

## **English Language Teachers' Practices of Online Professional Development using Facebook**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Social Networking Sites (SNS) are a relatively new strand of the Internet, and are rapidly emerging as a popular and meaningful platform for teachers to engage in online professional development activities (OPD). However, literature indicates that very little studies have been done on how teachers actually use SNS, specifically Facebook, for professional development. Hence, their practices and experiences of Facebook for professional development are not well understood. Therefore, this study, which involved 113 English language teachers, was undertaken with the aim of understanding English language teachers' practices of online professional development using the Facebook platform. Findings do indicate how Facebook may have contributed to teachers' OPD. This has meaningful implications for planners and organizers of teacher development programmes to better integrate Facebook in enhancing teachers' meaningful learning and experiences, particularly during their professional development.

*Keywords:* Facebook, online professional development, social media, social networking sites

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The Internet (including Web 6.0), with its capacity for creating connections and interconnections, creative capabilities, interactivity and sharing resources, holds huge promise to host effective professional development activities and programmes for English language teachers. This is also known as online professional development (OPD), which refers to,

...activities, programmes, opportunities, or experiences, undertaken using the Internet (and its tools) by teachers, leading to the achievement and, later, the enhancement of the preset objectives of individuals or groups in a learning context that may be identified by themselves or their institutions (Kabilan, 2004a, p. 51).

OPD could be informal, i.e. initiated by themselves for their own personal and professional needs and interests or it could be formal, whereby the OPD is planned, designed and implemented in a formal setting, with structured and specific learning objectives and outcomes that are determined and guided by systematic activities, engagements and instructions. For the purpose of this study, OPD refers to both formal and informal structures and, could be more effective than face-to-face (F2F) professional development (in certain aspects) since the Internet overcomes territorial and geographic boundaries, and cuts time and financial constraints. Moreover, the emergence of social media (such as Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp), has brought teachers from all over the world even closer than ever before. These factors, combined with the status of English as the *lingua franca*, highlights the significance of English language, as the inter-national language of a modern and globalized world (Jenkins, 2008).

The reality is, that the Internet has transformed into a dominant platform for the spread of English (Danet & Herring,

2007), facilitating English language teachers from different parts of the world, to create opportunities for networking with colleagues and experts in English language teaching (ELT). The benefits include learning new ideas, information and developments in ELT and other (un)related fields, as well as creating, developing, finding and sharing materials and resources extensively. This helps to establish global communities of practicing English language teachers and breaks down barriers that may discourage teacher professional development. Internet helps in uniting teachers from diverse contexts, whilst engaging in meaningful and purposeful professional development that are universal in nature.

Studies show that OPD enhances teachers' capabilities of creating and orchestrating an ideal classroom atmosphere for effective teaching and learning of English. For instance, the sharing and exchanging of knowledge via Internet enhance teachers' interaction and communication with learners, whereby they constantly switch roles from teachers to learners and vice versa with the idea of sharing "common learning goals and strive to create a common ground in which to share their experiences" (Alvarez & Olivera-Smith, 2013). Such experiences would also lead to teachers gaining "a rich treasury of teaching ideas through the responses of group members to [their] own and others' questions" and allow them to solve problems in their teaching based around principles of "collective exploration, play and innovation" and their abilities "to connect to specialized

information nodes and sources as and when required" (Selwyn, 2011).

Research in the area of teachers' OPD – using synchronous or/and asynchronous tools – is available in abundance since the new millennium and they indicate positive learning and experiences (Chen et al., 2009; Dash et al., 2012; Kabilan & Embi, 2006; Rienties et al., 2013; Yang & Liu, 2004). However, research in the use of Social Networking Sites (SNS), a relatively new strand of the Internet, for teacher's OPD is just recently emerging with very little studies exploring how teachers actually use SNS for professional development. Veletsianos (2012, 2013), for instance, pointed out that, in the higher educational contexts, scholars' and educators' practices and experiences of SNS were not well understood since they were inadequately researched. There is also little evidence of teachers' uses of social network "particularly with reference to groups of teachers on Facebook" (Ranieri et al., 2012), and in terms of creating professional learning communities (Bissessar, 2014). Most likely, as explained by Rutherford (2010) earlier, the scarcity of research in this area was due to the 'vast and uncharted waters of social network sites (which) remains to be explored as scholars currently have a limited understanding of who is using these sites, and why they are using these sites'.

