Teachers’ Use of Social Media for Professional Development

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Teachers can never truly teach unless they are still learning themselves. A lamp can never light another lamp unless it continues to burn its own flame.

Rabindranath Tagore
What kind of professional development do you undertake?
Traditionally:

- Periodically enhance pedagogical skills and knowledge of subject matter
- Via in-service seminars, workshops etc.
- Done to teachers rather than something they choose to do
- Top-down
Motivation

Intrinsic

Extrinsic

Extrinsic
Other models

Emphasis on:
- Teachers’ growth
- New teacher roles
- Culture of inquiry
- Critical reflection on practice
- Development of beliefs
Empowerment

Ownership

Intrinsic rewards

Collegiality
What’s a…?

Personal Learning Network
PLN

- Around for many years
- Recently, the reach, size, availability and look of a PLN have changed
Defining a PLN

- Teachers’ assemblage of resources and means of assimilating knowledge from those resources (Neubauer et al. 2011)

- A social infrastructure that offers teachers access to materials, knowledge and new colleagues (Hanraets et al. 2011)

- A means of participating in networked spaces where sharing and reciprocity are expected (Nussbaum-Beach & Ritter Hall 2012)
The Study

- In-service course on using social media for professional development
- 60 secondary school teachers of English in Malta
- 30% of English teachers working in the state school sector
- Mixed methods approach
Personal use

- 1-5 hours: 26.7%
- 5-10 hours: 33.3%
- More than 10 hours: 40.0%
PD Use

- Social media is an important (53%) or very important (30%) part of teachers’ professional development

- Only 10% consider social media to be the most effective form of professional development
PD use

- 1-5 hours: 13.4%
- 5-10 hours: 23.3%
- More than 10 hours: 63.3%
- “YouTube clips are an integral part of how I learn new things about English teaching”
- “I never considered that social networks can be used for this”
Why do you use social media for professional development?
Teachers’ reasons

- Network with local and international peers to share ideas and information
- Relevant material made available through networking
- Learning potential of a teachers’ network
- Keep up-to-date with the latest trends in education
“I feel I know the other teachers wherever they are based...we’re all in this for the same goals”

“It helps me to learn and grow as a teacher”
“I feel I’m contributing something. It’s a process of give and take and it’s amongst colleagues who also become friends”

“...It gives me a sense of belonging”
Facilitating use

- Availability of time
- Relevant training
- Internet access at school
- Hardware
- Teachers’ motivation
“the dedicated teacher makes time for learning even though we’re always very busy”

“training gives such innovation a sense of recognition...teachers would realise that Twitter and Facebook can allow them to do great things”
Significance of training

While participating in these online spaces may appear easy, creating a PLN is in fact a highly complex intellectual and emotional task (Richardson & Mancabelli 2011)
References


