



Building learning communities through online learning for English language teachers

Crear comunidades de aprendizaje a través del aprendizaje en línea para profesores de Inglés

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Abstract

With the rapid development of the fourth industrial revolution, online education has become essential because of its practical needs. By building learning communities in an online learning environment fosters collaboration, shared expertise, and continuous professional growth. The article analyzes the benefits and necessity of online learning for English language teachers. The research has a quantitative approach with a descriptive design to investigate the building learning communities through online learning for English language teachers at the University of Khanh Hoa. This approach allowed us to gather numerical data and analyze trends, while the descriptive nature of the research design provided a comprehensive understanding of the current status and impact of online learning communities. The result of the study clarifies the expectations of online learning for professional development, including fostering collaboration, shared expertise, continuous professional growth, engaging teachers form connections, seek advice, share insights, leading to an increased sense of professional fulfillment and enriching the teaching experience for English language educators at the University. These communities facilitate the exchange of ideas, enhance teaching practices, and contribute to a vibrant professional network. By fostering a culture of collaboration and continuous learning, the University can empower its English language teachers to excel in their roles and create a more engaging and effective learning environment for their students.

Keywords: online learning, English language teachers, learning community, industrial revolution, professional development, technological changes.

Resumen

Con el rápido desarrollo de la Cuarta Revolución Industrial, el aprendizaje en línea se ha vuelto esencial por sus necesidades prácticas. La creación de comunidades de aprendizaje en un entorno de aprendizaje en línea fomenta la colaboración, la experiencia compartida y el crecimiento profesional continuo. Este artículo analiza las ventajas y la necesidad del aprendizaje en línea para el profesorado de inglés. La investigación tiene un enfoque cuantitativo con un diseño descriptivo para investigar la construcción de comunidades de aprendizaje a través del aprendizaje en línea para el profesorado de inglés en la Universidad de Khanh Hoa. Este enfoque permitió recopilar datos numéricos y analizar tendencias, mientras que la naturaleza descriptiva del diseño proporcionó una comprensión exhaustiva de la situación actual y el impacto de las comunidades de aprendizaje en línea. El resultado aclara las expectativas del aprendizaje en línea para el desarrollo profesional, incluido el fomento de la colaboración, experiencia compartida, crecimiento profesional continuo, participación del profesorado en la creación de conexiones, búsqueda de asesoramiento, e intercambio de ideas, lo que lleva a un mayor sentido de realización profesional y enriquece la experiencia docente del profesorado de inglés en la Universidad. Estas comunidades facilitan el intercambio de ideas, mejoran las prácticas docentes y contribuyen a crear una red profesional dinámica. Al fomentar una cultura de colaboración y aprendizaje continuo, la Universidad puede capacitar a sus profesores de inglés para superar sus funciones y crear un entorno de aprendizaje más atractivo y eficaz para sus estudiantes.

Palabras clave: aprendizaje en línea, profesorado de inglés, comunidad de aprendizaje, revolución industrial, desarrollo profesional, cambios tecnológicos.

1. Introduction

The Fourth Industrial Revolution brought many advantages in education. Education can leverage online platforms, online courses, digital learning materials, learning videos, and other online resources to provide diverse and rich knowledge to learners. Teachers can use advanced technology to create innovative, flexible and interactive teaching methods. Education can focus on developing STEM skills, creative thinking skills, problem-solving abilities, life skills, and teamwork abilities. Education can provide advanced courses and continuous training to improve qualifications and adapt to technological changes and the labor market. Inclusive cooperation and connectivity in education play an essential role in meeting the challenges and opportunities of today's world. Schools and educational institutions can work together to share materials, teaching methods, experiences, and resources. This cooperation can take place at local, national and international levels. It may include the organization of joint courses, the exchange of lecturers and students, or the building of collaborative networks between schools and educational institutions. Education can facilitate connections and collaborations among different sectors, including industry, research, government, and society. This connection helps build bridges between education and the real world, and encourages the sharing of knowledge, experience and resources across disciplines to meet modern requirements and challenges.