Therefore, this study is undertaken with the aim of understanding English language teachers' practices of online professional development using the Facebook platform. The specific research questions for this

study are: (i) 'What are the English language teachers' practices of online professional development using the Facebook platform?' and; (ii) 'How do English language teachers make use of Facebook to enhance their professional development?'

Examining the teachers' professional practices of Facebook would inform us on how Facebook may contribute to teachers' OPD as well as, aiding planners and organizers of teacher development programmes to better integrate the Facebook in enhancing teachers' meaningful learning and experiences, particularly during their professional development. Another significance of this study is that teacher educators around the world will gain valuable insights into how Facebook could be integrated in the training and professional development of future teachers. Therefore, these future teachers would have the experience, knowledge and skills and, are able to incorporate Facebook meaningfully (formally or informally) into their own teaching and learning. This is crucial, as teachers need to be engaged with students and "provide a rich discursive environment, and not merely to provide ad-hoc opportunities for use in a classroom." (Chandler, 2013).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

In a review of literature, Kabilan (2004b) concluded that there were five aspects of teacher competencies that teachers could attain when they undertook OPD: (1) motivation; (2) skills, knowledge, and ideas; (3) self-directed learning; (4) interactive

competence; and (5) computer technology awareness and skills. The above are possible because the Internet is a huge virtual “oasis of knowledge” (Schrum, 1995) that has the ability to create “collaborative professional culture among the teachers” (Becker, 1999), even more so in the era of Web 6.0 whereby, it permits ‘hybrid learning spaces that travel across physical and cyberspaces according to principles of collaboration and participation’ (Greenhow et al., 2009). In addition, teachers are able to link up or create independent information, linkages and applications and share them among teachers and thus, build and develop a network of teachers and “increase the number and range of people to consult for feedback or support” (Greenhow et al., 2009). Such networks foster professional learning that increases peer discussions of content and teaching practices, which then positively affect teachers’ knowledge and practice (Masters et al., 2012). An example of this positive change is presented in a study of English language teachers’ pedagogical transformation that leveraged on the affordances provided through the integration of SNS, which resulted in the teachers foreseeing themselves more as a facilitator than a “point person when it came to teaching.” (Archambault et al., 2010).

Literature points out that SNS has great potentials in augmenting and enriching the professional development of English language teachers. For instance, Cruz-Yeh (2011) found that Facebook could help English teachers: (i) gain knowledge about teacher professional development

opportunities that are available online; (ii) access real time links to teaching resources, web pages and online events related to teaching and learning and, (iii) to be connected with other English teachers. Roach and Beck (2012) demonstrated how a language teacher’s sharing of her experiences, beliefs and ideas in Facebook eventually led to meaningful professional development that included extending networking with colleagues and students, being more aware of literacies and pedagogies and, thinking and reflecting of one’s development as a professional. Apart from Facebook, Kim and Jang (2014) found that by using other SNS such as podcasting and blogging, English language teachers were engaged in dialogic practices in developing innovative teaching methods, enhancing their professional identities, encouraging educational engagement and augmenting teachers’ active learning.

Lieberman and Pointer-Mace (2010) earlier foresaw the above professional learning initiatives as ‘Growing your own’ professional development that had value and meaning to the daily classroom decisions a teacher had to make and thus, influenced and affected classroom teaching and learning. Lieberman and Pointer-Mace (2010) strongly believed, that, Facebook, and other social media, facilitated professional learning and development that were “intentionally local, humble sustainable, and intended to nourish both individuals and their communities” through the sharing of practices with others that “starts with us.” This is based on the premise that making and sharing practices,

artifacts, events (of practice) and reflections on practice in a public forum or platform (such as Facebook, Twitter and Blogs) improve teaching and benefit other teachers (Kabilan et al., 2010; Lieberman & Pointer-Mace, 2010).

