

Facebook as an Online Self-Directed Professional Learning Platform: EFL Middle Level Education in Algeria

الفيديوك كمنصة تعليمية مهنية عبر الإنترنت: تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية كلفة أجنبية للطور المتوسط في الجزائر

Keltoum Bettaher¹ *

Dr. Malika Zourgui 2

1 TICELET laboratory of the Faculty of Foreign Languages of Hassiba Ben Bouali, University of Hassiba Ben Bouali, Chlef (Algeria) k.bettahar@univ-chlef.dz

2 TICELET laboratory of the Faculty of Foreign Languages of Hassiba Ben Bouali, University of Hassiba Ben Bouali Chlef (Algeria) zourgui.malika@yahoo.fr

Received 2024-05-06 Accepted 2024-05-13 Published 01-06-2024

Abstract:

In recent years, a digitally extended context for professional learning has arisen. Thanks to the great spread of social media platforms, teachers have initiated their personal professional learning on the Internet. Interestingly, as far as the learning process takes place in a formal, non-formal, and informal setting, the present paper aims to shed light on teachers' modern informal learning that uses technological innovations, particularly on social media networks. It stresses the role of 1) using Facebook groups as a community of practice among middle-level English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in Algeria; 2) using Facebook as a digital tool that serves the educational environment; and 3) using Facebook as a technological means for teachers' self-directed professional learning. Moreover, this exploratory study analyzes teachers' discussions and content shared in the private Facebook group "Hireche Middle School Teachers" with over 60,571 members, created by several EFL teachers working at different schools in Algeria. Thus, an online semi-structured survey was implemented with 14 teachers who engaged in the study voluntarily. As a result, the search concludes that participants have positive experiences with the Facebook community of practice. It demonstrates its utility in facilitating online learning, the exchange of e-learning resources, collaboration among colleagues, feedback, and online peer assessment, among others. In the end, the study highlights the role of Facebook as a digital medium in supporting teachers' informal ongoing professional learning within the Algerian EFL context.

Keywords: EFL Teachers, Professional Learning, Professional Self-Development, Self-directed Learning, Facebook.

ملخص:

في السنوات الأخيرة، ظهر سياق إلكتروني واسع خاص بالتعلم المهني. وبفضل الانتشار الكبير لمنصات التواصل الاجتماعي، استهل المعلمون تعلمهم المهني الخاص عبر الإنترنت. والمثير للاهتمام أنه بقدر ما تتم عملية التعلم في إطار رسمي وغير رسمي، المقال الحالي يهدف

إلى تسليط الضوء على التعلم الحديث الغير رسمي للأساتذة، والذي يتم فيه إستخدام الإبتكارات التكنولوجية الحديثة، تحديدا شبكات التواصل الإجتماعي. وبدوره يشدد على (1) إستعمال مجموعات الفيسبوك كمجتمع للتمرس بين أساتذة اللغة الإنجليزية للطور المتوسط في الجزائر. (2) إستعمال الفايسبوك كأداة رقمية تخدم الوسط التعليمي. و (3) إستعمال الفايسبوك كوسيلة إلكترونية للتعلم المهني الذاتي للمعلمين. إضافة إلى ذلك، الدراسة الإستكشافية تحلل المناقشات والمضمون المشترك بين الأساتذة فالمجموعة الفايسبوكية الخاصة و التي تضم أكثر من 60.571 عضوا، و التي أنشأها مجموعة من «HIRECHE Middle School Teachers» الأساتذة الذين يعملون في مختلف المدارس الجزائرية. وهكذا، تم تنفيذ إستبيان شبه منظم عبر الإنترنت مع 14 أستاذا شاركوا في الدراسة طوعا. ونتيجة لذلك، يختم البحث أن المشاركين لديهم تجارب إيجابية معط الفايسبوك. ويثبت إستعماله في تسهيل التعلم عبر الإنترنت، تبادل موارد التعلم الإلكتروني، التعاون بين الزملاء، التغذية الراجعة، تقييم الزملاء عبر الإنترنت، من بين أمور أخرى. في النهاية، الدراسة تسلط الضوء على دور الفايسبوك كوسيلة رقمية لدعم التعلم المهني الذاتي المتواصل الغير رسمي ضمن سياق اللغة الإنجليزية في الجزائر.

