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Preparatory School Teachers' Self-Directed Online Professional Development

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ABSTRACT

This case study investigates how teachers render digital professional development in digital environments by interviewing with three preparatory school English language teachers voluntarily engaged in online professional development. In order to examine their process of teacher learning in online settings, we drew on Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2012) regarding the motivation as to how they engage and learn in the course of online professional development. An exploratory approach was adopted based on the interviews, and the motivational factors of the participants together with how they exploit technology were presented in three different cases. The study revealed that all the teachers were intrinsically motivated, and the need for developing competence, exercising autonomy, and assessing relatedness were key motivational reasons behind their online professional learning. Instagram, MOOCs, YouTube and websites were the online sources mentioned by the participants when they turn to the Internet for help. The discussion focuses on implications of this study for encouraging language teachers to engage in online professional development drawing on self-determination theory.

Keywords: self-directed teacher learning; online professional development; self-determination theory; preparatory school

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Introduction

Teachers with high motivation, greater job satisfaction and sense of fulfillment play a pivotal role not only in determining and improving the quality of education at schools (Atkinson, 2000) but also in ensuring the motivation of their students (Gardner, 2007). It is evident in the literature that teachers possess various motivations such as professional development, instrumental incentives, institutional expectations and pedagogical concerns that can promote teachers' research engagement (Mehrani, 2015), and teacher motivation has been the focus of much recent research (Kasimi & Hangıŝı, 2021; Sadıku, 2021; Thorburn, 2020). Motivated teachers often strive to improve their practices by engaging in different ways of professional learning including digital social environments (Duncan-Howell, 2010). Rapid developments in information and communication technology (ICT) have created more flexible spaces for teachers to learn (Prestridge & Main, 2018) and integrate technology as a presentation tool. The advantage of teachers with digital literacy cannot be limited to classroom use; students also benefit from their teachers' high digital literacy and professional learning (Tour, 2017). Despite the importance of teachers' self-determined learning, there is dearth of research on how teachers render professional development in digital environments, which is the gap that this study aims to address by interviewing with three English language teachers at a preparatory school in Turkey who voluntarily engaged in online professional development. In order to examine their process of teacher learning in online settings, we drew on the SDT regarding the motivation as to how they engage and learn in online professional development.

Self-Determination Theory

Self Determination Theory is concerned with human motivation, wellness, and development (Deci & Ryan, 2000). It is a comprehensive theory which embraces several mini theories. One of those theories is *Basic Needs Theory*. It argues that people endeavor to fulfill three innate needs; autonomy, relatedness and competence (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Hagger et al., 2006). *Autonomy* refers to the need for feeling in control of one's own behaviors and self-governed pursuits. Namely, if people feel that they are able to take an action which will lead to a change, they are more likely to be self-determined people. In this regard, Bradly (2010) found that since the teachers in his study had the freedom to choose the materials they wished in the classroom, their motivation levels were quite high. *Relatedness* is concerned with belonging and attachment of people with others. People strive to be involved in a social group and feel a connection with them. Finally, *competence* refers to the need to show your level of mastery in certain skills and tasks and eventually being recognized by others due to your expertise in those tasks.

Another mini theory within SDT is *Organismic Integration Theory*. It makes a distinction between different types of motivation (Ryan & Connell, 1989): intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. Deci and Ryan (2000) define intrinsic motivation as performing tasks to satisfy inherent needs instead of its separable consequences. It suggests that when people are intrinsically motivated, they participate in activities that interest them personally, so they do those activities without an outside reward (Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991). Intrinsic motivation is fostered in the environments where the individual receive support to feed his or her psychological needs. On the other side of the continuum is extrinsic motivation, which is defined as external factors which foster individuals to accomplish an activity (Deci & Ryan, 2000). These external factors may include tangible monetary or verbal rewards; hence, the motivation does not stem from the activity itself, rather from the rewards or punishment that individual will receive as a final product, which may lead to demotivation. Between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation along the continuum is amotivation. Markland and Tobin (2004) use the term as the state of lack of clear intentions and motivation in fulfilling a task, and according to Deci and Ryan (2000),

amotivation is the perceived lack of relationship between the outcome and behavior. A significant point in SDT is that these three types of motivation on the continuum indicate how much self-determined an individual is. To illustrate, if an individual's own curiosity and wish are the cause of a behavior, that person is said to be more intrinsically motivated and accordingly more self-determined (Ölmez-Öztürk, 2015).