To meet the needs of society, higher education needs to prepare and train human resources with appropriate knowledge and skills. This includes providing knowledge in artificial intelligence, information technology, data management, and soft skills such as creative thinking, problem-solving, and teamwork. Higher education has an important role in encouraging creativity and research in new technological fields. This can be done through creating appropriate learning and research environments, providing resources and financial support for research projects and entrepreneurship, and creating flexible and up-to-date learning programs in response to rapid technological change. Higher education can promote interdisciplinary and combined training by offering multidisciplinary learning programs that allow students to study and work in competitive environments.

In Vietnam, to take advantage of the advantages brought by the industrial revolution, the government has promoted the training of high-quality human resources. To do that, universities have started by improving the teaching staff in general and English lecturers in particular. At the University of Khanh Hoa, online learning for professional improvement has been focused in recent years. Learning in this form initially shows that there are certain achievements (McConnell et al., 2013) that have been stated in terms of building professional learning communities. Also, online learning for professional development will help lecturers manage time and distance well. Learners can be proactive about their time to focus on learning at any time. As (Ching & Hursh, 2014) said, the method of learning online learning is improving because of the efforts of all parties. Online learning enhances learner-expert interaction (Prenger et al., 2017; Sprague, 2006; Dede et al., 2009)

The study of online learning plays a very important role for English lecturers in general and English lecturers at the University of Khanh Hoa in particular for the following reasons: Online learning research provides English lecturers with access to materials, sources of knowledge and the latest research in the field of English and language teaching. Online research and learning help teachers update their knowledge and develop the latest teaching methods to apply in the classroom; Online research and learning helps English language instructors develop technology skills and use online tools and platforms to interact with students and deliver learning content. Instructors can learn how to use teaching technologies such as: learning management systems, learning videos, learning software, and mobile applications to create a better learning experience; Online research and learning allows English language instructors to learn and apply interactive online methods to interact with and support students. Tools such as online forums, live chats, and instant feedback systems help instructors reach and interact with students remotely. This opens up opportunities to create diverse learning environments and stimulates student engagement and collaboration.

The development of information technology has contributed to the development of education in recent years. That growth has spurred the learning community to flourish. In addition, online learning also facilitates English language teachers to impro-

ve their expertise, research and training, as well as academic exchanges. Therefore, online learning is an environment for English lecturers to interact, exchange, learn and share teaching and research experiences with each other.

1.1 Research questions

To conduct research for this topic, the author posed the following three research questions:

- What role does online learning play for English teachers at the University of Khanh Hoa?
- What are the advantages and limitations of online learning for the professional development of English lecturers at the University of Khanh Hoa?
- What are the suggestions for building online learning and professional development for English language teachers today?

1.2 Theoretical basis

Online education is a form of learning that takes place on the Internet. It is often referred to as “eLearning” (Cross, 2004; Nichols, 2003) in a number of other terms. The first online classes were launched in 1986 by John F. Kennedy University in California – USA. Learning and material delivery through online software and other mobile applications. The outstanding feature of online training is the high interaction and diversity between lecturers and learners. Under that feature, instructors and learners can communicate directly with each other through applications: chat, zoom, email, forums, webinars, etc. The study of online education has created forums for serious discussion, and from these discussions, scientists have differing views (Singh & Thurman, 2019): “We collected 46 definitions from 37 resources and conducted a content analysis on these sets of definitions”(Martin et al., 2020) suggested that between 2009 and 2018, there were 619 articles mentioning online education. In addition, there are also many authors who have evaluated online education (Castro & Tumibay, 2021), online education after COVID-19 (Castro & Tumibay, 2021; Chakraborty et al., 2021; Paudel, 2021; Dhawan, 2020). These views are aligned, but there are gaps between them that need to be filled. From research, I found that the reason for the difference is due to

different approaches and practices. In addition, the strong development of information technology has made its specific definitions obsolete. I found that the emergence of the internet will bring researchers on this issue closer together.

