"I am so lucky to be part of this community": Online professional learning communities to support teacher professional development (TPD) in higher education

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Abstract

Few studies have examined how EFL teachers, as language teacher educators, perceive their participation in a particular online professional learning community (PLC) despite the growing body of research on PLC in educational settings. The current study delved into the teacher professional development of EFL teachers in higher education settings. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data and then narratively evaluated. The data were thematically analyzed. The results point to a few advantages teacher educators experience when participating in online PLC, which ultimately improves their competency in teacher professional development. The result brought to light that online PLC activities in Indonesia facilitated teacher educators' professional development in many aspects. Understanding the findings in the present study could motivate English teachers, be they in secondary or post-secondary education contexts, to always improve their pedagogical knowledge through PLC. Stories shared by the participants in this study inform pedagogical impacts for redesigning curricula that specialize in writing practice for PhD students. Policymakers could also take advantage of the present study's findings in the context of enacting PLC training for teachers on how to treat and make use of this PLC effectively.

Introduction

Numerous studies on English as a foreign language (EFL) teacher education clarify that EFL teachers make an effort to foster their professional development as teachers by participating in professional learning communities (PLCs) or communities of practice (CoPs). According to Wenger's (1998) theory, social participation can be defined as an educational process that takes place in four areas: identity, practice, community, and meaning. First, meaning is defined as our (changing) capacity to find personal and societal significance in both our lives and the world (Wenger, 1998). To discover meaning in life, EFL teachers reflect on their experiences and search for a personal and collective purpose. Practice is as the shared historical and social frameworks, viewpoints, and assets that enable reciprocal participation in action (Rienties et al., 2013). Thirdly, the community is defined as the social arrangements wherein our involvement is acknowledged as competent, and our endeavors are deemed worthy of pursuit (Wenger, 1998). EFL teachers who engage in classroom activities are exposed to community cultural norms and are required to abide by them in order to maintain their participation (Wenger, 1998; Wenger et al., 2002).

PLCs are defined as groups of individuals who share the same commitment to engage in cooperative work through an ongoing process of knowledge sharing and inquiry to maximize certain results (Wenger et al., 2002). Professional learning community (PLC) can be approached in a number of ways, including professional learning groups, collaborative learning communities, and communities of practice (which are often made up of eight to twelve educators each). Conventional PLC activities typically take the shape of one-time seminars,

short courses, or workshop training that is delivered in a cascade fashion and lasts for one day or seven to thirty days (Rienties et al., 2013). Universities and other educational institutions will probably spend a lot of money sending their teachers to conferences and short courses.

However, according to Farrell (2015), traditional PLCs have little effect on enhancing the professionalism of teacher educators. Conventional PLC is cited as evaluating the traditional PLC's quality and giving particular attention to its shortcomings and strengths is vital to address the requirement to raise the caliber of teachers (Dehdary, 2017). According to Sari (2012), conventional PLC often asks a school to send one or a select few teacher representatives to participate in seminars or courses, which are typically conducted in a large city. This could take a lot of money and effort, and the teacher might already be overburdened with work or dealing with personal issues (Ross, 2011; Zepeda, 2015). Additionally, the conventional PLC model typically gives teachers little practice during the workshop and little feedback, particularly regarding the outcomes of their training (Ross, 2011; Zepeda, 2015). Because there were fewer opportunities for collaboration, reflection, and feedback, previous PLCs that were conducted offline—such as seminars or one-time workshops—could not support teacher educators' research and publication competency (Ross, 2011; Zepeda, 2015).

Education professionals are starting to switch professional learning from conventional PLC to online PLC in an effort to improve the quality of conventional PLC, particularly in the age of digital information technology (Beauchamp et al., 2015; Blayone et al., 2017). Teachers in many countries are beginning to use the Internet for multiple teaching and learning purposes, including improving their professional development (Beauchamp et al., 2015), as the Internet and digital technology become more and more important tools for fostering social connections and meeting personal and professional needs across a variety of contexts (Blayone et al., 2017). Engaging in the online community of practice is an alternate way for teacher educators to further their professional development (Alimirzaee & Ashraff, 2016; Habsi et al., 2020; Putri & Damayanti, 2024).

