that these children know that if parents exercise any overt control over them, they can make a complaint to the police. Parents who have very limited knowledge of the system, no English language skills and a fear of social security are sometimes forced to give them more freedom. This illustrates how the differences in communicative practices and pedagogical relations between teachers and students can influence the relationships between students and their families and further influence students’ learning outcomes.
While discussing pedagogical relations, Thiri, Azad and Obato, who deal with refugee students both in and out of the classrooms, observed that teachers who are from non-native English speaking backgrounds have a better understanding of these students. They noted that teachers who are native speakers need more assistance in order to understand how to best acknowledge the cultural heritages, norms and practices that these students associate with, thereby making the learning environments more conducive to the needs of refugee students. They indicated that often teachers’ inadequate knowledge of refugee students’ socio-cultural backgrounds creates extremely challenging pedagogical dilemmas for them in meeting the specific needs of these students more effectively.

Teachers’ self-understanding of their situation, worldview, cultural beliefs and practices can affect the classroom practices they undertake with refugee children (Nagasa, 2016). Often teachers are not aware of the different social, cultural and relational changes impeding these students’ understandings of the demands made in the classroom. These findings demonstrate that teachers need both skills and opportunity to reflect on their understandings of refugees in order to meet the unique needs of refugee students and adopt strategies to help them to negotiate these differences.

5.1.3 Pre- and post-migration experiences

It will be recalled that the review of literature in Chapter 2 revealed that refugees’ levels of pre-migration trauma and post migration living difficulties play significant roles in their settlement in the host country. The paraprofessionals interviewed for this study, acknowledged the ways in which the different pre- and post-migration issues impacted the schooling of refugee students, which, in turn, leads to strong boundaries between students, their families and the school community. All the paraprofessionals interviewed agreed that although learning English is the common skill required for refugee students to access
education, but for many, lack of experience in any kind of educational setting together with their family’s very low or missing literacy skills even in their first language, has a tremendous impact on their progress.

Based on their experiences of regular communication with refugee parents, the paraprofessionals stated that often refugee parents have no clue about how to help their children overcome their emotional disturbances, when they themselves are struggling to overcome the trauma of their pre-migration experiences. Moreover, they also face post migration issues, for instance, financial difficulties, having very limited knowledge about the systems in their new country including medical facilities, housing, social security, extended family help and also community attitudes. Often refugees remain very disturbed by the distance and lack of communication with their family members in their home country, specially if they are in conflict situations. Their mental disturbances can play havoc with their children, and this, in turn affects their learning. Perhaps, unknowingly or unwittingly, the school community has little knowledge or awareness of the facts that can cause such immense damage to refugee students’ learning.

Paraprofessionals often play an important role in helping the parents to overcome many of these barriers and to learn the new life skills. As stated by Angela,

*We give information sessions, topics include services in the area, telephone interpreting service. We also teach them about transportation, that includes Go Card and how to use public transport, how to get driver’s licence and many more....... We train them about money management, which includes how to use ATM, where to pay bills. We educate them about the rules of tenancy, family laws and Australian law and also the role of police.*
This extract shows that by assisting refugee parents in settling in their new environment, paraprofessionals help them to build emotional strength and knowledge about how to negotiate their new way of life. When parents are emotionally strong, they are able to think of how they can integrate them into their children’s learning environment.

As Linh commented these refugee students are enrolled in school having had severely interrupted schooling or little or no experience of school. They lack literacy in a first or a second language, have little or no knowledge or understanding of how school works, and have had the trauma associated with the refugee experience, so it is understandable that they face substantial obstacles to settling, including learning in schools. Besides experiencing trauma in their home country, many have experienced a harsh life in a refugee camp. Taken together, these experiences have dire consequences on their life here. As Obato, who himself was a refuge, explained, “…. though people admit that life in refugee camps is not easy but many of them don’t have any clue how bad it really is.” Obato shared what actually happens in refugee camps, with unhygienic conditions often reaching an extreme with no electricity, overflowing toilets, dearth of clean water and very limited resources. He stated,

*In refugee camps, they have no clothes, they could take shower may be once a week......... These children often don’t get any scope to learn the importance of living a life in a hygienic way. Often we get reports from teachers that these students do not shower or wash their clothes regularly.*

A further interrogation of Obato’s comments revealed that refugees’ unhygienic behaviour sometimes becomes a reason for being bullied in school. Though teachers are
vigilant about bullying, this sometimes still occurs. The outcomes of bullying can be very negative, and may lower a child’s self-esteem, give them a lower perception of their own success (self-efficacy), may cause strained relationships with their peers and they may lose trust and confidence in the schooling system. The participants interviewed urged the necessity to understand that this behaviour is a result of innocent ignorance in understanding the importance of maintaining a hygienic way of life. They stress the fact that refugees, especially young children, have experienced how their families struggle just to stay alive. They have absolutely no scope to know how to live a healthy life.

This account demonstrates not only the different cultural and linguistic issues of refugee students and their families but also how their pre- and post-migration experiences can have a severe impact on their schooling. The three community liaison officers interviewed strongly believed that refugee students and their families are in need of orientation to the school culture, norms and expectations. Indeed, new types of resources and ways of talking and being are needed to help the teachers, the students and their families to understand what it means to interact and learn effectively from each other within a rapidly shifting cultural and linguistic context of hyper diversity (Noble, 2011).

5.1.4 Summary

This section of the analysis summarizes how the relationship between school knowledge and the local knowledge influences the pedagogic relations in refugee-inclusive classrooms. According to Bernstein and Solomon (1999, p. 267), principles of communication are integral to establishing pedagogical relations “where there is a purposeful intention to initiate, modify, develop or change knowledge, conduct or practice by someone…….[who] already possesses or has access to, the necessary resources and the means of evaluating acquisition”.
This part of the interview analysis explicates Bernstein’s theory as an analytic tool to
discuss the power and control relations inherent within pedagogic discourses related to
refugee schooling. As argued by Singh and Dooley (2001), students who fail to recognize the
principles of power and control that structure the communicative context of the classroom are
likely to face more difficulties in meeting the teacher’s criteria of ‘competence’. Besides,
teachers may also misread the competence that is displayed by these refugee students when it
does not meet the conventions of the classroom’s communicative context, or because these
students are marginalized and categorized as ‘refugees’. This is what is revealed throughout
the interviews of this study. As stated by the paraprofessionals, these students and their
parents are often confused by the regular communicative practices or pedagogical
relationship in the school, as they have never experienced such things before and their
existing knowledge about the student-teacher relationship is very different from what takes
place in schools in Australia.

