



EFFECTS OF THE EDUCATIONAL SOCIAL NETWORKS ON PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHERS

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Abstract

The main aim of this activity is to test the effectiveness of the educational social network in career development of the teachers. The scope of the study, a social network site can be accessed from the address "www.mavikurdele.net". The application was used by 34 teachers at a high school in the province of Afyonkarahisar in the first semester of 2015-2016 education year for 6 weeks. After the application, the data was collected through survey of social networking application to ensure the professional development of teachers. In the research, while examining the data, descriptive statistics were used. The study showed that teachers generally have a great tendency for using the social network and they often used the social network to share, communicate and be in cooperation.

Keywords: Web 2.0, social networks, social networking sites, educational social networks, professional development of teachers.

INTRODUCTION

A considerable development has occurred in the way Web technology used in educational settings lately. Surveys have showed that Web technology has potential to improve learning and to increase interaction among learners and teachers (Ada and Akan, 2007). It has been pointed out that effective student achievement can be acquired with quality professional development activities (Bristow, Reese, & DeRocchi, 2013). Teachers who have to live each moment of change update old information and learn new applications with the help of social networks (Cochran-Smith, 2004). Social Networks also help teachers take feedback from other colleagues, make knowledge storage and be in a differentiation process (Crook 2008; Moody 2010; Liburd, 2011). Furthermore, for professional development of teachers, they should be encouraged to utilise of these tools such as digital devices, resources, and using social networks throughout their professional lives and these tools help teachers develop themselves (McLoughlin and Lee, 2007; Kukulska-Hulme, 2012). In order to get feedback from teachers, social networks increase the interactions with the other users following new developments, problem solving, sharing, critical thinking (Albion, 2008; Ploderer, Howard, & Thomas, 2010; Gülbahar, Kalelioğlu, & Madran, 2010). Social networks increase collaboration among users (Ray and Hocutt, 2006). Inactive users have changed their read only position to producer and content creator. In sharing video, text and photo, users have taken an active position (Özmen, Aküzü, & Sünkür, 2012; Cormode and Krishnamurthy, 2008). Thus, social networks integrated with career development process help educators reorganize their teaching attitudes (Ploderer et al. 2010).

The emergence of the Internet's basic concepts has begun with the beginning of 1961 and since 1975 with financial supports of large organizations; the effectiveness of the internet has arisen dramatically. In 1993, a new browser, mosaic, images, information, sound, and graphics could be easily shared. New social-sharing

applications were transformed the Web technology from Web 1.0 Web 2.0 technologies (Tuncer, Özata, Akar, & Öztürk, 2013). Teachers have found better opportunities while using social network applications. They become familiar with each other and doing things together make them feel comfortable and this forms a community teachers can contact and maintain relationships (McLean, 2014; Blanchard and Markus 2004; Wright 2010; Atkinson 2010; Webb, 2012).

Doğan, Duman, & Seferoğlu, (2011) defined social networks as the software providing interaction, and the main features are summarized as follows:

- Provides the interaction among the groups.
- Provides communication among lots of people.
- Provides meeting and resource sharing.
- Provides indexing and obtains the information within collaboration.
- Allows the cooperation and helps personification of the priorities.
- For knowledge and the creation of new knowledge, they are equipped with new tools
- Provides a variety of creative and appropriate platforms

Akar (2010) grouped social networking platforms under the main headings as follows:

Blogs: In this website, topics are written in chronological order and all users can make comments on those.

Microblogging: Users could exchange short sentences, images and links.

Wikis: It is a kind of software users easily create, edit and link web pages.

Social Marking: Users store, organize, share and search bookmarks of web pages. In this system, by saving links to web pages, users could remember what is on web.

Social Networking: Within online social networks, people sharing their interests and activities communicate with other users have the same interests or follow others' interests and activities.

Media Sharing Sites: With these sites, users could upload their photos, videos and audio to a website.

Virtual Worlds: Users could create the worlds and create personal avatars then interact within the virtual worlds.

This study aimed to examine the effectiveness of the educational social network in career development of the teachers. The following research questions were investigated:

- What is the level of material sharing, communication and cooperation in the professional development of a social network developed to be used for professional development of teachers?

METHOD

The study was conducted with teachers at a high school in the province of Afyonkarahisar in the first semester of 2015-2016 Education year for 6 weeks. In the study simple random sampling method was applied in selecting the sample and one group and post-test model was carried out. In the school which the study was conducted in, all the teachers were interviewed and the social network was explained. The teachers who were volunteer for applying the network were asked to log in social network. According to the social network's records, 34 teachers began to use the social network. The survey was made up of this component: survey of social networking applications to ensure the professional development of teachers. The data were analyzed with quantitative methods and presented with frequency and percentage tables.

In the survey there are 30 items related with the social networks contributions on teachers' professional development. These items were answered and the teachers chose options Yes/ Partially/ No.

