

Reflections of Teachers' Participation in the eTwinning platform on Their Professional and Personal Development in Jordan

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Abstract: The study aimed to know The Reflections of Teachers' Participation in the eTwinning platform on Their Professional and Personal Development in Jordan. Case study design, as one of the qualitative research models, was used in the study. The participants of the research consist of 10 volunteer teachers, working in state schools in the 2021 -2022 academic year, were noticeably active on the eTwinning platform where they carried out a variety eTwinning projects. The data was collected with semi-structured interview forms prepared for teachers who volunteered to participate in the study, and the content analysis method was used in the data analysis. According to the survey, instructors used the eTwinning platform to collaborate, take online courses, create projects, and advance their professional development. In describing their eTwinning activities, teachers also utilized words like collaboration, sharing, technological advancement, and creativity.

It is clear that teachers may benefit greatly from the eTwinning platform. The platform is so successful that it helps teachers' development both professionally and personally.

Keywords: eTwinning, personal development, professional development,

انعكاسات مشاركة المعلمين في منصة التوأمة الإلكترونية على تطورهم المهني والشخصي في الأردن

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وزارة التربية والتعليم | الأردن

المستخلص: هدفت الدراسة إلى معرفة انعكاسات مشاركة المعلمين في منصة التوأمة الإلكترونية على تطورهم المهني والشخصي في الأردن. تم استخدام تصميم دراسة الحالة كأحد نماذج البحث النوعي في الدراسة. يتألف المشاركون في البحث من 10 مدرسين متطوعين، يعملون في المدارس الحكومية في العام الدراسي 2021-2022، وكانوا نشطين بشكل ملحوظ على منصة التوأمة الإلكترونية حيث نفذوا مجموعة متنوعة من مشاريع التوأمة. تم جمع البيانات من خلال نماذج مقابلات شبه منظمة أعدت للمعلمين الذين تطوعوا للمشاركة في الدراسة، واستخدمت طريقة تحليل المحتوى في تحليل البيانات. وفقاً للاستطلاع، استخدم المعلمون منصة التوأمة للتعاون، وأخذ دورات عبر الإنترنت، وإنشاء مشاريع، وتعزيز تطورهم المهني. في وصف أنشطة التوأمة الخاصة بهم، استخدم المعلمون أيضاً كلمات مثل التعاون والمشاركة والتقدم التكنولوجي والإبداع، ومن الواضح أن المعلمين قد يستفيدون بشكل كبير من منصة التوأمة. المنصة ناجحة للغاية لدرجة أنها تساعد على تطوير المعلمين مهنيًا وشخصيًا.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التوأمة الإلكترونية، تنمية شخصية، التطوير المهني.

• Open Access



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Introduction.

There can hardly be a country in the world that is not currently engaged in the process of introducing (ICTs) into its educational system, as learning has become independent in time and space since the introduction of information and communication technology in the classrooms, meaning that learning has extended outside of the classroom (Akdemir, 2017).

A lot of work was put into forming school alliances in Europe to encourage student and teacher online communication. ETwinning aims to promote innovative ways of using ICT in European schools by establishing school partnerships to encourage online collaboration between students and teachers (Papadakis, 2016). The aim is to improve cooperation between teachers through the use of information and communication technologies. Within the eTwinning community, members share knowledge and best practices and connect through various communication tools, including face-to-face communication and ICT. Educators (eTwinners) from pre-primary, primary, and secondary schools can participate in eTwinning exchanges and collaborations to learn new ICT skills, communication skills, teaching techniques and skills for interdisciplinary work (eg, twenty-first century skills) (Gajek, 2017).

With eTwinning, educators have access to a variety of learning opportunities, including webinars, professional development courses, and the possibility to engage with peers from different cities and nations. Teachers can also collaborate on various projects in a secure online environment by finding project partners. To put it briefly, eTwinning offers a platform for educators, students, and staff members at participating schools across Europe to connect, work together, create projects, and engage. Also, teachers who complete projects with excellent qualifications are given a Quality Mark. (Acar & Peker.2021.P 58).