In their interview account, some of the paraprofessionals described how the forms of
social relations and symbolic control specific to many refugee communities differ from those
in this country. They mention how these differences impact on the pedagogical relations
between the students, their families and the school community and how they influence the
communicative interactions between the students and their families. On one hand, the school
expects parents to be more involved in their children’s education, but on the other hand, the
parents perceive their involvement as being limited to the home front. They often consider
that it is culturally inappropriate to interfere with the role of the teachers, who they treat with
reverence and held in high esteem.

The interviews also revealed that refugee students who have had some schooling
experience have never been exposed to a pedagogical discourse where students’ contribution
is valued. They find it particularly challenging to understand the classroom communicative
practices and sometimes their silence is interpreted as being their inability to understand the classroom discourse. These findings provide scope for understanding linguistic and socio-cultural differences and its co-construction in and through classroom pedagogy and curriculum.

5.2 The School’s Knowledge of Refugee Students and how it Caters to Their Specific Needs

In this section, the ways in which the school understands the needs of students categorised as ‘refugees’ and how it caters to their specific needs are discussed. In this school where nearly 80% of the students do not come from a background where standard Australian English is spoken, and around 30% of the students are from a refugee background, the paraprofessionals recognized and respected the unique attributes of every learner. The majority of the staff demonstrated passionate dedication and commitment to improving the life chances of children from over 40 nationalities. The paraprofessionals in this study reported how the school caters to the growing number of refugee students with varied socio-economic, cultural and linguistic diversity. As mentioned earlier, the school has employed regional community liaison officers and also people from non-government settlement agencies for cultural groups from the Pacific Islands, Burma, Afghanistan and Africa communities to enhance understanding between the school and home.

5.2.1 Supporting and building relationships to enhance refugee students’ learning

The paraprofessionals expressed their opinion that helping these young people to settle, integrate and learn is about more than just providing academic support. They agreed that the Intensive Language Centre (ILC), with twelve special intensive classes, provides a starting point for deeper understanding of the specific backgrounds and experiences of refugee
students. Teachers also developed specific educational strategies that might best meet the needs of these students. The curriculum taught in ILC is a three-tier system which provides differentiated learning at a 'New Arrival', 'Intermediate' and 'Transitional' Level. Here students are taught at their level of English, not at their age level. The field notes also revealed that as the refugee students in ILC classrooms are enrolled on the basis of their level of English (reading, writing, listening and speaking), they do not experience feelings of isolation or inadequacy, as they are not compared with mainstream students.

An important finding reveals that teachers at this school go through special training and workshops so that they learn to scaffold their students’ understandings, enhancing their teaching practice to meet the specific needs of refugee students. Paraprofessionals stated that most of the ILC teachers, who are from a different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, can more effectively help these refugee students. As they are from a different background themselves, they are more capable of recognising a distinction between the capacity of a student to understand a concept and the student’s capacity to communicate or to express it (Naidoo, 2009). The school employs many bilingual teacher aides, who work regularly in classrooms with the refugee students, also helping to enhance their learning abilities. As pointed out by the CLOs, many refugee students have found this corner (ILC) of the school to be a safe place where they can explore their understandings and make mistakes.

The ILC of the school organizes orientation programs for refugee parents. The parents are invited to join the community groups, where the CLOs and other bilingual teacher aids interpret for them. The aim of these parent information sessions is to educate them and encourage them to socialize in the school’s mode of pedagogy. In this way, school’s Intensive Language Centre plays a key role in creating a welcoming new setting, where refugee students and their families can develop a sense of belonging.
Angela, who quite frequently visits the school with new arrivals, has observed that the school always organizes interpreters at the time of enrolment so that the parents do not feel lost and can understand the rules and policies related to their children’s schooling. Moreover, she stated that building relationships between the school, families and local communities is vital in the schooling process, and communication is an integral part of this process.

To manage a proper flow of information, the school maintains regular communication with this external agency, as most of the case workers of the school’s refugee students and their families belong to this organization. With the aim of building knowledge and skills for parents, to help them to navigate school system in order to meet their children’s needs and support their learning, the enrolment officer helps the families with the students, introducing them to the teacher, the CLOs, the hub leader and acquainting them with the school’s facilities.

5.2.2 Catering to mental health issues that affect refugee students’ learning

There is considerable evidence, as discussed in literature review chapter, that refugee children are at significant risk of developing psychological disturbances or mental stress due to their traumatic migration experiences. These experiences often remain vivid in children’s minds, fragment them psychologically and interfere with their learning (Kanu, 2008). The participants interviewed expressed their concern about the mental health issues of refugee students, concerns which are often unintentionally ignored in the school context.

My field notes revealed that to address the mental health issues of the students in a more effective way, the school developed the Creative Art Therapy program, where qualified music and art therapists work with those students who are in need. In collaboration with classroom teachers and paraprofessionals, this program encourages refugee students to vent their emotions or feelings. A better understanding of these students may enhance their
learning abilities. As acknowledged by most of the participants, this program encourages students with very low literacy levels to express themselves through other forms of expression, such as drawing, painting, playing a musical instrument or making things. Obato who has experience working with the CAT team stated,

*Sometimes some refugee students don’t want to open-up, they simply don’t talk, they are hesitant...scared. The way their brain has developed makes it hard for them to learn... they have seen or learnt only two things- to run or to fight. This CAT team gives them chance just to watch or to do things.... as they could do more things there in CAT room, they get strength to take risk in class ...*

This extract uncovered the subtle ways in which the barriers between refugee students and their new school environment is weakened, which, in turn, can enhance these students’ learning abilities.

When speaking about refugee students’ social and emotional well-being, Azad commented that the school has a special Responsible Planning Classroom (RPC) where the students are shown different coping strategies. In RPC, the responsible thinking process is fundamental to the social interaction of students in need. Students are encouraged to reflect upon their behaviour and to do the most appropriate thing in their interactions with others. RPC staff collaborate with the CLOs for more successful communication with students and their families.
5.2.3 Parents involvement in enhancing refugee students’ learning

The school’s community hub that works in collaboration with other community services, encourages and supports parents, guardians and carers in participating in different free activities. Its aim is to facilitate cultural integration and sense of belonging. As mentioned by Sofia, the community hub leader,

*The school encourages different activities like English learning class, sewing class, yoga class, cooking class for refugee parents and families and also homework club and an after-school sports program for refugee students through hub to make them feel safe, supportive and welcome...... because when you move to a different country, a completely different culture you face. In your own country, you may have your extended family to support you to raise your kids, here you have no one, you don’t understand the language......the money is not enough...*

As most refugee families feel the pressures of the new system and have no extended family assistance, the hub also has a ‘child-care’ facility where the parents can drop their children while engaging in various free activities in the hub. As Sofia proudly shared, the parents have the chance to meet people from their own community, they are happy and they are encouraged to come forward. Moreover, the bilingual volunteers often use native language and cultural practices to provide support and programs to build parents’ knowledge about the school and its programs. These volunteers share their own experiences, encouraging parents to learn from each other.

