



Analysis of an Online Community of Practice of Physical Education Professionals

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Abstract

This research studies the functioning of an online community of practice of physical education (PE) professionals. In the 2013/2014 and 2014/2015 academic years, 45 participants interacted in (Re)Produce, a community belonging to the MultiScopic virtual platform, where exchanges of experiences, information, opinions and suggestions take place based on the teaching practice of several teachers in schools in four provinces in Spain, which are shared in the community via photographs, videos and textual narrations. During the study, the functioning of this community of practice was analysed, along with the PE knowledge generated by it from three different standpoints, as well as its capacity as a means of teachers' professional development, starting with pre-service training. As it is essentially a qualitative study, interviews with the participants at different levels of professional socialisation were held to collect data in the successive phases of the study; two field diaries were created by the researcher, and the texts produced by the members of the community were analysed using scatter plots and were compared with the existing theoretical corpus to establish differences and similarities. The study confirmed the difficulty of sharing knowledge and experiences due to the dispersion of dialogues, which take place in the participants' comfort zones, involving a vast variety of topics discussed, forms of dialogue and types of participation. Multiple participation barriers and motivations were identified in both pre-service teachers and those engaged in continuous training in different educational stages. This study also monitored the assimilation process via the virtual community of a new pedagogical trend by one participant and investigated the potential usefulness of this platform for teachers' professional development, although certain aspects need to be improved before it can be offered as a more effective tool for this purpose.

Keywords: physical education, virtual community of practice, teachers' professional development