



ONLINE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR TEACHERS: A BRIEF REVIEW

ÇEVİRİMİÇİ ÖĞRETMEN MESLEKİ GELİŞİMİ: BİR TARAMA

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Abstract

Globally, education systems now place a high premium on the development of teachers. Professional development courses have also been impacted by technological advancements in learning. Teacher professional development has shifted away from traditional face-to-face, single-location training and toward developmental activities in advanced web-based environments in the age of Internet technology. As a result, web-based professional development courses can not only enhance instructors' professional knowledge and experience, but also assist them in breaking school boundaries. Online teacher professional development for teachers (oTPD) is still a rapidly expanding topic of research in teacher education. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to review related literature on oTPD to provide a large lens through oTPD. It will elaborate on communities of practice, online communities of practice for teachers and perspectives of online teacher professional development.

Keywords: Communities of Practice, Online Teacher Professional Development, Social Media

Öz

Küresel olarak, eğitim sistemleri artık öğretmenlerin gelişimine büyük önem vermektedir. Mesleki gelişim kursları, öğrenmedeki teknolojik gelişmelerden de etkilenmiştir. Öğretmenlerin mesleki gelişimi, geleneksel yüz yüze, tek konumlu eğitimden İnternet teknolojisi çağında gelişmiş web tabanlı ortamlardaki gelişim etkinliklerine doğru kaymıştır. Sonuç olarak, web tabanlı mesleki gelişim kursları, eğitimcilerin yalnızca mesleki bilgi ve deneyimlerini artırmakla kalmaz, aynı zamanda okul sınırlarını aşmalarına da yardımcı olur. Öğretmenler için çevrimiçi öğretmen mesleki gelişimi (oTPD), öğretmen eğitiminde hâlâ hızla genişleyen bir araştırma konusudur. Bu nedenle, bu çalışmanın amacı, oTPD ile ilgili alanyazını geniş bir açıyla gözden geçirmektir. Uygulama toplulukları, öğretmenler için çevrimiçi uygulama toplulukları ve çevrimiçi öğretmen mesleki gelişimi perspektifleri üzerinde durulacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Çevrimiçi Öğretmen Mesleki Gelişimi, Sosyal Medya, Uygulama Toplulukları

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Introduction

The term “community of practice” has long been used in different areas. Lave and Wenger (1991) coined the concept of community of practice (CoP) for the first time and define communities of practice (CoPs) as a set of relationships formed over time among people, activities and the world and related to other superficial and overlapping communities of practice (1991, p.98). Wenger (2005) later elaborated the definition as follows: CoPs are made up of individuals who participate in a process of collective learning within a specific field. This can be seen when tribes, bands, teams, and other groups learn to survive together, find new creative means of expression, define their identity in the classroom or workplace, research cutting-edge procedures or practices through collaboration with other surgeons etc. In essence these are settings where people come together to improve their skills and knowledge collectively. There are a variety of communication networks, from small groups to large multinational organizations. Some have a core group of members and many more peripheral participants. They can be local or global in scope, meeting face-to-face or online predominantly. Some are within an organization while others involve members from different parts of the organizational landscape. There is no one model that fits all; each network has its own unique features and benefits. Helleve (2010, p.13) describes CoPs as groups that share a common participation, specific tasks and a common repertoire. People participate in learning activities in CoPs. Along with artifacts like products, media, procedures, and technology, they include both experts and novices as members. CoPs take place in the actual world outside, as opposed to typical learning environments where learning takes place indoors in a controlled environment. This allows for more interaction between participants and provides them with opportunities to learn from each other directly (Johnson, 2001) since it is common to have individuals with varied degrees of competence present at once in a CoP (Chung & Chen, 2018).

In the age of Internet technology, the approach to teacher professional development has shifted from traditional face-to-face training to more interactive web-based activities. This change has allowed online courses to not only enhance teachers' professional knowledge and experience but also break down the limitations of school boundaries. Online teacher professional development (oTPD) is a rapidly growing field of study within teacher education. Hence, the aim of this research is to analyze existing literature on oTPD, providing a comprehensive perspective on the subject. It will explore topics such as communities of practice, online communities of practice for teachers, and different viewpoints on online teacher professional development.