In collaboration with paraprofessionals, the school celebrates Harmony Day, the multicultural food festival, Refugee Week and the Spring Fair, where the students and their
families are encouraged to participate in different multi-cultural activities. This provides opportunities for both the school community and the families to get to know each other better, to understand each other and thus to reduce the gap which in turn promotes better learning outcomes.

However, in this context, some of the participants expressed the need for the mainstream teachers to become more acquainted with the refugee students’ parents. Each of the paraprofessionals interviewed for this study suggested that many refugee students are often afraid to go to mainstream classes. When they are transitioned into mainstream classrooms, some teachers do not maintain regular communication with the parents or make any sort of collaborative effort with the CLOs. Thiri commented,

*Many parents sometimes express their concerns that they are not always invited for parent-teachers meeting after they are transitioned to mainstream and even we are also not called by the teachers to explain their performance at school.... parents only get calls or we are only called for interpreting if there is a major issue.... but many parents are also eager to know from their child’s teacher how they are improving.... they feel so proud, happy and contented to know even about the small successes of their children in their host country.*

Through their regular dealings with the refugee families, the paraprofessionals have realized the necessity for more contact between teachers and parents to ensure that the parents are regularly informed about their children’s progress. This suggests that refugee parents value their children’s education, and that communication between parents and teachers plays an important role in educating refugee students. Consistent dialogues between
parents and schools helps to build trust between schools and homes, which is essential in sustaining positive relationships which can influence children’s learning at all stages of schooling (Gonzalez-DeHass, Willems, & Holbein, 2005).

5.2.4 Summary

This section of the interview data focuses Bernstein’s (1975) concepts of classification and framing by highlighting how the structural and interactional aspects of pedagogic practice expose power and control relations that are inherent in pedagogic practice. These concepts are connected at both macro and micro levels to a set of related concepts that allow an analysis of the workings of power and control, specifically in relation to transmission and acquisition processes.

This study revealed that the regulative practices of the case study school are embedded in different social relations in different contexts. These social relations included relations with ILC (Intensive Language Centre) teachers, behaviour specialists, music and art therapists in the CAT (Creative Art Therapy) program, case workers, the hub leader and the community liaison officers, many of whom are from the same linguistic and cultural backgrounds as the refugees. The power relations relayed by these agents of socialization determined the positioning of these students labelled ‘refugees’ within the institutional order of the primary schooling context.

It has also been revealed that many refugee students feel alienated when they are transitioned to mainstream classes, and that the interaction between the students, their families and the teachers becomes limited. The strength of the insulation of boundaries between students, their families and teachers was influenced by teachers’ articulation of knowledge about refugee students and inclusive curricula, and the pedagogic discourses constituting the classroom lessons. The participants interviewed suggested that there is a need
for more open dialogue between the two parties comprising the mesosystem, the home and
the school, so that each party becomes aware of each other expectations and can contribute
towards the students’ learning outcomes.

5.3 Role of Paraprofessionals in The Context of Refugee Schooling

All the paraprofessionals interviewed talked about the different ways in which they
contributed to develop parents’ knowledge and capacity to support student learning through
building relationships between students, their families and the school. The analysis of the
interview data reveals that the paraprofessionals make a significant contribution to the
transmission and acquisition of informational resources between the school and the refugee
community by helping to provide inclusive education for refugee students. Based on
Bernstein’s theory (1996, 2000) which highlighted how the recontextualising rules regulate
the theory of instruction to derive the rules of transmission, this analysis uncovers
paraprofessionals’ contribution in recontextualising pedagogic discourse for refugee
education. The analysis has revealed how the paraprofessionals provide assistance, both
formally and informally, for refugee students’ and their families’ successful integration into a
new schooling system.

5.3.1 Formal supports

This section refers to the formal support that paraprofessionals provide, in collaboration with
teachers and other staff, to effectively integrate refugee students into the school system.
Participants in this study identified that cultural integration and a sense of belonging were
key factors influencing refugee students’ adaptation to schooling in the Australian
educational context. They suggested that a weak sense of identity due to cultural and
linguistic differences is linked to low self-esteem and feelings of not belonging. In order to
increase a sense of belonging and prevent isolation, paraprofessionals from the same ethnic
communities as students often use native language and cultural practices to provide support and a sense of belonging. Beginning with their enrolment and during the course of everyday learning, paraprofessionals are always ready to provide assistance. As Thiri commented, school enrolment is a complicated process for any refugee family, as the parents are completely unaware of how the schooling system works,

"parents face several obstacles like the forms to be filled out, decisions to be made, policies to be read, programs to learn about and questions to be answered. Many of them are from a situation where there is no experience of schooling at all and so when they get the support from the paraprofessional who speaks their same language and helps them, explains them about the process.... it becomes a huge relief for them...."

So, these paraprofessionals provide a much-needed linguistic connection between refugee students, their families and the school community.

The paraprofessionals in the study also mentioned how they always extend a helping hand whenever they get a call from any classroom teacher, whether it is related to any behavioural issues or if the student is not feeling well physically or emotionally. It sometimes becomes very challenging for the teacher to understand a student’s problem, as noted by Obato while sharing one of his experiences:

"Just a few days back, I received a call from a teacher saying- please come to my class. The student (she told me the name) is crying and I have no idea why? .... I went immediately, took him out of the classroom, tried to make him comfortable, took a
tissue and helped him to wipe his tears, trying to comfort him with very soft spoken
tone and then slowly he shared the reason why he was feeling very scared and
uncomfortable in class.... I asked the student- why you haven’t told this to your
teacher? He was quiet... Though we are from the same country but not same place, he
is from Ethiopia and I am from Burundi.

This extract revealed paraprofessionals’ skills in communicating in a manner the
student would respond to. In this context, Obato commented that it may take time for refugee
students to develop a trusting relationship in which they would not hesitate to share an issue
that may affect their learning. Obato mentioned that although the teachers always try to
provide a safe and supportive environment, the socio-cultural differences matter. Refugee
students and their families are hesitant about opening up to a person who is culturally and
linguistically so different from them. The insulating boundaries in the fields of production,
recontextualisation and reproduction due to these linguistic or socio-cultural differences are
relatively strong. The paraprofessionals suggested that the school should organize special
training workshops for staff, suggesting ways teachers could overcome cross-cultural
differences and weaken the boundaries, thereby fostering productive initiatives that improve
integration for refugees and asylum seekers.

