

Online Professional Development for English Teachers: An Autoethnographic Study

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Abstract

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The COVID-19 pandemic had sparked a huge transformation in the educational landscape, driving educators and learners to move from the physical to the virtual classroom. This autoethnographic study examines my professional development activities during and after the pandemic. This study has emphasized the role of technology and social connections as a crucial part of professional growth during the professional journey of an English language teacher. The data were collected from memory work, anecdotes, and experiences from personal and professional journeys. The connectivism theory was used to support the theoretical concerns. The findings demonstrated that various online teacher professional development activities like online conversation clubs, discussion forums, webinars and being part of online international organizations like IELTA, contributed to my professional journey. Based on the findings and conclusion, the research recommends including the voices of educators from diverse contexts and expanding its area impacting the online teacher professional development. This article was written based on the online teacher professional development activities of the first author, who is referred to using the first-person pronoun 'I.' The second author contributed by providing suggestions to the first author during the writing process, reviewing the contents, editing, and finalizing the article.

Keywords: COVID-19 pandemic, Online teacher professional development, Autoethnography, English language teaching

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought a great transition in the teaching and learning environments globally, creating a modern shift in classroom practices by going digitally in the context

of Nepal. The pandemic resulted in an unimaginable crisis across every sector (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 2020). It has forced both educators and learners to bring a shift from the traditional classroom to online platforms. The pandemic changed life drastically, suspending physical classes and teaching and making restrictions (Villani et al., 2021). ICT was included in the teaching and learning process, forcing instructors to change their pedagogies and teaching methodologies during the pandemic (Karki et al., 2024). Educators have to be flexible and creative to keep abreast of the unforeseen changes occurring in the educational world (Dempsey & Mestry, 2023). The requirement for continuing professional development, which concerns the concept of technology, is necessary as it relates to the professional development of teachers in the post-pandemic period (Curwood, 2014). The COVID-19 pandemic has brought a sudden digital transformation in education, which has made educators flexible and creative to facilitate the teaching and learning process (Mladenova et al., 2020). Online professional development is increasing which has made advancements in fostering the knowledge, skills, and competencies of educators (Atmojo, 2021). It is conducted with the help of ICT in a virtual mode. This can include any online workshops, seminars, or conferences (Van et al., 2022). The various online professional development activities can lead to the engagement and success of educators and learners in the online environment (Scarpena et al., 2018). This has created a shift from the traditional to online teaching and learning approaches.

Online professional development has made educators be reflective rather than simply the transmitter of knowledge (Rienties et al., 2013). The practice of engaging in different online professional development activities has made educators gain knowledge and skills about new classroom practices like specific teaching strategies (Morina et al., 2023), which has fostered their professional growth. Online teacher professional development helps to support the community of practice and leads to social participation (Tseng & Rao, 2014), which helps to develop and share teachers' knowledge by connecting them in a global community (Bragg et al., 2021). This research study benefits all educators and researchers to delve into the transitional change that the teacher has made while involved in various professional development activities. This research study hopes to contribute the knowledge and literature on online teacher professional development programs for educators and practitioners in Nepal. This paper draws on my reflections and experiences of various professional development activities, which have significantly helped develop my professional career as a language teacher. This study aims to explore the various online teacher professional development activities during and after the emergency. The following research question has guided my study: How have online professional development activities significantly impacted my professional journey as a language teacher?

Connectivism in the Digital Era

Connectivism is “a theory for the digital age” (Duke et al., 2013, p. 4) developed by George Siemens and Stephen Downes in 2005. Connectivism has placed the significance of technology and social networks in learning (Alam, 2023). Connectivism has emphasized the crucial role of networks and connections as the key to learning new information (Alam, 2023). The use of various digital tools and information and communication technology is growing (Banihashem & Aliabadi, 2017) in the present day. Through virtual means, people are connecting from all around the world. Learning occurs as a process of creating networks in the digital age according to the connectivism learning theory

(Banihashem & Aliabadi, 2017). As stated by Duke et al. (2013), “Connectivism is social learning that is networked” (p. 6). According to connectivism, learning is dispersed over information networks and can be saved in many digital formats (Kop & Hill, 2008). This means that knowledge is not limited to a single source but can flow from multiple channels, like educational platforms and online databases, which can make the learning process dynamic and flexible. Connectivism highlights how the internet has created a multitude of opportunities for people to learn both from digital resources and from each other (Bharucha, 2018). I have tried to place the significant role of social connections and networks in the national and international community by integrating this theory in sharing and gaining knowledge, building rapport with national and international colleagues and learning from each other through digital platforms.