الكلمات المفتاحية: أساتذة اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، التعلم المهني، التطوير المهني الذاتي، التعلم الموجه ذاتياً، الفيسبوك.

1. Introduction:

Recent research in the educational arena and professional development (PD) gave warranted consideration to the importance of professional learning as an opportunity for gaining improvement in teachers' practices and learners' outcomes, hence the success of the overall educational system of a nation. As far as the learning process is concerned, teachers engage in different learning experiences: formal or informal, structured or unstructured, individually or collaboratively with others, deliberately or accidentally, inside school or beyond the school walls. In this sense, it has been argued that nowadays teachers do not merely rely on the traditional PD courses they tend to have with their instructors at work, which are formal and government-mandated. That is the type of course where teachers are imposed

by their school districts where the government invests amounts of money every school year to attend scheduled hours for traditional PD courses such as training sessions and attending seminars and/or workshops. Evans (2015) stated that "despite the link between effective teacher professional learning and school improvement, teachers continue to complain about the irrelevance of mandated programs of professional learning, considering that such programs are of minor importance compared with informal learning by themselves and with colleagues" (p.24). Scholars such as Fullan and Miles (1992) have argued that many prior initiatives for educational improvement have not accomplished the intended goals because they failed to provide teachers with appropriate learning opportunities (as cited in Bautista and Ortega-Ruiz, 2015, p. 242).

For this reason, our interest in this study is to bring into sharper focus what middle-level teachers of English in particular have reached out to as an alternative form of professional learning model. We aim to focus on an online community of practice as a new strategy for professional learning, which is considered an informal and digital-based learning strategy. Interestingly, some of the questions that motivated this search were mainly: What models of technological resources and digital platforms are being adopted for teachers' professional practices? What is the most commonly used platform? And for what purpose is it basically used? What are its professional

benefits? Answering the aforementioned questions would enrich our understanding of how technology has reshaped things in teachers' professional learning and development. As a consequence, teachers create their own professional space in a digital world where they socialize, share knowledge, and gain new understanding across different local and global geographical boundaries, which embodies the mechanisms that underlie teacher learning in our current globalized world.

2. Background

1.2 Teacher's Informal Professional Learning

Growing research indicates that the quality of any educational system depends on the quality of its teachers. The quality of teachers, then, depends on the necessary skills and knowledge a teacher must be equipped with to teach students in accordance with the new requirements and the 21st century challenges (be they social, emotional, or pedagogical). Thus, these skills and knowledge are acquired through teachers' professional training and learning. In other words, the type of professional development and training being afforded plays a crucial role in shaping effective teachers. Accordingly, Adey (2007) asserted that "the continuing professional development of teachers remains the most important force in the quest for educational improvement." (p.3)

Professional learning, for Evans (2015), "conjures a greater sense of expansive, sustained learning that is constructed through critical reflection, and active engagement in the research of practice" (p.39). Moreover, Aharonian (2017) noted that "teacher learning is consisting of all 'natural' learning experiences and those conscious and planned and unplanned activities which are of direct or indirect benefit to the individual teacher, to groups of teachers or to the school". (p. 46)

Also, most of what professionals learn is learned informally (Vaessen et al. 2014, p. 57). Teachers, therefore, tend to engage in a kind of learning that is informal, voluntarily done, goal-oriented, and self-initiated. Lohman (2000) revealed that informal learning:

Refers to learning initiated by teachers themselves to enhance professional development, with the focus of voluntary engagement of teachers in learning and their active agency, "Agency refers to people's ability to make choices, take control, self-regulate, and thereby pursue their goals as individuals leading, potentially, to personal or social transformation. (as cited in Cai, 2019, p. 28)

This learning, respectively, does not necessarily take place in a formal setting organized by institutions such as seminars and training workshops. It might be informal and take place in a private context, in dialogues, or in an offline or online informal learning community. Also, it might be seen in the cooperation and collaboration with one's colleagues at work. In this sense, informal learning entails teachers' engagement in acquiring new knowledge and skills through active discussion and dialogue among the teaching committee and a collective reflection between them. Lohman (2000), therefore, proposed eight informal learning activities where teachers may learn something new at work: through "talking with others, collaborating with others, observing others, sharing materials and resources with others, searching the internet, scanning professional magazines and journals, trial and error, and reflecting" (as cited in Cai, 2019, pp. 28–29). This indeed highlights the need for professional autonomy, personal creativity in problem-solving, and the exchange of experiences and expertise among colleagues.