Online Communities of Practice for Teachers

The developments in learning technology have had an influence on professional development courses (Wasserman & Migdal, 2019). The value of using online CoPs as a model for teacher professional development is becoming increasingly clear, especially when it comes to assisting teachers and educators in reflecting on their practice in a supportive and collaborative learning environment. CoPs are now, however, increasingly viewed as something virtual due to rising globalization and the Internet's rapid development, growth, and accessibility (Kirschner & Lai, 2007). Wenger et al. (2002, p. 34) argue that a community of practices is more than just a website, database, or group of best practices; they asserted that it is a collection of people who interact, share knowledge, form connections, and are engaged in a process of belonging and interdependence. As it is understood, online communities have their own characteristics.

Gairín-Sallán and Rodríguez-Gómez (2010, p.142) listed the characteristics of online communities as follows:

- Since its members communicate with each other using electronic means in the created environment, it is only available in cyberspace.
- Considering that knowledge and science are formed on the basis of a common reflection, their organizational models are horizontal without vertical structures.
- Participants share an environment as individuals who give meaning to society with their diverse interests, goals and professions.
- Its members share a purpose, interest, need and activity as the primary reason for establishing the community. They also agree on a context, language, conventions and rules of communication.
- Its members take an active attitude towards participation, even sharing emotional bonds and intense joint activities.
- Its members have access to shared resources and the policies that govern access to those resources.
- There is a mutuality of information, support and services among members.

Virtual communities rely on networked technologies, such as the Internet, to create collaboration across geographical barriers and time zones. These networks allow for virtual communities that exist outside of traditional physical boundaries (Johnson, 2001). Regardless of their origins, communities of online users have become increasingly popular. This popularity can be attributed to a variety of reasons - from entertainment to education, and even business purposes (Rosenbaum & Shachaf, 2010). It is thought that naturally occurring groups are important in terms of professional development. When teachers begin to utilize web-based platforms and maintain ongoing conversations, they encounter less isolation and create a learning community that values the progress of every member. Multiple online tools encourage instructors to break away from the traditional learning model where an expert imparts knowledge, and instead instill a culture of collaborative learning where teachers can learn from one another with the support of a skilled facilitator. This is also an opportunity for teachers to experience and learn to use online tools such as databases, simulations and video that are applicable when teaching their students. It has been argued that the use of online learning will be effective in ensuring continuity or enriching other professional learning experiences (Loucks-Horsley et al., 1998, p. 276). Without the involvement of a range of people, from novices to experts, an online community of practice cannot function effectively (Abedini et al., 2021). However, maintaining teachers' professional up-to-date and giving them ongoing professional development opportunities is a significant difficulty. Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) can be a resource- and cost-efficient way to supplement the conventional approaches to teacher professional development. Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) have been suggested as a viable remedy since TPD essentially needs new ways in terms of content distribution and training modality (Misra, 2018). A teacher's development depends heavily on having the assistance of others in their field. As teachers advance in their careers, it becomes increasingly crucial. Therefore, there is evidence to suggest that the traditional face-to-face collegial support for teachers is increasingly being supplemented with online support (Kelly & Antonio, 2016).

Online Teacher Professional Development

In the era of Internet technology, teacher professional development has transitioned away from conventional face-to-face, single-location training and toward developmental

activities in sophisticated web-based settings (Chen et al., 2009). Online professional development courses, one of the web-based settings, may help educators transcend traditional academic borders while simultaneously helping them advance their professional knowledge and expertise (Kao et al., 2014). For teachers, online communities are understood as open and voluntary gatherings of individuals related to the general practice of teaching, specific disciplines or areas of interest (Lloyd & Duncan-Howell, 2010, p. 61). Education systems across the world currently place a high value on teacher professional development (Misra, 2018). Online professional development has emerged as a viable, effective and up-to-date tool for teacher education (Zygouris-Coe & Swan, 2010, p. 114). Dela Cruz-Yeh (2011, p.76) stated that online groups, whether institutionally based or not, have a lot of potential for offering online teacher professional development. Online professional development refers to any web-based form of learning or process of professional growth that teachers can participate in, with the aim of enhancing their job performance in areas such as content knowledge, skills, or pedagogical abilities. It is considered as one of the modes of delivering professional development (Elliott, 2017).

Teachers in rural and remote schools face a variety of difficulties, such as those caused by distance, loneliness, and a lack of opportunities for professional development. Access to professional development is a crucial aspect of every teacher's career because of the constant changes to syllabus documents, accreditation requirements, and teaching challenges. Teachers in outlying areas have a difficult time taking part in professional development for a variety of reasons (Maher & Prescott, 2017). One of the greatest benefits of using online professional development to enhance their professional learning is the availability of learning with people who are geographically distant from one another. There are resources and connections among teachers that are not available locally for those who work in different schools or cities (Loucks-Horsley et al., 1998, p.275).