The SDT has been a very influential framework to examine the motivation of teachers (Dörnyei & Schmidt, 2001); however, the use of SDT in examining the motivational factors of language teachers towards exploiting online sources for professional development is scarce. Therefore, this research seeks to close this gap by trying to uncover the motivational factors of three language instructors behind using online sources for professional development. It also aims to find out the type of digital technologies they turn to while trying to advance their professional knowledge.

Teacher Online Learning

Raising teacher quality is crucial for the quality of education, schools, and learning (Opfer & Pedder, 2011). Literacy studies suggest that this improvement is achieved by various ways (Lankshear & Knobel, 2011) such as professional development courses (Webb, Robertson, & Fluck, 2005) and learning communities at schools (Lieberman & Miller, 2011). Another way to improve teacher quality and his teaching effectiveness is exploiting online sources. The widespread use of the Internet has encouraged educators to benefit from technology for teaching as well as learning (Palloff & Pratt, 2005). One of the earliest efforts to leverage technology for online professional development is the online communities that teachers establish (Schlager & Fusco, 2003). In these communities, called online communities of practice (OCO_P) or professional learning communities (PLCs), teachers have a chance to share their knowledge and concerns with their colleagues from different parts of the world (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Many studies have demonstrated OCO_P to be supportive for teacher professional learning in developing teachers' technology knowledge (Bostancıoğlu, 2018). Having become prevalent for professional development of teachers (Ansari et al., 2012), these online communities work as a catalyst to improve the professional knowledge of the teachers (Tang and Chung, 2016). This is partly because of the equal efficiency of OCO_P compared to face-to-face communication in terms of disseminating the knowledge (McConnell et al., 2013). Even though some teachers are not familiar with OCO_P or use it rarely (Steinbrecher & Hart, 2012), many teachers find this kind of learning valuable. Since social media is a part of teachers' daily lives (Carpenter et al., 2020), teachers also try to utilize it for professional development (Tour, 2017). Goodyear et al., (2014) also agree that social media has emerged as CoP, which has promoted inquiry and enabled teachers to work collaboratively to increase their professional knowledge.

Various research has been conducted to find out how teachers make use of social media such as Facebook (Kelly & Antonio, 2016), Pinterest (Schroeder, Curcio, & Lundgren, 2019), Twitter (Rosenberg, Greenhalgh, Koehler, Hamilton, & Akcaoğlu, 2016) for professional learning. In a study which investigated social media use of teachers, Wesely (2013) discovered that OCO_P which was established on Twitter encouraged members to share their practices and ideas. In a recent study by Xue, Hu, Chi and Zhang (2021), it was also found out that the use of a chat application (WeChat) proved to be helpful in both gaining professional knowledge and transmitting that knowledge to the members of the group. Online spaces that teachers visit are not limited to the ones mentioned. Xerri (2014) found that YouTube and blogs are the most preferred online spaces that teachers visit for professional development. Due to the scarcity of the relevant research in the literature, researchers have recently begun to investigate social media use of teacher for

professional development. For instance, in a recent study, Carpenter et al. (2020) investigated Instagram use of 841 instructors for pedagogical purposes. The study revealed that %71.2 of the participants used Instagram more than once a day for professional purposes while it was 13.1 for YouTube. The second most frequently visited social media site more than once a day was Facebook (%26.8), which was followed by Twitter (%16.9). Another important finding of the study is that the reason for %87.7 teachers accessing Instagram is to look at the content or ideas of other educators. In their study about Facebook use, Kelly and Antonio (2016) discovered that teachers use open large groups for seeking practical advice or for socialization.

Research Questions:

1. What motivates ELT instructors to utilize online sources for professional development?
2. What kind of digital technologies do they make use of when they wish to improve their teaching?

Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative research design, in which the aim is not to generalize the findings but an in-depth exploration of a phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). In fact, it is a multiple case study, which investigates bounded or a multiple bounded systems over a course of time by means of detailed data collection (Creswell et al, 2007), and is a great way to identify cases for a simpler interpretation (Cousin, 2005). In this study, an exploratory approach was adopted in order to find out about the participants' online professional learning drawing on their self-directed learning and motivation.

Our study was informed by SDT dwelling on its two minor theories, *Basic Needs Theory* and *Organismic Integration Theory*. The participants were a convenience sample of three instructors who work at various state university preparatory schools in Turkey where students who are about to transition to their university major program are provided with academic language learning for one year. These schools offer intensive English courses starting from elementary level to advanced depending on the requirements of the departments at which students are going to study, where the medium of instruction is often English.