Once more, traditional teacher informal learning usually takes place at school, so teachers are given the opportunity to learn and exchange ideas in their real-life professional context, the autonomy to quest for their real needs, and the tendency to investigate challenges they face or may face in their everyday practices. Yet, for the school to become a better place for professional learning, teachers have to share a sense of solidarity, responsibility, and openness with each other. They should primarily establish a healthy environment and a good relationship with each other, and the ultimate goal of their commitment should be the students' positive outcomes. That is, obviously, in cases where colleagues of a school community are considered competitors and not members of a unified teaching and learning community, then the informal learning would have no impact on their performance and no benefits for students' outcomes. (Kaulens, 2019, p. 560)

The authors, accordingly, used the term traditional to refer to the fact that it used to be the most familiar and unique way in the last few decades where informal professional learning took place. Propitiously, globalization and technology invasion had remodeled things even in educational settings. In the following section, we will explore a different setting for informal learning where the virtual world had a great hand in it, particularly via a social networking site.

2.2 Facebook as a Virtual Community of Practice

Making use of social networking sites (SNSs) has gained a crucial role in mediating information in many aspects of life, and educational settings are no exception. Facebook, as one of the social network sites, has evolved to become a virtual gathering area where thousands of teachers can be observed engaging in discussions related to teaching and learning orientations. Teachers have many reasons to engage in such virtual online communities facilitated by technology. Studies noted that communication mediated via the digital online space is easy to maintain, and at the click of a mouse, teachers can communicate, collaborate, and receive information and ideas on any particular issue they face or may face while doing their job. They may discuss different topics such as curriculum difficulties, pedagogical issues, school and classroom management problems, teaching challenges, learners' discipline, teaching resources, lesson delivery and planning, and the like. Yet, such topics might be discussed nationally or regionally: agreeing and disagreeing with each other, exchanging e-teaching materials, receiving feedback, providing and receiving mutual support, enhancing a sense of collaboration and collegiality, and hence improving their professional as well as personal growth.

In this respect, Bissessar (2014) noted that "teachers are using Facebook as a means of generating interest in their classes, socializing with each other, collaborating and sharing pertinent information, and as a sounding board to give vent to their concerns and to receive advice" (p. 121). Likewise, it stated that "With the advent of web-based technologies, teachers can now engage in professional development that is participant-driven, practical, collaborative, and available 24 hours a day from any Internet location" (as cited in Bissessar, 2014, p. 132).

In light of the previously mentioned definitions, Facebook can be used as a platform for learning, knowledge transmission, and/or production through online social engagement. Yet, this engagement is considered significant because it is self-directed and goal-oriented since they have the autonomy to learn what they want to learn. That is, they interact, communicate, and share information with their peers with diverse perspectives using the tools available on Facebook, such as the chat box, the posting option, the comment section on any post, sharing and exchanging

worksheets, pictures, videos, scripts, and audios, and downloading files such as yearly plans, lesson plans, tests, and exams, among many other data and information exchanges. To wrap it up, several studies show that teachers use social media to go beyond their school community to develop professional knowledge. (Liljekvist et al., 2021). Thus, teachers' engagement in Facebook as one of the social network sites is clearly visible; they use the platform as a learning space where they share and receive professional knowledge as well as "to develop their collective knowledge on pedagogical and subject-specific issues related to their every-day practice". (Liljekvist et al., 2021)

3. Research Objectives:

In this paper, we research the social network site 'Facebook' as a tool for teacher-directed professional learning. We aimed to accentuate the Facebook groups' usage as an informal professional community of practice facilitated by technology. In other words, investigating the impact of Facebook as a technological means in the arena of teacher professional learning and its role in facilitating the teaching-learning process for middle-level EFL teachers

In furtherance of reaching the aim of the investigation, the authors aimed to analyze three main research questions as well as confirm or reject two hypotheses that are stated below.

