

ABSTRACT

Title of dissertation: Providing Online Professional Development for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Teachers: A Study of an Online Educational Technology Course for Latin American EFL Teachers

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The current international situation has made it very difficult for teacher exchange programs to continue. September 11, 2001 brought an abrupt halt to the award winning UMBC Egyptian Teacher Leader Program (1994-2001). This professional development program was designed to develop a global community of teacher leaders for a diverse and dynamic world. In times of international unrest, the challenge is to keep the global intellectual spirit alive. Addressing this challenge, this study of a constructivist, online professional development course (ELC 600: Educational Technology for EFL Contexts) for Latin American, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers makes significant contributions to the knowledge bases of creating professional cyber learning communities for non-native English speakers in TESOL (NNEST), EFL technology-enhanced teaching, and the pedagogy of online instruction.

Qualitative methodologies were used in this study to examine the pedagogy of the online professional development course and the ways in which

participants (EFL teachers) envision using technology to enhance their students' learning. Results of the study show that multi-level collaboration and fostering student autonomy and engagement in authentic activities are central to the success of online professional development courses. EFL teachers/participants increased in their confidence and ability to develop theory-based rationales for integrating technology into their teaching, to adapt teaching strategies to their students' needs and local contexts, to collaborate more effectively with other teachers and their students, and to critically select appropriate technology. The outcomes of this study serve to create broader understandings in the field of TESOL and, specifically, in the areas of NNEST and EFL. Non-native speaking English teachers in EFL environments are often neglected in terms of professional development. Results of this study serve as a heuristic for other teacher educators interested in addressing this issue.