Online technologies have the potential to support more specialized experiences for teacher professional development. It can be important and effective for teachers to situate their individual work, thinking, or approach within larger communities, whether those communities consist of direct connections with other educators or diffuse connections to groups of educators working on related projects (Yurkofsky et al., 2019). Teachers are using social media platforms to communicate, share ideas and broaden their professional learning possibilities. Teachers are using professional learning networks to study for themselves online. Some instructors prioritize obtaining instructional materials, while others choose to follow others to learn about the newest concepts (Prestridge, 2019). E-learning has a number of benefits for professional development. It enables adult learners to control their own educational journey and balance it with work and other responsibilities. Online interactions can be fully synchronous, fully asynchronous, or hybrid in their structure. Either synchronous or entirely asynchronous behavior is possible (Biasutti et al., 2019).

oTPD must help teachers learn, as traditional professional development has long attempted to do (Roskos et al., 2007). Professional development activities that might not be available locally can be taken part in through online resources. Since the environment in which teachers work is changing quickly, they require better and ongoing professional development to stay current (Chen et al., 2009). Aside from occasional meetings in the staff room, most of the teachers do not have enough opportunities to exchange and discuss their practice in the course. They may feel lonely as a result of this lack of opportunities. However, online resources are constantly expanding teachers' opportunity to interact with other teachers (Donnelly & Boniface, 2013).

Teacher online learning community has resulted in new potentials and challenges to teacher professional development, necessitating the use of both well-developed frameworks and successful methodologies (Li et al., 2021). Informal online communities and networks provide teachers with the possibility to share their teaching practices, reflect on them, and receive emotional support from others (Macià & García, 2016).

When compared to traditional teacher professional development, teacher online learning networks have several notable advantages. One of the benefits of online PD is that it responds to teachers' busy schedules (Du et al., 2023). Online communities can offer authentic and individualized learning experiences, which can serve as a source of continuing professional development for teachers. These communities can give teachers access to collaborative and ongoing learning opportunities as well as individualized content (Duncan-Howell, 2010). The online community of practice (CoPs) has become an essential platform for individuals with similar interests or objectives to collaborate, exchange resources, create effective strategies, resolve challenges, and enhance both personal and organizational achievements in order to promote the professional growth of educators in the digital realm. Because it fosters the development of mutuality, confidence, and backing between members, the strength of connections plays a vital role in facilitating knowledge-sharing within online professional CoPs (Tseng & Kuo, 2014).

Social Networking Sites and oTPD

The management of educational resources and the development of informal communities or networks of teachers usually take place in social circumstances (Michos & Hernández-Leo, 2018). Boyd and Ellison (2008) argue that social networking sites offer individuals the ability to (1) develop a public or semi-public profile on a restricted system, (2) generate a list of other users they are connected to, and (3) grant themselves or other users within the system access to this list. Essentially, these web-based services provide users with a way to review and analyze the list of connections they have established. The Internet has created new opportunities for school teachers to connect with one another through online support groups, which have proliferated alongside the advent of social media platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn, and MySpace. Participants in online teacher support groups generally enjoy greater access to teaching resources and knowledge that may not be easily available locally. When these groups evolve into successful online communities of practice, they can effectively facilitate and encourage the professional development of their members. Consequently, members are more likely to find good solutions to challenges, experience less job-related anxiety, and feel more self-assured at work. In conclusion, online teacher support groups have played a role in enhancing the professional development of their members to some degree (Chung & Chen, 2018). Teachers are using social media more and more as a tool for informal professional development, and it's a useful way to track how much knowledge they've built up collectively. The teachers themselves choose the professional development (PD) topics and level of participation in these informal settings. Reifications may be conveyed in online communities of practice through blog posts or comments made in forums like Facebook groups. These are a few examples of the channels through which members may influence the involvement of others to result in changes in their knowledge and behavior (van Bommel et al., 2020).