The sample in the study represents various backgrounds in terms of education and working experience, the details of those are provided in the case studies themselves. Data were collected in the 2020-2021 Spring semester via semi-structured interviews which were conducted online. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, having interviews online was the only option. At the outset of the research, the participants were informed about the aim of the research, and their consent was granted verbally. They were also ensured about the anonymity of their identities. The interviews which lasted 37, 47 and 50 minutes, were videorecorded and transcribed. The participants were set free to talk in Turkish or English and the recording of those who spoke Turkish were later translated into English.

Data Analysis

Having transcribed the interviews, both writers read the transcripts to uncover the motivational factors of the participants and how they utilize online sources for professional development. The themes in each case were identified deductively with reference to the theoretical underpinnings

proposed by SDT and supported by its two minor theories: *Basic Needs Theory* and *Organismic Integration Theory*. Cases were presented separately and a thick description (Geertz, 1973) of each case was provided. Finally, to increase the credibility of the research, member checking was utilized; the quotations that were used in the research were returned to the participants to make sure they adequately represented their ideas.

Cases and Findings

Meryem

Meryem, 37 years old, is the oldest of the three participants. She has been teaching English at a state university preparatory school for over 15 years. She holds a BA in Language and Literature, and a non-thesis MA in ELT. When she graduated, she worked at an elementary school for three months then transferred to the university where she has been working since then. She teaches about 20 hours a week. Being a very enthusiastic teacher, she prefers to start a lesson having fully prepared, and she is aware that she must leverage technology to be effective in the lessons even though she is not a big fan of technology in her daily life.

To start with, it is evident in the interviews that Meryem's major motivation for using online sources for professional development is her own desire as she states:

"I think it is because of my self-motivation. I am interested in it so I enjoy doing that. I don't see it as burden, I feel like I am adding something to myself. It feels like I am on a journey in my teaching career, and I like various stops like this. Instead of teaching the same topic the same way each year, I like to support it with different things."

The following statement also indicates how enthusiastic she is in learning and implementing new things when she searches them online:

"I feel the satisfaction. It feels like I am trying to do the job that I want to do, and I enjoy it so much that until I utilize that in the classroom, I feel excited."

Although workload tends to decrease motivation of teachers (Olmezer-Ozturk, 2015), she also expresses that her workload does not discourage her from doing extra online research as she states:

"To be honest, it takes time to learn since I deal with new things all the time. It takes time because teaching online is not like teaching face to face so I have limited time. I both need to integrate what I learn and cover the syllabus, which takes quite a lot of time."

Even though Meryem has her own motivation to use online tools for PD, and time constraint is not an issue for her, it is also evident in her sentences that outside factors are quite influential to raise her motivation. For example, she highlights the importance of the feedback coming from students as follows:

"I receive very good feedback from my students. They especially say how much they enjoy my lessons, how much it adds to them. I feel motivated when they say that the fill in the gap exercises do not add to them, but they benefit from such kind of interactive activities."

The following statement by her indicates how much value she attaches to her students' opinions:

"It does affect positively yet even if I didn't hear such comments, I would continue doing that. That is not the top one motivator for me. Of course, I like hearing good things, yet I don't do anything in order to hear good things. If students enjoy my lesson, and I receive feedback in the classroom, that is enough for me."

Another important factor which motivates Meryem to leverage the Internet for professional development is the community of practice (CoP) that they created with her colleagues at the school they work. It is evident in the interviews that CoP she is in inspires her for advancement. In this regard she states:

"I would continue learning even if there is no feedback, but I don't enrich that way. But when my friends make comments, I switch to another dimension. I think this is because we are similar in this sense since I also give feedback to what they do. This motivates us, they also state that our group is very motivative."

When she is inquired about how she perceives her progress in online professional development she is positive about it as she says:

"To start with, I believe that it improves my teaching skills, I feel better when I am teaching. I have been teaching for 15 years and I'm not like as I was when I first started teaching; actually, I am not like as I was last year. I can say that there is that much of a difference"

It is also evident in the interviews that she could implement what she learns online in the classroom since she frequently mentions how she uses internet for learning and how she makes use of what she finds in the classroom. It was found out in the interviews that social media, especially Instagram, and YouTube are her biggest source for professional development. Instagram seems to be starting point which leads her to further research as can be understood in the following statements:

"I thought of an activity like this, I saw it on an account I follow on Instagram. Then I saw a webinar invitation on an account which is about technology that I follow on the Instagram, I got interested in it and noted down its date and time. I benefit from social media and YouTube. Then I search what I learn from them on the internet."