There must be a collaborative educational environment. The majority of issues, according to teachers involved in school partnerships, are not related to proper technology use but rather include working with other teachers, communicating in foreign languages, getting students involved in group activities, incorporating your projects into the curriculum, etc..(Gülnar and Yatağan, 2014.p.44).

Based on the resources available to the school, teachers with experience establishing collaborations between schools based on new technologies advise that inexperienced peers work in small groups of students to ensure that everyone contributes to the project. For usage in the classroom, they also recommend texts, graphics, written reviews, presentations, documents, blogs, and other websites similarly, Cachia and Punie, 2012. It is obvious that eTwinning is a platform that provides special chances for educational institutions, educators, and students. The literature research revealed that numerous studies on eTwinning have been carried out. (Crişan, 2013; Cachia, Ferrari, Ala-Mutka and Punie, 2010)

The impact of teacher participation in eTwinning on teaching practice was examined. Teachers who participated in the research said that using eTwinning motivated and encouraged themselves and their students, as well as aided their professional development. They also explain that the awards with national and European quality labels awarded to these projects also motivate teachers. As for the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, ETwinning program started in 2018 with the support of the Madrasati initiative of the Jordan River Foundation. This program has been implemented in (50) public and private schools from different regions of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. The number of participating male and female teachers was more than (250) from different Specializations, and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is the first Arab Asian country to join the electronic twinning community, It is also the second in the Arab world after Tunisia, which has implemented joint projects with several countries of the European Union)Bani Yunus, 2019 P.33)

The platform provides a number of opportunities for online courses. In addition, the Madrasati initiative holds a number of interactive workshops, both face-to-face and online, to support teachers and enhance their skills. Quality certificates are awarded to outstanding projects that qualify teachers to participate in conferences outside Jordan (www.madrasati.jo/ar/)

After highlighting the significance of the electronic twinning project and its successes in many nations, whether for teachers, students, or parents, and after its implementation in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, it was important to understand the opinions of teachers regarding the project and how it has affected their professional and personal development.

Study Objective:

This study aims to provide insight on the opinions of teachers regarding the reflection of participation in electronic twinning on their professional and personal development

In keeping with that purpose, the research questions were set out as follows:

1. What impact does the eTwinning platform have on instructors' professional development?
2. How does the eTwinning platform impact instructors' professional development?

Procedural definitions

ETwinning:

Launched in 2005, eTwinning is a community that is exclusively open to educators and other school staff in initial vocational education and training and education from early childhood education and care to upper secondary schools from countries participating in eTwinning.

ETwinning embodies a methodology, a pedagogical approach, a community of practice, and a platform that enables innovation, communication, and collaboration. (ETwinning, 2021).

Professional development:

Professional development mean that an individual teacher educator improves the quality of his or her work and tries to 'become the best professional one can possibly be' (Smith, 2003, p. 203).

personal development:

possessing personal strengths and characteristics that aid teachers define and make sense of their teaching practice and of themselves as individuals(Acar & Peker.2021)

1.General Background.

1.1 eTwinning:

eTwinning is an interactive program through an educational platform for educators targeting students between the ages of 7 and 18, with a focus on increasing understanding between European countries and their neighboring countries. By integrating innovative technology into the educational process, teachers work on projects directly related to the curriculum, and communicate with their partners through the eTwinning platform. Through which experiences are exchanged between teachers from participating countries, and interactive activities are implemented by students under the supervision of their teacher. The program also builds bridges of communication between students and introduces them to other cultures. (Madrasati.jo, 2023)

The essence of eTwinning is not only to enable school twinning within the participating countries but also for young people to equip themselves with technological skills and above all awareness of a multicultural society. A global community (Camilleri, 2016)

The professional development of educators is continued through eTwinning, which is more than merely a project-run portal. especially given it offers chances for professional development, examples of successful initiatives, and is available in 28 languages. (eTwinning, 2020). Therefore, the platform provides a very broad online learning environment. Duncan Howell (2010) states that online learning environments provide valuable professional development opportunities for educators, and open source makes it easier for them to do so. With more teachers participating in the portal, the need for online education has increased at the same rate. At this point, there are professional development seminars on the portal. It is published and updated in the development section. (Basaran, Zehra, Akabs and Yalcin. 2020).