This study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. How frequently do EFL teachers use Facebook groups?
2. For what reason do they use them?
3. Do they use other online resources?

The above-mentioned questions are to be answered in detail on the basis of both the quantitative and qualitative data gathered throughout the search.

Likewise, we hypothesized that 'Facebook' is a) the most widely used social network site among Algerian middle-level EFL teachers and b) considered as an informal professional self-learning tool. The supposed findings are to either confirm or reject the stated assumptions.

4. Methods

The aim of this paper was to determine teachers' perceptions of Facebook as a teacher professional learning platform. The authors of this study selected the Facebook group named "HIRECHE Middle School Teachers"¹, because it is one of the most widely used groups among middle-level English language teachers in Algeria. Taking the Algerian context into account, where all middle-level teachers are required to have a bachelor's degree and a teaching certificate, most experienced teachers had their bachelor's degree for four years; they studied under the classical system at university. However, in recent years, the university system changed and opted for the LMD system (Licence, Master, Doctorate), where students have to complete only three years to get a bachelor's certificate.

In order to achieve the aim of this study, a mixed methodology was selected. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected through an online semi-structured survey questionnaire posted in the aforementioned Facebook private group addressed to its members, who are EFL teachers in different middle schools in Algeria and who participated in the research voluntarily. Thus, it was addressed to 14 teachers in this community of practice in order to get an in-depth understanding of

¹ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/945063298924770>

teachers' views of the utility of this particular social network site and its impact on their professional self-learning.

5. Results

The result of this study is an answer to the research's basic questions; in which to identify the frequency of Facebook use among EFL teachers and the professional reasons behind its use. To give a clearer picture, the data collected is shown below:

Figure 1 represents the frequency of Facebook use and group engagement for professional interests among Algerian middle-level EFL teachers. As it can be seen; the survey offers four main options that refer to frequency: 'usually, frequently, sometimes, and rarely'. Teacher-participants' responses were as follows: 12 (86%) teachers selected the "usually" option. Then, only 2 (14%) of them selected the "frequently" option. However, none (0%) of the participants opt for the "sometimes" and "rarely" options, respectively.

Figure 1:

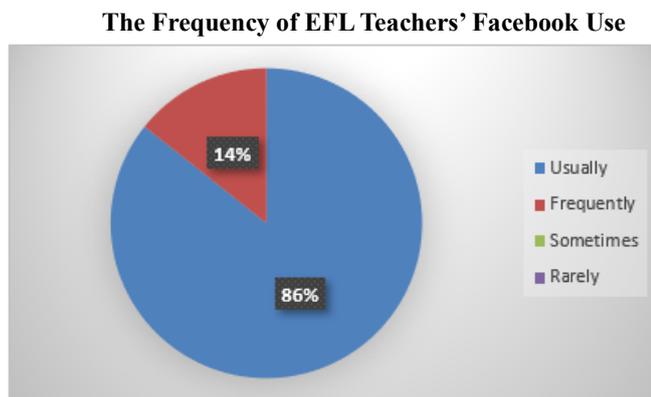


Figure 2 indicates the social network sites (SNSs) teacher-participants had mentioned in their responses. Participants used different SNSs for personal as well as professional commitment. The results showed a common use of SNSs among teachers, and the top three sites were "Facebook, Google, and YouTube" (100%, 85%, and 50% respectively). Besides Facebook, they additionally identified other networked platforms that serve them in their teaching practices. From their answers, we, therefore, notice that they do not merely use social network sites, but also other applications. Some responses indicate the use of e-learning sites; 6 teachers responded that they use different educational sites without taking into account their names. Authors gathered them under one umbrella term "e-learning sites". Moreover, three teachers identified the utility of some English applications without labeling them, among which one teacher mentioned the Pinterest application.

