

The Impact of Convenience on Saudi Teachers and Supervisors for Using Online Professional Development in Saudi Arabia

Ali Suwayid Alqarni[†]

Umm Al-Qura University, Makkah, Makkah, SA

Summary

This quantitative study explored the extent to which convenience enhances professional development (PD) online. The sample of the study consisted of 421 teachers and supervisors. Findings evinced that convenience stimulated online PD. Another salient finding is the absence of significant differences among participants' responses concerning position and gender. Nonetheless, a significant difference exists in the variable of teaching experience. Teachers with more than 26-year experience were motivated to use online PD, which evidently could be attributed to the convenience they had over teachers with fewer years of experience.

Keyword:

Impact of Convenience, Online Professional Development, Teacher and Supervisors

Introduction

Although OPD is a well-known alternative for those teachers who cannot attend face-to-face professional development, only a few Saudi studies highlighted this form of development. Alharbi [1] examined the effectiveness of an online community of English teachers, showing a remarkable impact on teachers who acquired new English teaching skills.

Online PD was first offered in the second quarter of 2015, and is therefore considered a modern method of PD in Saudi Arabia. It is offered by one district, Makkah, which offers many training programs conducted by supervisors each semester [2].

OPD Policies at the Center of Distance Training in the Makkah District

The Center of Distance Training in the Makkah District has regulations for those teachers who want to benefit from this type of professional development. According to the Center of Distance Training in Makkah District [2], the conditions are as follows:

- The trainee should be affiliated with the district or to Saudi schools that are dispersed across the world.

- The training programs should be harmonious with targeted teachers as stipulated in the online professional development program plan.
- The training programs should not exceed three programs per semester for each teacher.
- The trainee should not select a program that he or she has previously attended, either face-to-face or through online professional development programs.
- The trainee should register for programs through the Distance Training in Makkah website.
- To begin asynchronous training programs, the trainee should log on to the website within the training period determined by the Department of Electronic Training, and peruse the other training programs as well as the required projects.
- The trainee must fulfill the required projects for each program, including the trainee's full name and the program number in each file name.
- The trainee should email the projects to the Department of Electronic Training at a specific time based on the plan the department issued.
- The trainee should evaluate the programs he or she has attended in order to obtain an attendance certificate for each program.

One of the features that an online setting provides for participants is the opportunity to refer to course materials whenever and wherever they want. McCormack and Griffiths [3] indicated that online gambling saves time and can be done anywhere. In a similar study of online shopping, the results indicated that one of the major motives for online shoppers was convenience [4]. In the field of education, participants have pointed out convenience as a critical component of online learning [5]. Approximately two-thirds of respondents indicated that convenience motivated them to choose online courses [6]. Online learning can serve as a motivation for those who, because of work obligations, do not have the required time

for face-to-face sessions that widen and pursue knowledge [7-8]. El Mansour and Mupinga [9] studied college students' experiences in an online and hybrid course. One of the comments with regard to convenience made by one of the study's participants suggested "being able to do your work online on your own schedule allows me to go back to school while working full time" (p. 246). Another time-based convenience online learning can offer participants is the possibility of repetition. Kibelloh and Yukun [10] looked into foreign female students' perceptions of e-learning to resolve issues involved with pursuing higher education abroad and reducing family stress. One of their findings indicates that online courses enable users to repeat a course as often as they like.

In addition, convenience also comes in the form of geographic flexibility. El Mansour and Mupinga [9] reported student comments indicating that one only needs computer access to take online courses, regardless of location. Hamel, Allaire, and Turcotte [11] carried out a study that offered OPD for teachers in rural areas. The results indicated that the OPD offered provided an enriching learning setting for the participants. Teachers and students living in isolated and rural areas can be motivated to attend online classes because they do not have to attend on-site classes [12-13]. Cady and Rearden [14] studied four OPD courses to address the needs of mathematics teachers in a rural middle school. Their findings showed that teachers' instructional content knowledge increased through the use of the online courses. In the Saudi context, few researchers spotlighted the importance of convenience produced by online learning. Al-Ghonaim [15] conducted a study to examine the instructors' and administrators' opinions, difficulties, and motivation to implement online learning. The results showed that convenience was a key incentive for participants to use online learning. Ziyadah [16] also came to similar conclusions in their research. In other words, they concluded that participants pointed out that flexibility in time and place are fundamental and encouraged them to utilize online learning.