The paraprofessionals reported winning the trust and faith of parents and the sense of
pride that has resulted. They commented that even when the language barriers do not exist,
many parents still choose to go first to the paraprofessionals to discuss any issue, primarily
because the parents know them better than they know the teachers. In this context, Angela
and Linh, stated that as they are the case workers, they are the first people these refugee
families meet on their arrival. Their contribution plays a vital role in building trusting,
supportive relationships between the school and refugee students and their families. As Angela commented,

*With our families, I have often observed, they are not just comfortable in coming to school and talking about any issue that they may face. They prefer to go to their hub teacher or to the case worker to share any problem and they expect us to take it back to school and talk about it....... I think this is just because of the unfamiliar faces....... parents might have seen that person or the teacher just on that one day of enrolment... I think here the school, particularly the teachers should encourage the parents to come forward and help in different collaborative activities.......so that the relationship can develop where the teachers and parents could work together for children’s learning progress.*

Realizing that the position does not authorize them to solve all problems related to refugee students’ schooling, the participants shared how they contribute to bringing parents and teachers together and provide useful input toward resolving problematic situations. The paraprofessionals reported how sometimes they play a critical role in mediating between parents and teachers. They revealed that the students’ version of any issue is sometimes completely different to what they tell their parents has actually happened, and sometimes this becomes a major hindrance to establishing a positive relationship between the school and the family. As a consequence, parents sometimes also think about changing their child’s school, without knowing the true story.

This is more common when the student is experiencing strong behavioural issues. The participants noted that sometimes when the student faces difficulties in integration, this
corresponds with behavioural problems. The student doesn’t understand how to respond and therefore may react with physical aggression or inappropriate behaviour. When they face the consequences of their inappropriate behaviour, they report a completely different story to their parents, putting all the blame on the school system. The parents cannot communicate or check with the school because of their lack of English, and sometimes believe their children’s story, and develop very negative feelings about the school system.

With their skills of empathy, compassion and diplomacy, the paraprofessionals play a major role in establishing positive relationships between the school and the family, which, in turn, helps in improving students’ behaviour and learning. As commented by Obato,

*Communicating with parents sometimes can be very challenging……. I need to consider their cultural beliefs, religion and gender. I need to move forward step by step to gain their trust. Once, I faced a situation like this…. I was so worried and bit scared also to deal with the mother and her husband. To establish a relation of trust, I visited them several times even beyond my office hours as they were not available in the day time. They were not at all welcoming at the beginning. They were completely having the wrong information and I talked and talked and at the end she addressed me – oh, my brother…..It was possible because of the way I talked…. I could gain their trust and confidence and I believe I helped them to change their attitude towards the school and the teacher.*

This extract denotes how the paraprofessionals establish relationships of trust with parents. Differential knowledge of the rules of recognition and realization depend largely on the socialization practices within families and family-school relationships (Bernstein, 2000).
By building trust and supportive relationships, the paraprofessionals can educate the parents about the school system and help them to overcome misunderstandings and misinterpretation.

5.3.2 Informal support

Some paraprofessionals stated that they are often a link between the student and the student’s parents and that they therefore are confronted by situations in which they are challenged to mediate problems. The paraprofessionals mentioned that sometimes they need to interfere in the renegotiation of family values and help to empower parents with the knowledge necessary to address parenting challenges in their new country.

Many refugee families experience a change in the power dynamics and a shift in roles and responsibilities within their families in their settlement process in Australia (Renzaho, Green, Mellor, & Swinburn, 2011). As the children are more exposed to Australian culture, especially through schools, they are often needed to interpret for their parents not only in language but also in new cultural forms. The interview data revealed that as parents and family members have difficulty in communicating in English, often children become the family’s representatives in many situations. While attending appointments, the children not only miss school but they are exposed to many matters which can be inappropriate at their age. On the other hand, parents must trust fully their children with their interpretation. This shift in power dynamics causes tension in families, and children sometimes take undue advantage of it. Parents’ limited exposure to Australian culture, together with their lack of English skills and social connections, often place them at a disadvantage. Paraprofessionals are sometimes needed to help to reinstate the power and status of parents within families. As shared by Azad,
Sometimes, children don’t listen to their parents and as the parents have very little English and very limited knowledge of the system, children take advantage of it and go against the words of parents. It happens that instead of studying they would spend more time on electronic devices …….. Facebook, chatting or going out with friends…. ask for money paid by Centrelink and if the parents go against them they even threat them with police. So here where I go and mediate and help them to know how actually the system works.

He commented that because of his positive relationships with parents, they feel safe and comfortable talking about the problems they are having with their children.

This extract shows how the shift in power dynamics impact family relationships. The participants agreed that often the cultural values and patriarchal gender roles are challenged in the resettlement process refugee families face. Refugee children often misinterpret the system as being lenient, where children can make decisions without understanding the consequences. This often leads to family tension and disagreement and impacts students’ educational outcomes. Some of the participants commented that their trust-worthy relationships sometimes cause them to work beyond official hours or to deal with issues that are not directly related to their schooling. As shared by Obato,

*As it is related to the safety of the children and these refugee families are completely unaware of where and how to ask for help, we can’t say ‘No’ to them…. for example, the child has gone out of home and not returning on time or the child is sick and they have no English or no knowledge where and how to get help, they call us…….*
The paraprofessionals mentioned that during their home visits, sometimes they are also required to spend hours helping the refugee children with their homework. As they are not particularly well acquainted with academic matters or the pedagogy used by teachers, they sometimes need to spend hours in research to learn a particular topic before they are able to help. But the question is, how much is their help or their contribution being recognized?

5.3.3 Work environment issues

Through their interviews the paraprofessionals expressed their concern that there were certain work environment related issues that helped or hindered their roles as connectors between refugee students, their families and the school community. Although the principal and most of the staff appreciated their help, their lack of training, respect, status and job security were issues which could be detrimental to their effectiveness.

Lack of training

Some of the paraprofessionals interviewed expressed their concern that they had never been provided with any formal training regarding instructional duties, behaviour problems, roles and responsibilities or interpersonal relationships. In these circumstances, they are often required to use the knowledge and skills they have learnt through their own experiences; their compassionate skills of understanding and empathetic feelings for their own community.

Respect, trust and appreciation

The participants interviewed acknowledged the positive learning environment in the school which is characterized by paraprofessionals working as a team with most of the teachers, being treated with trust and respect by all school personnel and parents and feeling rewarded for their work with children. As stated by Sophia, the community hub leader,
This school is amazing......the collaboration between staff - starting from the principal, teachers, special aides, liaison officers .... all work hand in hand, everyone is valued.... that’s the whole culture of this school.