Figure 2: Online Learning Networks Identified by EFL Teachers

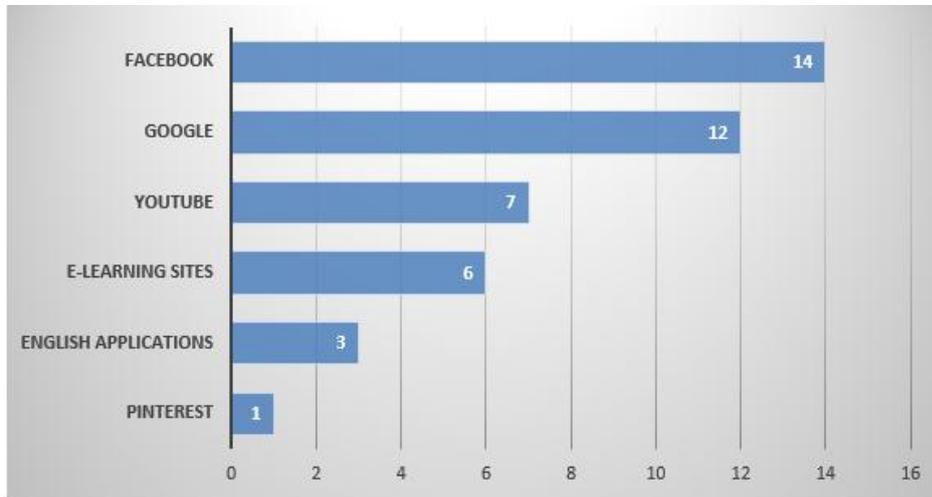


Table 1 shows the way EFL teachers use the Facebook platform. The obtained results are based on four statements; which are included in the data collection tool. Consequently, all 14 teacher-participants (100%) expressed that they use Facebook “as a guide to achieve educational objectives”. 13 (92%) of them selected the expression “I rely on them and other extra materials”. On the contrary, 1 (8%) of the participants voted for the statement “as a sole resource, I depend on them”. This latter was a novice teacher who was experiencing the teaching profession for the first year in her professional career, yet, she did not attend any professional development session. So, the platform was her unique space where she gathered knowledge and teaching materials. Finally, none (0%) of the participants go for the statement “No, I do not use them at all”, this, unquestionably embodies the crucial serviceability of the platform, none of them express its uselessness.

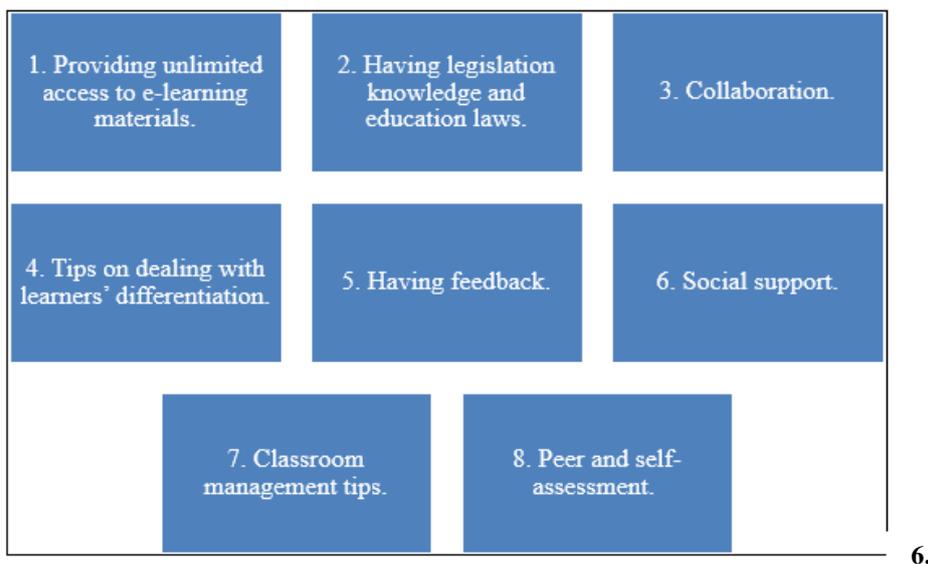
Table 1: The Ways Teachers Use Facebook Groups