Online professional learning communities (Gorham & Ogata, 2020) is an online environment created to connect and interact between experts, professionals, and learners in a specific field. The goal of this community is to share knowledge, experiences, ideas and create professional development for its members. Forums and social networks allow experts and learners in the same field to interact, ask questions, and share expertise. Members can discuss industry-related issues, seek solutions, and create professional relationships. Members can participate in online courses, discuss with faculty and other students, share ideas, and receive feedback on academic work. Online seminars and events in the professional field provide opportunities for professionals and learners to network, share research, present presentations, and discuss professional topics. Members can share resources, assign tasks, and support each other during research (Zhang & Liu, 2019; Goodyear et al., 2019; Yu & Chao, 2022; Verdi, 2022; Gore & Rosser, 2022; Tipping & Dennis, 2022). In *online professional learning communities*, learners can reflect and collaborate with each other and with experts outside their organization using the Internet and mobile technology, as well as access information and other resources with few restrictions on time, place, or speed. *Online professional learning communities*, human beings who communicate online and share common interests, goals, knowledge, and ideas. This exchange of information benefits the entire community. (Bedford, 2019) emphasizes online professional learning represented by a variety of software and the viewer can be supported using information technology. In addition, some argue that online professional learning will help us human beings push boundaries (O’Toole, 2019; Prado et al., 2022; Birch & Lewis, 2020; Cullinane et al., 2022; Akoglu et al., 2019; Tulowitzki, 2021). In the process, the teacher will benefit from this program and guide learners on how to approach them to master knowledge. It is clear that the online professional learning mentioned here is an educational model in which from teachers to administrators, educational institutions can learn and share experiences and ideas to improve the qua-

lity of education. As such, the question is, what are the benefits of online professional learning?

To answer the above question, I think that the benefits of online professional learning are flexibility. Knowledge transmitters can exchange information quickly thanks to the internet. Online learning will help teachers and learners have more time and space for exchange; minimize costs; provide opportunities to better meet individual academic interests and goals; benefiting various educational development goals; provide comprehensive and timely access to valuable internal resources, such as stored data, as well as resources that are not available locally, such as professional knowledge; prompt guidance to the teacher in the implementation of pedagogy; timely professional advice and design authorization, collect data and evaluate flexibly.

Face-to-face learning is the reason why English teachers face barriers such as: the difficulty of arranging time in accordance with the class organizers, flexibility in creating learning and exchange environments, lack of resources. These barriers can be addressed by online professional learning. In online professional learning environments, the utility of digital enables teachers to solve problems, plan, curriculum, evaluate and reflect proactively (Hawari & Noor, 2020; Kim et al., 2022; Churchill, 2020; Chang et al., 2022; Li et al., 2022). In this environment, learners return to their inherent “subject” position. Lecturers go from being engaged in learning to becoming important nodes of network development. From this approach, English teachers began to apply digital tools for learners to move from a “*verb*” state to a “*master*” state from”. Professional online professional learning not only promotes teachers’ capacity to develop but also helps them innovate teaching methods which promotes learner learning performance (Jia et al., 2022; Li et al., 2020; Wang & Zhu, 2019; Alomari et al., 2019; Huang et al., 2020). Professional online learning methods will help teachers move from a physical teaching environment to a real environment virtual reality. This transformation will bring many advantages to teachers, learners and education administrators. The use of a professional online professional learning environment is one of the strategies to promote professional success. Current research has shown that the integrated flexibility of online environments offers many benefits, including allowing teachers to absorb topics and materials in a convenient way. I think that,

in the future, learning a professional online learning environment, the teacher will become a designer. There, teaching and learners will break down the barriers of time and learning space, since teaching will shift to exchange information and knowledge.

