Today’s Learning Shift

• “With the growing availability of Web 2.0 tools to connect learners and scholars all over the world—online collaborative workspaces, social networking tools, mobile, and more—teaching and scholarship are transcending traditional borders more and more all the time,” (Horizon Report, 2009).

Transition into the 21st Century Model
“Honeycomb” Digital Learner

Synchronous; Research based; Web; Mobile; Video; Audio;
Multitasking; Group and project based; Non-Linear;
Building relationships; Critical thinking; Problem solving;
Greater horizontal and dynamic learning.
The advancement of expertise and skills for success in a particular profession. This usually takes place through some formal educational process and continuum.

To enhance teacher professional development, it is important to study the characteristics, patterns, and the activities of the teachers that are engaged in for PD.
The new technological and pedagogical paradigms (mobile, global, immediate, and ubiquitous information) do not equate to teachers automatically learning this new 21st century educational and PD reality, (Lieberman & Mace, 2008).

This often results in a disconnect between today’s PD and the educator (grouped by grade level, time allocation).

PD is constrained today as continuous training is needed to meet the new demands of the student and administration, (Hooker, 2008).

This new learning paradigm should be reflected in how educators learn while working in their careers.
• Twitter can be an excellent vehicle for facilitating professional learning networks.
• Twitter provides a vast pool of easily accessible resources and talents so that teachers can expand their own professional development anytime and anywhere.
• Twitter allows the direct following of experts in any profession or area of interest around the world.
• Twitter is free, very fluid, mobile, and collaborative.
To find the answer of how Twitter can enhance PD for educators, I examined:

1. Who are the teachers and what are the characteristics of those educators that participate in Twitter for professional development?
2. What draws K-12 teachers and other educators to participate in professional development using 21st century learning Web 2.0 tools, and specifically Twitter?
3. How do K-12 teachers and other educators participate in professional development using Twitter?
2. Literature Support

• There is a lack of empirical evidence linking greater use of digital technologies and increased learning, (Ritchell, 2011).
• There is a lack of direction for teachers to take advantage of Web 2.0 tools for learning and professional development, (Greenhow & Gleason, 2012).
• Twitter is seen as a useful tool for enhancing PD, (Deyamport, 2013).
• Tu, Blocher, and Ntoruru, (2008) found that Web 2.0 tools enhanced creativity, sharing, and collaboration among users in learning communities.
• Many teachers find it difficult to infuse effective Web 2.0 pedagogical and skill related resources and practices in their teaching, (Pan & Franklin, 2011).
3. Research Methodology

- An online cross-sectional survey examined the demographics, the motivations, and the practices of Twitter users in education in relation to professional development.
- A Google Forms online survey consisted of closed-ended and open-ended questions.
- A tweet was sent containing a link to the survey form.
- The survey took approximately five minutes to complete.
- Over 18 years of age and anonymous.
4. Results

#1. Who are the teachers and what are the characteristics of those educators that participate in Twitter for professional development?

Participants by Country of Origin (153 in Total)
Who is using Twitter?

- 57% are female and 42% are male.
- 50% are 41 to 55 years of age.
- 42% taught 16 to 30 years in the school system.
- 39% have at least a Masters degree.
- 61% of the participants are classroom teachers.
- 26% are in administration.
- 41% have 100 to 500 followers and following.
Percentage of participants that either strongly agreed or agreed to the following statements:

- 80%: Twitter helps with collaboration with my colleagues.
- 89%: Twitter saves time in sharing information.
- 98%: Twitter keeps me current with educational material.
- 95%: Twitter helps me find new educational leaders.
- 98%: Twitter connects me with people that I would have never met otherwise.
What Draws Educators to Twitter?