Facebook Uses	N	%
As a guide to achieve educational objectives	14	100
I rely on them and other extra materials	13	92.8
As a sole resource, I depend on them	1	7.14
No, I do not use them at all	-	-

Figure 3 points out the professional aims beyond the access of EFL teachers to these Facebook groups. The authors, then, in this section gave the opportunity to participants to give their feedback based on their personal experience. So, they had the total freedom to express their opinions concerning the professional reasons behind their engagement in these groups. From the gathered data, we reported common responses in different wording. It can be noted that the teacher-participants use EFL Facebook groups at the professional level for multiple reasons; the statements

afforded below are the gist of the authors’ understanding since respondents used different terms while expressing their thoughts. The reasons were: 1) Providing unlimited access to e-learning materials. 2) Having legislation knowledge and education laws. 3) Collaboration. 4) Advice and tips on dealing with learners’ differentiation. 5) Having feedback. 6) Social support. 7) Classroom management tips. 8) Peer and self-assessment.

Figure 3: Professional Reasons behind Using Facebook Groups



Discussion

1.6 Facebook is the Most Widely Used Platform/SNS among Algerian EFL Teachers.

As data demonstrate above, the online learning resources reported by teacher-respondents included different SNSs; when asked about the most commonly used online networks, teachers’ responses, therefore, were quite similar among which Facebook was at top list. Responses, additionally, included Google, YouTube, e-learning websites, Pinterest, and other English applications. Also, as shown in **Figure 2**, it is remarkable that the first source and the most commonly used platform reported by all participants was Facebook.

Moreover, based on the results stated in **Table 1**, taking particularly the first statement into account. It is interestingly noticeable that all 14 teachers had chosen the statement ‘as a guide to achieve educational interests’; that is worth saying EFL teachers considered this virtual platform a commendable resource for professional profit and guidance. The participants’ total agreement upon this statement demonstrates a clear significance of the utility of this digital platform for professional reasons. In this respect, teachers’ responses have highlighted the utility’s value of the platform in which it embodies the realization of the research objective. As we initially proposed Facebook is the most widely used platform among Algerian EFL teachers. The acquired outcomes, consequently, confirmed the first suggested hypothesis.

2.6 Facebook as an Informal Professional Self-Learning Tool.

As for obtaining the most meaningful results and confirming the second hypothesis; where we suggested that Facebook is considered as a virtual professional community of practice and a professional self-learning tool. Teacher participants, as **Table 1** represents, were surveyed on four statements related to their way of using the platform. The obtained results, accordingly, illustrate the way teachers perceive the functionality of Facebook groups and to what extent they rely on them. Hence, the fact that all participants had chosen the option 'as a guide to achieve educational objectives' entails the large focus on the platform. In other words, EFL teachers' responses have highlighted the importance of their self-engagement in the platform for the sake of gaining professional merits.

Once again, the study examined the reasons behind EFL Facebook groups' usage. Results, as shown in **Figure 3**, demonstrate that these groups are being used for accomplishing many learning purposes, and teachers' engagement is purposeful and intended to get professional knows. Based on teachers' experience with the platform, we, therefore, outlined eight different reasons which have been expressed in different terms by respondents, we gathered them under the following ideas:

1. Providing unlimited access to e-learning materials.
2. Teachers' knowledge of legislation and education laws.
3. Collaboration.
4. Advice and tips on dealing with learners' differentiation.
5. Having feedback.
6. Social support.
7. Classroom management tips.
8. Self-assessment.

As seen in the aforementioned statements, the very first one is predominantly, the aspect of exchanging e-learning resources and teaching materials; which concerns the whole middle cycle (1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th years) and which are available and saved 24 hours a day, such as: lesson plans, yearly plans, tests, exams, tutorials, worksheets, scripts, pictures, audios, videos and the so like. This was ultimately the first and major reason why teachers access to the EFL groups since they found a plethora of files and works of different teachers across the country that fulfil their needs and interests. Besides that, the share-out of pedagogical ministerial up-dates for example: (the starting and ending of school year, official holidays, the final exams' schedules, exceptional reforms or readjustments, and/or any news that concerns schools and education).