The interconnections, creative capabilities, and interactivity of Web 2.0 described above would facilitate teachers to immerse culturally in the virtual environment and participate in a community of practice, whereby teachers are able to engage with each other in various OPD activities and programmes with the aim of enhancing their professionalism through improving their practices (Jenkins, 2008; Kabilan, 2004a, 2004b). With the emergence of SNS, exploration into OPD has intensified into the realms of social constructivism whereby social interactions are seen as an overarching embodiment to build and expand teacher networks, share information and practices and, promote autonomous and collaborative efforts in teaching and learning.

In the process of sharing information using Facebook, teachers are actually “communicating with larger audiences with whom they might have no personal relationship, but are doing so because they perceive the value of sharing their knowledge with the larger public” (Beach, 2012). The potentials of Facebook, particularly in sharing and showcasing ideas and materials in a collegial and collaborative manner, are immense and are very much parallel to the notion of a member of a community of practice. The teachers are in a “familiar territory” and can handle

themselves competently i.e. through the community of practice (CoP) in Facebook, the teachers experience competence and are “recognized as competent” as well as having the knowledge and skills on “how to engage with others” (Wenger, 1999).

In terms of OPD, Wenger’s (1999) notion of CoP is integral and explains important ideas related to the professional development of teachers such as teacher engagement, teacher learning and teacher practices. CoP is basically an activity system or groups of people or participants, who share understandings about what they do and what that means in their lives and community (Lave & Wenger, 1991). In experiencing OPD, a teacher functions as an active member of a CoP through a complex socialization process with fellow teachers by engaging in various online activities using different online platforms that lead to meaningful OPD experiences, which then enhance and solidify teachers’ learning processes (Schwen & Hara, 2004) and teacher competency (Kabilan, 2004b). The Internet technologies have the capability to improve teachers’ abilities not only to learn and develop independently and autonomously but also “to work simultaneously in a collaborative environment with fellow teachers” (Kabilan, 2004a). Online interactions via Internet technologies also enable teachers

...to map their thoughts and ideas carefully, and reflect on others’ ideas before responding to the concerning issues. The responses were then available for others

(and the teacher) to see, to digest, to formulate, and to evaluate in relation to the teachers' needs and learning outcomes. The teachers would be then able to self-direct and manage their consequent process or course of action, depending (and based) on the outcomes and analyses of their initial evaluation. (Kabilan, 2004a, p. 54).

Cevik et al. (2014) concurred with the above impact of OPD via Facebook on teachers' learning and interaction as they discovered that teachers' overall professional development was enhanced and they had become more "capable of integrating novel technology and solving learning problems in real-life teaching settings". Such professional development experiences are even more important in the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning environment or spaces where teachers need to "share and develop their skills and resources" (Blair, 2012) in order to engage learners in meaningful learning in creating 21<sup>st</sup> century learners.

## **METHODS**

### **Participants and Sampling Technique**

This study was carried out in 37 schools, in the northeast district of the Penang Island. This district was identified mainly because of two reasons. Firstly, the identified schools include both high-performing and low-performing schools which can be found in this district. These schools' performance was identified by their overall achievement in the national examinations. Secondly,

the location of the identified schools are relatively close to each other, thus enabling the researchers to easily distribute and collect the questionnaires from the participating teachers. A quantitative survey study exploring the English language teachers' general practices of OPD using Facebook and their views on how English language teachers made use of Facebook to enhance their professional development would be appropriate in answering the two research questions. For this purpose, two hundred (200) English teachers were chosen from the 37 schools to participate in the survey using the criteria sampling technique i.e. the teachers were identified by simply asking if they had Facebook accounts. Teachers without Facebook accounts were not chosen as participants for this study. The researchers visited all the 37 schools and obtained permission from the principals of the schools to distribute the questionnaire to the teachers. (Note: Prior permission from the related agencies such as the Ministry of Education and State Education Department were also obtained). The questionnaires from each school were collected once the teachers completed them (This was done on the day of the school visit).