In the interview, besides learning process, Meryem also mentions how she stores the new information she learns. The most prevalent one is getting screenshots as she puts:

"Let's say I am on Instagram; I see the posts of the accounts that I follow. At that point I think that will make a good last five-minute activity and take a screenshot. My gallery is full of such screenshots. I also save these screenshots in a folder on my laptop, I transfer those screenshots into that folder when I have time. So, when I need an activity for the last five minutes of my lesson, I check that folder and use one."

The quotation above demonstrates how vigilant she is even when she is surfing on the social media as she strives to make use of anything she comes across while she is online in the classroom.

Tülay

Tülay is 35 years old and has been working at a preparatory school at a state university for the last one year. Before university, she worked at a state high school for six years. Her BA was in English Language and Literature and currently, she holds an MA degree in ELT, and she is doing PhD in ELT. She is interested in technology and tries to integrate it in her classes.

Tülay thinks that the ELT field is a dynamic field which accordingly alters our materials and how we teach. She says, “in the face of so many changes, we must participate in professional development activities to learn new things” and she adds:

“Personality wise, I am a live wire, and I am always after learning new things and the activeness of the field and myself combine each other. I don't feel the obligation to do it, I do because I want it.”

In the same vein, she expresses how she ignores what others think about her endeavor in exploiting online resources for professional development by the following words:

“I am not doing this so that people around me will applaud me. I really don't care what they think. On the contrary, when they say that I am too busy, it annoys me from time to time especially it is a time when I am truly busy. At other times, whether they applaud me or not does not affect my motivation.”

The primary reason for why Tülay prefers learning online is the easy access to information. The abundance of information online which is reached with ease motivates her to take advantage of technology for professional development, but she opts for online sources which includes guidance such as lesson plans. In this regard she states, “the preplanned syllabus for online PD activities is great since you can see the content and how much time you need to allocate for each.” Another benefit of online learning for Tülay is that she can learn from any teacher from all around the world at the convenience of her own house.

She is also a fan of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), and the reason behind it is that they are not synchronously designed, as she states, “... to be able to participate in an activity when I want is one of the fun parts of it for me”. Tülay also participates in webinars quite often, and in the interview, she mentions her criteria in choosing one to participate. To start with, who organizes the webinar is a measure for her as can be understood from the following sentences:

“For instance, I check which institution is organizing the webinar, the organization itself may excite me. If it is Cambridge University, it may excite me. However, if it is a webinar by a university whose name I have not heard, it does not create that effect since I feel prejudiced towards it, and it affects my motivation.”

Besides the organizer of the webinar, the accent of the speaker is also a criterion for Tülay since it is not easy to understand some accents and varieties of English. She also highlights the practical aspect of webinars:

“It does not affect in terms of theory. If you ask why, we are already learning the theoretical part well. The reason why I participate in these webinars is to improve myself practically; which tools can I use and how? Or what is new in the field? I mean to make the things fun and raise the interaction in the classroom.”

Having participated in various online learning activities, especially webinars, before, Tülay acknowledges that she utilizes online sources for PD efficiently, yet she does not want to spare as much time for them lately. She says: “I don't even feel like signing up for something during this Covid19 period because I am tired of sitting in front of the computer all the time, and time constraints.” This statement reveals the negative consequences of COVID breakout on even enthusiastic teachers in terms of online PD.

Pelin

Pelin is the youngest of the three participants; however, she has the most experience in terms of the variety of schools she has worked at. She has been teaching English for about five years; she worked at a private high school for one year, later she worked at a private university for three

years, and she has been working at a state university for the last one year. Her BA and MA are in ELT and currently she is doing her PhD in ELT, as well. Unlike the other two participants, Pelin was not keen on technology. In fact, she says *“in the early years of my teaching career, I thought it was a waste of time.”* She thought it created chaos in the classroom. Since the students at this time *“are digital natives and they don't make us loose time”*, she started to use online sources for PD. She doesn't want to be an English teacher who teaches only grammar and she decided to improve herself since she wants her students to write blogs, and comments on social media. Pelin highlights that what motivated her to do research always resulted from a need, and gives the following example:

“For example, which tool can I use for writing classes? I don't like giving long feedback, I spend so much time while giving feedback to assignments; therefore, I looked for a tool by which I can give oral feedback. I mean all of those resulted from a need. Or I needed a platform on which students could discuss as a group. I learned all these by searching online.”