One method of collaborative teacher learning that has demonstrated its ability to support teacher professional development is online PLC. Katz and Earl (2010) demonstrated how online PLC maintains teacher professional development by strengthening global teacher connections and fostering greater teacher collaboration. In addition, participating in online PLC using technology integration modifies teachers' attitudes about adopting technology in pedagogy and can enhance technology literacy as part of teacher professional development (Katz & Earl, 2010). PLC also makes it easier for educators to consider how to

incorporate technology into their lessons and activities (Rathert & Okan, 2015). Secondary school teachers, according to Wang and Lu (2012), prefer to use online communities because they help them expand their network and share opinions and expertise, offer support and immediate feedback from peers, and help them deepen their subject knowledge by allowing them to exchange resources and experiences more freely. Based on studies by Dean et al. (2017) and Xue et al. (2021), online PLCs help teachers advance their professional development while enhancing their instructional strategies. Moreover, Ramdani et al. (2023) showed that ELT teachers had positive attitudes about being part of an online professional learning community, and they showed great enthusiasm for collaborative blog-based learning. Furthermore, Brown (2017) discovered that the PLCs progress teachers' engagement with mobile learning and enrich their knowledge about the use of technology in their teaching and learning.

Previous evaluations of literature have demonstrated that global online PLC activities contribute positively to TPD (Alimirzaee & Ashraf, 2016; Habsi et al., 2020; Putri & Damayanti, 2024), particularly in terms of participants' pedagogical knowledge and abilities, cognitive and emotive elements, technological awareness, and network expansion. Previous studies have addressed how online PLC has contributed to the development of teachers' TPD. However, they have a paucity of empirical data concerning the influence of online PLCs on the enhancement of research and publication abilities among teacher educators (De Wever et al., 2016; Lunenberg et al., 2014, 2017; Smith, 2016) particularly in underdeveloped countries (Linh & Kasule, 2022) where English serves as foreign language like in Indonesia. Several studies have demonstrated that membership in a professional learning team or learning community provides the most advantageous learning environment; as a result, learning among team members is more beneficial than learning on an individual basis (e.g., Van Der Klink et al., 2017). In order to bridge the knowledge gap regarding PLC, particularly with regard to research and publications, the current study utilizes online PLCs to support teacher educators' research expertise and publication abilities within the Indonesian context, particularly on how PLC is considered important to enhance the EFL teachers' participation of academics in the dissemination of research results by means of journals. The following research question is thus raised by the study's focus, "To what extent do online professional learning communities (PLCs) activities facilitate teacher educators' professional development?"

Literature review

Professional learning community (PLC)

Wenger (1998) introduced the concept of community of practice (CoP) or, in this context, professional learning community (PLC), which solidified the idea of the importance of social activities that unite individuals within communities. According to Lave and Wenger (1991), a community of practice is recognized as a successful approach for promoting teacher growth via cooperation, information sharing, and reflective conversation. Professional learning communities (PLCs) are community platforms where individuals with similar commitments join together to engage in cooperative work via an ongoing process of knowledge sharing and research to maximize specific results (Wenger et al., 2002). PLC can be approached in a number of ways, including professional learning groups, collaborative learning communities, and communities of practice (which are often made up of eight to twelve educators each). Conventional PLC activities typically take the shape of one-time seminars, quick courses, or workshop training that is delivered in a cascade fashion and lasts for one day or seven to thirty days (Rienties et al., 2013).

Online PLC

The rapid advancement of information and communication technology (ICT) has resulted in many changes, especially in the professional development of teacher educators. The number of people using online PLC has increased. A Facebook group is one unofficial venue for English language teachers to further their professional development (Bissessar, 2014). Furthermore, scholars have assessed Twitter's influence on educators' instructional approaches and its utility as a community of practice tool (Rosell-Aguilar, 2018). WeChat is an additional platform that is utilized for community practice (Xue et al., 2019). They gain professional development from it. However, they claimed that maintaining the online community of practice could be difficult due to a variety of factors, including the need to establish a good connection with instructors, performance anxiety, scheduling constraints, and dissatisfaction with technology.