### **Instrument and Data Analysis**

The instrument used in this survey was a questionnaire that consisted four sections. Section I sought demographic information of the teachers' teaching experience and qualification. Section II attempted to obtain information regarding the use of Facebook by the English language teachers. Section



III identified the professional development activities that the English teachers were engaged in using the Facebook environment. This construct, which used a 5-level Likert scales of 'Always to 'Never, had a very high Cronbach alpha score of 0.86. Section IV comprised of items enquiring information on the Facebook tools that were used by English teachers for professional development activities and used a 4-level Likert scale of "Very Important" to "Not important at all". This construct has a Cronbach alpha score of 0.85. The above two constructs were developed by the authors based on previous studies that examined the practices and experiences of using Facebook (Bissessar, 2014; Kabilan et al., 2010; Rutherford, 2010) and other computer-mediated-communication (CMC) and ICT tools for language learning and teaching (Kabilan, 2016; Kabilan & Embi, 2006).

The items for the above constructs were then refined and aligned to address the two research questions of this study. An open-ended item ('How do the tools contribute towards enhancing your professional development? Please explain with examples') was also included to describe and explain the quantitative data.

For the analysis of the demographic data, frequency and percentages were used; whereas for the description of items in the construct, mean scores, frequency and percentages were employed to describe the English language teachers' practices of Facebook for professional development. As for the open-ended item, the teachers' views were categorized into emerging themes and

analyzed using situation and activity coding strategies (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). The situation codes were assigned to units of data that described how the English language teachers defined and practiced in using Facebook for professional development, as well as to identify the situations in which the utilization of Facebook would be important and meaningful in terms of enhancing their professional development. The activity codes were assigned to units of data that described the English language teachers' regularly occurring behavior (i.e. engaging in professional development activities), such as collaborating with other teachers (using 'Group') and sharing experiences (using 'Comments'), that were transpired as a consequence of their activities in FB.

The qualitative data were used to support and give meaning to the quantitative data analysis, and for systematic analysis and presentation of each teacher's responses. The teachers were coded, as T1, T2, T3... T200, respectively. The comments from the respondents were cited as they were expressed or stated by the English teachers and identified by their respective codes.

## RESULTS

Out of the 200 questionnaires distributed to the identified English teachers, only 113 teachers returned their completed questionnaires. Those who did not return the questionnaires were teachers who were absent or were attending official events elsewhere or, were on medical leave. Table 1 shows the demographic profile of the respondents. Majority of them were

Table 1  
*Demographic profile of respondents*

	Group	Participants (f)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	14	12.4
	Female	99	87.6
Age	< 29 years	25	22.1
	30 – 39 years	57	50.4
	40 – 49 years	27	23.9
	50 – 59 years	4	3.5
Teaching experience	1 – 5 years	30	26.5
	6 – 10 years	36	31.9
	11 – 15 years	17	15.0
	16 – 20 years	16	14.2
	21 – 25 years	10	8.8
	26 – 30 years	4	3.5
Highest academic qualification	Bachelor	92	81.4
	Masters	21	18.6

female teachers and almost one-third of the respondents were teachers who had ample teaching experience i.e. had taught more than 5 years (73.4%).

### Facebook Use

More than half of the English language teachers in this study said that their Facebook account was based on a 'General Profile' (f=78; 69%), whereas only 35 teachers (31%) had set up their Facebook accounts in the 'Professional Profile' mode. Nevertheless, teachers had mixed reactions in terms of the type of profile that they preferred in the interview. For example, T2 felt that the general profile 'is sufficient to be used for my professional practices' and also because this facilitated 'easier usage' of Facebook for professional purposes. This ease of usage concept was also emphasized by T3, especially in sharing practices and experiences with fellow teachers and others:

*Well, I think I am comfortable using general profile because besides my colleagues, other members will be able to know and get idea about my practices. For example, some of my friends and cousins benefit from viewing my profile because I do discuss about my experiences as a teacher and share link...even blogs on my page.*

On the other hand, T4 set up a purely professional Facebook account, as he wanted his account to be accessed by his 'colleagues', 'other educators around the world' and 'students' for 'this specific purpose of education' and did not wish to disclose 'any of my personal information'. T17 concurred with T4 to a great extent, but had a more open, philosophical and profound view of having a Facebook account. By setting up a dual mode i.e. general and professional profile, T17,



utilized Facebook as a platform to enhance professional development, as well as ensuring that his students benefited from their learning engagement in a secure and safe Facebook environment:

*I have both general and professional profile. Many don't see the importance of having professional profile as for their practices. By setting professional profile, I can control who can view information pertaining my educational work. I have set up groups for my class students, for my English department. Most importantly, these profile members are more focused on the content they are reading, sharing with me.*

In terms of frequency of logging into Facebook, teachers in this study were active users i.e. 106 teachers (93.8%) log in 4 times or more per day (Table 2) with 44 teachers (38.9%) login between seven to nine times per day.

### English Language Teachers' Practices of OPD using Facebook

Table 3 and Table 4 show the mean scores, frequency and percentages (respectively) for the use of Facebook for OPD practices i.e. the professional development activities that English language teachers undertake using Facebook. Data show that seven items have a mean score of more than 4.0, which indicate that the teachers in this study are frequently engaged in the

Table 2  
Frequency of Facebook login (daily)

Login times (per day)	Frequency				
	1-3	4-6	7-9	10-12	12
f (%)	7 (6.2%)	22 (19.5%)	44 (38.9%)	37 (32.7%)	3 (2.7%)

Table 3  
Mean scores of frequency of the use of Facebook for OPD

Items	Mean	Std Dev.
To share educational information	4.63	160.5
To view posts on language oriented posts	4.60	168.9
To share TESOL ideas	4.54	147.1
To collaborate with other English teachers	4.52	142.7
To tag colleagues' useful posts on teaching	4.30	130.5
To discuss new innovation for classroom teaching	4.25	111.7
To share teaching materials	4.19	115.3
To share experiences of other TESOL teachers	3.12	49.4
To add educational application	2.70	53.9
To organize educational events with other English teachers	2.31	36.7

respective PD activities using Facebook. These seven PD activities are sharing educational information (mean score=4.63; f=110, 93.8%), viewing posts on language-oriented posts (mean score= 4.60; f=100, 88.5%), sharing TESOL/TESL ideas (mean score= 4.54; f=100, 93.8%), collaborating

with other teachers (mean score= 4.52; f=113, 100%), tagging colleagues useful posts on teaching (mean score=4.30; f=89, 78.7%), discussing new innovation for classroom teaching (mean score=4.25; f=96, 85%) and sharing teaching materials (mean score= 4.19; f=99, 87.6%).

Table 4  
Frequency and percentage of use of Facebook for OPD

I engage in the following PD activities using Facebook	Never		Rarely		Sometimes		Frequently		Always	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
To share educational information	0	0	0	0	3	2.7	36	31.9	74	65.5
To view posts on language oriented posts	0	0	0	0	13	11.5	20	17.7	80	70.8
To share TESOL ideas	0	0	0	0	7	6.2	38	33.6	68	60.2
To collaborate with other English teachers	0	0	0	0	0	0	54	47.8	59	52.2
To tag colleagues' useful posts on teaching	0	0	7	6.2	17	15	25	22.1	64	56.6
To discuss new innovation for classroom teaching	1	0.9	0	0	16	14.2	49	43.4	47	41.6
To share teaching materials	0	0	0	0	14	12.4	64	56.6	35	31.0
To share experiences of other TESOL teachers	15	13.3	23	20.4	46	40.7	12	10.6	70	61.9
To add educational application	14	12.4	39	34.5	4	3.9	0	0	16	14.2
To organize educational events with other English teachers	25	22.1	53	46.5	21	18.6	3	2.7	11	9.7

In relation to the above proliferation of knowledge and practices, the key question that arises is ‘How do English language teachers make use of Facebook to enhance their professional development?’