In contrast, few participants reported a lack of respect or appreciation from some staff who may not be aware of paraprofessionals’ contribution to students’ learning, and those staff members misinterpret paraprofessionals, considering them to be merely interpreters. The participants considered that lack of contact between paraprofessionals and staff was the reason for this attitude. They indicated the necessity of meetings between teachers, special support staff, such as those who work in the behavioural committee, therapists and the other paraprofessionals to discuss the specific issues related to refugee schooling and how best they can be met in a collaborative and productive manner. In the words of one participant,

The staff’s lack of understanding of what the paraprofessionals can do and how it can contribute to the students’ learning sometimes can create a big gap between teaching and learning and can impact heavily on students’ learning progress...... their behaviour, their attitude, their family input.... everything matters and we need to value it.

All participants strongly agreed that educating the whole school population about refugees and how paraprofessionals can mediate in the schooling process can help to foster a welcoming and tolerant community.

Some of the participants in the study mentioned that though they are often required to work after hours and need to make repeated home visits, they do not receive any travelling
allowance or additional pay for these extra duties. Moreover, it is surprising to know that these community liaison officers are required to work with 20-30 schools at a time. During the previous school year, some even worked with 40 schools. Shockingly, even after working in their positions for more than 10 years, none of them has yet achieved permanency and they are all still working on contract basis.

5.3.4 Summary

In summary, this section analyses the process of recontextualization and reproduction of pedagogic discourse for successful integration of refugee students in the state schooling system. It will be recalled that Bernstein defined pedagogic discourse as a recontextualizing principle “which selectively appropriates, relocates, refocuses and relates other discourses to constitute its own order and orderings” (1990, p. 184). The interview analysis revealed that in the recontextualizing field where the knowledge is transformed by teachers for pedagogic purposes, some of the strategies that are used by some teachers to select and organise instructional discourses may prove to be ineffective for refugee students’ learning. These strategies often fail to acknowledge social and cultural differences, and instead of participating, some students prefer to silently withdraw.

In this context, Jones (1991) argued that teachers should acquire the skills to analyse and use the forms of communication that students bring to the classroom, as well as the instructional content and the interactions that students need to be engaged with to acquire school knowledge. This section revealed how paraprofessionals, through a social process produced by recontextualization, assist the educators in acquiring those skills and how they contribute by finding ways to make connections between refugee children’s worlds and their meanings, and the meanings of the school, thus making the curricula more relevant to refugee education.
This section also informed how the differences in the modes of pedagogy between home country and host country, as well as the socio-cultural differences in pedagogic practice, can influence the pedagogic discourse that may impede refugee students’ learning. These differences in pedagogical attributes sometimes make it difficult for refugee students and their parents to understand their social position in relation to the teacher. The differences in social relations between the communicative contexts at home and school create confusion for refugee students.

The pedagogic communication in school emphasised individual freedom, individual accomplishment of tasks where the students are encouraged to question teachers with an aim to develop individual repertoire of knowledge. The participants in this study indicated how sometimes refugee students misinterpret this ‘freedom’ in the communicative practices of schooling, and this misinterpretation hamper parent-child relationships. The findings mentioned several situations where the paraprofessionals played an important role in assisting refugee students and their families to understand this communicative practice, and power relations in school that are often “masked, disguised or hidden” (Singh, 2001a, p. 257).

5.4 Conclusion

It can be concluded from this data analysis in one case study schooling institution that discourse practices construct specific identities for refugee students. The theoretical model employed for this analysis was based on Bernstein’s concept of pedagogic discourse (1975, 1990, 1996) that highlights the principles of instructional discourse and regulative discourse. These principles explained how power relations between different agents of socialisation (students, teachers, parents, paraprofessionals) position refugee students within the institutional order in the primary schooling context. It was possible to see how the
distribution of power and principles of control at the organisational level of socialisation influences the pedagogic practice in the context of refugee schooling.

The analysis highlighted the differences and/or the deficit factors of why the refugee students could not exercise the same power as that of their peers, who were familiar with the workings of the classroom and the school community. It was argued that the communication relations between and within the various categories of agents of socialization had the potential to recontextualize and reproduce pedagogic discourse for successful integration of refugee students.

The findings suggested how perceptions of refugee students and interactions with refugee communities can enhance or limit the positive dynamics and relationships in the classroom. Teachers’ inadequate understanding of refugee students’ identities and, their socio-cultural backgrounds often knowingly or unknowingly restricts them from constructing an inclusive pedagogic practice. On the other hand, the importance of family-school partnerships to enhance students’ education has been recognized at both federal and state levels of education. But refugee parents’ unfamiliarity with the Australian schooling system, limited literacy and numeracy skills, different cultural understanding and limited English language skills make them unable to participate in their children’s education.

The data analysis revealed paraprofessionals’ contribution bridging refugee students and their families and the school community to facilitate their learning. Despite adopting different strategies in bridging the gaps brought about by cultural and communication differences, several policy and practice recommendations emerge from the themes in this study that would further enable the paraprofessionals to act as intermediaries between refugee students, their families and school communities to promote better understanding in the educational context.
This study analyses the role of paraprofessionals in communicating between school, refugee students and their families within a specific case study context. The limitations and implications of the study and reasons for considerations for further research also need to be noted. These factors are outlined in the next chapter, Chapter 6.
Chapter 6 : Discussion and Conclusion

6.1 Reflecting Back While Moving Forward

This research study aimed to examine the work of paraprofessionals in enhancing the educational outcomes of refugee students attending a public primary school servicing a culturally and linguistically diverse, high poverty community in South-East Queensland. Specifically, the study examined the work undertaken by a cohort of paraprofessionals in facilitating knowledge flows between the school, home and local community.

A review of the research literature indicated that refugee background students are often not a priority in schooling and education systems. Rather, the needs of refugee students are often conflated with the needs of other migrants or international students. Thus, the difficulties experienced by refugee students in their transition from home country, refugee camps and so forth are not given due attention in schooling or education policies. The difficulties experienced by refugee students lead to frustration and misunderstandings within the school community, which, in turn, can impede these students’ learning outcomes. Within the education system, there is urgent need for acknowledgement of the strengths and resources inherent in those students who are also refugees (Crossan, Field, Gallacher, & Merrill, 2003). This study is significant because it examined the leading role that paraprofessionals play in recognising refugee students’ needs and impediments to their education, and how the paraprofessionals contribute to more effective school programs and teaching strategies to facilitate refugee students’ learning.

6.2 Contributions to The Empirical Literature

The literature review undertaken in Chapter 2 showed that although empirical research has been undertaken on the well-being determinants of refugee students, the knowledge work that
Paraprofessionals undertake between the refugee community and the school community to enhance the learning needs of refugee students has not been examined in depths. Large scale studies of refugee education in Australia (Matthews, 2008; Pugh et al., 2012; Taylor & Sidhu, 2012) highlighted how refugee students’ different pre- and post-migration issues create real challenges at different levels of their schooling. Previous studies have also documented how teachers of refugee students often feel ill-equipped to reproduce classroom practices or negotiate discourses alongside educational policy, curriculum documents and their own personal understandings about the diverse needs of refugee students (Naidoo, 2009; Standage, 2015). A lack in systematic policies, resources and funding initiatives addressing the specific needs of refugee students has led to their schooling being “left to chance” (Sidhu & Taylor, 2007, p. 279).