Teacher educators enjoy using online PLCs for their professional development because of their hard workloads and desire to cut expenses related to travel and hotel. By taking part in online PLC, teacher educators can connect with more people and get advice and views from more seasoned PLC peers. The study's online PLC offers teacher educators a fresh approach to enhancing their professional growth, particularly in research and worldwide publications, which also makes it easier to share and develop pedagogical information. Furthermore,

Lisnawati (2019) argues that the professional development of Indonesian teachers consists of three demands: having pedagogic, personality, and social competence, implementing a current curriculum for language teaching and learning, and producing graduates with 21st-century skills. In other words, teachers who receive quality professional development are more likely to see an improvement in their skills and abilities (Liu et al., 2015).

Previous studies on PLC in the areas of education

The previous reviews of articles had shown that online PLC activities around the world provide positive contributions towards teacher professional development (TPD), especially in their pedagogical knowledge and skills, their cognitive and affective aspects, their awareness of technology, as well as expanding their network. However, there is a scanty study regarding PLCs in developing countries (Linh & Kasule, 2022). Additionally, the empirical evidence is limited regarding the impact of online PLC on teacher educators' professional development in research and publication skills (De Wever et al., 2016; Lunenberg et al., 2014, 2017; Smith, 2016). Numerous studies showed that the most beneficial learning experience can be obtained by being part of a learning community or a professional learning team; thus, learning between members is more useful than on an individual basis (Van Der Klink et al., 2017). To fill the gap in the study of PLC, especially in research and publications, the present study adopts online PLCs to facilitate teacher educators' research knowledge and publication skills in the Indonesian context.

Method

Design

This project's main objective is to carry out a narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), whereby we gathered narrative data from EFL teachers at universities in Indonesia who have experiences in joining the professional learning community (PLC). According to Clandinin (2006), "human beings both live and tell stories about their living" is the framework in which this design is positioned (p. 44). Because of this, a narrative inquiry methodology is thought to be suitable for the research. Although narrative inquiry is subjective, we acknowledge that it captures the nuances of meaning that are present in the stories and provides a thorough analysis of the facts. With the use of this methodology, we were able to examine how the participant's lived experiences

of learning and using English affected and influenced by political, social, and cultural discourses within the background of the present study (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000).

Participants

This study involved six teacher educators who joined an online PLC. They were labeled TEM (Teacher Educator Male) and TEF (Teacher Educator Female) as the acronyms for these roles. Three males were coded TEM 1, TEM 2, and TEM 3, while three females were coded TEF 1, TEF 2, and TEF 3. They are from various Indonesian universities, and one of them is an Indonesian teacher employed by a foreign university. With the exception of one who was employed by a university overseas, they all have teacher certificates and at least six to ten years of expertise instructing English language learners. In addition to participating actively in unofficial Facebook PLCs, they actively participate in teacher professional development (TPD) through conventional PLC training, workshops, and seminars. The participants' demographic information is available in Table 1.

Table 1

Participants' demographic information

Participant code and information	Length of engagement in online PLC	Publication before the engagement in online PLC			Publication after the engagement in online PLC		
		National accredited journal	International high-indexed journal	Total before ($\sum$)	National accredited journal	International high-indexed journal	Total after ($\sum$)
TEM 1 40 years old, State University in Jember, Indonesia	2	2	0	2	2	15	17
TEM 2 38 years old, University in Thailand	4	0	0	0	1	6	7
TEM 3 43 years old, Private University	2	0	1	1	5	7	12

in Banjarmasin, Indonesia							
TEF 1 46 years old, State University in Surakarta, Indonesia	4	4	0	4	11	5	16
TEF 2 35 years old, Private University in Jakarta, Indonesia	3	0	0	0	4	2	6
TEF 3 45 years old, State University in Medan, Indonesia	3	1	0	1	2	2	4

Note. TEM (Teacher Educator Male); TEF (Teacher Educator Female)

In order to address research ethics, we gave the participants a consent form to sign, confirming their willingness for all the data to be made public. In addition, we made sure that the participants were aware of the study's objectives and that ethical approval was upheld, respecting their rights throughout the process. Ensuring the privacy and confidentiality of study participants was crucial. The participants were required to complete and sign the informed consent form, indicating their willingness to participate in the study and their understanding of it. We sent them a consent document outlining the goals of our study as well as the advantages reading the essay would have for other people.