Teachers in this study identified seven main tools of Facebook that they felt were important in enhancing their PD (see Table 5 and Table 6) with the ‘Pages’ as the main tool (mean score= 3.46; f=113, 100%). Teachers did indicate, through qualitative data, that the ‘Pages’ and ‘Groups’ tools support their professional needs and interests:

*Pages and Groups become a peer-supporting tool. By joining page like English Language Centre, I get informative feedback from educators and colleagues who are expert in language (T99)*

*I am able to communicate or get in contact with other educators around the world by joining groups /pages. This ‘Pages’ that I joined is very close to my need and interests such as English Teachers Club, Teaching English-British Council (T87)*

A FB tool that is very much related to the 'Pages' and 'Groups' tools is the 'Like' tool. T9 explained how by clicking on the 'Like' icon directed her to other related online resources that she was interested in. T9 further explained that when she liked the relevant 'Pages', it helped her to 'support language teaching' and she made sure that she only chose 'Pages' that were 'important to my profession'. For example, T17 elucidated how the British Council Page provided useful materials for teachers and T18 elaborated how the 'Fun English' Page also provided a variety of teaching ideas and materials, which later she adapted and adopted them for her classroom teaching and learning.

Sharing ideas via links is also another important PD activity in FB. With a mean score of 3.32 ( $f=111$ , 98.2%), links in FB enable T16 to share ideas and reflect on her teaching profession. T23 agreed and further clarified that reading links forwarded by other educators facilitated her to 'get some

ideas to develop myself' and in turn she also forwarded the links to her own colleagues so that 'they benefit it as they read it'. Sharing crucial and important information via the notification tool in FB is also vital for the English language teachers (Mean score= 3.28;  $f= 113$ ; 85%), as it is a tool that enables collaboration among teachers in the schools especially when teachers receive the latest

Table 5  
*Mean scores of the importance of the use of Facebook tools for OPD*

Facebook Tools	Mean	Std Dev.
Pages	3.46	113.3
Professional Groups	3.32	113.9
Links	3.32	109.4
Notification	3.28	116.9
View/upload videos	3.27	118.8
Comments columns	3.10	130.0
Like	3.03	97.3
Notes	2.96	137.3
FB Stories page	2.47	32.4
Public polling	2.30	33.3
Educational application	1.98	61.4

Table 6  
*Frequency and percentage of the importance of the use of Facebook tools for OPD*

Importance of the Use of Facebook Tools for OPD	Not at all important		Slightly important		Important		Very Important	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Pages	0	0	0	0	61	54.0	52	46.0
Professional Groups	0	0	0	0	77	68.1	36	31.9
Links	0	0	2	1.8	73	64.6	38	33.6
Notification	0	0	0	0	81	71.7	32	23.3
View/upload videos	0	0	0	0	83	73.5	30	26.5
Comments columns	0	0	1	1.8	92	69.2	18	13.5
Like	0	0	18	15.9	74	65.5	21	18.6
Notes	7	6.2	0	0	96	85.0	10	88.0
FB Stories page	26	23.0	33	29.2	29	25.7	25	21.1
Public polling	27	23.9	38	33.6	35	31.0	13	11.5
Educational application	25	22.1	29	25.7	47	41.6	0	0

educational information. It is a tool that notifies 'the trending issues in the world of education' (T45).

## DISCUSSION

Though quantitative data indicate that most of the teachers in this study have and prefer a general profile, qualitative data point to the fact that teachers utilize both types of profiles in enhancing their profession as teachers. Findings indicate that the profiles are platforms for teachers to engage in "continued professional networking" that allow for posting queries, resource needs, professional opportunities and career updates (Staudt et al., 2013). This implicates that the teachers are willing to share information, engage with fellow teachers in a community of practice, and explore and form new connections with common interests and needs. Hence, these teachers are most likely to create and maintain greater amounts of social capital than an individual with a small, constrained network (Staudt et al., 2013). With greater social capital, Johnson et al. (2011) argued that teachers' resources were increased, as they were able to "access through peer collaboration to support their ongoing learning by introducing new resources into the teachers' social network or by improving the teachers' access to the resources that already existed in that network" (Johnson et al., 2011).

The above nexus between social capital and professional development of English language teachers, are exemplified in the main findings of this study. The items

that have the highest mean scores and frequencies (see Tables 3 and 5) reflect three main OPD activities of a true professional learning community i.e. (i) sharing educational information, ideas, and materials; (ii) collaborating with others and (iii) creating and maintaining resources. The above OPD practices by teachers in this study are transpired as a result of exchanges of expertise and resources through interactions among the teachers in Facebook (Kabilan, 2016; Penuel et al., 2009), which are in the form of a community of practice (Wenger, 1999). In this vein, the best practices and innovation are moved quickly, "accelerating knowledge creation and innovation" (Watkins, 2013).

