

Survey of Second Language Teachers' Participation in Online Professional Development Activities

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Abstract

In recent years, with the rapid development of information technology, online professional development projects for teachers' continuous professional development have gradually emerged in the world and attracted wide attention. In order to understand the participation of second language teaching teachers in online professional development activities. This study selected 15 teachers from different universities in the field of language teaching as research objects, adopted one-to-one interview as the main method of data generation, and conducted in-depth analysis of the collected interview data through thematic analysis. Teachers generally show a positive, open and enterprising attitude towards online professional development. They are willing to try new teaching methods and technological means, and are willing to share experiences and seek cooperation with their peers. Teachers generally have positive comments on the theme, form and effect of online teaching and research activities, believing that they are closely related to hot and difficult topics in education, but some topics need to be more focused and practical, and they hope to increase online interaction and follow-up measures. The interviews revealed many factors that affect teachers' participation in online teaching research activities. Among them, the technical condition is the foundation, the personal factor is the key, and the organizational environment is also a factor that cannot be ignored.

Keywords

Teacher; Online Professional Development; Second Language.

1. Introduction

In recent years, with the rapid development of information technology, the online learning community for teachers' continuous professional development has gradually emerged and attracted wide attention around the world. These online learning communities provide teachers with a learning platform with abundant resources and frequent interaction that transcend the limitations of time and space, and greatly promote their professional growth and knowledge update. At present, online teacher professional development can be divided into formal online community and informal online community according to the way of organization. A series of relevant studies have also proved that online community projects for teachers further promote professional development through sharing and mutual communication with others. (Kim,2000; Coffman, 2004; Schwen & Hara,2003; McLoughlin et al., 2007; Dewi, 2016; JinHwa & Kim, 2016) The most important benefit of online communities is the flexibility to participate in learning at any time, anywhere. Whether teachers have a strong willingness to participate in professional development activities is a necessary condition for the effectiveness of teacher professional development activities (e.g. Albersetal., 2015; Lantz-anderssonet al., 2018). These activities must be recognized by teachers, and only when they feel that such professional development activities are effective can they be considered a success (Trust & Horrocks, 2017). However, some studies have found that some teachers do not like online training programs and prefer face-to-face training (Moen & Walters, 2018), because online

programs can not perceive the body language of the other teachers. Hardware problems or personal network skills may also lead to failed learning experience (Wang et al.,2019). Lack of relevant technical knowledge has become the biggest obstacle to participating in online teacher professional development learning (e.g. Xie et al., 2017). Other studies have pointed out that internal factors play a very important role in teacher professional development, and antipathy to technology affects the effectiveness of online learning more than technology itself (Graham and Fredenberg,2015). In addition, fear of making mistakes and negative evaluation of others have also become influential factors that hinder teachers from participating in online professional development activities (Tsiotakis & Jimoyiannis, 2016). Therefore, whether the peers participating in the project are compassionate and friendly will affect the willingness of other participants to participate (e.g. Albers et al., 2015). In addition, whether the design of the project itself is reasonable, whether the content and resources of the project are valuable, and whether the guidelines are clear also affect the effect of the project. (Beach, 2017; Gikandi &Morrow, 2016; S.; Zhang, Liu, Zhu, et al., 2019). For language teaching teachers, online professional learning has become an important way to improve their teaching ability and broaden their international vision. Through forums, groups, blogs and other forms of communication and discussion, teachers can share teaching experience and experience and solve teaching problems. This kind of collaborative learning can help stimulate teachers' innovative thinking and improve their teaching ability.

2. Research the Problem

- 1) What teaching questions are second language teachers interested in in the online professional development project?
- 2) What reasons influenced second language teachers to participate in online professional development projects?
- 3) What did the second language teachers say about the online professional development projects?
- 4) Conclude suggestions to improve the effectiveness of online professional development programs.