Instrument

Semi-structured interviews (Wilson, 2014) were utilized in the data collection process to get data in detail. This style of interview is chosen because it gives participants the freedom to express their viewpoints in their own unique ways and helps to capture their views and feelings about particular subjects or occurrences (Wilson, 2014). Semi-structured interviews are beneficial when working with a difficult problem because you may use probes and spontaneous questions to explore, deepen understanding, and provide clarification on answers to questions (Wilson, 2014). The semi-structured interviews consist of eight questions. In an attempt to collect detailed information on research

participants' experiences and interactions more organically, covert observation was also utilized. Finally, the assessment of the document's participants was carried out to ascertain the advancement of their learnings in prior studies and publications.

The interview questions were designed based on the contextual learning theory of Lave and Wenger (1991) and the identity notion proposed by Norton (2000). Questions like 'How do you see yourself and the environment around you? How did you choose to learn English for your academic degree? How do you view yourself in the future?' and 'How did you participate in the classroom activities? What difficulties did you encounter in the classroom activities? How did you cope with those difficulties?' for example, were aligned with the identity notion, while other questions were in line with the situated learning theory. The following queries were covered during the interview sessions: (1) 'How do you see yourself and the PLC you have joined?' (2) 'How did you choose to join PLC?' (3) 'How did you participate in the PLC activities?' (4) 'What difficulties did you encounter in the PLC activities?' (5) 'How did you cope with those difficulties?' (6) 'How do you view your TPD as teachers in the past?' (7) 'How do you view your TPD as teachers in the present?' and (8) 'How do you view TPD as teachers in the future?'

Data collection

Each participant received a letter asking them to affirm that they were allowed to take part in the study. Following their agreement, they were requested to submit their resumes and publications as proof of accomplishment. After that, a semi-structured interview (Wilson, 2014) was conducted three times over Zoom with a time allotment of ± 45–50 minutes. The language of the interview was English. The primary source of data for this study is an interview, with two covert observations conducted to document participants' interactions and lived experiences during their involvement in online PLCs, serving as supporting data. The information from the participants' resumes was carefully reviewed to see how far they had come in their publications and research before and after joining PLCs. The semi-structured interviews were recorded, and the transcripts (Widodo, 2014).

Data analysis

The present study applied thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) that involved six steps: familiarizing, coding, looking for themes, reviewing themes, naming themes, and writing. To have a deep familiarity with the data, the fully edited transcripts were read. They listened to at least three times, and the participant

documents and their lived experiences from the observation were carefully read at least twice. Each data set was carefully coded in order to produce significant labels pertinent to the research questions. The collection of codes was carefully analyzed to look for patterns in the similarities and differences.

After discovering the themes (Table 2), we examined the themes by determining how each theme related to the others. To develop specific and educational themes for this study, we took into account the themes' compatibility with the research questions. Prior to compiling the themes, we used peer debriefing techniques to analyze and classify the transcripts in collaboration with a number of peer experts. This was done in order to ensure that the data was reliable. Triangulating data sources involved comparing information from the interview, observation, participant research, publications, and artifacts in an effort to increase the validity of the findings during the analysis phase.

Table 2
Sample of data extract, with codes and potential themes

Data extract	Potential themes
I seem to be increasingly discovering the essence of what it is to be a teacher educator after many discussions via the PLC Online forum. Previously, I only felt that my job was to teach, but from being cynical, I understood what it was to be a teacher. (TM1)	Changes in identity construction
If I hadn't joined PLC, I don't know; perhaps up to now, I wouldn't have been confident about how to write good research because I was continuing my doctoral degree and also had minimal knowledge of research because, during my years of teaching, I rarely did research. In this forum we practiced writing what good research looks like. (TEF 1)	Improved writing skills and research publication

Trustworthiness

During the data verification procedure, we used member checking (Merriam, 1998) to ensure the study was reliable. Here is how this was accomplished: Initially, the participants were asked to examine, discuss, and offer recommendations regarding the information. Secondly, we presented comprehensive and detailed explanations of the results (Merriam, 1998; Sudarwati et al., 2022; Yulianti & Mukminin, 2021). Third, we reviewed the completed paper to ensure that the meaning-building and flow were correct. During this stage, we examined if the theoretical underpinnings of disability were appropriate and how this theory fit the participant's narrative flow, which could then be connected through the construction of participant's stories

regarding their experiences when joining PLCs. In addition, the previous studies were also checked to ensure that the studies used are relevant to the present study.