A number of innovative approaches for supporting teaching, learning, and information collection have been made available by the advent and use of online social media networks in education. These networks' existence has made it possible to hear the teacher's voice (Moodley, 2019). Teachers' work lives today frequently include use of social media. While social media sites like Facebook and Twitter are increasingly being utilized to support the delivery of classes

and maintain engagement with students, professional development may be the most common usage of social media by teachers (Bergviken Rensfeldt et al., 2018). Social media platforms can be beneficial for teachers' professional development (Bett & Makewa, 2020). Social media usage and the idea of TPD can be combined (Kavoshian et al., 2022). SNSs appear to be one way used to access this kind of collegial assistance. Collegial support is expected to disappear as communities expand, with a continually changing membership base weakening community trust. Members of a group are more likely to adopt a positive attitude toward information sharing if they believe they will gain extrinsic benefits (knowledge sharing) or intrinsic benefits (self-satisfaction or social recognition). Facebook and other online groups are being used by teachers to receive various forms of social support (Kelly & Antonio, 2016). By encouraging informal learning, Twitter can help teachers continue their professional growth. As a result, these platforms enable instructors to formally organize in a collaborative manner around their needs and interests (Rehm & Notten, 2016).

Teachers no longer have to lose out on learning opportunities because they lack the financial means to attend conferences or wait until conference season to pick up new skills. Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), edcamps, online courses, certifications, LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook groups, webinars, Facebook groups, complete online conferences, as well as online courses and certifications, have all shown themselves to be effective substitutes for the conventional face-to-face conference in recent years. The most popular of them is Twitter, which is already in its second decade and is frequently used for connections to viral cat videos and celebrity rumors. Twitter has acquired popularity as a political venue more lately. Despite this image, Twitter has emerged as the preferred online teaching tool for many educators, including English language teachers (Nicholas et al., 2018). Social networking websites offer spaces for people to profile themselves and their professional lives as well as to express ideas, share resources, and engage with coworkers in real-time and from anywhere. It is no longer acceptable to adopt a one-size-fits-all philosophy mandated by the employer, or in the case of a teacher, a school or district. Instead of more conventionally organized Massive Online Open courses, webinars, or institutionalized online programs or events, the new "self-generating" paradigm has been demonstrated in online places like Twitter and Facebook as a more flexible and responsive form of professional learning. Online, Professional learning networks (PLNs) are mostly developed through educational blogs, wikis, podcasts, and social media platforms like Edmodo, Facebook, and Twitter. One social media platform, such as Facebook, where teachers are members of one or more "Groups" that suit their requirements and interests, as well as following a number of Twitter hashtags, can be used to build a PLN. A teacher's PLN might make use of a variety of websites, tools, and apps that are accessed at specific times for specific needs. Online collaboration amongst teachers gives them the chance to discover new, creative teaching methods and successfully use them in their lesson plans, which may boost their confidence in their abilities (mastery experience). Through their online network, teachers can get ongoing support while they are in a trial period. Their sense of efficacy is affected by the supportive and constructive criticism they receive from their peers (verbal persuasion) (Prestridge, 2019). Undoubtedly, online teacher professional development and learning will play a crucial role in the emerging global educational environment (Bragg et al., 2021).

Conclusion

Online teacher professional development (oTPD) is still a fast growing area of study in teacher education (Dille & Røkenes, 2021). Technology-based professional development delivery has the potential to overcome common obstacles such as access and practicality to the spread of teacher-implemented classroom interventions (Mixon et al., 2019). So, unsurprisingly the potential of online CoPs as a means of enhancing TPD has grown increasingly popular due

to the affordances afforded by Web technology (Murugaiah et al., 2012). The use of teacher networks or communities can help to foster this idea of teacher growth. These networks support the development of collegiate, reflective, practice-based learning, enabling teachers to share knowledge, expertise, and best practices (Riding, 2001). To promote educators' professional growth and learning, there is an increasing interest in taking part in social media networks like Twitter (Xing & Gao, 2018). Online participatory practice, in contrast to in-person collaboration, enables instructors to co-construct pedagogical knowledge without time or space restrictions while allowing for the documenting of their practices in log files (Yang, 2016). An additional method of professional development that enables teachers to exchange knowledge, best practices, and experience is the creation of teacher networks or communities (Karagiorgi & Lymbouridou, 2009).

To conclude, the literature identifies the new era in teacher professional development which is more flexible, time-saving and accessible. Teachers in remote areas can easily communicate and negotiate online with their colleagues or experts in the other parts of the world on teaching and learning issues. It seems inevitable that teachers will benefit from online resources for their professional development in the age of Web 5.0.

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