Chapter 14

Educators' Participatory Practices and Development of Professional Identities in a Twitter Online Professional Learning Network (PLN)

Krista Welz
New Jersey City University, USA

ABSTRACT

Twitter, a popular social networking application, is being recognized as a tool for changing how people share their knowledge and experience, as well as collaborate with one another. Twitter is being recognized for not only how people network with one another, but as a multipurpose learning tool. Originally designed as an application where users could update and share their statuses with friends, Twitter has become an essential tool for learning and developing online communities. Various studies feature Twitter's potentialities to promote the work of K-12 teachers. Within these studies, Twitter (1) enables educators to interact with other educators besides those in their own school districts, (2) decreases different kinds of isolation in workplaces, and (3) provides personalized and collaborative communities as well as PLNs.

INTRODUCTION

Social networking applications are now being recognized in transforming how educators distribute their knowledge and network with others. With the advancement of online social networking applications, educators are engaging in networked communities that provide them with the assistance they need to obtain particular necessities, respond to problems, and develop professional knowledge (Nelson, 2012). Educational technology is developing options such as professional learning communities (PLCs) and PLNs that are not limited to social networks. Networking can take place within school meetings, online, and at state and national conferences through formal and informal discussions. Reading, reflecting, and

sharing through media also avail professional opportunities (Nelson, 2012). Educators can share sources, exchange stories, and assist each other.

Twitter, a popular social networking application, is being recognized as a tool for changing how people share their knowledge and experience, as well as collaborate with one another. Twitter is being recognized for not only how people network with one another, but as a multipurpose learning tool (Komorowski, Do Huu, & Deligiannis, 2018). Originally designed as an application where users could update and share their statuses with friends (Bilton, 2013), Twitter has become an essential tool for learning and developing online communities. Various studies feature Twitter's potentialities to promote the work of K-12 teachers. Within these studies, Twitter (a) enables educators to interact with other educators besides those in their own school districts, (b) decreases different kinds of isolation in workplaces, and (c) provides personalized and collaborative communities as well as PLNs.

Being able to connect with others for the intent of learning, such as discovering new resources, creating and sharing their own content, participating in discussions, exploring best practices, and seeking examples of innovation in schools, helps educators strengthen their practice. Web 2.0 technology, such as Twitter, can help them gain knowledge and experience from other educators who are either beginners or experts (Nelson, 2012). By engaging in an online Twitter PLN, educators have a place to discover the practices of other educators around the world, explore innovative ideas and trends, expand their overall thinking, and become familiar with educational leaders who are transforming the field and education.

Twitter can present a powerful digital environment for the analysis of social and informational practices within an online CoP. Because the quality and amount of school district professional learning can be unpredictable for many educators, many of them are in search of other ways to acquire support and access to beneficial resources, such as online communities. Harlan (2009) exclaims that an online community can help develop learning beyond direct school environments, such as remaining current with the dynamic realm of technology. Educators need to remain relevant with current and fluctuating educational and technological trends, which does not come easily if they are isolated in their workplace.

With the options of joining and exploring online communities, such as Twitter, remaining current has become simpler for educators. Changes in educational theory, technology, current and award-winning literature, advocacy issues, and other helpful trends or resources that may affect student learning can be explored in an online community (Harlan, 2009). Online communities play an essential part in encouraging and supporting modern practices, as educators are subject to a variety of innovative concepts and viewpoints from outside their school practice.

Educators may develop continuous learning opportunities using Twitter. Harlan (2009) asserts that to be highly effective in their practice, educators need to explore beyond their school's walls and persist in discovering innovative and inspiring ideas. Twitter, like many online communities, can help its users explore their individual interests, desires, and necessities, which may help lessen the feelings of isolation. Hathcock (2017) states that some of the most constructive and inspiring conversations for educators are occurring on Twitter. Twitter has become a popular online community for connecting with other educators, taking part in discussions, learning, and growing professionally. Twitter's ability to build communities through the use of micro-dialogues, made up of 280 characters, has become of specific significance to educators who are exploring ways to develop practical social significance from like-minded individuals with shared interests and visions (Hathcock, 2017). From Twitter chats, sharing resources and ideas, and searching subject-specific hashtags, to establishing professional and personal connections, educators are discovering many ways to connect through Twitter.

Related Content

Developing a Personalized, Educational Gaming Experience for Young Chinese DLI Learners: A Design-Based Approach
Frederick J. Poole, Joana Francoand Jody Clarke-Midura (2018). *Digital Technologies and Instructional Design for Personalized Learning (pp. 253-274).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/developing-a-personalized-educational-gaming-experience-for-young-chinese-dli-learners/199543

Spur Gear Design and Analysis ATAPS Package
(2020). *Advanced Technology-Assisted Problem Solving in Engineering Education: Emerging Research and Opportunities (pp. 128-153).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/spur-gear-design-and-analysis-ataps-package/239822

Investigating the Experiences of Mathematics Teacher Technology Integration in the Selected Rural Primary Schools in Namibia
Clement Simujaand Hilya Shikesho (2024). *International Journal of Technology-Enhanced Education (pp. 1-15).*
www.irma-international.org/article/investigating-the-experiences-of-mathematics-teacher-technology-integration-in-the-selected-rural-primary-schools-in-namibia/340028

Designing for a Production-Oriented Approach to Blended Learning in English Language Teaching
Siliang Fu (2022). *International Journal of Technology-Enhanced Education (pp. 1-16).*
www.irma-international.org/article/designing-for-a-production-oriented-approach-to-blended-learning-in-english-language-teaching/316457

A Comparative Study of the Functionalities and Characteristics of a Learner Model in Adaptive Hypermedia Educational Systems
(2019). *Bayesian Networks for Managing Learner Models in Adaptive Hypermedia Systems: Emerging Research and Opportunities (pp. 1-23).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/a-comparative-study-of-the-functionalities-and-characteristics-of-a-learner-model-in-adaptive-hypermedia-educational-systems/216781