

# Chapter 12


## Teacher Professional Development in the 21st Century: How Social Media Has Revolutionized the Practice

**Feliza Marie S. Mercado**

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4634-6125>

*Texas Tech University, USA*

**Sungwon Shin**

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3403-7093>

*Texas Tech University, USA*

### ABSTRACT

*This chapter discusses how social media assist teachers in their informal professional development (PD) activities, which pave the way to support their practices, motivate job satisfaction, and lifelong learning purposes. Social media's capacity to facilitate social interaction and the creation of user-generated content allows teachers to perform self-initiated learning, join professional learning networks, and obtain immediate responses from colleagues. However, using social media for PD can risk teachers' privacy and retrieval of voluminous and low-quality information. Therefore, the authors provide recommendations to guide school administrators in facilitating a well-designed social media-based PD to sustain teachers' continuing education efforts that can address their professional needs and students' diverse learning needs.*

### INTRODUCTION

Professional development (PD) plays a vital role in enriching teachers' practices, which can support their

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students' diverse learning needs (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Fischer et al., 2018). The National Staff Development Council (NSDC) defined PD as "a comprehensive, sustained, and intensive approach to improving teachers' and principals' effectiveness in raising student achievement" (Hirsh, 2009, p. 12). Participating in PD has many benefits. Several recent studies have reported that PD can increase teachers' job satisfaction and self-efficacy (e.g., Toropova et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2020; Yoon & Kim, 2022). For example, Yoon and Kim (2022) found that teachers who are strongly involved in PD are more likely to demonstrate higher self-efficacy and job satisfaction. Consequently, greater job satisfaction for teachers can promote teacher retention (Toropova et al., 2021). Well-designed PD should involve teachers in a long-term engagement to acquire a profound and lasting influence on learning and be facilitated by high-quality instructors who are well-prepared to give teachers enthusiasm about their inspiring purpose (Bayar, 2014; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

Literature on teacher PD shows that teachers can participate in two types of PD: formal and informal (Collinson & Ono, 2001; Greenhow et al., 2018; Richter et al., 2011). First, formal PD refers to the traditional concept of professional learning opportunities designed to guide teachers in enhancing their skills. It happens when teachers participate in structured workshops or courses that follow a specific curriculum (Richter et al., 2011). Also, it could be in the form of full-day or half-day events led by outside experts to assist teachers in gaining new knowledge and skills. For instance, the Colorado Department of Education requires teachers to complete 90 contact hours of professional learning every seven years for license renewal (Colorado Department of Education, 2021). Conversely, informal PD happens when teachers initiate and form their own learning experiences to meet their personal needs (Bommel & Liljekvist, 2016; Dennen & Park, 2021). Through informal PD, teachers can choose the activities that will benefit their experience, practice, and a sense of purpose. For example, teachers may use social media, such as Twitter and Facebook, to obtain and share information and build professional learning communities. This practice highlights teachers participating in informal PD are not only recipients of knowledge but also have power over how they learn (Richter et al., 2011). Therefore, both formal and informal PD provides teachers with learning opportunities to improve their teaching competence.

One promising approach to informal PD is using social media. Teachers use social media platforms to initiate informal PD, which can foster lifelong learning (Yildirim, 2019). As defined by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), social media refers to the "group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content" (p. 61). It indicates that social media platforms provide users with services that enable them to interact and collaborate online (Dewing, 2012). As a tool for professional learning, K-12 teachers use social media for self-directed PD, as it increases the accessibility to resources and overcomes geographical and time constraints (Bett & Makewa, 2020; Harvey & Carpenter, 2020; Parsons et al., 2019). Also, they continuously seek possibilities to progress in their careers as they deal with ongoing demands to improve teaching. Social media platforms, such as Twitter and Facebook, may serve as innovative venues to create a teacher-generated forum and Professional Learning Networks (PLNs) to support such efforts (Bommel et al., 2020; Carpenter & Krutka, 2014; Davis, 2015). Furthermore, they utilize these platforms to obtain immediate responses from other teachers for more information and knowledge. Indeed, one of the formal PD's drawbacks is that sessions happen periodically when the students are not in school and includes a wide range of topics that may not necessarily speak to teachers' immediate needs (Rucker, 2018). Therefore, teachers' intention to utilize social media for professional learning may be highly influenced by the platform's design, which allows them to communicate, exchange information, and collaborate in real time and efficiently.

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