Chapter 5

WhatsApp as a Platform of Community of Practice and Its Affordances Toward Capacity Building of Teachers in Online Teaching

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ABSTRACT

The current study examined the efficiency of Whatsapp as a mobile-based Community of Practice (CoP) toward capacity building of teachers in acquiring online teaching skills during the COVID-19 pandemic. The data were collected using mixed- methods in which both survey and in-depth interviews were used to for data collection. The sample for the study were secondary school teachers from six private schools in

Chennai, India. The authors collected data from 170 secondary school teachers via a web-based survey using a questionnaire adapted from the Community of Practice Evaluation Questionnaire (CoPeval). To elicit the best practices for utilising Whatsapp as a CoP platform for professional learning, qualitative data were gathered through in-depth interviews with six participants, including two teachers, subject headteachers, and principals. The findings confirmed that Whatsapp CoP is a viable mobile-based platform for upskilling and capacity building of teachers in online teaching skills. The suggestions and recommendations of the study are presented.

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought phenomenal changes in teaching and learning processes that have pushed the teaching community to expand its horizon of teaching practices. The influence of the pandemic has revolutionised instructional approaches bringing online teaching to the forefront. Despite the fact that the COVID-19 crisis has had a global impact on teaching and learning, novel approaches and unexpected possibilities have emerged to reorganise our educational system with the emphasis on the need for teacher professional development (*Green et al., 2021). Besides,* due to the opportunities offered by social networking sites, professional learning practices have witnessed a paradigm shift. In order to connect individuals with the outside world, social media platforms have become an integral element of all professions. Currently, everyday knowledge is generated through social media platforms such as Facebook, Linkedin, educational Blogs, personal websites, Instagram, TikTok, Twitter, YouTube, WhatsApp, WeChat, Telegram, and many other social networking sites that connect teachers with other individuals and encourage group work and interactivity, thereby forming a social identity (Khoza, 2021).

During the early phases of the pandemic, teachers were first concerned with honing their online teaching skills, which accelerated their adoption of technology-enabled teaching and learning practices. Consequently, teachers are urged to upskill and continue teaching via online mode. However, a lack of expertise in teaching online. Especially teachers without prior technological training or limited digital skills are prone to develop stress, which has raised concerns about teachers' fatigue and burnout in online teaching. Therefore, the importance of teachers to break their sense of isolation and to stay connected with the teaching communities, and students is even more evident. Moreover, teachers have developed their online teaching skills through a variety of approaches that includes self-directed learning, peer-assisted learning, mobile learning, social networking, and collaborative learning using web2.0 technologies. Specifically, the social-constructivist approach has played a significant role in upskilling teachers in understanding the available range of digital learning

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