3. Research Methods

3.1. Research Objects

This study selected 15 language teaching teachers from different universities as the research objects. These teachers ranged in age from 30 to 55, covering young and middle-aged teachers with rich teaching experience. The courses they teach cover grammar, reading and listening, and speaking, including basic language courses, advanced language skills courses, and translation theory. By selecting such a diverse group of subjects, this study aims to capture the real experiences and insights of second language teachers from different backgrounds and at different stages of teaching in online professional development programs.

3.2. Methods of Data Generation

In order to deeply understand the experiences, attitudes, needs and challenges of these language teaching college teachers in online professional learning, this study adopted one-to-one interview as the main method of data generation. The interview outline is designed around the following aspects: what issues are teachers interested in in language teaching, teachers' cognition and use of online learning platforms, the help of online learning to their professional development, the difficulties and challenges encountered in the process of online learning, and the expectations and demands of online learning in the future. The semi-structured interview

not only ensures the focus of the interview, but also gives the interviewee the freedom to fully express his personal views and experience.

3.3. Data Analysis Methods

In this study, the thematic analysis method was adopted to conduct an in-depth analysis of the collected interview data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is a systematic and flexible approach that allows researchers to identify, analyze and report recurring patterns from the original data. The steps are as follows:

(1) Transcription: First of all, transcribe the interview recordings into written materials one by one, and conduct preliminary sorting to remove irrelevant information and retain the core content of the interview.

(2) Encoding: The researcher repeatedly reads the transcript and makes preliminary encoding of the key concepts, viewpoints and emotions mentioned in it to form a preliminary theme framework.

(3) Classification: The similar codes are classified under a broader theme, and the theme is integrated and adjusted according to the logical relationship and internal connection of the interview content.

(4) Interpretation: By comparing the descriptions of different interviewees, the universality and specificity of each topic are verified, and the topic is explained and discussed in depth in combination with relevant theories and research background.

(5) Presentation: Finally, the analysis results are reported in a clear and coherent manner, including an overview of the topic, specific examples, and the significance and enlightenment of the analysis results.

Through the method of topic analysis, this study aims to comprehensively and deeply reveal the current situation, problems and needs of language teaching college teachers in online professional learning, so as to provide empirical evidence for optimizing online learning platform and improving teachers' professional development level.

What teaching and research questions are you interested in?

4. Results

4.1. Respondents' Interest in Online Teaching Research Activities

Table 1. The teachers' interest in online teaching research activities

Topics of interest	Number of people
Innovation in teaching methods	11
Learner needs analysis	7
Textbook evaluation and adaptation	6
Integrating culture into teaching strategies	8
Technology AIDS language learning	12
Other	3

The respondents' interest in online teaching research activities showed a diversified trend, mainly focusing on the following aspects: A total of 11 people expressed a strong interest in teaching methods. This reflects teachers' strong desire to explore new teaching methods and improve teaching results. Seven of them focused on learner needs analysis, which showed that teachers realized the importance of understanding and meeting students' needs. Six mentioned an interest in the assessment and adaptation of teaching materials. In the context of online teaching, the applicability, timeliness and interactivity of teaching materials are particularly important. 8 focus on integrating culture into teaching strategies. In today's globalized world,

cross-cultural communication has become an important topic in the field of education. A total of 12 people expressed great interest in technology-assisted language learning, which was the most prominent interest among all the subjects. Three mentioned other areas of interest, including educational psychology, functional optimization of online teaching platforms, and online testing and assessment.

(1) Innovation in teaching methods

With the renewal of educational ideas and the advancement of educational technology, teachers are paying more and more attention to the innovation of teaching methods. They hope to explore more efficient, interactive and interesting teaching methods to stimulate students' interest in learning and improve learning results. This includes but is not limited to new teaching models such as project-based learning, flipped classroom and cooperative learning, as well as how to enrich classroom content with elements such as multimedia resources and gamified learning.