Participants and Methodology

The descriptive approach, which is a type of quantitative research methodology, was conducted in this study. The population is Saudi teachers who reside in Saudi Arabia's western region. The sample consists of 421 teachers who were randomly selected. The distribution of the sample was gender-based. The male participants

represented the majority by 61.3%, while female participants comprised 38.7%. It could be said that there are always fewer female participants in such studies than male participants and that is related to societal factors in Saudi Arabia. Regarding years of experience, participants of the study with between 0-5 years made up 10.2%, while 17.8% had between 6-10 years, and 18.8% had 11-15 years. It is obvious that 20.0% of the participants had 16-20 years of experience, whereas 20.4% had 21-25 years, and 12.8% had more than 26 years. It is clear from the distribution of the sample that the respondents were widely experienced and the sample was fairly distributed.

Results

Research Question 1: To what degree does convenience motivate Saudi teachers and supervisors and supervisors to use OPD?

To answer this question, the perceptions of the study sample were examined by frequencies, percentages, and average means, as displayed in Table 1.

Table 1: Participant Responses Regarding the Degree to Which Convenience Motivates Saudi Teachers and Supervisors to Use OPD

		ST. agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	ST. Disagree	Mean	ST. Deviation
I would be motivated to take online professional development (OPD) because it will provide me with a more flexible schedule.	F	15	21	3	1	5	4.1	0.8
I would be motivated to take online professional development (OPD) because it provides me with the ability to accommodate other needs, including, transportation, child	F	14	20	3	2	8	4.1	0.8

care, and family needs								
I would be motivated to take OPD because it can enable me to minimize commuting time.	F 2	16	2	5	3	4.	0.7	
	2	4	0			4	1	
	9					5		
	% 5	39	4.	1	0			
	4.	.0	8	.	.			
	4			2	7			
I would be motivated to take OPD because of the time constraints of my teaching responsibilities	F 1	19	2	8	4	4.	0.7	
	9	6	2			3	5	
	1					3		
	% 4	46	5.	1	1			
	5.	.6	2	.	.			
	4			9	0			
I would be motivated to take OPD because of the time constraints due to commuter related issues such as wear and tear on car, gas, and mileage.	F 1	18	3	1	1	4.	0.7	
	9	0	1	5		3	8	
	4					1		
	% 4	42	7.	3	0			
	6.	.8	4	.	.			
	1			6	2			
Inconvenient times of face-to-face training programs motivate me to opt for OP	F 1	17	3	1	3	4.	0.8	
	9	4	4	6		2	2	
	4					8		
	% 4	41	8.	3	0			
	6.	.3	1	.	.			
	1			8	7			
Inconvenient locations of face-to-face training programs motivate me to opt for OPD.	F 2	15	2	1	2	4.	0.8	
	1	9	9	5		3	0	
	6					6		
	% 5	37	6.	3	0			
	1.	.8	9	.	.			
	3			6	5			
Reaching supervisors and teachers in different geographical locations motivate me to opt for OPD.	F 2	17	2	1	1	4.	0.7	
	0	2	9	2		3	5	
	7					6		
	% 4	40	6.	2	0			
	9.	.9	9	.	.			
	2			9	2			
I would be motivated to take OPD since it can provide an opportunity to reach teachers and supervisors at various phases of live learning (e.g. more experienced/mature,	F 2	17	3	9	1	4.	0.7	
	0	1	1			3	3	
	9					7		
	% 4	40	7.	2	0			
	9.	.6	4	.	.			
	6			1	2			

younger/ older, and so on.								
I would be motivated to take OPD since it can give way to reach teachers and supervisors who come from varied cultural background.	F 1	17	3	1	1	4.	0.7	
	9	8	5	1		3	6	
	6					2		
	% 4	42	8.	2	0			
	6.	.3	3	.	.			
	6			6	2			
Total Grand Mean						4.	0.5	
						3	2	
						1		