The acceleration of knowledge, creation and innovation stated by Watkins (2013) in the above, illustrate the importance of the use of Facebook tools or features for engaging in meaningful OPD. Quoting Ferdig (2007), Staudt et al. (2013) concurred that in terms of meaningful OPD activities, the Facebook environment was able to: (i) scaffold mentoring; (ii) facilitate active participation (iii) enable creation and/or sharing of discourse artifacts and reflection and; (iv) become a safe space to try out new ideas. These are easily facilitated by the use and application of Facebook tools, as indicated by the participants of this study. It includes public and private messaging via 'Comment' and 'Messages' respectively; posting questions and comments in 'Comment'; sharing resources (such as text, media, and Web links) using 'Share' and engaging with experts and peers in 'Groups'

and 'Pages'. By engaging in all the above activities in the Facebook environment, the teachers underwent informal professional development experiences that are of interest to them since they, on their own accord choose to be involved in those activities. Hence, the teachers are presented with "varied options of empowering themselves with professional skills and knowledge" (Kabilan, 2004b) that are relevant and meaningful to them and their responsibilities as an English language teacher.

Findings from this study have clear and meaningful implications for school administrators and professional development managers/planners. Administrators, managers and planners should think of ways and strategies of connecting teachers to fellow professionals in other schools/districts/state using Facebook. The primary aim should be to enhance and expand their social capital and networks and eventually, their professional development – formally and informally. This could be attained by facilitating, planning and organizing collaborative projects using Facebook, that would have the potential to gather teachers from different schools as a CoP with a common aspiration, work ethics and professional gains (Kabilan, 2016; Schroeder & Greenbowe, 2009). Again, such initiatives and projects could be formal or informal in nature.

Another implication is derived from the fact that the use of Facebook enabled the teachers in this study to experience a much-diversified practice of professional development activities using different

tools available in Facebook. Each practice facilitates a focused and specific kind of professional development experiences, especially the ones that would enhance their teaching and, which is integral to their teaching, as well as the ones that would fulfill their professional needs and interests. Therefore, future professional development activities (formal or informal ones) carried out or planned in Facebook should optimize the use of as many Facebook tools as possible, in order to diversify the activities. Besides that, teachers need to be engaged in various professional development activities, which facilitate rich and meaningful professional development experiences. Such strategy may lead to a more active and constructivist learning process, where the teachers will have more opportunities to engage with others as an expert and as a learner (Darling-Hammond & Mclaughlin, 2011; Rutherford, 2010) within their CoP and thus, energize their social capacity.

## CONCLUSION

In a nutshell, the teachers' interaction and engagement with peers and fellow professionals in Facebook (using the various tools available) in this study has expanded and enriched their social capital and their professional involvement in a CoP. It is an indication of the potentials of Facebook in enhancing teachers' access to a vast social capital and extended network, which in turn may develop and increase their capacity to grow professionally, as a result of the meaningful practices and experiences gained through OPD. This, arguably, will lead to

further proliferation and enhancement of knowledge and innovation, if further proper supports and encouragements are given to the teachers. Nevertheless, more research on the use of social media (especially Facebook) for teacher professional development should be explored and expanded. As of now, this is an area that is still at an infancy stage albeit an emerging one – not many published articles or papers on the different use of Facebook for teacher development. From the current study, there are a few critical questions that emerge and need answers or solution: (i) What are the OPD practices undertaken via Facebook that lead to meaningful and useful experiences? (ii) Do the Facebook tools contribute to different professional development experiences? (iii) Does OPD via Facebook contribute or enhance teacher competencies? If yes, what are the OPD practices and what kind of teacher competencies? Addressing these questions would enable practitioners, researchers and planners to plan OPD via Facebook that are based on strong literature and theoretical and pedagogical frameworks in providing useful, meaningful, relevant professional development experiences.

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