Teacher 1: I want to learn new ways of teaching, and I've always wanted to try the "interactive classroom" to get students to use their hands and their brains instead of listening to me. For example, by playing a short play, or having an impromptu debate, they can not only learn knowledge, but also practice courage and eloquence. I need someone to guide me on how to turn these ideas into reality.

(2) Learner needs analysis

Understanding and meeting the needs of learners is the key to the success of teaching. Therefore, teachers are interested in learner needs analysis, and they want to gain an in-depth understanding of students' learning habits, points of interest, learning motivations, and challenges, so that they can tailor teaching programs to them. Through questionnaires, interviews, observations and other methods, teachers can more accurately grasp the needs of students and provide a basis for personalized teaching.

Teacher 9: I think language learning must stimulate students' interest in learning. I will find time to chat with them and ask them about their difficulties and interests in learning. Sometimes I also look at their homework and exams to see where they make mistakes and where they need more work. I hope to learn more about the analysis of learners' needs, so that I can have a more accurate understanding of students' needs.

(3) Textbook evaluation and adaptation

Teaching materials are important resources for teachers and students to learn. However, different student groups and teaching environments may have different needs for textbooks. Therefore, teachers pay attention to the evaluation and adaptation of teaching materials, in order to make them more close to students' reality and in line with teaching objectives. They will evaluate the difficulty, content coverage, language authenticity and other aspects of the teaching materials, and make necessary adaptations or supplements according to the evaluation results.

Teacher 4: Some of the textbooks are so boring that they feel disconnected from students' lives. I just wish the textbooks could be more realistic, with more life-oriented examples and illustrations. Also, sometimes the content in the textbook is a little out of date and needs to be updated to keep pace with The Times. I am very interested in teaching seminars related to textbooks.

(4) Integrating culture into teaching strategies

Language is not only a tool of communication, but also a carrier of culture. Therefore, teachers are interested in how to integrate cultural elements into language teaching. They hope to enhance students' communicative ability by introducing relevant cultural background, customs and other contents. At the same time, they also pay attention to how to cultivate students' cultural sensitivity, respect for different cultural values and norms of behavior in teaching.

Teacher 5: I think language learning must be combined with culture. Language learning is not only about vocabulary, sentences and grammar, but also about understanding the world through language. I want to know how to better integrate culture into teaching and guide students to form correct values.

(5) Technology assists language learning

With the rapid development of information technology, technology-assisted language learning has become a trend. Teachers are interested in how to use technology to improve teaching efficiency, enrich teaching resources and innovate teaching modes. They pay attention to the application of various language learning software, online platforms, mobile applications and other technical tools, and try to integrate them into classroom teaching to stimulate students' interest and enthusiasm in learning.

Teacher 13: With the development of science and technology, there are more and more AI-assisted language learning apps. They can customize some learning content according to the needs and level of learners, and also evaluate and score them. I really want to learn more about this and use these technologies in my classroom.

4.2. The Respondents' Purpose of Participating in Online Teaching and Research Activities

Through interviews with 15 college teachers of language teaching, we summarized their diversified purposes of participating in online teaching research activities. These purposes not only reflect the teachers' individual pursuit of professional development, but also reflect the external environment's promoting effect on teachers' participation in online learning activities. The following is an analysis of specific purposes:

(1) To improve teaching skills and methods

Almost all respondents mentioned this as their main motivation for participating in online teaching research activities. They hope that by participating in these activities, they can learn more innovative teaching techniques and methods to cope with increasingly complex and diverse teaching needs. The online platform provides a wealth of teaching resources and practical cases to help teachers update their teaching concepts and improve teaching quality.

Teacher 13: "Hey, you know what? Every time I participate in online teaching and research activities, it is like opening the door to a new world. I learned a lot of new techniques, such as how to make online classes more active and how to design engaging interactive sessions, which really blew my mind. Now that I'm in class, the students are more active and feel that their teaching level has gone to a higher level."

Teacher 2: "I just love thinking about these new teaching methods. The experiences shared by many teachers in the online activities are so practical. I learned how to use the software to track my students' progress, and I was able to adjust my lesson plans based on the data. It made me a lot more efficient."