The professional development of educators is continued through eTwinning, which is more than merely a project-run portal. Particularly considering that it offers opportunities for professional development and examples of successful projects through various learning activities, webinars, and professional development seminars. It is also available in 28 different languages. In a safe online environment, teachers can also discover project partners and take part in various projects. (Acar & Peker.2021).

1.2 professional and personal development:

Teachers might adopt creative strategies to enhance the school with the aid of professional development. Formative assessment, data-driven decision-making, policy implications, leadership, society, educational technology, and teaching methods are just a few of the wide issues that fall under the umbrella of professional development (PD).(Nunez & Tellez 2010)

Most professional development programs for teachers are "organized efforts to bring about change in the classroom practices of instructors, in their attitudes and beliefs, and in the learning outcomes of students," according to Guskey (2002, p.381). His description of the current state of affairs shows a systematic, policy-driven approach to bringing about change in educational systems. For teachers to flourish, it is essential to pursue both professional and personal growth (Yangambi, 2021).

Richards and Farrell (2005) consider teacher professional development as a long-term personal growth that helps teachers define and understand their teaching practices and themselves as individuals. As Hiemstra and Brockett (1991) confirmed, they are "characteristics of an individual that predispose one toward taking primary responsibility for personal learning and endeavours" (Richards and Farrell.2005 p. 29)

Teachers get new knowledge of teaching and learning, new beliefs, new instructional strategies, and new resources for teaching students during the process of continuing professional development. They also gain the capacity to grow not only professionally but also socially and personally.

In-service professional development opportunities in order to maintain a high standard of teaching and to maintain a quality workforce of teachers. It includes coaching, practice, and feedback, and saves a lot of time and follow-up support. Successful programs engage teachers in

teaching activities similar to those they might use with their students, and encourage the development of teacher learning communities. (Nunez & Tellez 2010)

In Jordan, the Ministry of Education has encouraged teachers to develop professionally and personally through conducting multiple workshops and courses and cooperating with other countries, as is the case in eTwinning projects for the personal and professional development of the teacher. (Madrasati,jo, 2023)

Thus, teacher development entails a long-term personal and professional process that favors continuous self-reflection to enhance EFL teaching and learning potentials that benefit students' learning endeavors through contextual materials. In our study, MEED-enrolled teachers are informed over a two-year period to conduct research and become agents of change through the development and implementation of contextual materials in their contexts for the educational interventions of their research studies. (Nunez & Tellez 2010).

2.Methodology.

Semi-structured interviews were used as the data collection technique for this qualitative study, which was created as a case study investigation.

2.1The interviews:

Participating teachers were interviewed using semi-structured, open-ended questions to elicit about their participation in eTwinning and their professional and personal development. Paraphrasing and investigation were used where necessary to obtain more information. Interviews are very effective tools for data collection, as they provide knowledge acquisition through human interaction and emphasize the social status of the research data" (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007, p. 349).

2.2 Study Population :

The study population was selected from teachers participating in eTwinning projects from public schools in Ajloun Governorate in the Ministry of Education in Jordan, which consisted of (10) teachers, . From primary schools to secondary schools in the academic year 2022/2023Study Sample:

The criterion sampling approach, one of the intentional sampling techniques, was used to choose the study's sample group. The intentional sampling approach is a sampling strategy in which scenarios with plenty of information are chosen in accordance with the goals of the study to perform a thorough inquiry (Patton, 2014). The criterion sampling method's fundamental tenet is to examine all instances that satisfy a predetermined set of criteria.(Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018). In this study, participating in eTwinning projects and having quality label rewarded projects were taken as a criterion. The study group included 10 volunteer teachers working in the state elementary, secondary and high schools in Jordan in the 2021-2022 academic year. In order to be ethically appropriate, codes such as T1... T10 were used instead of teachers' clear names. The demographic structure of the study group and the codes given to the teachers are given in Table (1)