Methodology

As this research study is fully based on the lived experiences of the researcher while venturing into the online teacher professional development, it falls under the autoethnographic study. An autoethnography is a qualitative research method (blends both autobiography and ethnography) that allows writers, performers, and others to critically reflect on both personal and professional experiences in a creative way (Pace, 2012). Hayes and Fulton (2014) noted that autoethnography “acknowledges the centrality of the researcher in the process of research and provides an excellent means of structuring the reflection” (p. 5). I have reflected on my past and present online professional practices, which have truly helped me to foster my professional career. As stated by Mosleh (2020), “... autoethnography as a qualitative research approach means to give voice to personal experiences in the field...” (p. 415). I have included my voices, feelings, and anecdotes in this article. Autoethnography offers an authoritative but powerful method that presents the researcher's lived experiences as primary data for cultural analysis and criticism (Tarisayi, 2023). The goal of autoethnography is to replicate reflexively the researcher's experiences, aiming to make a connection to the readers that would further enable him or her to consider and reflect on their own experiences (Mendez, 2013). This autoethnographic study has let me pour my insights, thoughts and experiences of paving my professional journey through participation and engagement in online teacher communities, conversation clubs, webinars, and discussion forums.

Data Generation Techniques, Process and Analysis

I have employed the autoethnographic study. Therefore, this study has used memory work as the main data collection tool (Keles, 2022). The memories that hold significant aspects and add meaning to our experiences (Bochner & Ellis, 2016) can be explored to reflect the professional journey of our life. This adds true value, may inspire other educators to jot down their anecdotes, and lived experiences to contribute to online teacher professional development. The autoethnographic technique can let us examine ourselves as a researcher and have a reflective conversation with the readers, hoping that the meaning has been embedded in a similar type of life story (Humphreys, 2005). I have tried to present my life stories and teaching experiences in the form of a memoir, which has relevance to incorporate in the teaching practices. I have collected “self-reflective data” (Cooper & Lilyea, 2022) through which I have reflected on my personal experiences about my rapport and connection with national and international colleagues via virtual platforms. I have accessed the memories through

the support of external data like: screenshots from social media like Facebook posts and using my narratives to detail the incidents of my professional journey.

I have used the Gibbs (2008) framework for the thematic analysis in this autoethnographic study. According to the Gibbs (2008) framework for the thematic analysis, I have recollected my past incidents, feelings, and experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic and prepared the short synopses of the beginning, middle, and end narrative. This helps me to extract the main incidents and experiences related to the involvement in the online teacher professional development activities. Then, I collected the available screenshots from the Facebook posts to keep them as a form of evidence to support my narrative. After that, I looked for thematic ideas related to those recollected incidents of my professional journey. Then, I have highlighted some of the thematic language and feelings within my anecdotes. I have taken notes of the emerged thematic ideas and coded them, providing the specific sub-headings. Finally, after the division of the sub-topics, I have jotted down my narratives, along with referencing the scholars' ideas when necessary.

Results and Discussion

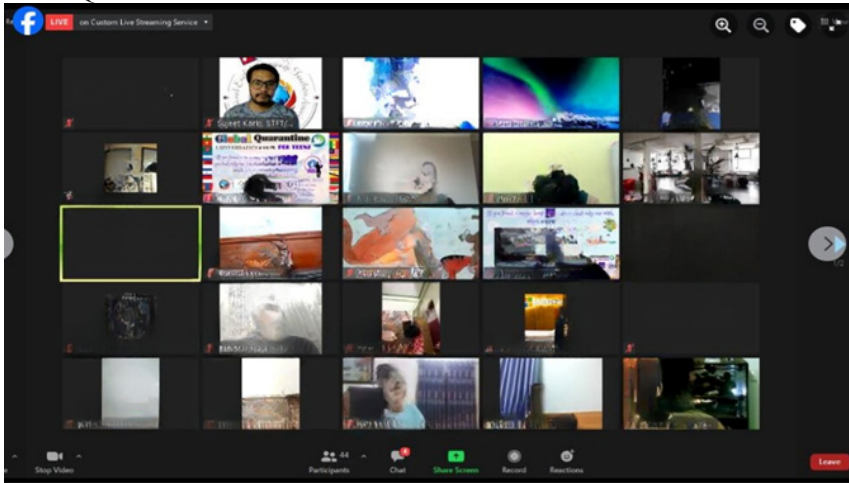
The following findings are drawn from my self-reflective data in the form of lived experiences and memory work.