2. Research methodology

To investigate the topic of online learning for professional development for English language lecturers at the University of Khanh Hoa, the following research methods were used:

To conduct the study, a survey and evaluation on the use of online learning and its role in the professional development of English language teachers at the University of Khanh Hoa were carried out. The survey and evaluation method allowed to gather information from a rich source of data. By conducting surveys and interviews, I could collect opinions, viewpoints and experiences from research participants, which helped to better understand the views and opinions of English lecturers at the University of Khanh Hoa on the role of online learning. This method aided to identify the data pattern accurately and represented the focus group to study. By choosing a representative sample data, the article will ensure the accuracy and reliability of the research results. Survey and evaluation methods provided digitized and quantitative data, to apply statistical analysis methods to dig deeper into relationships and trends. By analyzing the data, conclusions can be drawn and assertions about online learning in professional development for English language teachers are made.

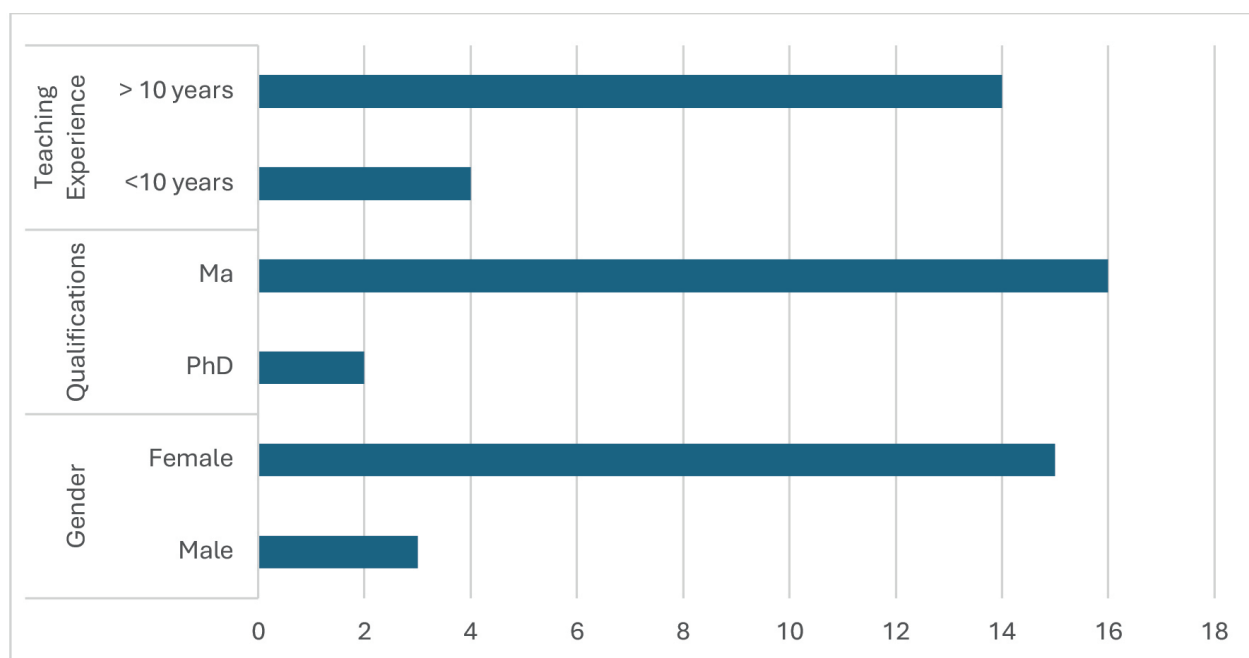
Surveys and interviews to collect information about teachers’ views, experiences and opinions on online learning were used. This method helped to directly interact with lecturers. In this way, personal views, and feelings about the role of online learning can be better understood. This enabled to build an overall and multidimensional picture of the research topic. This method was used to capture insights from individuals and create direct relationships with faculty. Ask specific questions and get a variety of answers in order to dive deeper into teacher’s experiences and perspectives on e-learning. Studying in person or through materials to better understand the realities and challenges teachers face during online learning. Using survey, interview and observational

methods will diversify information and consider a variety of perspectives on the role of online learning.

In order to have a multidimensional approach, it is important to understand and analyze the research findings of previous works related to online learning in professional development for English language teachers. This approach gives an overview of the current situation and research trends that have been carried out in the field.