Strengthening relationships between families and schools is considered to be essential for children’s academic achievement and for their social and emotional development (Gutman & Midgley, 2000; Jeynes, 2005). The research literature on refugee education has acknowledged the role of liaison workers or cultural brokers in this regard (Matthews, 2008; Yohani, 2013). Paraprofessionals’ contribution to the schooling of refugee students, particularly, those enrolled in primary schools has received little attention. Their work often has a significant effect on these children’s education, assisting with communication flows between young refugee students, their families and the school.

Furthermore, insufficient research has been undertaken on the active part played by paraprofessionals from the local community in the schooling of refugee students. Nor has the importance of the work undertaken by paraprofessionals been sufficiently recognized or supported by the current education system. In addition, as researchers such as Ball (2012) argued, teachers often need to develop deeper, more comprehensive understandings of the students. A valuable source of professional information for teachers is available from
paraprofessionals who are immersed in the local community and who are working closely with refugee students and their families. However, many classroom teachers do not engage effectively or work collaboratively with paraprofessionals for the educational benefit of refugee students. The research study reported in this thesis offers an opportunity for teachers to engage with the work of paraprofessionals and hear their stories of their educational work mediating relations between the school, refugee families and local communities.

6.3 Contributions to The Theory

The findings of this study not only supported those of the research literature but also the theoretical outlines, as provided by Bernstein in his theories of pedagogical practice. Bernstein’s theory of pedagogic discourse (1975, 1990, 1996) provided concepts within which to explore and define learning in social contexts. His theory also showed how the interaction that occurs within the context of social learning creates an environment where children are active learners. Thus, his theory of pedagogic discourse provides powerful insights, enabling analysis of the role of paraprofessionals in constructing the pedagogic discourse appropriate for refugee students.

This study builds on the work of Bernstein and other scholars such as Exley (1997, 2005), Whatman (2004) and Singh (1997, 2001a, 2001b) who have drawn on Bernstein’s concepts to undertake empirical studies in Australia. However, no researchers who have used Bernstein’s theoretical concepts have applied his ideas to explore the work of paraprofessionals in refugee children’s primary school education. Thus, this study contributes by advancing scholarship in this theoretical area, as these concepts have not been used in any previous examination of the specific research problem of this study.

The theoretical significance of this study lies in the fact that the analysis further developed understandings of how instructional and regulative discourses were assimilated,
creating one discourse of pedagogic communication. This assimilation will be profoundly influenced by new understandings of the ways in which paraprofessionals assist in the flows of knowledge between refugee students, their families and the school. On one hand, the study revealed how paraprofessionals assist the school community in understanding refugee students’ needs, their parents’ expectations and the barriers to their schooling. On the other hand, the study demonstrated how paraprofessionals can assist refugee students and their families to understand the norms, regulations and expectations of the new learning environment. Thus, this study draws attention to the input provided by paraprofessionals which assist both teachers and the school community in developing inclusive pedagogical practices for refugee students.

Furthermore, the theorisation of Bernstein’s concepts (1975, 1990, 1996) was useful because of the ways it exposed some of the implicit transmissions within pedagogic acts. Bernstein’s framework of classification and framing was valuable to this study, providing a deeper understanding of how the power and control relations between different agents of pedagogic discourse - (refugee students, teachers, parents, paraprofessionals and the community)- structure communication channels and create, legitimize and reproduce boundaries. The analysis of the case study data demonstrated the ways in which refugee students often become confused or disoriented by the differences between the modes of social control regulating the institutions of the primary schools, and those regulating their homes in the refugee community. This confusion affects refugee students’ learning and their successful adjustment to their new learning environment. Thus, the power and control relations generating pedagogic discourse disadvantage refugee students in the acquisition of school knowledge. This conceptual framework was extremely useful for this study, assisting in an exploration of how paraprofessionals contribute and help refugee students and their families to recognise the principles of power and control in their learning context. Highlighted in this
research are the ways in which paraprofessionals have the ability to bridge the gap between refugee students, their families and the schooling system, thereby creating scope for better educational outcomes.

6.4 Contributions to The Case Study Research Design

This study also contributed to the literature regarding the design of case study research and the use of semi-structured interviews. The case study method proved to be useful in gaining a more informed perspective on incidents related to this study’s investigation. Semi-structured interviews provided the scope to reword/rephrase questions if and when necessary. The data provided by the interview participants revealed some solutions to the problems, this study posed.

It is important to mention that, although several extant case studies on refugee education exist, there are very few case studies on refugee education in which the researcher is an insider-researcher. I acknowledge that my experience of working with refugee students influenced my decision to undertake this topic. My role as an insider-researcher influenced many aspects of this case study research, including the selection of the research topic, the scope of the study, access to the participants, data collection and analysis, and most importantly, maintenance of research rigour (Breen, 2007).

It has been argued (DeLyser, 2001; Hewitt-Taylor, 2002; Unluer, 2012) that research undertaken by an insider-researcher could lead to loss of objectivity and bias. However, in this case, my position allowed me to take a nuanced approach, giving me the opportunity to closely explore the issues being examined. I was able to identify the key players, the power differentials and the dynamics that existed within the domain of the research study.

Furthermore, as I have worked as a teacher within this vulnerable, impoverished community, my knowledge and experience enabled me to work in a respectful and ethical
way with the paraprofessionals who participated in this study. As a teacher of refugee students, to some extent, I do the same type of work as these paraprofessionals, liaising between refugee students, the school and the local community. My experience has inspired me to promote the work of paraprofessionals so that their contributions are acknowledged and valued by the educators and the school community, leading to successful educational outcomes for refugee students.

6.5 Implications for School Policies and Pedagogical Practices

The aim of this study was to provide educators with an understanding of the valuable contribution paraprofessionals make to the effective schooling of refugee students. Although this case study drew on a very small sample of just six paraprofessionals, the findings provided valuable insights into the ways in which paraprofessionals are changing the curriculum and pedagogy in primary schools to make it more inclusive of the needs of refugee students. As suggested in the literature (Kanu, 2008), and as confirmed by this study, teachers need assistance to improve their knowledge of, and attitudes towards, refugee students. In order to effectively educate refugee students, teachers need to deconstruct their own cultural views and intellectual stuntedness in the curriculum and pedagogy of formal schooling. As the study highlighted, paraprofessionals with socio-cultural knowledge who work closely with refugee communities, can assist teachers in developing a broader vision, encompassing multifaceted teaching goals for refugee students.

