

Effectiveness of MOOCS and Webinars for Teacher Educators' Professional Development

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Abstract:

Professional development has become a cornerstone of teacher education, ensuring that teacher educators remain competent, innovative, and aligned with global educational practices. In recent years, digital learning environments—particularly Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and webinars—have become prominent tools for professional growth. This paper critically examines the effectiveness of MOOCs and webinars in enhancing the professional competencies of teacher educators. It explores their unique benefits, limitations, and comparative advantages while highlighting implications for institutional practice and policy. The findings indicate that MOOCs and webinars provide flexible, affordable, and globally relevant opportunities for teacher educators, yet challenges such as technological barriers, lack of sustained engagement, and limited institutional recognition persist. The paper concludes that a blended and well-structured approach can maximize the impact of MOOCs and webinars in supporting lifelong professional development.

Keywords: MOOCs, webinars, teacher educators, professional development, online learning, lifelong learning

Introduction

Teacher educators hold a vital role in preparing future teachers with the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in modern classrooms. As education continues to evolve with digital

transformation, professional development opportunities for teacher educators must also adapt. Traditionally, professional development relied on in-person workshops, seminars, and conferences. However, these approaches often faced limitations in terms of cost, accessibility, and scalability (Morris & Lambe, 2020).

In response to these limitations, online platforms such as MOOCs and webinars have emerged as powerful alternatives. MOOCs—Massive Open Online Courses—are structured, large-scale online courses often developed by universities or international organizations. Webinars, meanwhile, are shorter, interactive, real-time sessions designed for focused knowledge sharing. Both platforms surged in popularity during the COVID-19 pandemic, proving their potential to support ongoing professional learning in education.

This article examines the effectiveness of MOOCs and webinars as professional development tools for teacher educators, focusing on their advantages, challenges, and future implications.

MOOCs and Teacher Educators' Professional Development

MOOCs have been recognized for their capacity to democratize education by making quality learning resources widely accessible. For teacher educators, MOOCs present opportunities to update their knowledge in pedagogy, research, and digital teaching practices.

Advantages of MOOCs

1. **Accessibility and Flexibility** – MOOCs allow participants to engage at their own pace and time, supporting busy professional schedules (Chiappe & Arias, 2021).
2. **Cost Efficiency** – Many MOOCs are free or offered at minimal cost, reducing financial barriers.
3. **Global Networking** – Participation in MOOCs fosters cross-cultural exchange of ideas among educators worldwide.
4. **Wide Range of Topics** – MOOCs cover diverse areas including curriculum design, educational technology, and inclusive pedagogy.

Limitations of MOOCs

MOOCs often face issues such as high dropout rates, limited opportunities for personalized feedback, and challenges in applying abstract knowledge into local classroom contexts (Shah, 2022). Teacher educators in developing regions also face technological barriers, including poor internet connectivity and lack of access to devices.

Webinars and Teacher Educators' Professional Development

Webinars provide shorter, topic-specific learning opportunities. They are interactive and often focus on immediate, practical issues in education.

Benefits of Webinars

1. **Real-Time Engagement** – Live interaction with experts encourages discussion and knowledge exchange (Nash, 2021).
2. **Convenience and Time Efficiency** – Webinars are typically short, allowing busy professionals to participate without significant disruption.
3. **Relevance** – Many webinars address emerging issues in education, such as digital assessment, hybrid classrooms, or policy updates.
4. **Collaborative Opportunities** – Breakout sessions, polls, and chat discussions enhance active participation.

Limitations of Webinars

Effectiveness of webinars is often limited by passive participation, technical glitches, and lack of follow-up activities. Without additional resources or reflection, webinars may provide only surface-level learning.

Comparative Effectiveness of MOOCs and Webinars

MOOCs and webinars differ in scope, structure, and outcomes, yet both contribute significantly to professional development. MOOCs provide **long-term, structured learning** experiences, while webinars are more effective for **short-term, immediate knowledge updates**.

Research suggests that teacher educators benefit most when both formats are combined. MOOCs foster deep, sustained learning, while webinars provide platforms for dialogue and contextual reflection (Gokool-Ramdoo & Ifenthaler, 2021). Thus, integrating the two can create a balanced model of professional growth.

Implications for Teacher Educators' Professional Development

1. **Institutional Support:** Universities and teacher training institutions should recognize MOOCs and webinars as valid professional development activities.
2. **Blended Approaches:** A hybrid model combining face-to-face workshops, MOOCs, and webinars ensures comprehensive professional learning.
3. **Digital Competence:** Teacher educators must be equipped with digital literacy skills to fully benefit from online learning platforms.
4. **Policy Integration:** Governments and accreditation bodies should incorporate MOOCs and webinars into structured professional development frameworks.

Conclusion

MOOCs and webinars have redefined professional development for teacher educators by offering flexible, affordable, and globally relevant learning opportunities. While MOOCs provide structured, in-depth learning pathways, webinars facilitate short, interactive engagements with immediate applicability. The combination of both creates a dynamic professional learning environment that aligns with the demands of 21st-century education.

However, challenges such as technological inequalities, engagement issues, and lack of institutional recognition must be addressed to maximize their potential.

Moving forward, blended professional development strategies supported by institutional and policy frameworks can ensure that teacher educators remain effective, innovative, and globally connected.

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