Table(1): Demographic Features of the Study Group and Codes Given to Participants in the Study)

Codes	Gender	Professional seniority	Branch	School type
T1	Female	6	English	High school
T2	Female	3	Mathematics	High school
T3	Female	23	Especial education	High school
T4	Female	10	Physics	High school
T5	Female	12	Pre-school Teaching	High school
T6	Female	10	Mathematics	High school
T7	Female	20	Computer science	High school
T8	Female	18	Computer science	secondary
T9	Female	9	Geography	secondary
T10	Female	6	English	High school

2.3 Data Collecting Procedure and tool:

The semi-structured interview method, a qualitative research data collection technique, was applied in this study. This approach was principally chosen because each participant responded the questions on the designed semi-structured interview form independently of the others and because it was defined to have a certain level of standardization (Büyükoztürk et al., 2018).

The researchers conducted an analysis of the eTwinning literature and, with the assistance of industry professionals, created a semi-structured interview form for use in the study. The interview form's preparation placed a special emphasis on teachers' motivations for using the

eTwinning platform and how it will affect their personal and professional growth. The suitability of the language used in the interview was first determined by consulting the expert opinions of two academics from a state university education faculty in Jordan, and then a pilot study with two participants was conducted to compare the feedback from the interview form created with the experts. The form was finalized after the essential adjustments and alterations were made before it was once more given to the experts. This step wasn't shown because it was utilized to structure the interview questions. Before beginning the interview, the study group's participants were told about the study and chosen as volunteers. The participants were informed before to the interviews that their identities and places of employment would remain private and that the information would be used exclusively for research. In order to achieve the goal of the research, it was also underlined that the interview form should be filled out completely. The participants in the semi-structured interview form were asked the same questions in the same order without any restrictions on how they could respond. Yet because of the characteristics of the semi-structured interview style, certain closing or supplementary questions were posed to provide participants the opportunity to expand on their responses.

2.4 Data Analysis:

The content analysis method was used to examine the study's data collection. The content analysis method necessitates a thorough examination of the information gathered. In content analysis, newly defined attributes, classes, and codes are formed. The goal is to display the gathered information in a way that the reader can understand by classifying it according to symbols and topics (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018). The data analysis methodology employed the variance method. We sought the advice of two specialists with independent backgrounds in qualitative research from the University of Jordan and Yarmouk University. The coding performed by the researchers and the experts was compared, and the appropriate preparations were made. According to Miles and Huberman's formula, (1994) the coherence ratio among programmers is 0.89.

(Reliability=Consensus/(Consensus+Disagreement). Teachers received a code number at the beginning of the analysis. Direct citations were then used to convey the participants' views in accordance with the parameters of the content analysis. When choosing the direct citation for the data presentation, the criteria of subject relevancy, description, and coolness were all taken into consideration (Unver, Bowmen, & Başpai, 2010). Teachers' opinions are denoted with symbols in the results section. The findings were finally evaluated in light of the information discovered in the literature.

3. Results.

1. The Effects of eTwinning Platform on Personal Development:

How does the eTwinning platform impact teachers' personal development? is the first research question. Table lists the themes and symbols in this context that the teachers felt were important (2). The themes identified through content analysis, the symbols associated with the subjects, and the frequency of these symbols are all reported in this section. Moreover, participant data is displayed using participant-specific iconography and direct quotes from participants are enclosed in quotation marks. The number of iterations and the number of participants in the analysis process may vary in the tables provided in the results section since some of the answers provided by the participants are linked to several symbols.

In this context, the themes and symbols obtained from the teachers' opinions are given in Table (2).