It is evident in the interview that the need to learn new things stems from the need for the feeling of self-fulfillment and her projection towards the future of learning itself and her career as can be seen in the following statements:

“I would like to feel self-fulfillment. I mean, when I step into my classroom, I want to meet the needs of my students at this age. To be honest, I don't want to be a teacher who cannot even set a projector. I want to be a teacher who is knowledgeable at all fields and is able to integrate technology into my lessons and enrich my lessons because in the future, I will be a teacher trainer and training teachers, so I have such a long-term goal.”

The above sentences show Pelin's determination and motivation to pursue her career as an up-to-date teacher in terms of technology, and it is no surprise that she strives to leverage technology to achieve her aim. Despite all the motivation she has, Pelin acknowledges the difficulty of online learning process for her at the outset:

“At first, I feel like I am lost. When we search something, millions of ridiculous things come up, I feel there is information pollution there. Then, I filter them to find what is logical and appropriate for my context by critical thinking. I also check if that is practical, if it is something which will take so much time, I cannot. I teach several courses and I cannot spare that much time for each lesson.”

When it comes to webinars, Pelin is quite negative about their influence on professional development. She says, *“to be honest, I find most of the webinars a waste of time. I know it's too assertive, but I think I know more than the speakers in those webinars.”* She also goes on to criticize the webinars organized by well-established publishers since they always have same speakers in their webinars as well as lacking topics which will add to classroom teaching. Despite her negative attitude towards webinars, she does mention some that she benefitted a lot:

“For instance, there was a lady named Rebecaa. She changed my life. The most difficult thing for me to teach was The Present Perfect Tense. Her webinar was quite different; she did classroom teaching rather than providing the theory shallowly. She taught how we can put the theory into practice and since then I haven't had problems teaching that tense. That is what a good webinar is all about”

During the interviews, Pelin also mentions how she manages the information she gains during online learning process. To start with, despite her curiosity in technology, she has a classical notebook where she writes down her notes during webinars or while surfing the net. Occasionally, she folders all the documents she finds online or receives in webinars on her laptop since she does not find all of them intriguing. She also adds the websites that she finds useful to the favorites on the web browser, which she finds convenient. To Pelin, another thing which makes an online learning activity effective is its duration as she explains:

“Instead of 1- or 2-hour long webinars, the ones which focuses on a specific topic and lasts for 1 or 2, in fact 6–8-week seminars are more effective. I once participated in one which lasted 10 weeks. These long ones are usually 2 hours a week, and you need to read about 50-60 pages a week. They create a change in your perspective. For example, after this 10-week one, my teaching philosophy changed since my teaching was not based on the principles of English as a lingua franca. We used forums and commented on each other’s comments, discussing with other teachers; discussing other teachers’ plan is really fruitful.”

We can understand from these comments that when an activity is extended over time and includes exchanging ideas, it tends to be more beneficial and preferable for the learners. Talking about what you learn online and sharing with colleagues seems to be a motivation factor for Pelin, as well. She says that there is a positive environment among her colleagues of her age where she works, they share what they learn and enjoy learning from each other; however, she holds the idea that at state schools if you come up with new things, it is not appreciated much. She also believes that professional development strengthens her authority in the classroom as she puts: *“The more I know, the more respectful my students are to me, which strengthen my authority in the classroom. That is my authority results from my knowledge.”* Finally, as a digital immigrant, she holds the idea that she has learnt how to learn from online sources, which websites she can use for what, or whose blogs she can turn to when she is in need.

Discussion

RQ 1: What motivates ELT instructors to utilize online sources for professional development?

To start with, the analysis of the interviews with the framework of *Organismic Integration Theory* revealed that what motivates the three English teachers in this study is their own desires; therefore, we can say that they are intrinsically motivated and as Deci et al. (1991) suggest, they do not utilize the internet due to an outside reward. This may be explained by the fact that teachers are not usually required to participate in professional development activities at state universities in Turkey. It is only Meryem, who is also extrinsically motivated by the verbal appreciation of her students, which means her motivation level may fluctuate depending on the profile of the students since some students feel too shy to give feedback to their teachers. When the transcriptions were analyzed under *Basic Needs Theory*, it was found that the participants were motivated by the needs of autonomy, relatedness, and competence to use online sources to learn. The most outstanding need that was found in the interviews was autonomy. All the participant teachers in the study seemed to have the luxury of using what they learned through online sources in their classes. Apparently, it is safe to say that being able to choose what to learn and when to use it is a crucial motivator since all the participants mentioned how they utilized the new information without talking about any institutional constraints. The findings also revealed that CoP is a facilitative factor for Pelin and Meryem in online learning; only Tülay did not mention collegial motivation. It is possible that Pelin and Meryem have better relationship with their colleagues, or it may be just that Tülay does not like exchanging ideas with others. Finally, when it comes to competence, Pelin displays the highest motivation as she states: *“I want to feel the self-fulfillment. Whenever I step into the classroom, I want to be well-equipped and up to date, and meet the needs of my learners.”* It seems possible that if she is asked a question and she cannot answer it, she will be rather demotivated. Meryem also compares herself with how she was last year, and states that she notices a big difference.