A Golden Opportunity to Build My Network

The COVID-19 pandemic had led most educational institutions to be closed, and education-related activities have moved from physical classrooms to online classrooms (Sahito et al., 2022). The online platforms have allowed educators and learners to enhance collaboration through digitalization (Rowe, 2016). I was fortunate to meet Antonio (Pseudonym), one of my American friends on the virtual platform as he had created the Global Quarantine Conversation Club (GQCC). GQCC is “a speaking practice program that involves more than 20 countries across the world” (Suswanto, 2021, p. 222). The use of group discussion and the presentation of the contents among the educators and learners was the focus of this GQCC (Suswanto, 2021), which helps to enhance their English language skills.

GQCC is one of the online global communities where educators and learners participate and speak on particular assigned topics. The online platform to join the session was Zoom. Antonio joined the GQCC Facebook Messenger group and introduced me to global educators. Engagement and participation in online courses and platforms help to establish rapport among participants, fostering collaboration and integration (Tanis, 2020). I had a similar experience when I joined the GQCC platform. The common topics (such as travel, national dress, my future profession, my favourite music, childhood memories, endangered animals, my best friend, and the happiest day of my life) were provided to the educators and learners before the session so that the learners could be ready to prepare their presentation or think about the guiding questions based on the respective topics. These common topics were presented to the learners before the session, along with guiding questions included in the flyer and shared through social media. The learners were aware of the topics and joined the conversation club after their preparation.

Figure 1. Global Quarantine Conversation Club Discussion on Zoom



(Screenshots taken by the researcher)

Umm... I was excited to see different new faces of educators and learners on the screen. I was also made to act as a facilitator in one of the breakout rooms with other assistant educators and learners. All learners were eager to share their personal opinions and feelings on the topic. I also led them from those guiding questions on the flyer to guide our discussion in the breakout room. Effective virtual/online communication among educators can help to develop online professional development (Wasserman & Migdal, 2019). I found the discussion and communication with global educators very beneficial. The discussion moved in a good manner and I felt that this sort of conversation club was useful especially for shy and hesitant learners to foster their communication skills. The initiator of this Global Quarantine Conversation Club did their best to make the screen interesting and motivating by assigning new topics and including different fun games after the breakout discussion, like Kahoot! and Quizizz. I selected a representative from each breakout room to share their thoughts with all participants in the main room. It was lovely and fascinating to join such a forum. I even motivated other learners to join the conversation club and improve their communication skills. I continued to join in several sessions and programs and served voluntarily to make them successful and fruitful.

Online Global Classroom and World Englishes Conversation Club... Moving Ahead!

There is a great necessity for using technologies to support the teaching and learning process for competent and professional teachers in the present era (Salako et al., 2015). There is the incorporation of different online discussion forums, which have further expanded in the area of distance learning. In the words of Onyema et al. (2019), "Online Discussion Forum takes teaching and learning beyond a confined learning environment... bringing flexibility and convenience to teaching and learning" (p. 4853). The online discussion forum can facilitate synchronous and asynchronous interactions, making it easier for the learners (Onyema et al., 2019). The online discussion forum plays a significant role in improving higher-order thinking and communication skills (Seethamraju, 2014), fostering social interaction among members (Vinagre, 2017) and many others.

These concepts make it abundantly evident that online discussion forums will significantly benefit and improve learning for both instructors and students. During the COVID-19 pandemic, I

actively participated in several online discussion groups, which inspired me to engage in a range of professional activities and facilitated the development of relationships with educators and students around the globe. My journey started further with meeting one of the educators, 'Ko' (Pseudonym) from Japan. He had started one of the online discussion forums named, "Online Global Classroom " where many educators from different parts of the world were there to foster and enhance the collaboration and communication skills among the learners. It was like the Global Quarantine Conversation Club, which Antonio initiated. I sent a text to the Japanese educator and requested him to join me in the Online Global Classroom. I can involve my learners there to foster their collaboration with other global colleagues. Fortunately, he joined me in the educators' group and offered me a polite response over Facebook Messenger. After that, he sent me the flyer for the session, which was conducted through Zoom.