For successful research, a specific plan to answer the questions was made. These samples were surveyed among 18 faculty members, including 16.6% male and 83.3% female. Qualifications include: 100% have completed a master's program, whereof 11.1% have completed a doctoral program. Teaching experience, 22.2% of lecturers have less than 10 years of teaching time, 77.7% of lecturers have more than 10 years of teaching time.

Table 1. *Demographic information of participants*

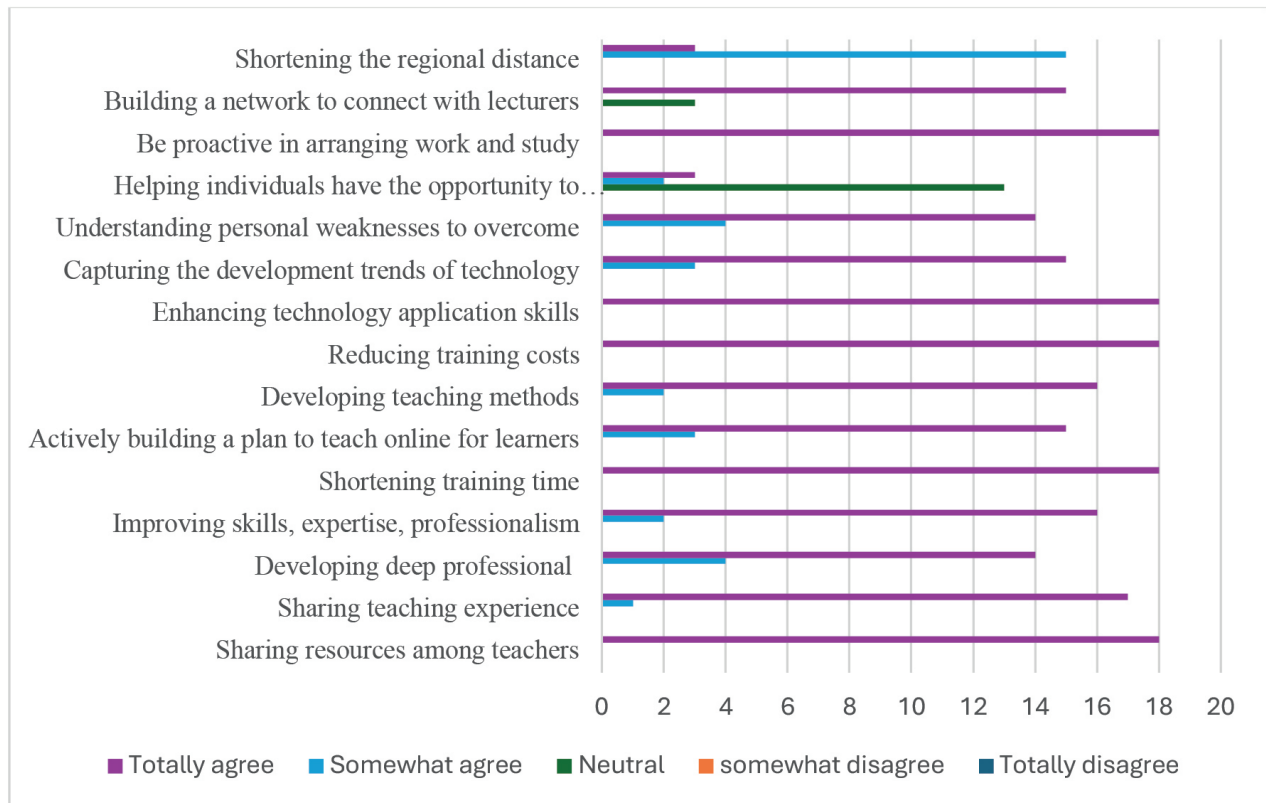


To conduct research and collect data, an online and in-person survey were applied in May 2023 to assess the primacy and necessity of virtual professional learning for professional development of English language teachers at the University of Khanh Hoa. This survey was conducted in a convenient way, with acceptable survey methods, wide survey scope, large samples, survey costs low environmental protection because there is no waste from it (Nayak & Narayan, 2019; Andrade, 2020; Ball, 2019). Survey questions were designed around learning materials for teachers' professional development. The questionnaire was designed with 15 multiple choice questions and 17 open-ended questions. The validity and reliability of the questionnaire was established when Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of all entries was greater than 0.6 (Li, 2021). This questionnaire system was initially experimented with 10 randomly selected instructors.

