



TITLE: Online Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for EFL Language Teachers



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Abstract

The working paper aims to investigate the issue of sustaining and continuing online professional development (PD) for English as foreign language (EFL) teachers. To achieve this goal and for data gathering, the researcher will employ an explanatory research design by devising online questionnaire using Google forms as well as conducting interviews with willing participants at the researcher's workplace to examine the teachers' PD practices, attitudes, needs and challenges regarding this new online platform of delivery. There is a large body of studies on teachers' professional development (face-to-face and online) that have been conducted in different settings, examined different teacher professional development areas and utilized various research instruments for data collection. Likewise, those findings go in line with the existing situation in my work context and setting. Thus, considering these insightful results, the researcher (author of this paper) hopes to propose to the management of her workplace: the Centre of Preparatory Studies (CPS) having a blend of PD delivery modes, the usual face to face and the suggested online form such as MOOCs: Massive Open Online courses to assist teachers to continue their PD and to mitigate any standing challenges.

Key Words:

Continuing Professional development, adult learning, andragogy, self-directed learning, teachers' autonomy, EFL

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this explanatory research study is to investigate the issue of sustaining and continuing online professional development (PD) for English as foreign language (EFL) teachers.

Research Problem

The context of my workplace, the Centre for Preparatory Studies (CPS) is remarkably diverse and rich in terms of having teachers and practitioners from different cultural and educational backgrounds. Those EFL teachers from a population of around 230. Beside the local Omani teachers, we have teachers from different parts of the world, the US, the UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Russia, India and Armenia. These teachers are always offered opportunities for academic professional development and growth but because of time constraints and workload, they find it inconvenient to attend these training sessions or they feel that their needs are not met because of the choice of topics selected for these training sessions. This current study is intended to address and bridge several gaps found in the published studies of traditional and online professional development. Further, it highlights prior research studies with all their limitations

Research Problem (Cont'd)

Finally, it attempts to explore the topic of online PD for EFL language teachers by utilizing MOOCs: massive open online courses as an online platform and it addresses areas in my specific context and setting. MOOCs offer effective and efficient features for both course designers, course educators and learners. According to Fyle (2013), MOOCs platform expedites the acquisition and mastery of content knowledge, facilitates the design and delivery of organized instructional activities, offers chances for students to reflect, encourages social interaction between learners, teacher educators, practicing teacher mentors, other experienced teachers, and their peers. As such, a further investigation is required in my context, Oman, to see the impact of the advancement of technology and the Internet on using MOOCs platform to design and deliver professional development content for EFL teachers.

Research Questions

This research study will employ a descriptive exploratory methodology to answer the following questions:

1. What are EFL teachers' practices of online continuing professional development (CPD)?
2. What are EFL teachers' attitudes towards online continuing professional development (CPD)?
3. What are EFL teachers' work needs regarding online continuing professional development (CPD)?
4. Do EFL teachers encounter any challenges regarding online continuing professional development (CPD)? If so, what are they?

Research Instruments

For data collection, a mixed-method approach will be utilized to gather data. A questionnaire will be devised and distributed to the participants by using Google online forms. The questionnaire will be divided into five main sections. Section One: Demographic information; Section Two: Teachers' practices of online professional development; Section Three: Teachers' attitudes towards online CPD and Section Four: Challenges faced by teachers when performing online CPD and finally; Section Five: Open ended questions. As for the qualitative part, interviews will be conducted with willing participants to further seek the teachers' insights and feedback on online CPD.

Procedures

Data collection will start by devising an online questionnaire by using Google Forms. Consent forms will be sent out to participants at the Centre of Preparatory Studies prior to the administration of the questionnaire to get the EFL teachers' approval. The actual administration of the questionnaire will happen online due to the format of the questionnaire. So, the researcher does not have to be available on site. Reminders will be sent to participants from time to time for about three times to remind them to fill out the online questionnaire. Following this, interviews will be conducted with the willing participants sometime later in a place agreed upon between the interviewer (the researcher) and the interviewee. This is usually going to be in the researcher's office at the CPS. Each interview will last for one hour and it is going to be audio recorded. The researcher will make sure that interviewees are comfortable and ready to respond to some given questions prompts. These prompts can be given the participants prior to the interview session.

For data analysis, the researcher is planning on using SPSS software for analyzing the statistical quantitative data, while NVIVO software will be used for coding and interpreting the interview qualitative set of data.

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