Likewise, teachers engaging in these groups will deliberately or accidentally learn concepts about legislation and educational laws. i.e., teachers when having access to the group, they met those experienced and well-versed members who may share content that has to do with legislation or educational laws; either in form of posts or comments. Hence, they get informed about different constitutions and pedagogical ideas such as: their duties, obligations and rights as well as the rights of all agents in the school community. Also, they get to know conditions of teaching and conditions of students' learning, instructions and regulations, principles regarding teachers as employees, and/or any issue that pertain the teaching profession.

Secondly, the use of Facebook groups boosts the sense of cooperation and collegiality among the community members. It offers educators, at different geographical boundaries of the

country, an opportunity to express their interests and expertise in the field, hence, enhancing the collaboration process among them.

Moreover, what is also considered as meaningful is the aspect of quick feedback, since the idea is welcomed and appreciated by all teachers. In other words, raising a question on the group page or an issue that nudge a teacher's thinking would entail, at a click of a mouse, different responses, comments, opinions, and maybe solutions on how to deal with a given situation or tips on how to solve the targeted problem. This is, significantly important for teachers as far as it serves them in better performing their job as well as facilitating the teaching task, this is in one hand.

On the other hand, the fact that they receive feedback on any teaching inquiry implies not merely the sense of knowledge sharing and collaboration but also the sharing of classroom management tips; which is among the reasons why teachers engage in the FB groups.

Furthermore, the fourth source gaining common recognition by teachers' participants is strategies for dealing with learners' differentiation. Obviously, taking the fact that classes vary precisely in terms of learners; where learners differ from one individual to the other vis-à-vis their age, cognitive background, mental abilities, intellectual skills, rate of comprehension, learning styles, intelligences, strengths and weaknesses, needs and interests and so on. The task, hence, for early-career teachers and those with less experience remains very challenging and needs continuous learning and reflection upon effective strategies on dealing with melting pot classes. Interestingly, teachers while having online discussions in the FB group with colleagues from different geographic locations and with diverse teaching experiences; seek help and guidance from them, so, they get enlightened by their expertise and may experiment and adopt the strategies of those experienced teachers. This indeed helps novice teachers explore new solutions and suitable teaching techniques. Besides that, the share of expertise helps in solving administrative issues and classroom challenges; precisely when confronting problems with learners and/or when having difficulty on classroom management, for example: ways on dealing with disruptive elements.

As a consequence, to what has been said, teachers informally learn and take benefits from those mid or late-career experienced teachers, and this type of discussions (asking and receiving answers) and experience's transmission embodies a higher sense of collaboration, peer assessment, providence of classroom management tips as well as social support among peers. In this respect, Rashid (2016) noted that "Facebook is a space for giving and receiving social support" (as cited in Liljekvist et al, 2021).

The final reason identified by teachers for using Facebook groups is self-assessment. Rashid (2021) also asserted that teachers' engagement in Facebook groups "provided social support, helping the teachers reflect on their practice and cope with the day-to-day challenges at their schools" (as cited in Liljekvist et al, 2021). Teachers, therefore, while discussing course content or different professional topics that concerns their needs, they are undoubtedly scaffolding knowledge; this is well-illustrated when observing other colleagues' works, inquiring about a particular matter, requesting for help and solutions, and having feedback. Thereby, the fact that they critically reflect on their practices, learn new things, develop knowledge, adapt and adopt, and make readjustment is an illustration of assessing their knows as well as their teaching practices. Rutherford (2010) puts it

well when she shows that “the teachers discussed issues in relation to their practice, and that the content of the discussions had potential to improve their teaching” (as cited in Liljekvist et al, 2021). This improvement, hence, is the fruit of self-assessment.

To wrap it up, from the obtained results, it is found that Facebook as one of the social network platforms, is the most widely-used SNS among English as Foreign Language teachers at middle-level education in Algeria, in which the suggested hypotheses were confirmed. Also, it is approved that EFL teachers engage in such self-organized Facebook groups to achieve many professional teaching-learning goals.