The study’s investigation revealed that many teachers did not have the language or appropriate resources to understand or to analyse, the specific issues which impact upon refugee students’ learning abilities. Some mainstream teachers may find it difficult to meet these students’ particular academic, social and linguistic needs in ways which are not underpinned by deficit assumptions. The case study school, through its Learning and Well
Being and Pedagogical framework has implemented different programs which focus on building respectful and healthy relationships in a multicultural setting. However, the specific expertise and knowledge that the paraprofessionals acquire through their work with refugee students and their families was not integrated across the whole school, and certainly did not inform classroom curriculum and pedagogy. As such, this study suggests that teachers need to work more closely with paraprofessionals to better understand the various, complicated issues that refugee students face, which massively influence their learning. Thus, paraprofessionals’ advice and knowledge relating to refugee students may help teachers to change classroom pedagogic discourses so that they are more inclusive of refugee students.

One of the central tenets of the paraprofessionals’ stories was how misunderstandings between refugee parents and teachers lead to misinterpretations caused by lack of understanding of school systems, and linguistic differences. The study revealed the ways in which paraprofessionals assist in collecting and disseminating accurate information and cultural knowledge. This knowledge contributes to a reduction in prejudice and negativity among the different members of the school community. Furthermore, this study highlighted the ways in which paraprofessionals help parents to navigate an unfamiliar educational system by facilitating communication between the home and the school. The urgent need for the involvement of the paraprofessionals in regular and open communication between refugee students, their parents/families and the teachers was also revealed. It is the paraprofessionals who are most likely to be able to resolve the dilemmas which cause barriers in the communication.

This study also contributed to broader, improved understandings of refugee students’ needs which should be taken into consideration by practising teachers, in line with the AITSL professional standard, “Know your students” (AITSL, 2014). As revealed by the data analysis, this means that paraprofessionals have the ability to help teachers understand the
specific needs of refugee students. Paraprofessionals are familiar with refugees’ issues because of their existing knowledge and their regular dealings with refugee students and their families. Accordingly, teachers can frame their pedagogic practice in ways that go beyond caring, ensuring that “misframing”, which may work against the involvement and engagement of refugee students, does not occur (Standage, 2015, p. 126).

As the study’s investigation also revealed, the support of paraprofessionals for teachers is necessary in seeking and enacting change for refugee students. The examination of the research problem revealed paraprofessionals' roles in the creation of social and cultural relationships, both inside and outside of the classroom. This focused the need for teaching staff to work proactively with paraprofessionals to better understand the unique needs of refugee students, facilitating a conducive environment which provides better educational outcomes. The findings of this study revealed that teachers need to understand the contribution paraprofessionals make, bridging the gap that exists in refugee schooling, as they regularly and actively collaborate between school and home, ensuring that refugee students are offered effective education.

It is imperative that educators and policy makers recognize the contribution paraprofessionals make to the education of refugee students, and how their contribution is relevant to the recontextualization of pedagogic practices that may facilitate the actual learning and teaching of these students. As the data revealed, paraprofessionals are working with 20 to 30 schools at a time, and are often required to work beyond school hours with no additional remuneration. Moreover, even after working for nearly ten years, they have not achieved permanent status. Is this because of inadequate funding? Or it is because of a misrecognition of paraprofessionals as an important resource in refugee schooling?
This research makes a significant contribution to the field of refugee education, revealing new ways to design pedagogic practices in collaboration with paraprofessionals, which will make a positive difference to refugee students’ educational outcomes.

6.6 Implications for Further Research

It is imperative that a similar study involving a larger cohort of participants from a varied range of institutional contexts be conducted. A larger scale research study would enable more comparisons and would render the findings more generalizable. A larger sample size could include others involved with refugee schooling, for example, refugee students, their families, mainstream teachers and EAL/D teachers, guidance officers, behaviour specialists and other paraprofessionals such as bilingual teacher aides or therapists who work with refugee children. Such a study would present the larger context of refugee students’ schooling, and would provide additional perceptions about the need for paraprofessionals’ contributions, thereby enhancing the learning of refugee students.

Further studies could be undertaken to explore Bernstein’s theory (1975, 1996, 2000) related to the content of instruction. This current study has focused on the regulative discourse, examining the ways in which paraprofessionals contribute to the acquisition of values, the norms of social conduct and socio-affective competences in the context of refugee schooling. But what content or specialized texts should be used by teachers to be more appropriate and effective for refugee students? As Bernstein (1996, 2000) pointed out, instructional and regulative discourses are intertwined, so it is essential that both discourses be investigated in detail in order to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the problem.
Human research policy in relation to the employment of paraprofessionals is another area requiring further investigation. Some knowledge and experience of refugee life would certainly facilitate refugee students’ learning in an Australian educational context.

Finally, the study showed the need for an evaluation of training and professional workshops, exclusively related to refugee schooling. Teaching and non-teaching staff should be encouraged to attend such workshops, to ensure that the appropriate pedagogical practices which enhance refugee students’ education are being enacted. However, this study’s findings could serve as a baseline for further research in the context of refugee schooling. Regarding the effective schooling of refugee children, the study has demonstrated to all stakeholders the importance and benefits of such research.

6.7 Limitations of the research

The findings of the study were limited as the study used a very small database. Only six paraprofessionals were interviewed and the study was based on one case study school: Rejewel State School. In this context, it is important to note that through this study, the unique experiences of the paraprofessionals working in the context of one case study school were explored. Thus, the findings are mostly based on their perceptions of their experiences. The overreliance on data from the few paraprofessionals interviewed is another limitation of this research study. However, the varied job profiles of the participants have provided a greater understanding of the research problem and have contributed to the validity of the data. As mentioned in Chapter 4, three of the paraprofessionals interviewed are community liaison officers, one interviewee works with the community hub and two interviewees are case workers.

The fact that this case study consisted of one school in one suburb also restricted the findings. Data was limited because the study did not explore other case study schools where
refugee students were enrolled, for example, other state schools, Catholic schools, special schools or one teacher schools. As a consequence, comparisons between paraprofessionals’ roles in a number of institutions could not be developed.

The limited number and category of paraprofessionals restricted the generalisability of the research findings. Although, the responses of the paraprofessionals interviewed within the case study school were genuine and heartfelt, they cannot represent those of the entire category of paraprofessionals. For example, teacher aides, voluntary workers, therapists and other specialists who contribute towards refugee students’ schooling are also paraprofessionals and may have an important influence on refugee students’ schooling.