The results in Table 1 present the sample's responses regarding how much convenience is a motivator for Saudi teachers and supervisors to use OPD. The overall mean value is 4.31. Therefore, it can be concluded that Saudi teachers and supervisors strongly agreed that convenience motivates them to use OPD. These results prove that convenience is the biggest motivator for Saudi teachers and supervisors in their use of OPD. This section will focus on the main convenience points that could lead Saudi teachers and supervisors to use OPD, based on their responses in Table 1. The statement with the highest mean score (4.45) was "I would be motivated to take OPD because it can provide me with the ability to reduce commuting time." The percentage of participants who responded between strongly agree and agree was 93.4%, whereas only 1.9% had negative views. On the other hand, the statement with the lowest mean score (4.11) was "I would be motivated to take online professional development (OPD) because it provides me with the ability to accommodate other life needs such as child care, transportation, and family needs." Table 1 illustrates that 84.6% responded between strongly agree and agree, while the remaining participants either had unclear views or negative opinions toward this statement. It can be concluded that even though this statement received a high mean score, it still represents the lowest mean score among all statements. The rest of the statements' mean scores rated between 4.37 and 4.18, and it is worthy to mention that these statements have been ordered in accordance to their mean scores in the following section. The mean score of the statement "I would be motivated to take OPD since it can provide an opportunity to reach

teachers and supervisors at various phases of live learning (e.g. more experienced/mature, younger/ older, and so on.) was 4.37. The data in Table 1 shows that 90.2% of the sample both strongly agreed and agreed about this statement, while only 2.3% had negative responses. Participants who were undecided made up 7.4% of the sample.

Furthermore, the statements “I would be motivated to take OPD because face-to-face training programs are scheduled at inconvenient locations” and “I would be motivated to take OPD since it can provide an opportunity to reach teachers and supervisors in different geographical locations” had the same mean score of 4.36. The approximate breakdown of these two statements is 89.5%agreed, 3.5% disagreed, and 6.9% made no clear decision.

The statement “I would be motivated to take OPD because of the time constraints of my teaching responsibilities” had a mean score of 4.33. Only 2.9% of the participants reported negative views, and 5.2% were neutral. The remaining 91.9% of the sample reported positive views of either strongly agree or agree.

The statements “I would be motivated to take OPD since it can provide an opportunity to reach teachers and supervisors with different cultural backgrounds” and “I would be motivated to take OPD because of the time constraints due to commuter related issues such as wear and tear on car, gas, and mileage” showed mean scores of 4.32 and 4.31 respectively. Approximately 11.1% of the participants had no clear decision or negative views, whereas approximately 88.9% had positive opinions toward this statement.

The statement “I would be motivated to take OPD because face-to-face training programs are scheduled at inconvenient times” received a mean score of 4.28. 87.4% of the respondents generally agreed with the statement. However, 12.6% of the respondents made no clear decision or had negative views.

Regarding the last statement, 87.4% of the responses indicated that a flexible schedule provided by OPD would motivate them to participate. However, only 4.3% of the participants had negative views. Thirty-five respondents, or 8.3%, did not have a clear opinion about this statement. The mean was 4.18.

Research Question 2: To what degree does gender impact participant responses concerning online PD use?

To answer this research question, t-test statistics were analyzed.

Table 2. *T-test Results of the Impact of Gender Regarding the Effect of Convenience, Collaboration and Technology on Online Professional Development.*

Gender	Sample size	Mean	SD	T-test	Degrees of freedom	P-value
Male	258	4.32	0.49	0.573	419	0.57
Female	163	4.29	0.57			

Table 2 shows that the P-values for the t-test statistics are greater than 0.05, which means the nonexistence of statistically significant differences between responses of males and females regarding the factors that affect Saudi teachers 'use of OPD.

Research Question 3: To what degree do years of teaching experience and level of degree impact participant responses regarding the use of OPD?

Both ANOVA and Kruskal –Wallis tests were performed in order to determine whether or not there was a significant effect from years of experience or level of degree on participants’ responses regarding use of OPD.

Table 3 *Analysis of Variances (ANOVA) Test to Examine the Impact Years of Experience Has Regarding the Convenience in Online Professional Development.*

OPD variables	Source of variation	Sum of squares	Degrees of freedom	Mean square	F-statistics	P-value
Convenience	Between groups	3.075	5	0.615	2.29	0.045*
	Within groups	111.454	415	0.269		
	Total	114.529	420			

The analysis results of variances conducted by using the F-Test show that there are statistically significant variations between sample responses regarding the impact of convenience on OPD related to years of experience at the significant level 0.05.