FINDINGS

Survey of Social Networking Applications to Ensure the Professional Development of teachers

The results revealed that the highest score at the social networking application to ensure the professional development of teachers was efficiency of social networking applications 94.11% (n=32), obtaining information about different teaching techniques used in social networking application for disadvantaged students 94.11 (n=32), sharing the problems related to teaching and different applications 94.11 (n=32), classroom management 94.11 (n=32). Teachers' answers to the survey of social networking application can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1: Teachers' Answers to The Survey of Social Networking Applications to Ensure The Professional Development of Teachers

Items	Frequency				Percentage
	No	Partially	Yes	Total	
1 Topics discussed on the social networking application were efficient and useful	0	3	31	34	%91.17
2 Shared contents in the social networking were suitable for its purpose.	0	4	30	34	%88.23
3 It helped me to acquire new knowledge to participate in the debate in the social network.	1	6	27	34	% 79.41
4 Course content based on the application of social network helped me find solutions to ease some of the problems in the course.	0	3	31	34	%91.17
5 The time set aside for social networking applications was efficient and I think it's useful.	0	2	32	34	%94.11
6 I learnt different techniques in teaching and learning information about social networking applications.	1	4	29	34	%85.29
7 I obtained information about different teaching techniques used in social networking applications for disadvantaged students.	0	2	32	34	%94.11
8 Social networking application, made me share the problems related to teaching and different applications more comfortably with my colleague.	0	2	32	34	%94.11
9 Social network applications helped me identify individual learnings, needs of students and acquire new information for the evaluation.	0	3	31	34	%91.17
10 Social networking app, helped me to see that my colleagues had similar issues in the class.	0	3	31	34	%91.17
11 With social networking applications, we shared successful teaching strategies.	0	4	30	34	%88,23
12 With Social networking applications, we evaluated new approaches which are successful, and we shared it.	0	3	31	34	%91.17
13 With Social networking applications, we discussed strategies, materials and that motivate students	1	5	28	34	%82.35
14 Social networking applications used in educational practice helped me use good examples.	0	3	31	34	%91.17
15 Social networking application contributed to me about classroom management.	0	2	32	34	%94.11
16 Social networking application contributed me to	0	1	33	34	%97.05

	determine the measurement and evaluation methods and techniques that I'll use in the class.					
17	Social networking application contributed to me about time management.	0	2	32	34	%94.11
18	"Colleagues Interaction" located in social networking application and through shares of my colleagues I found the opportunity to apply my experience in the class.	0	7	27	34	%79.41
19	I think social network app is more useful than the other I have received in-service training seminars on professional development.	1	3	30	34	%88.23
20	Social networking application was easier for me to communicate with school administrators.	0	6	28	34	%82.35
21	Social networking application had a positive impact on the shares in the group work.	0	3	31	34	%91.17
22	Shares (images,videos,connections and comments.) in social networking application contributed us to be collaborative in school environment.	0	4	30	34	%88.23
23	With the help of social network app ,all members of the school easily became aware of the activities in the school.	0	5	29	34	%85.29
24	Social network application increased the my interest in technology.	0	7	27	34	%79.41
25	School members easily got current information about education and training through the social networking application.	0	5	29	34	%85.29
26	Through social networking application, it was also possible to continue education and training outside the school.	1	4	29	34	%85.29
27	With the help of social networking application, it provided the environment to be able to acquire a variety of information.	0	4	30	34	%88.23
28	As social networking app facilitated communication, it helped me solve problems that resulted from miscommunication within the school.	0	6	28	34	%82.35
29	I think social networking app enhanced work productivity at school.	0	6	28	34	%82.35
30	I think social networking app contributed to improving and developing the school.	0	4	30	34	%88.23

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

The focus of this study was to determine availability of material sharing, communication and cooperation of the social network. Analysis of the study showed that teachers generally have a great tendency for using the social network and they often used the social network to share, communicate and be in cooperation.

In summary, this application was a supporting element in the development of the teachers. Learning was turned into a dynamic structure. Learning and cooperative learning encouraged by the potential power of the professional development process contributed to the teachers' personal development. It became a structure making the teachers aware of the latest teaching and learning techniques. With sharing their experiences, they tried to find solutions in cooperation (Maughan, 2015; Trust, 2012).



Social network technologies are powerful enabling means in career development and they are potentially useful for the teachers. The current study indicates a usefulness of the social network in career development of the teachers. The study provides guidance regarding the study that would need to be in place for designing activities for the teachers.

Social network applications make teacher communicate outside the school and increase the cooperation and strengthen the feeling of sharing (Urfalioğlu, 2015; Karabuğa, 2015; Mazman 2009; Demirel 2012; Barczyk and Duncan 2013; Özmen, Aküzüm, Sünkür, Baysal, 2011; Gündüz, 2014; Özkan and Mckenzi, 2008; Rap and Blonder, 2014).

Continuous improvement in technology helps society to achieve quickly to the desired information and makes things easier by eliminating the limitations of time and space. Web 2.0 technology, which is one of the most important developments in human life, has become so imperative that social media has been formed as an alternative way of communication for the teachers in and outside the school (Sheeks ve Birchmeier, 2007; Kraut, Patterson, Lundmark, Kiesler, Mukhopadhyay, & Scherlis, 2002; Baltacı, İşleyen, and Özdemir, 2012; Öztürk, and Akgün, 2012).

Teachers who cannot be in contact with colleagues with a busy schedule have brought feelings of sharing, communication, cooperation to the virtual environment through educational social networks. This compulsory position has also led to the emergence of new training formations. Educational social networking applications do not only offer an important contribution to all areas of education but also acquire an important place for the career development of teachers. (Madge, Meek, Wellens, & Hooley 2009; Pempek, 2009; Demirel and Keleş 2011; Barczyk and Duncan 2013; Acar and Yenmiş 2014; Bilen, Ercan, & Gülmez, 2014; Gonzales-Ramirez, Gasco, & Llopis Taverner, 2015; Flores, 2009).

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