
BLOGGING AND TWEETING ABOUT TEACHING: TEACHERS’ PERCEPTIONS OF INFORMAL ONLINE PROFESSIONAL NETWORKS

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This is a case study of teachers that use blogs and/or Twitter to connect with other teachers online. This purpose of the study was to examine the perceived benefits of teachers who use blogs and/or Twitter to connect with other teachers. Social media has the potential to create a connected network of professional colleagues beyond the constraints of face-to-face meetings. In this study bloggers were contacted and interviewed in regards to the benefits to participating in online interactions. Interview data were analyzed to determine perceptions about the benefits of blogging and/or Twittering. Preliminary analysis suggests that participants identified of potential benefits such as one that creates some emotional distance that it is more convenient to interact on their own time schedule, and that they are able to learn from these interactions. The results of the study indicate that online networks can help to overcome many barriers that prevent teachers from interacting face-to-face. Although these networks may not fit into traditional professional development schema, it is clear that teachers feel that they benefit professionally from their participation in these professional networks. However, the type of interactions that participants preferred (e.g. Skype, Twitter, blogs) were influenced by the specific barriers faced by the participant in building their face-to-face professional network.