It is evident in the findings that the participants in this study pursue online professional learning activities in accordance with the needs put forward by SDT.

RQ2: What kind of digital technologies do they make use of when they wish to improve their teaching?

Besides the motivational factors in teachers' online learning, what kind of online sources the participants utilize was another concern of this study. The participant teachers differed in how they use technology for professional development. To start with, Meryem is a big fan of Instagram as she states that it encourages her to do further research. This statement of hers is in accordance with Tang and Chung (2016) in the sense that it acts as a catalyst. The purpose of Meryem in using Instagram is also in line with the findings by Carpenter et al. (2020) who found that %87.7 of the participants visited Instagram to see other educators' ideas. Meryem is also the only participant who mentioned YouTube as a source for professional development.

Tülay also likes learning by watching but not on YouTube but through MOOCs. She likes the training on MOOCs since she can participate in them whenever she wishes. This fact displays the importance of autonomy in online learning. The reason why she does not watch YouTube videos but participates in MOOCs training could be the fact that at the end of many MOOCs training, the participants receive a certificate. Tülay also participates in webinars, but she mentions some criteria for her to choose one; the organizer, the accent of the speaker, and practical information that it provides. It is clear from her statements that she is quite picky when it comes to webinar choice, and it makes a lot of sense when we consider the amount of webinar invitations that we receive in our mail inboxes. The last participant Pelin finds most of the webinars a waste of time due to the quality of participants, the duration of webinars and lack of practical aspect in webinars. This finding has important implications for webinar organizers and school management. It is clear from the statements of Tülay and Pelin that the presence of a webinar, which seemed to be fruitful at any case at the beginning of the Covid19 outbreak, does not necessarily lead to learning anymore, and they need to be organized more professionally. Pelin also visits webpages and blogs for professional development and saves the webpages to the favorites tab on her internet browser. The findings from this study do not support the previous studies by Kelly and Antonio (2016), Schroeder, Curcio and Lundgren (2019), and Rosenberg, Greenhalgh, Koehler, Hamilton, and Akcaoğlu (2016) since none of the participants mention that they used Facebook, Pinterest, or Twitter for professional development.

Implications and Further Research

This study explored the motivational factors of three English teachers working at preparatory schools of three state universities in Turkey towards employing online sources for professional development. We found that all the teachers were intrinsically motivated, and the need for developing competence, exercising autonomy, and assessing relatedness were key motivational reasons behind their online professional learning. Instagram, MOOCs, YouTube and websites were the online sources mentioned by the participants when they turn to the Internet for help. Our findings have implications for teacher educators and institutional leaders who plan to encourage language teachers to engage in online professional development drawing on self-determination theory, which include:

- providing time and space for teachers to freely select and engage in online activities
- negotiating individual (digital) resources that they might need to boost their motivation
- planning various forms of support which they might need in the case of self-paced individual learning

- organizing institutionally assisted social environment in which such teachers can be appreciated and recognized

Intrinsic motivation emerged as the key factor for teachers to engage in self-determined and self-paced professional learning in online settings. Further research appears to be needed regarding how language teachers integrate their learning into their teaching practices with follow-up observations to get deeper insights into their actual learning practices.

Conclusion

This study narrated some individual cases and revealed that English language instructors teaching at universities in Turkish context engaged without a top-down requirement in their own professional development in online environment due partly to the restrictions the Covid-19 pandemic led to across the world. Some teachers used that restriction as an opportunity and explored new ways of teacher learning. We examined the ways of engagement and the outcomes drawing on the principles of self-determination theory to understand the locus and source of motivation that led them to take the control of their own professional learning. Our research argues that online professional development that is characterized by bottom-up, self-initiation and determination with a self-pace mode could lead to more meaningful teacher learning.

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