Findings

The study's findings are influenced by the backward and forward lines of storying found in Connelly and Clandinin (2000). The results have been thematically classified in accordance with Braun and Clarke (2006). This study was designed to explore the contribution of a professional learning community (PLC) on teacher educators' professional development competence. The findings mean to answer the following research problem, namely, "To what extent do online professional learning communities (PLCs) activities facilitate teacher educators' professional development?"

The research results show that participants who are members of the online PLC get many benefits in their teacher professional development. Their joining the online PLC has had a significant impact on participants' literacy regarding their teacher professional development (TPD). This study shows that English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers periodically worked on their professional development. Through PLC, they witness their transformation from inexperienced EFL teachers to more seasoned educators in terms of their internal feelings, external interactions, and institutional and social environments (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Their improvement in TPD seems to have been impacted by both their participation in PLC and past experiences. Overall, the following is a summary of their TPD development over time:

Identity construction changes: Finding out the essence of teacher educator

Identity has been understood as the way a person understands his or her relationship to the world, "how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future" (Norton, 2000, p. 5). The EFL teachers' involvement in online PLC has changed their identity construction from time to time. This is declared by the participants, for example, TM 1 and TF 2, as follows:

> I seem to be increasingly discovering the essence of what it is to be a teacher educator after many discussions via the online PLC forum. Previously, I only felt that my job was to teach, but from being cynical, I understood what it was to be a teacher. (TM 1)

> I am increasingly understanding my identity as a teacher educator and whatever it is called, and I do not consider teaching as a job but as a noble duty that I must carry out seriously. (TF 2)

The data above show that the two participants experienced a fundamental change in identity from initially just teaching and just carrying out tasks. However, since joining PLC, they have changed their identity to become people who know that, in reality, a teacher cannot just be a teacher but must be maximal in imparting knowledge.

Improved writing skills and research publication

This study found that online PLC helps the participants in improving their research knowledge. They become more literate on current research trends, which helps them decide on topics for their dissertation proposal. This is indicated in the statements of TEF 1 and TEM 2:

> If I hadn't joined PLC, I don't know; perhaps up to now, I wouldn't have been confident about how to write good research because I was continuing my doctoral degree and also had minimal knowledge of research because, during my years of teaching, I rarely did research. In this forum we practiced writing what good research looks like. (TEF 1)

> The workshop I was following online served me well. It is cost-effective, but still, we can get lots of knowledge from the experts on stuff dealing with research. For doctoral students like me, this PLC really helps. I previously was quite in the dark and felt sort of confusion when it deals with my dissertation proposal. Soon, I joined it, and I saw many opportunities wide open for my research proposal and see what's new. (TEM 2)

The above excerpts show that the participants were very happy to join their online PLC. Their previous PLCs also initiated workshops and training on academic research that helped to develop knowledge on designing research.
    Furthermore, the workshops and training only provide general knowledge. The facilitator's explanations were somewhat awesome, and they provided hands-on experience. The same thing is also revealed by TEM 3 and TEF 1:

> I joined one of the formal PLCs in 2019 up to now. This community holds international seminars annually. I got updated with the latest issues in ELT. To develop my skills in research, I also joined an informal research community called an English journal where some of the researchers and editors around the world gathered and had meaningful discussions in research and publications. (TEM 3)

> I'm interested in technology, so I decided to join one of the organizations engaged in the field of English language education technology. Through this forum, I got several friends who are teacher educators from universities in Indonesia and from abroad. I got updated information about the research trends in technology from them. (TEF 1)

In the above excerpts, the participant finds that participating in an online PLC gives her the opportunity to connect with people who share her interests and potentially work together in the future. Her increased knowledge from the online PLC enables her to conduct further research on the application of technology in education. This broadens her perspective.