The experiment showed that respondents struggled with some of the answers provided. They felt that the answers did not cover all the views they expected. Faced with this situation, the author has adjusted the answer plan to solve the above situation with the value of "undecided".

3. Results

The survey was conducted using the Google App and sent to English lecturers at University of Khanh Hoa. The study applied descriptive research methods to analyze the data obtained, and its findings focused on key aspects such as: benefits of online learning, the need for online professional learning, and expectations for online professional learning.

Table 2. *Benefits of online professional learning*

From the above data, 100% of trainers believe that the benefits of online professional learning are the sharing of resources among trainers, the shortening of training time, and the cost of training, improve skills in applying technology to teaching.

94.4% of lecturers said online professional learning helped them share their teaching experiences. This suggests the opportunity to reach out and learn from other instructors in an online environment. 77.8% stated that online learning has helped them develop deep expertise. So they have the opportunity to access new knowledge and improve their qualifications through online courses. 88.9% affirmed that online learning has helped them enhance their skills, expertise and professionalism. This proves that they have learned new skills and applied them to their teaching. 83.3% ensured that online learning has helped them proactively develop plans for online teaching to learners. This suggests that they have embraced methods, tools, and resources to create a better online learning experience for learners. 88.9% said that online learning helped them develop teaching methods. This proves that they have explored and applied new teaching methods in an online envi-

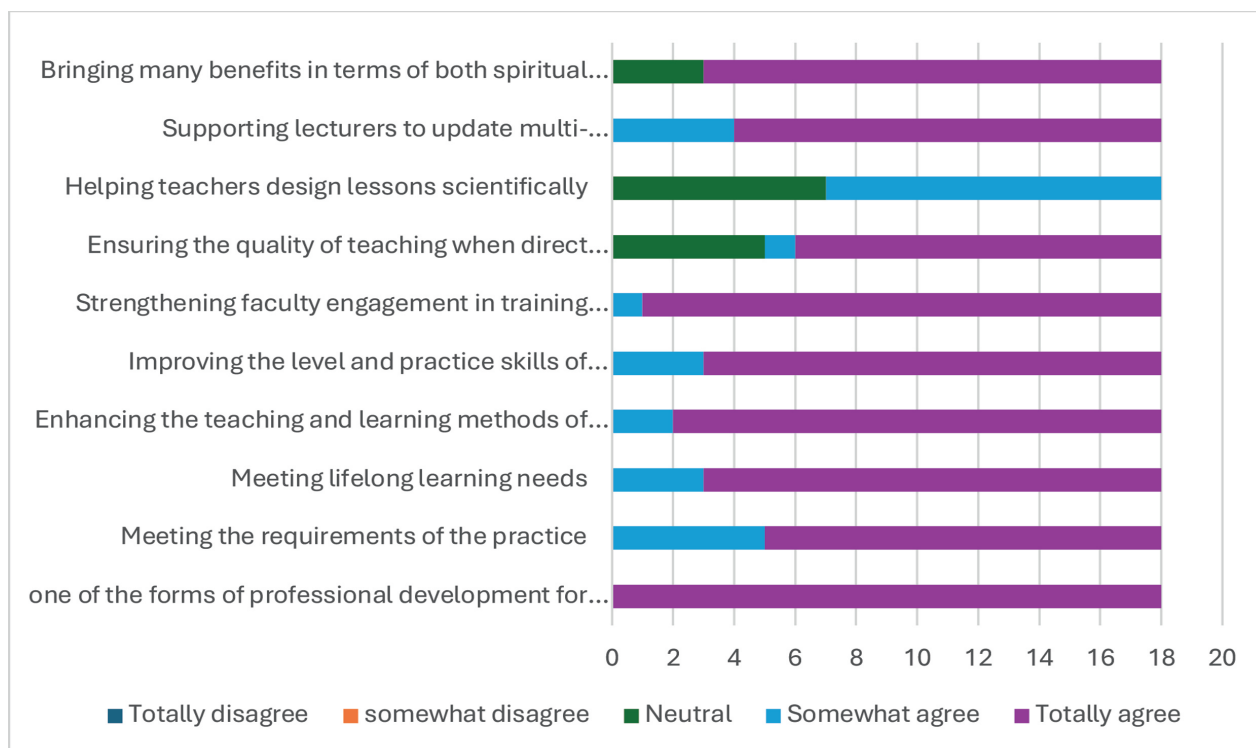
ronment. 83.3% affirmed that online learning has helped them grasp the evolving trends of technology. This reveals that they have approached and mastered new technologies to use in the online teaching process. 77.8% agreed that online learning helped them better understand personal weaknesses and overcome them. This shows that they have identified areas where they need to improve and take measures to overcome those weaknesses. 83.3% said that online learning has helped them build networks with other instructors. The findings reveal that they have had the opportunity to exchange, share and learn from the online faculty community, creating a network of links with people who share common interests and goals in the field of teaching. The data shows that online professional learning has benefited faculty by helping them understand personal weaknesses and develop skills, as well as building networks to interact with and learn from other faculty communities.