Online Global Classroom is one of the virtual platforms where global colleagues and educators come to communicate and interact with specific conversation topics through Zoom meetings. One of the Japanese educators for English practising skills initiated this classroom. It is one of the open platforms for developing a sense of collaboration with each other. Online Global Classroom has directed various activities like meetings in the main hall in the Zoom platform, dividing the groups in the breakout rooms with the facilitators, and later on engaging the learners in the online mate activity where they can discuss their favourite topics like sports, music, anime, and language. Online Global Classroom plays one of the determining roles in nurturing the learner's skills in English proficiency. Global educators can collaborate and make their teaching and learning unique than other educators.

To join the Online Global Classroom session, I needed to fill out my learners'/participants' names in the registration form with the help of Google Sheets. The registration was carried out systematically. I could easily know about the breakout room number where my learners would participate. There were many breakout rooms, and the number of participants was slightly higher than that of the Global Quarantine Conversation Club. The day came when the session began! I saw many participants from Japan, Malaysia, Greece, India, Indonesia, Vietnam, Taiwan, the Philippines, South Korea, Armenia, and the USA. It was similar to the Global Quarantine Conversation Club. However, one thing was different! Interesting! It was the online mate activity after the breakout room discussion on the respective topic of the session. It was fascinating! They were given the freedom to discuss themselves with new international friends. Then, finally, they could return to the Zoom main hall and take leave from the session. The initiator of the Online Global Classroom (from Japan) did his best to make the session a thrilling and wonderful experience for me.

Moreover, I got the opportunity to meet the next educator, 'Fadin' (Pseudonym) from Indonesia, who was running the "World Englishes Conversation Club" (biweekly on Sunday), which was suitable for adult learners to communicate with one another via online means. However, the age group is flexible. The session structure was similar to the previous Online Global Classroom. I contacted him and, finally, managed to organize a meeting for my adult learners to participate in the World Englishes conversation club. I engaged my Bachelor level learners to improve their English communication skills. The learners were interested in joining such a club and meeting new friends by staying on the virtual platform. This will help foster their communication and collaboration skills and further support their language development. In my point of view, the World Englishes Conversation Club was the best

platform for adult learners to engage in the online discussion forum. They can interact and share their ideas, which helps them answer conversation-guiding questions. Not only this, but what about their upliftment in confidence level? They are learning to use non-verbal communication, such as facial expressions, eye contact, gestures, and hand movements, while speaking in front of the screen. They can further engage in the contents deeply and analyze them from my perspective.

I found it unique and applicable to apply in any classroom through the virtual platforms. Letting the learners explore themselves in the online conversation club is one of my pedagogical practices to develop self-confidence, communication and creativity skills, thinking and rapport building with many global educators and learners. It seemed to be fruitful in the teaching and learning process. I have personally observed my shy and hesitant learners being motivated and speaking with confidence in this online forum. They were further really motivated by this practice/ and it enhanced my identity too. The online conversation club was the best platform for me to build the various skills of learners. It developed my pedagogical skills to move beyond the physical classroom and to the global platform.

I think this is a transferable idea to all educators who are struggling to improve the communication skills of their learners. This club tries to explore their communication abilities and engage them in the global scenario. Similarly, educators can flourish to be part of a wider teacher professional community and expand the horizon of knowledge. These sorts of online conversation clubs play one of the prominent roles in building a broader connection among global educators and learners. We can develop a sense of rapport and recognition among the community. Furthermore, these sorts of pedagogical practices can be incorporated in other school curriculums, too. They help to exchange opinions and ideas on related topics. Connection helps a lot and this sort of club can be integrated with different subject matters or topics.

These online conversation clubs remain professional clubs with active engagement and participation of English teachers worldwide. At first, it was difficult to gather the learners to join the club, but later on, the learners were themselves motivated and had a keen interest in such conversation clubs. They found it useful, and it had a significant impact on their learning process.