Improving pedagogical practices in English language teaching (ELT)

Besides becoming more literate in research trends, joining online PLC also helps the participants in improving their pedagogical competencies in ELT. The study found that joining PLCs also contributes to developing their pedagogical aspects in ELT. The other two participants also felt some benefits from the PLC they followed. They thought their PLCs could help them develop their career and improve their pedagogical practices in ELT. This is revealed by TEM 2 and TEM 3 as follows.

> Previously, teaching research and methodology was quite a challenge for me as I am still in the middle of nowhere for some aspects of research. Now I feel more confident" I understand better about several research designs and the amalgam of those designs. I have tried to submit my manuscript to one of the international high-indexed journals after that. (TEM 2)

> This PLC improves my understanding of research, and it really enhances my pedagogical competence, especially in the research methodology course. I have become more confident when teaching research and methodology classes. (TEM 3)

The excerpts above indicate that all participants get lots of benefits from the PLCs they follow, for they can receive more information, especially in pedagogy and practices about research and publication. It deals with issues of research designs, quantitative and qualitative data analysis and data collection, tips and tricks to publish in international high-indexed journals, as well as pedagogy and practices about teaching. TEM 3 informed:

> During the pandemic, I found an online PLC called PERIISAI *(Perkumpulan Peneliti dan penulis Ilmu Sosial Indonesia)*. I decided to join the webinar on quantitative methods and analysis. Quantitative designs and analyses are very

complex. I used to dislike them because, for me, it's complicated. But, the facilitator in this webinar gives a simple but concise explanation. I got to know much better about the design and the analysis. Wanna give it a try for my next research. (TEM 3)

The participant indicates that joining PLC gives him more understanding of certain research approaches. The online PLC facilitator successfully clarifies the idea of quantitative design to be more understandable. As a result, it encourages him to do more research on it.

Broadening collegial relationship

One of the benefits of participating in PLC is expanding the collegial network of fellow EFL teachers. By gathering and joining this online PLC, a teacher does not need to come to a place and pay expensive fees just to be able to gain knowledge in the academic community but can do so through an affordable and cheap digital platform. From this, there are various kinds of engagements that are formed, starting from joint research opportunities on a national and international scale, collaborative outreach to the community, and other academic engagements. This is expressed by TEF 1 and TEF 2 as follows.

I am very lucky to be able to join and be able to get the opportunity in this Online PLC because I can expand my collegial network not only within the campus scope but also on a national and even international scale so that opportunities for joint research are wide open and of course, international and national collaboration is also wide open. (TEF 1)

Online PLC is very useful; how can we not virtually meet academics outside our reach on a global scale, which gives us many opportunities to learn from each other with fellow EFL teachers? (TEF 2)

One of the benefits of joining online PLC is the greater chances to get more and more friends having the same passion in a certain field or what we call a collegial relationship. This happens because online PLC gives greater chances for all people around the world, regardless of where they are, to get into a forum where everybody can join and discuss each other's research interests. The facilitators in the online PLC facilitate a group discussion enabling the online PLC participants to be in a group having the same interest.

Becoming a more reflective teacher

Online PLC also helps its members to be more reflective teachers. Long before joining PLC, these teachers would never think about their teaching progress.

Through PLC, they stated that they become more and more reflective teachers. For example, TEM 1 and TEM 2 expressed:

> In the past, I just taught without thinking that teaching should be reflected on so that we, as teachers, can understand the shortcomings of the teaching process we carry out. Since joining this PLC, I have become very sensitive to what I do in class, how my students respond, and whether I am successful or not in teaching. (TEM 1)

> We rarely do being a reflective teacher, but this PLC community has taught me how necessary it is for the development of our teacher professional development and that of our students. By reflecting we will know what is lacking and what we need to improve in what way. (TEM 2)

The excerpts above describe that the online PLC activities that participants join make them more reflective in teaching. They become more aware of the teaching and learning process they have conducted. They are finally aware that the teaching process needs to be evaluated to know its lacks. Asking students about their learning or providing them with a questionnaire will really help students and teachers to keep evaluating their teaching and learning process.