6. Conclusion

The field of teacher professional development and learning has changed due to the rapid growth of social media and social networking sites (SNSs). Various online communities, whether self-organized or professionally operated, have been established for the sake of serving education and pedagogical practices in schools. In this respect, the purpose of the study was to accentuate the utility of Facebook groups as a self-directed digital tool for teachers’ professional learning, as well as an informal professional community of practice. The findings of the search proved that EFL teacher participants use different SNSs for professional purposes, among which Facebook is number one. They tend to use Google, YouTube, and Pinterest, as well as other e-learning websites. Simultaneously, findings indicate that teachers who use EFL Facebook groups greatly benefit from the affordances available. Of course, at the professional level, they ultimately benefit from the e-learning materials and professional knowledge being shared and posted in the group. Likewise, they use these groups as a professional gathering community where they request new sources of information, solutions to teaching problems, advice, feedback, means of self-assessment, tips for a good running lesson, and the like. We conclude that teachers’ exposure to this virtual platform is becoming their thriving space for informal and self-directed learning. As members willingly respond and share knowledge, teaching methods, successes, and strategies, they serve to facilitate professional learning, and this is the main reason why teachers engage in this kind of collegial digital gathering. This, finally, can be considered as evidence for the accuracy of the second research hypothesis. Moreover, since this form of online engagement proved its fruitfulness at the professional level for EFL teachers, it can be suggested that educational inspection systems give a warranted consideration to this type of digital informal professional learning space, and why not, besides the traditional way of delivering PD sessions, take the initiative in tailoring professional online meetings that suit teachers’ needs and meet the 21st-century evolution.

7. List of references

- Adey, P. (2007). *The professional development of teachers: Practice and theory*. Springer Science & Business Media.
- Aharonian, N. (2017). Dialogic professional learning for Israeli teachers: A narrative inquiry. PhD diss., Monash University. https://figshare.com/articles/Dialogic_professional_learning_for_Israeli_teachers_A_narrative_inquiry/5306092.
- Aharonian, N. (2017). Dialogic professional learning for Israeli teachers: A narrative inquiry. PhD dissertation., Monash University.

Commentaire [k1]: Which one is correct?

Commentaire [k2]:

- Bautista, A., & Ortega-Ruiz, R. (2015). Teacher professional development: International perspectives and approaches. *Psychology, Society, & Education*, 7(3), 240-251.
- Bissessar, C. S. (2014). Facebook as an informal teacher professional development tool. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 39(2), 121-135.
- Cai, M. (2019) Professional Self-Development Based on Informal Learning: A Case Study of Foreign Language Teachers in a University of China. *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, 7, 26-38. doi: [10.4236/jss.2019.712003](https://doi.org/10.4236/jss.2019.712003).
- Evans, L. A. (2015). *Professional learning from the inside-teachers as agents of school improvement: A principal's case study* (Doctoral dissertation, Queensland University of Technology).
- Kaulens, O. (2019). Informal learning for teachers' professional development at school: opportunities and challenges. *Innovations, Technologies and Research in Education*, 553.
- Liljekvist, Y. E., Randahl, A. C., van Bommel, J., & Olin-Scheller, C. (2021). Facebook for professional development: Pedagogical content knowledge in the centre of teachers' online communities. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 65(5), 723-735.
- Todorovic, M., Coyne, E., Gopalan, V., Youn, O., Landowski, L. & Barton, M. (2021) Twelve tips for using Facebook as a learning platform, *Medical Teacher*, 43(11), 1261-1266
- Vaessen, M., Van Den Beemt, A., & De Laat, M. (2014). Networked Professional Learning: Relating the Formal and the Informal. *Frontline Learning Research*, 2(2), 56-71.
- Van Bommel, J., & Liljekvist, Y. (2016, October). Teachers' informal professional development on social media and social network sites: when and what do they discuss. In *ERME-Topic Conference: Mathematics Teaching, Resources and Teacher Professional Development* (pp. 5-7).