Joining the IELTA Panama Teachers' Conversation Club and International Literary Competition

IELTA (International English Language Teachers Association) is one of the online associations that was formed by a group of global educators to support English language teachers from around the world. As it is a registered voluntary organization, it lets all its professional activities and membership in free of cost to the educators. The central concern is to establish networking with teachers and learners from around the world and to foster English language teaching. I got one golden opportunity to join such a prestigious organization being the country representative and leading my participation in various webinars and other programs that IELTA conducted for the teachers. The IELTA Panama branch educator invited all interested teachers to participate in the Global Quarantine Teachers' Conversation Club. IELTA Panama started the Global Quarantine Teachers' Conversation Club to encourage educators to share their perspectives and experiences in a global setting. It was like an international educator community coming together and developing communication and collaboration among global educators. This teachers' conversation club promoted the recognition of the GQCC community throughout the world.

Being the country representative from IELTA Nepal, I was fascinated to join the club. There were many representatives from most of the countries. There were sessions incorporated with reflection on one of the articles, then, the discussion of topics in the breakout rooms with the colleagues. Moreover, we should keep our reflective notes on the jam board platform so that we can enhance collaboration at the same time. Online professional development supports teachers to reflect on their classroom experiences and practices and become less focused on the transmission of only knowledge (Rienties et al., 2013). I was eager to share my voice with global educators and place my experiences in the Nepalese context. I could feel the sense of collaboration and solved some of the pedagogical issues (like dealing with the classroom problems, motivating the learners, learner engagement, giving constructive feedback), and collaborating with the educators to conduct the projects for the learners that were raised in my Nepalese classroom.

Our program organizers gave the appropriate instructions and recommendations before the session. They made PowerPoint slides to display that information. The beautiful country of Panama in Central America was portrayed with its scenery and its natural beauty. It was a beautiful moment to initiate the conversation club. There were sessions entitled with topics like: “Every kid needs a champion” (first session), Five challenges in online teaching (second session), and “Teacher’s wellness during pandemics” (third session). The guest speaker was invited from the Philippines on the fourth session to speak about the topic, “What to teach and what not to teach online, that’s the question!” I believed he was a genius since he had shared his amazing teaching experiences from his professional life. He was the same educator with whom I got the chance to be interviewed, and Antonio (from the USA) had talked about the same person. The last session was entitled, “Hey teacher! What’s your Genius Zone?”. All the sessions were amazing, and I appreciated the hard work done by the educators from Panama to create a common platform for discussion among the educators. I had the opportunity to share my perspective on the given article, and we had a great conversation in which I also contributed some insightful commentary. It was fantastic and I felt glad to be a part of such a club!

IELTA launched an international literary competition for English language teachers, and I was assigned to be the facilitator of poster and slogan-making contests. The virtual poster session benefits the learners and educators as they interact, show their creativity, learn from each other, and experience the virtual environment. The participants would further disseminate their tasks and skills (Holt et al., 2020). I was lucky to support the main IELTA office as the representative of IELTA Nepal. I had to talk with the English language teachers and facilitate the other educators supporting me in judging the quality of the slogans and posters that the teachers made during the session.

During COVID-19, many educators opened the platform for creativity and engagement to their colleagues (Holt et al., 2020). The educators can participate in those programs and platforms for free and foster and share their skills globally. Giving time and energy to the voluntary association brings me immense pleasure and satisfaction as I get the opportunity to build relationships with teachers worldwide. The participants for the poster and slogan-making contests were from the Philippines, Egypt, Pakistan, Lebanon, Ghana, Armenia, Bangladesh, Panama, Mauritius, Algeria, and Malaysia. It was quite a challenging task to select the best slogans and posters from many teachers, but I finally did it with the help of my colleague, who supported me in one of the breakout rooms. I developed a network with other foreign colleagues and enhanced the growth of the International English Language

Teachers' Association (IELTA) at every moment.

Listed in the Japanese Online Magazine!

I met one of the educators from Japan via Facebook Messenger. She informed me about the World Teachers' meeting session to share my opinions and experiences about supporting my learners during the pandemic. We have done this together with two other educators from Ghana and the Philippines. Moreover, it was a proud moment for me as I was informed that this was going to be published in one of the Japanese Monthly High School Education Magazine! She informed me about the discussion platform, which was a marvellous session I attended. I shared my personal experience as well as the teaching practices in my country during the pandemic. Finally, my interview with two other educators was listed in one of the Japanese online magazines and other educators for this big achievement honored me. It was my first experience getting my voice and experiences in the Japanese online magazine.

