Online English Language Teaching: Identifying Teachers'Needs and Perceptions of Continuous Professional Development Activities

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Online English Language Teaching (ELT), defined as practices and/or processes of teaching and learning the English language on virtual platforms that provide 'unique and irreplaceable learning opportunities'(Burbules & Callister, 2000, p. 277), has gained prevalence across various educational settings. In line with the global trend, Vietnam has seen a notable rise in online ELT classes in both public and private sectors. This surge aligns with increased governmental investment in digital education, notably outlined in the NFLP2020 Project and HERA. However, despite this growth, challenges persist in implementing and optimizing online ELT. To provide a comprehensive understanding within the Vietnamese context, it's essential to examine the digital provision of ELT in public K-12 schools. This evaluation aims to offer insights and recommendations for language policies, catering to stakeholders at provincial and national levels.

In this presentation, we specifically focus on identifying (a) teachers'needs about online ELT and (b) their perceptions of CPD activities designed for online ELT. We adopted a mixed-method design, using a survey and semi-structured interviews to investigate these two focal areas. For teachers'needs, we followed the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge framework-(TPACK) (Mishra & Koehler, 2006), and thus modified existing TPACK surveys to investigate teachers'needs in the context of Vietnam. Interviews were then conducted to gather more details of teachers'needs observed in the survey results. For teachers'perceptions of CPD for online ELT, we adopted the INSPIRE framework—Impactful, Needs-based, Sustained, Peer-collaborative, Reflective, and Evaluated (Richardson & Díaz Maggioli, 2018) to evaluate teachers'views of CPD activities.

The survey results from 481 English teachers at three levels (primary, secondary, and high schools) showed teachers' high self-ratings of their TPACK knowledge. However, the interviews revealed a contrasting picture in which teachers reported numerous needs related to online ELT in all aspects of TPACK. The needs were not only concerned with Technology, Pedagogy, and Content (i.e., English proficiency) but also went beyond the TPACK aspects. They included, for example, insufficient infrastructure for online ELT, teachers'and learners' well-being in online ELT, parent's involvement, institutional support, and online ELT policies. The results also showed that while teachers'needs were addressed to a certain extent, they did not seem to generate long-term impacts. Regarding teachers'perceptions of CPD, the teachers'interview accounts demonstrate that the CPD activities for online ELT that the focal teachers attended were generally effective as they were, to varied extents, needs-based, impactful, and sustained. There was, however, considerable variation regarding the in-practice and peer-collaborative features and to what extent they were reflective and evaluative. While these two characteristics could be found in longer-term CPD events (e.g., those that span several sessions or are month- or semester-long), they were largely missing in short-term and one-off activities. Based on these results, we provide some suggestions regarding (a) how to prepare teachers for the transition to online ELT and (b) the kinds and the design of CPD that English teachers in Vietnam identify as needing.

Online Profile

Biography

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