Discussion

This study's primary goal was to find out how online professional learning community (PLC) helps teacher educators' teacher professional development (TPD). The discussion provides further elaboration on how PLC can help teachers in terms of (1) improving their teacher's identity, (2) improving teachers' research and publication skills, (3) improving teachers' pedagogical skills, (4) improving teacher's collegial relationship, and (5) making the teachers to be more and more reflective in teaching

An online PLC is more than just a group of friends creating networks for entertainment purposes or to share interests. In order to increase their shared knowledge and competencies, they appreciate their collective learning and are eager to pick up new skills from one another. Members of PLC have an identity determined by a shared domain of interest (Graven, 2003). Since their common competencies set them apart from other organizations, they continue to be dedicated to their domain. Their dedication to a team motivates them to fulfill their responsibilities and see the team through to victory. Graven (2003) asserts that learning in a society is a process of changing who we are (identity) and what we are capable of, not just a summation of knowledge and abilities. This is also

in line with Norton (2000) that identity has been considered a multifaceted construct that is defined as "how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future. These English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers experienced how their identity changed once they joined this online PLC.

The results demonstrated that nearly all participants showed comparable competencies in writing research and international publications prior to beginning their PLC careers. Their research expertise was old, their networks were small, and they struggled to publish in internationally recognized and domestically certified publications. Their proficiency in research methodologies was also low. They started to demonstrate improvement in their publication skills and research expertise once they joined online PLCs. By conducting collaborative research, they have successfully distributed their publications in international journals with high index counts. The online PLCs frequently hold webinars on research techniques and how to publish successfully in prestigious international journals. Participants in online PLCs have numerous options to work together on research projects with community members from different Indonesian or international institutions. Through this partnership, each participant may have the opportunity to gain knowledge from the other and expand their research toolkit.

According to Ampartzaki et al. (2013), learning involves more than just acquiring knowledge; it also involves fostering interaction among members of a learning community so that knowledge can be shared and mutual learning can occur. Furthermore, Graven's (2003) component of meaning explains that learning occurs when we are able to engage in meaningful experiences and as a result of social interaction. Development as a professional does not occur in a vacuum. In order to learn more and create new experiences, people must engage in meaningful shared activities like those found in this study, like working together on publications and research projects or participating in online learning communities with other professionals.

Another benefit of online PLCs is to facilitate teacher educators' pedagogical knowledge. Dealing with innovations in English language teaching (ELT), the participants agreed that online PLCs also contribute to the changing of teacher educators' paradigms, especially in their traditional ways of teaching. Teacher educators who used to be old fashioned in their teaching instructions and rarely incorporated technology in the classroom, after they joined online PLC, became aware of the importance of using technology to provide the best educational experience for the students. It is very crucial to be abreast with technological

advancement so that teacher educators keep updated with the recent trends in ELT and they will not lag. This finding agrees with a study from Tamaki and Ishii (2023). With the advanced transformation of information and communication technology (ICT) in education, professional learning complemented by technology is crucial for teachers, in which teachers can develop new innovations in teaching and create more flexible learning spaces. According to Wenger et al. (2002), PLC is identical to sharing knowledge, which may lead to higher productivity of the members, which leads to better outcomes. The members of this online PLC are motivated to engage in collaborative research and publication in international high-indexed journals so that the new and inexperienced members can learn from those with more experience in conducting research and international publications.

EFL TPD can also be seen through the expansion of collegial relationships. Through time, these EFL teachers show that their engagement and participation in a community of practice, in this case, PLC can benefit them in many ways. Their alignment with an academic community involved a variety of learning processes requiring them to be more aware of the importance of gaining recognition in a community, and not merely being involved in an academic forum that has no purpose for knowledge and skills may not be enough but awareness on the importance of collaboration among us in stabling knowledge is very much acknowledge here. This perspective sees becoming a successful researcher in academia as requiring extremely hard and demanding effort (Austin, 2002). Through this collegial relationship, teachers can work on collaborative research as well. According to Wadesango (2014), collaborative research has been promoted in industrialized nations as a way to promote information exchange and idea synthesis, which not only produces high-quality research but also helps researchers build their research competencies.

