

Chapter 30

Current Approaches in Teacher Learning on Digital Social Platforms

Emily Southerton

Stanford University, USA

Victor R. Lee

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6434-7589>

Stanford University, USA

ABSTRACT

Within digital ecologies, teachers routinely find an abundance of information related to their teaching. While many teachers pursue brute force searches for online ideas and resources, during the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers had to address pressing new challenges in online teaching in the most efficient ways possible. This chapter reports on an ongoing study of 16 teachers and how they relied upon digital social platforms to make the move to online teaching. Analysis revolves around socially-distanced video-recorded interviews with these teachers. Given their limited time, teachers had to be selective about what they deemed useful and relevant to their immediate needs. Strategic uses of digital social platforms served to address some of those needs. Specific strategies observed in the data regarding the development of pedagogy included joining teacher collectives, accessing expert-like spaces, and finding pedagogical inspiration within posts by teacher-influencers.

INTRODUCTION

Since the widespread shift to online learning at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers have occupied a transitional space in the development of best practices for teaching online in emergency situations; in that space, they are both novices and the leading experts. The online pedagogies they are developing experimentally are being rapidly disseminated to other teachers in order to improve online learning experiences for students. Simultaneously, teachers are fine-tuning their own learning processes in

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-7222-1.ch030

an attempt to become more efficient learners in the face of demanding and ever-changing circumstances. Teachers have been pushed beyond their time commitments and training; nevertheless, they persist.

The COVID-19 pandemic is far from the first-time teachers have navigated uncertain landscapes without a guidebook. Learning to “build the plane while flying it,” or rather, learning to develop cutting edge pedagogies while implementing them, has seemingly become part of the job. Even before the pandemic, the integration of new ideas and technologies in schools has been shaking up learning environments and, in these cases, teachers regularly make up gaps in knowledge as they rapidly iterate on implementation toward maximizing student outcomes. Examples are found in recent education research regarding the rise of charter school educational models (Griffin & Wohlstetter, 2001), nationalized curricula (Hipkins, 2010) and equity programming (Farmer-Hinton, 2017; McDonald, 2003), all of which saw significant discrepancies in the initial quality and availability of research-based approaches for teachers to look to as they first turned ideas into practice. The systemic reliance on teachers’ learning and subsequent developing of new pedagogies, (often on their own time), shows itself as an inadequate stopgap for providing adequate support, as in the example of iPads in Los Angeles Unified School District, where significant oversights within a \$1.3 billion technology partnership between the district, software, and hardware companies caused a total failure of implementation at a significant cost to LA taxpayers (Gilbertson, 2015). Discrepancies like these can create emergency problems of practice, not-so-dissimilar from those arising throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, positioning teachers again and again in the tireless effort of learning to develop new pedagogies in real-time to address a rapidly changing situation.

Pointing out that the reliance on teachers to make up gaps between ideas and implementation is common is not to say it is right or that teacher-learners are comfortable existing on the front lines of education-in-flux. The authors hope only to acknowledge teachers’ resilience, dedication to learning (their own and their students’), and on-the-ground expertise in the development of new pedagogies now and before COVID-19. Teachers retain vital insights most especially in times of change and emergency, in which society depends on them to make up significant gaps of knowledge and practice. The authors want to directly acknowledge the vital nature of those insights and draw attention to the overarching need to amplify teachers’ pedagogical expertise, and this study aims to contribute to the field’s understanding of how best to support teachers’ ongoing learning processes.

An important step toward this goal is to better understand how teachers have been turning to and learning from one another in this challenging period of time, and whether there are ways to make that connection more effective and efficient. There have been several ad hoc teacher learning solutions for managing the move to online teaching in the form of web-based, district-provided professional development sessions and other direct communications from their district. In one survey of over 300 teachers asking how they responded to the emergency shift to online learning, researchers found that one resource that a majority of teachers relied on - even more than they did their district technology personnel, administrators, or district office - was social media. Additionally, teachers turned most frequently to their colleagues for ideas and resources (Trust & Whalen, 2020).

There are a number of reasons why colleagues and social media might be cited as the top sources of information for teachers, especially now. In addition to the limitations of support previously described, there is the basic notion that social media provides a space for connection when social distancing was the requirement. Given the limited ability to go to different locations, these kinds of interactions and exchanges have become a larger source of stimulation and entertainment for the general public. Recognizing that social media has been a resource for teachers to encounter new ideas for some time, the authors, as part of a larger research-practice partnership described in this chapter, became interested in

16 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:

www.igi-global.com/chapter/current-approaches-in-teacher-learning-on-digital-social-platforms/284547

Related Content

Learning Molecular Structures in a Tangible Augmented Reality Environment

Kikuo Asai and Norio Takase (2011). *International Journal of Virtual and Personal Learning Environments* (pp. 1-18).

www.irma-international.org/article/learning-molecular-structures-tangible-augmented/51624

Investigating Modes of Student Inquiry in Second Life as Part of a Blended Approach

Sheila Webber (2010). *International Journal of Virtual and Personal Learning Environments* (pp. 55-70).

www.irma-international.org/article/investigating-modes-student-inquiry-second/45892

Hybridization of Approaches and Gradual Investment in ICTs Toward Innovative University Pedagogy

Chaimae Tailassane and Imane Elimadi (2024). *Navigating Virtual Worlds and the Metaverse for Enhanced E-Learning* (pp. 204-224).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/hybridization-of-approaches-and-gradual-investment-in-icts-toward-innovative-university-pedagogy/340108

A Proposed Theory Seeded Methodology for Design Based Research into Effective use of MUEs in Vocational Education Contexts

Todd Cochrane, Niki Davis and Donna Morrow (2013). *International Journal of Virtual and Personal Learning Environments* (pp. 50-64).

www.irma-international.org/article/proposed-theory-seeded-methodology-design/78509

Augmented Reality as an Emerging Application in Tourism Marketing Education

Azizul Hassan and Timothy Jung (2016). *Emerging Tools and Applications of Virtual Reality in Education* (pp. 168-185).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/augmented-reality-as-an-emerging-application-in-tourism-marketing-education/144058