(2) Access to the latest educational information and technology

With the continuous advancement of educational technology, teachers are increasingly aware of the importance of keeping their knowledge up-to-date. Many respondents said they participate in online teaching research activities to keep abreast of the latest educational policies, teaching theories and technology trends. The information is of great significance for teachers to adjust their teaching strategies and optimize the teaching environment.

Teacher 3: "The development of educational technology is so fast now that it is impossible not to learn. I've never heard of any of the new software and platforms introduced in the online activities. I tried a few of them and found they really saved me a lot of time and helped me teach better."

Teacher 4: "Every time there are technical experts to share the latest black technology in education, I am particularly interested. I recently learned that virtual laboratory, so that students can do experiments at home, they can be excited, enthusiasm for learning ah!"

(3) Share experiences and network with peers

Online teaching research activities provide a platform for teachers to communicate across geographical restrictions. The respondents generally said that they cherish the opportunity to communicate with their peers, are willing to share their teaching experience and experience, and are also willing to listen to others' opinions and suggestions. Such exchanges not only help solve practical problems in teaching, but also promote emotional connections among teachers and lay the foundation for future cooperation.

Teacher 6: "The best thing about this activity is getting to know a bunch of like-minded people. We set up a wechat group to exchange our teaching experience and help each other when we have problems. It's like having a strong support group."

Teacher 5: "At one event, I met a teacher who was teaching in another city, and we had a great conversation. Later, he also shared some good resources of his school with me. It really benefited me a lot!"

(4) Fulfill the requirements of the school/institution

Some respondents mentioned that they participate in online teaching research activities in order to meet the requirements of their school or institution. These requirements might include completing a certain number of training hours, obtaining a specific qualification or participating in a group research project. While these purposes are somewhat mandatory, respondents also generally view these activities as positive for their professional development.

Teacher 9: "It may be a task, but I don't see it as a burden. After all, the school is also for our good, want us to learn more. I thought, if we are going to attend, we should be serious and we will learn something."

Teacher 3: "Actually thank the school for this request, otherwise I may not have time to calm down to participate in these activities." Now look at it, the harvest is quite big."

(5) The pursuit of personal career development

The respondents also indicated that they participate in online teaching and research activities for the consideration of personal career development. They hope to achieve better achievements and development in their careers by constantly learning and improving themselves. Online teaching and research activities provide them with an opportunity to demonstrate their abilities and achievements, which helps to enhance their career competitiveness and lay a solid foundation for future promotion and job transfer.

Teacher 1: "I've always felt that being a teacher requires constant learning, otherwise how can you teach students well? Participating in these activities is an investment in my career development."

Teacher 10: "If I want to go further in teaching, I have to keep improving myself. Online teaching and research activities are like my gas station, which keeps me motivated to keep going."

4.3. Respondents' Comments on Current Online Teaching and Research Activities

(1) Activity theme evaluation

In terms of activity theme, most teachers gave positive evaluation. They believe that the topics of online teaching research activities are closely related to current education hot spots and difficulties, such as "innovation and optimization of online teaching strategies", "improvement of students' learning motivation and online participation", etc. These topics are directly related to teachers' daily teaching pain points, and have strong guidance and practicability. However, some teachers also pointed out that some topics are too broad or theoretical and lack specific

practical cases and operational guidance, hoping to focus more on them and enhance practicability in the future.

Teacher 4: I think the choice of activity themes is quite good, and many of them are the contents that front-line teachers are very concerned about, such as how to better stimulate students' interest in online classes, or how to improve the interaction of online teaching. However, sometimes the topics may be too broad, and it would be better if we could combine them more specifically with the problems we encounter in actual teaching.