Last, PLC helps EFL teachers to be more reflective teacher educators. This is according to Farrell (2012), who stated that the responsibility of a teacher is to be able to think critically about what he has done in the classroom and how he might reflect on it. To put it another way, instructors are no longer passive practitioners who rely solely on the ideas they study without questioning them when things go wrong during or after implementation. This reflection deals with practices ranging from assessing a particular aspect of a lesson to considering the ethical, social, and political consequences of teaching practice (Larrivee, 2008). This reflection later can entail educational experiences as a basis for evaluation and decision-making, as well as a source of change (Richards & Lockhart, 2005). Therefore, we realize the importance of reflection for teachers who implement various educational techniques in the classroom. The development of a reflective

practice discourse owes much to the work of Dewey and Schon, who both advocated for the integration of experience with reflection and theory with practice (Humphreys & Susak, 2000).

Online PLC is a new platform in Indonesia that emerged during COVID-19 and can help facilitate the teacher educators' research and publication competencies. However, there are several drawbacks to the implementation of online PLC. The first online PLC investigated in this study was conducted with a top-down approach. However, several studies claimed that conducting virtual professional development in a bottom-up approach, which is based on the teachers' necessities, is more beneficial than a top-down (Darling-Hammond, 2017; Macià & García, 2016). Recognizing the importance of professional development in research and publication in the careers of teacher educators, it is highly recommended that they take part in online PLCs that have been proven to facilitate their teacher professional development.

The participants' experiences in this study have yielded significant findings, but it is also open to several limitations. Firstly, conducting research with six participants is risky when it comes to bias and subjective findings. Therefore, future research agendas are encouraged to recruit more participants in order to better convey and verify findings from similar studies. Secondly, using in-depth interviews in this study is not without problems. Future research should use multiple data collection in an attempt to document a more comprehensive data collection.

Conclusion

This narrative case study seeks to find out how the activities in online professional learning communities (PLCs) facilitate teacher educators' research and publication skills and how their views of online PLCs for their professional development. The findings reveal that the activities practiced in the online professional learning community (PLC) can empower teacher educators' research knowledge and international publications skills as well as help to sharpen the teacher educators' knowledge in pedagogy and refine their teaching practices. Teacher educators are aware of the importance of research for their future professional development, and they have big intentions to develop their research and publication competencies by involving themselves in online PLC.

The rapid development of information and communication technology (ICT) has brought many changes, especially in the professional development of teacher educators. Due to the high working loads and to save expenses on transportation

and accommodation budgets, teacher educators prefer the use of online PLCs as a means of their professional learning. Getting involved in online PLC provides opportunities for teacher educators to broaden their networks so that they can learn and get more information from fellow PLCs who are more experienced. Online PLC in this study provides a new model for teacher educators in Indonesia to improve their professional development, especially in research and international publications also facilitates the shared knowledge building in pedagogy.

These findings are expected to enlighten other educators to evaluate their professional development, especially in dealing with research and publications, so that they can consider the use of online PLCs to develop their research and publication skills. This study is limited to narrating how the process of collaborative research in online PLCs can boost teacher educators' research and publication competencies.

The participants' experiences in this study have yielded significant findings, but it is also open to several limitations. First, further study is required to measure the implication of collaborative research as part of online PLC activities so that it can be used for up-to-date professional development for educators across Indonesia. Next, the use of in-depth interviews in this study is not without its problems. Future research should use multiple data collection in order to document a more comprehensive data collection. Last, changes in participants' identity construction need to be further investigated to see how the changes really affect them in the past, present, and future with regard to their position as EFL teachers.

Knowing the results of this study could inspire English teachers, whether working in post-secondary or secondary education settings, to constantly advance their pedagogical expertise through PLCs. The study's participants' stories provide insights into the pedagogical implications of redesigning PhD student writing practice courses. The results of this study could also be used by policymakers to implement PLC training for educators on how to handle and utilize this PLC efficiently.

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