

@twitter #education #BeyondPD #teacherlearning #teachereducation

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ABSTRACT

Professional development (PD) is needed to ensure effective teaching, and PD is available in many forms. Many credible, reliable resources are available online; and Twitter is one tool that can be utilized to access them. The purpose of this study was to identify teacher candidates' perceptions of using Twitter for professional development during their pre-service experience at UW-Superior. Using a pre-and post-survey, it was found that the teacher candidates' perceptions of professional development and the use of Twitter changed more than they remained the same.

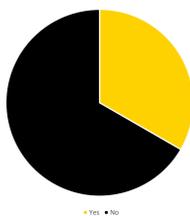
Introduction and Research Question

- Twitter first appeared in 2010. According to Curran (2014), in addition to "Twitter being a relative new concept in teacher education," its focus has been on supporting the learning of a course or field experience, not professional development. Curran (2014) concluded that "research in the use of Twitter in teacher education needs to be further explored."
- The research question explored in this SoTL project: What are teacher candidates' perceptions of using Twitter for professional development during their pre-service experience at UW-Superior?

Methodology

This study utilized a mixed method design that was primarily qualitative in focus.

Do you have a Twitter Account?



Participants: 20 pre-service teacher candidates in a middle school methods class.

Data Collection: Data collection was integrated into the course requirements. Data was confidential but not anonymous.

A pre-project and post-project survey were utilized to identify themes and extent of perception change.

Intentional scaffolding was provided via video and Tumblr resources so navigation did not interfere with results to the degree possible.

Results

To what extent has your definition of professional development changed?



To what extent have your feelings about using Twitter changed?



Pre-Project Themes

- *Definitions of PD:* learning; growth; collegial; personal responsibility.
- *Ways to participate in PD:* conferences; seminars; in-service days; mandatory meetings.
- *Thoughts on using Twitter:* not excited; annoyed; open to another resource for teachers; creative idea.

Post-Project Themes

- *Definitions of PD:* social networking; connecting with teachers in other states and countries; need not be in person; can be cheap and easy; can be individualized.
- *Twitter as part of PD plan:* easy to access; allows teachers to build off one another; lots of resources in one place; ability to see what others are doing in their classrooms; up-to-date because constantly changing; learn from seasoned veterans; support system; daily, personal way to keep up.
- *Most valuable aspects of using Twitter for PD:* making connections; network of educators; amount of information; daily reading habit; social media used professionally; current; resources, resources, resources.
- *Most challenging aspects of using Twitter for PD:* who to follow; tweeting regularly; keeping professional and personal separate; finding a place in the community; only having 140 characters.

Usefulness of Findings

Teacher Education Programs are aligned with the Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) standards. Standard #9 Professional Learning and Ethical Practice, in part, requires teacher candidates to seek out professional growth opportunities. The results of this study could support the use of Twitter as a tool for professional development. Because of the small number of participants, the researcher would be hesitant to generalize the results at this time.

Selected Student Quotes

- *Professional development is not necessarily formal training, but continual improvement of one's self through thoughtful reflection.*
- *Until we did this Twitter project, I had never really thought about using social media such as Twitter as a professional development tool.*
- *It was a simple and fun way to find professional development topics that applied to our own needs and interests. I found a lot of great resources and role models to look to for advice and ideas.*
- *The biggest setback of this project was finding my "place" in the Twitter community. As a pre-service teacher, I didn't feel like I had much insight compared to experienced teachers.*

Reference

Curran, M. (2014). Teacher candidates and Twitter: Learning with iMentors. *Academic Exchange Quarterly*, 18(3).