Theme	Codes	Participants	Frequency (f)
The effects of eTwinning platform on personal development	Self-confidence	T1, T2, T3, T6, T8, T9, T10	7
	Communication	T2, T3, T4, T8, T10, ,	5
	Helping-Sharing	T3, T6, T8,	3
	Making new friends	T4, T5, T8, T10	4
	second language	T4, T5, T7	3
	Leadership-Respectability	T2, T3,	2
	Belonging	T9, T3, T10	3
	Productivity	T5	1
	Total		28

When the codes they had made on the topic of "the benefits of eTwinning platform on personal development" were evaluated, most participants stated the platform helped them "grow self-confidence, " and eight people said it helped them "better their communication" skills (see Table 3).

Four teachers stated that the platform contributed positively to the "helping sharing" skills. The teachers said that sharing knowledge with colleagues made them happy.

T6: "In addition to helping me advance professionally, it has improved my relationship with people and boosted my confidence."

T8: "I discovered other uses that I was previously unaware of. I used them in my lessons, and the responses I got helped me feel more confident. Also, my social circle has grown."

T4: "I had more friends from abroad because it boosted my communication abilities and foreign language ability."

T5: "Developing enduring relationships with instructors abroad and at home. to be a producer rather than a consumer when teaching. It promotes the growth of foreign languages."

T7: "It was particularly useful for the acquisition of other languages. The eTwinning platform, in my opinion, is incredibly beneficial for both teachers and students."

Three participants said the platform helped them feel like they "belonged" to the community, and three teachers said it helped them develop as leaders with "respectability."

T2: "I am thrilled to be a member of the eTwinning project; I gained notoriety. It benefited communication and self-confidence."

T2 coded teacher claimed that due to his accomplishments in eTwinning initiatives, he was appointed the provincial coordinator for eTwinning and received recognition from all teachers at the provincial directorate of national education and in the city where he lived.

T3: "Sure, I now have much more confidence in myself. My capacity for communication is developing. Knowing that helping others and working together might help you acquire respect in society is a pleasant feeling."

T9: "I believe it is useful in developing self-confidence, working with the community, and belonging to the community."

T10: "Yes. communication, networking, and self-assurance. I felt a sense of belonging to a group of people who share my ideas and methods."

Since the eTwinning platform has a very big community, teachers claimed that they developed their self-confidence and communication skills as well as a sense of belonging.

2. The impact of eTwinning Platform on Professional Development:

How the eTwinning platform influences instructors' professional growth is the study's second unanswered question. Themes and codes gleaned from instructor perspectives are provided in Table in this context (3).

Table (3). The opinions of the participants on how the eTwinning platform affects professional development

Theme	Codes	Participants	Frequency (f)
The impacts of eTwinning platform on the professional development	Technology	T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, T6, T7, T8, T10,	9
	Pedagogy	T1, T2, T3, T4, T6, T9, T10,	8
	Acculturation	T1, T2, T3, T6, T7, T8, T9, T10	8
	Foreign language	T1, T2, T4, T5, T6, T7, T10.	7
	New learning	T5, T6, T7, T8	4
	Total		36

The vast majority of participants claimed that the platform greatly increased their understanding of "technology" and "pedagogy."

T1: "From my point of view eTwinning projects had many positive impacts on students, because we learn how to work in teams, how to organize our time and helped us with personal development."

T3: "The platform produces results. I had no experience with the online world, but today I use technology powerfully. I also learned about the customs and ways of various countries. Moreover, collaborating across disciplines to accomplish a certain aim is effective."

T6: "The platform has assisted me in actively learning and using a variety of technology tools. My English language skills have improved greatly. Project-based learning and collaborative learning are now tools I utilize more frequently. as well as teach them how to conduct research, ask probing questions, and learn. Our collaborations with partners allowed us to observe the cultures of our partners since we developed cultural bridges and had cultural siblings in them, thus we also made peer education more applicable."

participants stated that the platform positively affected their professional development by developing their "foreign language" skills.