72.2% said that online professional learning is beneficial in faster advancement. The data reveal that accessing and learning from online courses and materials help individuals develop skills and knowledge, thereby creating opportunities for career

advancement. 16.7% cited the benefit of online professional learning as the ability to network with faculty. The data underscore that online learning

provides opportunities to interact and connect with expert lecturers in the field, which in turn supports learning and knowledge sharing.

Table 3. *English teachers' comments on professional learning online*



From the data, 100% fully agreed that online professional learning is one of the forms of professional development for faculty. This indicates an acknowledgment and appreciation of the role of online professional learning in providing opportunities for faculty to develop and enhance their professional qualifications. 72.2% strongly agreed that online professional learning meets the requirements of practice. This reveals a strong and widespread belief among survey participants regarding the positive impact of online professional learning on faculty members. This suggests that online learning provides the knowledge and practical skills needed to apply in the daily work of faculty. 83.3% of recognized that online professional learning meets the need for lifelong learning. This indicates that they see the value of online learning not only as a short-term process, but also as a tool to continue to grow and update their knowledge throughout their professional lives. 88.9% admitted that online professional learning enhances the learning and teaching methods of faculty. This

indicates that online learning brings new tools and methods to improve the quality of learning and teaching. 83.3% agreed that online professional learning enhances information technology practical skills. This underscores that they see the value of online learning in providing the knowledge and skills needed to work with and apply information technology in the field of teaching. 94.4% strongly agreed that online professional learning enhances faculty engagement within the institution. This shows that they see the value of online learning in creating cohesion and interaction between lecturers and institutions, thereby improving the quality of teaching and learning experience. 66.7% strongly accepted that online professional learning ensures teaching quality when face-to-face teaching does not achieve results. The data highlights that online learning can be an effective alternative when traditional forms of teaching do not deliver the desired results. Nobody agreed that online professional learning helps lecturers design lectures scientifically. This suggests that there is a dis-

cernment in the opinions of survey participants, and there may be different opinions about the possibility of online learning in designing lessons. 77.8% strongly agreed that online professional learning supports teachers to update multidimensional knowledge. This demonstrates that they see the value of online learning in accessing and capturing new and diverse knowledge from online resources and courses. 83.3% strongly agreed that online professional learning has many benefits in terms of mental and material benefits. The data indicates that they see the immense value of online professional learning in many aspects, including emotional impact and material impact. It can provide satisfaction and motivation to instructors of the faculty because of the opportunity to develop and enhance their professional qualifications. Satisfaction and confidence in acquiring new knowledge can also enhance work ethic and passion in teaching. Online professional learning can help instructors save time and costs on travel, space, and resources. They can access and learn from online courses in the comfort of their own homes or from any location with an internet connection. This can help teachers make the most of available time and resources to achieve better learning outcomes.