To find out which level of teaching experience is significantly different in terms of convenience, Least Square Differences techniques (LSD) was used, as seen in Table 4.

Table 4 Results of Multiple Comparisons to Examine the Significant Differences in Convenience Related to Years of Experiences.

Years of Experience	Sample Size	Mean	0-5 years	6-10 years	11-15 years	16-20 years	21-25 years	26+ years
0-5 years	43	4.24	-	-	-	-	-	0.28*
6-10 years	75	4.27	-	-	-	-	-	0.25*
11-15 years	79	4.30	-	-	-	-	-	0.23*
16-20 years	84	4.25	-	-	-	-	-	0.27*
21-25 years	86	4.30	-	-	-	-	-	0.22*
26+ years	54	4.52	0.28*	0.25*	0.23*	0.27*	0.22*	-

In general, Table 4 shows a significant difference becomes apparent in terms of convenience between the level of teaching experience after 21 to 25 years. The results clearly show the significant differences between 26-year experience participants and the other groups. In other words, teachers and supervisors with 26 years of teaching experience and beyond likely more motivated to use OPD than their counterpart groups.

Research Question 4: To what degree does the participants’ professional position impact his or her responses regarding the use of OPD?

To examine the impact of participants’ professional positions on their use of OPD, a T-test was conducted. Table 5 Results of T-test on Whether Professional Position Impacts the Effect of Convenience in Use of Online Professional Development.

Position	Sample size	Mean	SD	T-test	Degrees of freedom	P-value
Supervisor	121	4.32	0.55	0.261	419	0.794
Teacher	300	4.30	0.51			

The P-values for the t-test statistics in Table 5 are greater than the significance level (0.05), which indicates no statistically significant differences between supervisors' and teachers' responses regarding convenience in the use of OPD.

Discussion

The mean scores of these responses related to convenience are between 4.45 and 4.11 on a 5.0 scale, and the overall mean score of the dimension is 4.31. Convenience received a high mean score based on participants’ views. Based on participants’ viewpoints, the highest mean score is related to saving time, which is a form of convenience. It means that time is a key factor in using OPD [7, 9, 17]. In addition, the participants asserted that OPD motivates them to attend training programs since it helps them to overcome problems with programs offered in inconvenient locations [18].

This conclusion is acceptable since convenience is considered one of the key advantages of online education [6, 19]. At the same time, it is compatible with previous studies [8, 10, 20, 21, 22]. This result might signal that Saudi teachers and supervisors are willing to develop themselves as soon as they can overcome inconvenient professional development program times and locations. In addition, the results indicate an existence of a significant difference among participants' responses insofar as convenience is concerned. The participants with 26 or more years in the profession are more motivated to use ODP than those with fewer years. This conclusion is consistent with Albarkhil’s [23] study that concluded that participants who taught for more than 20 years are more motivated than others to take online courses. It is also compatible with Kowalski et al.’s [8] research that concluded that participants who have more teaching experience reported that convenience is a central element in their motivation to partake in online courses. I agree with Kowalski et al. who interpreted this to indicate that these teachers’ family responsibilities could hinder them from attending face-to-face professional development programs.

The results also indicate no significant difference among the participants’ responses according to their position as teachers or supervisors in terms of convenience. This means that both positions, teachers and supervisors, had no impact on participants’ motivation toward using

OPD. This result is consistent with Alsenani's [24] research. Thus, I believe that this conclusion is plausible since some studies were conducted on teachers and supervisors' attitudes toward OPD and concluded that they have positive attitudes toward OPD [25-28]. (Alnafisah, 2007; Alqarni, 2010; Safar, 2008; Shafaie, 2007).

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Ali Alqarni: received the B.E. from Teacher College in Jeddah in 2004, and M.E. degree from Umm Al-Qura Univ. in 2010. He received the PhD. from Southern Illinois Univ. in 2016. After working as a computer teacher from 2005 to 2010, an assistant professor (from 2016) in the Dept. of Curriculum and Instruction, Umm Al-Qura Univ., he has been an associate professor at Umm Al-Qura Univ. since 2020. His research interest includes educational technology, e-learning, using computer in education.