Continued:

- 75%: I get encouragement from others.
- 87%: I feel more connected as a teacher.
- 82%: Twitter enhances my use of Web 2.0 tools.
- 76%: Twitter increases my classroom subject knowledge.
- 92%: Twitter enhances my PD.
- 58%: I prefer Twitter for PD over traditional PD methods (29% neutral).
Reasons for Using Twitter for PD (open-ended question)

- Being connected at any time and any place.
- Connecting with colleagues, educators, subject experts, and professionals.
- Encouragement, positive feedback.
- Reduces isolation for teachers, especially in remote areas and environments.
- Community involvement (local and global).
- Facilitates conferencing, PLNs and collaboration.
- Immediate sharing and communicating.
- Using free, current resources and creative material.
- In control of their own PD, personalized, non-hierarchal model.
- Curiosity and Twitter is a social meeting place.
#3. How do K-12 teachers and other educators participate in professional development using Twitter?

The distribution of the following types of Twitter activities used by the participants in this study:

- Website links/audio/video/blogs (26%)
- Online documents (PDFs, Docs, etc.) (19%)
- Twitter chats (17%)
- Personal links (personal thoughts) (15%)
- Classroom information (12%)
- Email links (11%)

Applications included: Instagram, Tweetdeck, Twitter lists, Scoop.it, Paper.li, Vine
• 100% read at least one tweet per week.
• 95% retweet at least once a week.
• 93% tweet at least once a week (88% at least once a day).
• 89% reply to a tweet at least once a week.
• 84% mention another user at least once a week.

• 7% lurk or read tweets -- but do not tweet.
Chats and hashtags offer filtering and targeting of material.

- 89% use hashtags at least once a week.
- Good for filtering, organizing, chats, and localizing tweets.
- Facilitates PLNs and back-channeling at conferences (i.e. #edcamp – the “unconference”).
- 57% participate in chats, 32% do not.
- Good for being connected for live discussions.
- Offers global and real-time conversations that would not happen otherwise.
- Need a good moderator.
Does Twitter Provide a Better Way to Deliver PD?

• 37% feel Twitter provides a better way to deliver PD.
• 9% say it does not.
• 51% are undecided, (3% did not answer).

1. Networking, collaborating, connecting with experts.
2. Easy access to information and people, peer-to-peer, reduces isolation.
3. Personalized, global, immediate.
4. Educational leadership and sharing best practices.
Reservations About Twitter for PD

- It is limited and superficial.
- 140 character maximum for a tweet is a barrier.
- It only fills a specific niche for PD.
- It is difficult to control content.
- Lack of face-to-face contact and personal interaction.
- There is too much information, often need to filter.
- It is self-serving.
- There is not enough time and very time-structured to participate in live chats.
- Conflicting statements from employers re social media.
Certain themes regarding using Twitter for PD came out in the following ways:

1. Excellent for being connected with colleagues, educational leaders, and professionals. Building social capital. This was the most common theme.
2. Getting encouragement from others.
3. Community and PLNs, sharing, collaborating, and communicating – locally and globally.
4. There is a large amount of immediate, free, current, and relevant resources (of quality).
5. Curiosity and the social aspect are parts of the attraction, teachers are more engaged and receive positive feedback.
6. Educators share resources and creative ideas. They like the fluidity, immediacy, personalization, and the ubiquitous nature.

7. Twitter decreases the isolation felt by some teachers.

8. Twitter offers educational leadership and works well for life-long learning and PD.

9. Educators are using the tools available such as hashtags and chats. Web 2.0 tools are also used.

10. Educators are tweeting/retweeting on a regular basis and all subject areas are being represented.
Many educators are not using Twitter for PD, including younger teachers. Lack of knowledge, time, and understanding are some of the reasons.

Training and time allocation are needed to increase the use of Twitter and PD.

Administration, schools, and school divisions should encourage this usage. Twitter should not be blocked at schools.

Greater flexibility and opportunities are needed for teachers to engage in this seamless practice of PD.

Twitter fits the needs of a new learning paradigm of life-long learning and flexible and self-service PD.
“It is more personalized. It is more differentiated. It provides many more resources and connections. It provides better individual feedback. It is more flexible and can be done at different times. It is unlimited.”
References


References


Thank you