Sharing my experiences with teaching and learning activities during the pandemic with global colleagues and audiences makes me feel proud. I even got the golden chance to list the valuable thoughts and experiences from Ghana and the Philippines. I was a less- experienced guy in front of them. However, it was a memorable experience for all of us, including the organizers from Japan. I still remember those days. It has always captured my mind, and I hope these days will take a new turn to flourish in my professional career in the future.

Figure 2. Being proud to be a part of Online Japanese Magazine

Contributed article by our CEO Igarashi in the August issue of Monthly High School

Education **"Educational sites around the world during the corona crisis"** Has been posted.

The spread of the new coronavirus infection, which has affected the world and has become an emergency situation that education sites in each country are forced to respond.

Although the spread of infection and the progress of vaccinations differ depending on the country, each teacher in each country is making efforts and devising on-site, not relying only on government measures, so that the students in front of them do not stop learning. .

In the article I contributed this time, I introduce the efforts of teachers from 54 countries, out of 325 schools in 3 countries around the world, that are working together with With The World.

Mr. Sujeet from Nepal shared how to make it fun to attend online, Mr. Rooney from the Philippines introduced active learning, and Ms. Taki from Ghana shared about the mental care of students.

For more information, please see the August issue of Monthly High School Education.

(Monthly High School Education August Issue "Educational Sites in the World in the Corona Crisis" Was Published | WithTheWorld, 2021)

I was enthusiastic when I got the news from one of the educators from Japan to have an interview about the experiences that I had faced in my country. The program was scheduled and named "The World Teachers' Meeting". Educators from different parts of the world were invited to have a group discussion with their Japanese colleagues. Sharing our experiences was the major concern of the session. I also joined the session with the help of a Zoom link, and I felt lucky. I had never thought someone would interview me about my professional life! Isn't it exciting news that someone called me to be interviewed? I made my PowerPoint presentation regarding the difficulties I faced during the

pandemic. I shared my personal views and opinions related to surviving the pandemic with limited resources and time. I also established a good rapport with other educators from India and Japan. The educators appreciated my personal experiences during the pandemic. It was lovely!

Figure 3

A proud moment for me to be a part of The World Teachers' Meeting



(Kawasaki, 2021)

Insights from the Webinars

During the pandemic, teachers created different sorts of professional opportunities that updated their academic performance and skills. Attending several webinars, conferences, virtual training, and discussion forums among national and global educators has equipped educators with various knowledge and skills to flourish in their teaching careers. As Tarusan et al. (2022) mentioned, Webinars can help educators learn new things. Webinars can help them improve their teaching strategies and meet the requirements of their students (Toquero & Talidong, 2020). The educators can get a huge opportunity to listen to the expert's opinion and their pedagogical tips and tricks, which can be applied in our real classroom.

The study conducted by Sakulprasertsri et al. (2022) showed the value of webinars in advancing educators' pedagogical, technical, and research expertise. Webinars help teachers become aware of new knowledge and skills and uplift their professional growth (Hidayati et al., 2021). After attending several webinars, I gained the knowledge and pedagogical skills to flourish in my teaching field. I also had the wonderful opportunity to be a part of several ICT training sessions at the national level, as well as international webinars, which have updated my teaching skills and pedagogical beliefs. This has helped me to enhance my professional career. Even after the pandemic, the professional journey continued by attending several teacher webinars, participating in MOOC courses, and joining the online discussion forum to listen to expert opinions and valuable ideas. The national and international webinars have played a significant role in enriching my knowledge, skills, and experiences regarding the pedagogical practices that were made by educators to enhance English teaching and learning.

Through the numerous ICT training and webinars at the national and international levels, I became familiar with the skills that made my online classroom successful. It has brought significant transformation to my virtual classroom. I have changed my teaching styles and approaches and tried to motivate the learners in the online classroom. This has always been inspirational for me moving my professional journey ahead and has provided me with positive vibes.