Despite the limitations, this study has advocated a new way of working with refugee students, in collaboration with paraprofessionals in an active social learning environment. This study seeks transformative actions with deliberative pedagogical practices which will make a real difference in refugee students’ educational achievements.
References


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Full Research Ethics Clearance 2017/147

4 messages

tims@griffith.edu.au <tims@griffith.edu.au>
To: nandini.dutta@griffithuni.edu.au, minglin.li@griffith.edu.au, parlo.singh@griffith.edu.au
Cc: research-ethics@griffith.edu.au, k.madison@griffith.edu.au

GRiffith UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW

Dear Prof Parlo Singh

I write further to the additional information provided in relation to the provisional approval granted to your application for ethical clearance for your project “Paraprofessionals and Refugee Education in Queensland, Australia” (GU Ref No: 2017/147).

This is to confirm that this response has addressed the comments and concerns of the HREC.

The ethics reviewers resolved to grant your application a clearance status of “Fully Approved”.

Consequently, you are authorised to immediately commence this research on this basis.

Regards

Kim Madison | Human Research Ethics
Office for Research
Griffith University | Nathan | QLD 4111 | Level 0, Bray Centre (N54)
T +61 7 373 58043 | email k.madison@griffith.edu.au
Appendix B: School Permission letter

SCHOOL PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

20 March, 2017
The Office for Research
Human Research Ethics
Griffith University
Queensland

Dear Institutional Review Board
As the principal of [Name] I confirm that the school grants permission to Nandini Dutta for the proposed research titled *Paraprofessionals and Refugee Education in Queensland* (GU Reference No. 2107/147). She is allowed to interview the professionals associated with this school for the purpose of her research. The school will be assisting her to get into contact with the people working with ACCESS for her research purpose only.

Sincerely

[Signature]

Principal
Appendix C: Information Sheet

INFORMATION SHEET

Topic: Paraprofessionals and Refugee students in Queensland

Chief Investigator: Prof. Parlo Singh
Griffith Institute for Educational Research
Telephone: (07) 373 51833
Email: parlo.singh@griffith.edu.au

Student Researcher: Nandini Dutta
GU Ethics Reference No.: 2017/147

Why is this research being conducted?

This research is being conducted to explore the bridging work undertaken by different paraprofessionals to meet the challenges and needs of refugee students and their families in the context of schooling in Queensland.

What will you be asked to do?

I will arrange a time to meet, which is convenient for you and in your workplace if that is appropriate. There will be one, single interview with myself during which I will ask you some questions related to your job profile and experience with refugee students and their families. The interview is expected to last no longer than half an hour and is a one-off event. This interview will be recorded and transcribed for my research purpose only. As required by Griffith University, all audio recordings will be erased after transcription.
The expected benefits of research

This research investigates the paraprofessionals’ understanding of the different learning and social-emotional issues faced by refugee students. The focus includes the school’s response to these issues, how the paraprofessionals assist with communication flows between families and school and vice versa, the difficulties associated with this work and what could be done better. The study will contribute to provide new insights and find possibilities for change that might assist schools to provide more effective support towards refugee schooling in Australia.

Risks to you
Apart from the 30 minutes of your time for the interview, I can foresee no risks for you. Your involvement in the study is voluntary and you may withdraw your participation from the study at any time and withdraw any data that you have provided to that point. Refusal to participate in the study will not affect your relationship with the organization you are working or with Griffith University.

Your confidentiality

If you agree to take part, your name will not be recorded on any script and the information will not be disclosed to other parties. Your responses to the questions will be used for the purpose of this project only. You can be assured that if you take part in the project you will remain anonymous.

The ethical conduct of this research

Griffith University conducts research in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research. If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the research project, you should contact the Manager, Research Ethics on 37354375 or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au
Privacy

The research forms a component of my academic program (Master of Education and Professional Studies Research). The conduct of this research involves the collection, access and/or use of your identified personal information. The information collected is confidential and will not be disclosed to thirds parties without your consent, except to meet government, legal or other regulatory authority requirements. A de-identified copy of this data may be used for other research purposes. However, your anonymity will at all times be safeguarded. All research data (interview transcripts and analysis) will be retained in a password protected electronic file at Griffith University for a period of five years before being destroyed. For further information consult the University’s Privacy Plan at http://www.griffith.edu.au/about-griffith/plans-publications/griffith-university-privacy-plan or telephone (07) 37354375.

Feedback

A summary report of the overall findings of the research will be made available to you at the completion of the study.

A consent form follows and you are asked to sign and date the statement before returning it to the student researcher. Griffith University acknowledges gratefully the support you will provide to its research initiatives if you decide to participate in this project.
Appendix D: Consent form

Paraprofessionals and Refugee Education in Queensland

Consent form

Research Team

Chief Investigator: Prof. Parlo Singh
Griffith Institute for Educational Research
Telephone: (07) 373 51833
Email: parlo.singh@griffith.edu.au

Partner Investigator: Dr. Minglin Li
Griffith Institute for Educational Research
Telephone (07) 373 54081
Email: minglin.li@griffith.edu.au

Member of the Research Team: Nandini Dutta
Email: nandini.dutta@griffithuni.edu.au

GU Ethics Reference No.: 2017/147

By signing below, I confirm that I have read and understood the information package and in particular:

- I understand that my involvement in this research will include participation in an interview;
- I understand that the interview will be audio-recorded for transcription purposes;
- I have had any questions answered to my satisfaction;
- I understand the risks involved;
- I understand that there will be no direct benefit to me from my participation in this research but the research is expected to generate new insights into the path of providing more effective support towards refuge schooling in Australia;
- I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary;
- I understand that if I have any additional questions I can contact the research team;
- I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time, without explanation or penalty;
- I understand that my name and other personal information that could identify me will be removed or de-identified in publications or presentations resulting from this research;
• I understand that I can contact the Manager, Research Ethics, at Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee on 3735 4375 (or research.ethics@griffith.edu.au) if I have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the project; and

• I agree to participate in the project.

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Appendix E: Questionnaire

- Can you describe your job in this school?

- Refugee students arrive in Australia with vastly different schooling and education experiences. Can you recount some of the stories told to you by refugee students and their families? Can you talk about their attempts to bridge the gap in their educational experiences?

- What are the common problems you think refugee students face on their arrival in Australia?

- What are the major issues they face in the context of their schooling in a new environment?

- How does this school and the teachers assist the students to deal with these issues? What is done well and what might be done better?

- Can you describe your work in assisting the flows of communication between the school and refugee families?

- What factors contribute to communication difficulties? What strategies have you and the school adopted to overcome these difficulties?

- For how long have you been working with the refugee community?

- Have the educational issues for this community shifted over time? In what way?

- How the school is responding towards involving community and family with the aim of providing a more supportive environment?

- What kinds of support has the community established for itself?