27.8% had a neutral opinion on online professional learning, ensuring the quality of teaching when face-to-face teaching does not achieve results. This suggests that there are participants who do not have a clear view or are unsure about the ability of online professional learning to ensure teaching quality. They may have had a negative experience or haven't seen a clear effect from it. 38.9% gave a neutral opinion that online professional learning helps teachers design lectures scientifically. However, both of these neutral opinions (27.8% and 38.9%) were quite high, indicating uncertainty and diversity of conceptions on the part of respondents about the ability of online professional learning to ensure the quality of teaching and scientific lesson design.

4. Discussion and conclusions

From the survey data, English language teaching lecturers at the Khanh Hoa University have highly appreciated the importance of online professional learning for their professional development. Lecturers are aware that, the increasing learning requirements of learners in order to provide

high-quality human resources for society, they must continuously improve their teaching and research abilities. Nowadays, online learning is present in all educational levels, giving learners the opportunity to be connected with teachers, partners, educational contents and pedagogical resources, which increase motivation and participation (Campos, et al., 2020); that is why one of the optimal solutions offered is to participate in online professional learning to share teaching experiences and skills with colleagues. This sharing will help English teachers solve work-related problems quickly and effectively. In fact, the majority of English teachers support the promotion of online professional learning and they expect this model to be implemented quickly.

In addition, English instructors believe that the implementation of online professional learning is fully in line with the 4th industrial revolution takes place. This revolution will blur the boundaries of perception to build a flat world. For online professional learning to become a trend, it is essential to reflect and develop new strategies since it not only enhances the expertise of lecturers but also shares learning resources among the internal and external school lecturers, which is a challenge, since the use of online resources can foster English teachers' creativity and students' critical thinking (Féliz et al., 2023).

In order to implement online learning for professional development at Khanh Hoa University, it is necessary to have a development orientation and regular check on its operation. Frequently evaluate the effectiveness associated with the professional title of the lecturer. Online learning gives English teachers the opportunity to access new knowledge and update the latest trends and teaching methods. According to Martín (2020) it requires changes in the teacher's role to be a designer of learning situations. On an online platform, they have access to materials, courses, and a wealth of knowledge from leading experts across the globe. This helps lecturers improve their professional qualifications and provide students with the latest knowledge. Online learning grants an environment of interaction and networking with other faculties and peers around the world. English lecturers at the University of Khanh Hoa can participate in specialized forums, discussion groups, and social networks to exchange experiences and share the latest information. This helps them build a wider network of professional

connections, by enhancing their development and knowledge sharing. Online learning allows English teachers to familiarize themselves and improve their skills in using information technology, taking also into account that the ICT use has changed from the simple transmission of information to carrying out contents and new learning (Andraca et al., 2022). They will approach and work with online tools and applications, from participating in online courses to using online learning platforms and tools to create instructional content. This helps English teachers become creative and flexible in applying technology in the teaching and learning process.

From the research results, online professional learning for professional development for English lecturers is very necessary not only at the University of Khanh Hoa, but also at other educational institutions. This is one of the forms contributing to improving knowledge and skills for lecturers. It is shown that online training helps English teachers access the latest knowledge, resources and trends in the field of teaching and learning. This helps to update and improve the professional knowledge in the four skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Instructors can apply technologies and tools in the teaching process, create interactive and enjoyable learning experiences among students, and improve teaching effectiveness. Through participation in online courses and communities, instructors can share experiences, learn from others, and create opportunities for collaboration and professional development. Online learning makes it possible for English language teachers to integrate new technology and applications, leveraging online learning tools and platforms to create a modern learning environment tailored to students' needs.

Online training plays an important role in the professional development of English language teachers. It not only provides new knowledge and tools, but also opportunities for professional exchange and grasp new trends. From the analysis of English teachers' opinions, online professional learning can be extremely important for development expertise.

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