Engaging in Kathmandu University (KU) ELE and Ph.D. Discussion Forum

Most of the learning activities connected to face-to-face sessions have been transformed into online versions since the outbreak of COVID-19 (Cendra & Sulindra, 2022). The web-based platform was common and could easily be accessible to all people. The discussion forum allows the learners “to interact, reflect, exchange ideas, and expand their knowledge base” (Craig, 2015, p. 1). There is a large body of research on the significance of conducting the discussion forum as: improving students’ engagement (Kisaka, 2017), channel to active learning as well as a useful critical thinking tool (Palenque & DeCosta, 2015); medium for peer feedback (Ekahitanond, 2013, as cited in Cendra & Sulindra, 2022); and helping to foster the critical thinking skills (Szabo & Schwartz, 2011).

Online discussion forums are prevalent in the present context. Most of the educational institutions and volunteer organizations working in the professional field used to conduct several free online discussion forums for educators and scholars. One of them was K.U. English Language Education (ELE) Discussion Forum. K.U. ELE Discussion Forum was a great online platform initiated by the Department of Language Education, Kathmandu University, and the School of Education. It was an open discussion platform, especially concerning the Masters, M. Phil., and Ph. D. scholars to get insights about different sorts of research experiences and initiate discussion related to the field of research and education. I have participated in the ELE discussion forum many times and have received significant amount of information and advice on writing research papers and essays and understanding research travel techniques. It was a great meeting with the research scholars and intellectuals. Many guest speakers were invited to the discussion forum, and they shared their wonderful research experiences with the participants.

Figure 4. ELE Discussion Forum Flyer Initiated by Kathmandu University, School of Education



(Training, Research, and Innovation Center, 2023)

The ELE discussion forum was useful in increasing my knowledge and providing advice on developing my research expertise. It enriched my research experiences, which further added to my professional development as a teacher-researcher, allowing me to examine and explore the various aspects of the education sector. It further motivates me to write research papers and articles that positively influence my professional development activities.

Motivating teachers from around the world shared various research studies and instructional strategies. Listening to their inspiring lecture and presentation evoked feelings from a novice to an experienced researcher. We even had more space to raise our queries with the ELT experts. They had

good answers to the questions raised by the audience. It was a thought-provoking and productive seminar that changed me as a beginner researcher. Additionally, it supported me in completing my research-related activities and helped me in my MPhil journey. This is a great area I had to discover in depth by undertaking research activities concerning my research interests. Some of the research interests I wanted to be involved in were teacher professional development, teacher identity, ICT integration, and fostering 21st-century skills, to name but a few. I had to manage my time to participate in such online discussion forums to develop my research expertise.

Conclusion and Implications

I have provided my insights and reflections about online professional activities, which have brought prominent changes in my digital pedagogy and online teacher professional development. I have mainly emphasized the significance of ICT for establishing online teacher networking, which can further support my professional growth. By reflecting upon my memories and experiences of the pandemic time and afterwards, I have shown how the circumstances and the various online professional development activities enhanced and transformed my academic and professional journey as an English language teacher. This has further had an impact on my teacher identity and career. Overall, this study has reflected and analyzed my personal and professional growth and transformation through engaging in the virtual teacher communities and getting huge benefits from the online activities like webinars, interviews, discussion forums, conversation clubs, and belonging to a part of IELTA. The findings of the study have meaningful implications for language educators, policymakers, and researchers in the education sector. This research has highlighted the critical role of ICT in flourishing professional growth by highlighting the significant transformative impact in the field of digital pedagogy. The insights gained can guide the researchers to promote and enhance their teaching and learning strategies, and reflective practices and reinforce their teacher identities in their community. Similarly, educational institutions and policymakers can design various professional programs and activities by using these findings in the post-pandemic world. The research study even explored the shift of traditional teacher professional development practices to online teacher professional development activities, including the prominent role of webinars, involvement in conversation clubs and projects and developing a sense of connections via the virtual platforms.

This study examined how important it is for language teachers to access online tools and resources (ICTs) and digital skills to support their professional growth, connecting with virtual communities and gaining knowledge and skills in times of emergency and afterwards. Future research could add more value if the experiences and ideas of other teachers teaching diverse subjects were addressed. Similarly, future research can expand the scope of integrating ICT in the online classroom along with incorporating the voices of other educators from the various contexts and countries who used the technology and the digital resources for building networking with the global community.

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