(2) Evaluation of activity forms

In terms of activity forms, teachers generally agree. Online teaching and research activities make full use of the network platform, break the geographical restrictions, and realize the sharing of resources and the convenience of communication. Whether it is live lectures, online seminars, group discussions or experience sharing, they all provide teachers with diversified ways to participate. But at the same time, some teachers said that long-term online activities are easy to make people feel tired, and sometimes network delays, technical failures and other problems may affect the effect of communication. Therefore, it is suggested that the form design of future activities should be more flexible and pay attention to the experience and feedback of participants.

Teacher 9: Well, I think there are various forms of activities, such as live broadcasting, video recording and group discussion, which allow us to choose to participate according to our own time and habits. However, online activities also have their limitations, for example, sometimes the unstable network will affect the communication, and it is easy to get tired by staring at the screen for a long time. It would be better if there were more interactive sessions or opportunities for offline communication.

(3) Activity effect evaluation

As far as the effect of the activity is concerned, on the whole, the teachers are relatively recognized. They believe that by participating in online teaching research activities, they not only broaden their horizons and understand the latest educational concepts and teaching methods, but also try to apply these new knowledge in practice to improve their teaching ability. In addition, the activities also promote the communication and cooperation among teachers, forming a good academic atmosphere. However, some teachers pointed out that some of the activities had shortcomings in follow-up and effect evaluation, such as the lack of specific implementation guidance and effect tracking mechanism, which made it difficult to implement some good ideas and suggestions.

Teacher 2: The results of these activities are generally good. Through participating in these activities, I did learn a lot of new things and made friends with some peers. We exchanged ideas with each other, which was very rewarding. However, I think some activities did not do enough follow-up. For example, we put forward some good suggestions or ideas, but there is no follow-up. I hope there can be a more perfect feedback and follow-up mechanism.

Table 2. Factors Affecting Teachers' Participation in Online Teaching Research Activities

Influencing factors	Number of people	Percentage
Technique	3	20.00%
Personal	7	46.67 &
Organizational environment	5	33.33 &

Teacher 11: I think this is mainly because online teaching and research activities are still developing and improving. On the one hand, it brings a lot of convenience and opportunities for us to learn and communicate more widely. On the other hand, because it is a new form, it is inevitable that there will be some shortcomings and areas for improvement. However, I believe

that with the continuous progress of technology and the accumulation of experience, online teaching and research activities will definitely get better and better.

In exploring the many factors that influence teachers' participation in e-learning research activities, our analysis shows that technical conditions, personal factors, and organizational environment all play important roles, but to varying degrees. A total of three, or 20% of the total respondents, mentioned technology. This proportion shows that although technology is not the only determining factor, it is still a foundation that cannot be ignored for teachers to participate in online teaching research activities. Seven of them stressed the importance of personal factors, accounting for 46.67%. This indicates that personal factors are the most critical factors affecting teachers' participation in activities. The personal characteristics of teachers, such as interest, demand, ability and motivation, directly determine whether they are willing and able to participate in online teaching and research activities. Another 5 people (33.33%) mentioned the influence of organizational environment on teachers' participation. Organizational environment factors, such as policy guidance, resource support and cultural atmosphere of schools or institutions, indirectly promoted or hindered teacher participation by providing external support and incentives.

(4) Technical conditions are the foundation

Technical conditions are not only a pile of hardware and software, but also a key factor related to user experience and efficiency. A good network environment means low latency and high bandwidth, ensuring the smooth transmission of video and audio. Stable platform support includes the friendliness of the platform interface, the perfection of functions and timely technical support. The satisfaction of these conditions can greatly reduce the burden of teachers in the technical level, so that they can focus more on teaching activities themselves.

Teacher 12: "In a previous online teaching experiment, due to the imperfect function of the platform, there were often problems such as delays and dropped calls, which seriously affected the teaching progress and effect. Later, the school changed to a more professional online teaching platform and provided a stable high-speed network. Now classes are as smooth as face to face, and students' participation has improved a lot."

(5) Personal factors are key

Teachers' personal factors play a decisive role in participating in activities. Interest is the best teacher, and when teachers are full of interest in an activity, they will be more proactive in investing their time and energy. At the same time, the needs and abilities of teachers can not be ignored. Only when the content of the activity is in line with their career development or teaching needs, and they have the corresponding ability to participate, the real motivation will be generated.

Teacher 11: "I have always been interested in how to use digital tools to improve teaching effectiveness. Recently the school organized a training on the intelligent teaching system, which I think is exactly what I want. I was not used to it at first, but through my own efforts and the help of my team, I gradually mastered the skills and now I can use them flexibly in the classroom."

(6) The organizational environment is also a factor that cannot be ignored

Organizational environment is the external environment for teachers to participate in activities. It influences teachers' behavior through policy guidance, resource support and cultural atmosphere. A positive organizational environment can stimulate teachers' enthusiasm and creativity, and make them more willing to participate in various activities. Conversely, a negative or unsupportive organizational environment can reduce teacher engagement.

Teacher 7: "Our school attaches great importance to the professional development of teachers and invests a lot of money every year for teacher training and the purchase of learning resources. In addition, the school holds regular teaching seminars and results showcases to

encourage teachers to share their experiences and innovate. This good cultural atmosphere makes me feel the school's care and support for our growth, and it also makes me more motivated to participate in various teaching activities."

To sum up, technical conditions, personal factors and organizational environment together constitute important factors that influence teachers' participation in online or technology-driven education activities. By continuously optimizing the technical conditions, stimulating the potential of teachers and creating a positive organizational environment, we can effectively improve teacher participation and teaching quality.

5. Discuss

In the teaching and research activities in the field of language teaching, the teachers always maintain a high degree of enthusiasm, and are committed to improving the quality of teaching and promoting the all-round development of students' language ability. Several teaching research issues that teachers are generally interested in cover teaching method innovation, learner needs analysis, textbook evaluation and adaptation, cultural integration into teaching strategies, and technology-assisted language learning.

In terms of behavior and attitude, teachers generally showed a positive, open and enterprising attitude. They are willing to try new teaching methods and technological means, and are willing to share experiences and seek cooperation with their peers. At the same time, they are also aware of their own shortcomings in technology application and teaching innovation, and show a strong willingness to learn and motivation to improve themselves. This positive behavior attitude has laid a solid foundation for the in-depth development of online teaching research activities.

Teachers generally hold a positive evaluation on the topics of online teaching research activities, believing that they are closely related to the hot and difficult points of education, but some topics need to be more focused and practical. The form of the activity has been widely recognized, and the online platform has broken the geographical restrictions and promoted the sharing and exchange of resources. However, long-term online activities are prone to fatigue, and technical failures affect the effect of communication, suggesting that future activities should be more flexible and focus on experience. The overall effect of the activity is good, which broadens teachers' horizons, improves their teaching ability and promotes communication and cooperation. However, there are shortcomings in follow-up and effect evaluation, and the implementation guidance and effect tracking mechanism need to be strengthened.

The interview revealed many factors affecting teachers' participation in online teaching research activities. Among them, technical conditions are the foundation, only with a good network environment and stable platform support, teachers can participate in activities smoothly; Personal factors are the key, including teachers' interests, needs, abilities and motivation. The organizational environment is also a factor that cannot be ignored. The policy guidance, resource support and cultural atmosphere of schools or institutions will have an important impact on teachers' participation in activities.

Based on the above research and analysis, we put forward the following practical application suggestions: First, strengthen technical training and support to help teachers master the basic skills and methods of online teaching; The second is to optimize the content design of online teaching and research activities to ensure that the content is rich, practical and close to the actual teaching; Third, strengthen the organization and guidance of interactive communication links to promote in-depth communication and cooperation among teachers; The fourth is to establish a scientific effect evaluation mechanism, collect teachers' feedback in time and constantly optimize the activity plan; Fifth, improve the support and security system of schools

or institutions to provide powerful policy and resource support for teachers to participate in online teaching and research activities.

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