T7: "Yes, I benefited from exchanging ideas with my friends from other departments and professional development seminars. It also allows us to see the different cultural activities of foreign partners, even teachers and students from other cities. I learned different information for the development of my students. We have foreign partners in the projects and my English has improved since we have to communicate with them all the time. I had no interest in web 2.0 tools before. Thanks to eTwinning,

these tools have contributed greatly. I taught my pupils at least 50 web 2.0 tools that I had never knew.

These resources have contributed greatly. I taught my pupils at least 50 web 2.0 tools that I had never heard of before.

T8: "Certainly, the webinars and seminars I attended were beneficial to me. I picked up new techniques and applications. I educated my students using web 2.0 tools that I learned. Through the projects I worked on with international partners, I had the chance to get a close-up look at their culture."

4. Findings:

The goal of eTwinning is to give schools in participating nations the chance to network and work together. Projects under the eTwinning program may also foster national and international collaboration in education between schools. The purpose of this study was to determine whether teachers' professional and personal growth was impacted by the creation of eTwinning initiatives at various school levels and during various work hours.

First, what impact did the eTwinning platform have on teachers' personal development?

All teachers confirmed that the platform had a positive impact on their personal development. The results are similar to those by Vuorikari, Gilleran, and Scimeca (2012). The majority of participants reported feeling more confident as a result of the platform, and half claimed their communication skills had also improved. The distinctive potential that the eTwinning platform offers educators can be utilized by educators. Their self-confidence is said to be enhanced in this way. The projects allow teachers to communicate with their students and help them improve their communication skills. Teachers who have signed up for the eTwinning platform frequently communicate with one another through the platform as well as through eTwinning groups they have founded on other social media platforms. Teachers also said that the platform made them feel more connected and wanted to share their knowledge with their classmates. Some teachers mentioned that the platform is beneficial for their personal development by developing foreign language and technology skills. eTwinning provides teachers with the opportunity to undertake international projects as well as local projects. So teachers can create projects with their classmates from distinct nations and improve their foreign language skills.

Second, the impact of the eTwinning platform on the professional development of instructors was investigated.

All teachers shared the opinion that the platform had a positive impact on their professional development. This finding is similar to the study by Duncan Howell (2010) who concluded that online e-learning environments provide valuable professional development opportunities for teachers. The majority of respondents who took part in the study stated that the platform greatly contributed to their knowledge of technology and pedagogy. Teachers reported that the projects increased their knowledge of technology, learnt about Web 2.0 tools and, by implementing what they discovered into their classes, substantially improved their teaching. Also, it was noted that they learned new teaching methods such as project-based learning, Steam, fcl. This finding is similar to the results of a study (Holmes & Sime, 2013; Crisan, 2013; Kucuktasci, 2022; AkIncl, 2018). Participants also mentioned that national and international projects introduced acculturation. That is logical and absolutely clear. due to the fact that the projects bring together teachers from various schools, cities, and nations. The projects' first part involves creating introductory movies for the students' schools and the place they reside in so that they may educate the pupils about various cultures. Moreover, initiatives are being carried out to foster cultural diversity. Besides, projects are being implemented to promote cultural differences.

The literature study includes findings that demonstrate how cultural engagement is provided via eTwinning. (Akdemir, 2017; Camilleri, 2016; Yilmaz & Altun Yilmaz, 2012). Like with personal development, teachers said that the platform helped them develop professionally by honing their foreign language abilities.

In line with the research results, the following recommendations were made:

- The platform's professional development activities can be expanded and modified to better meet the needs of instructors.
- Also, by working with universities, studies can be conducted to raise awareness of eTwinning at the university level.

5. Ethical considerations:

The research was conducted in accordance with the British Educational Research Association Ethical Guidelines (British Educational Research Association (BERA) 2018). This study carries little risk because it comprises highly skilled and capable individuals who are able to comprehend the idea of permission. Yet, every attempt was taken to prevent any discomfort for participants. The interviews were set up as professional dialogues in which the participants were treated with respect and on an equal footing, and participation in the study was entirely optional.

6. Study Limitations:

This research; It is limited to the answers given to the research questions by)10(teachers from)3(secandry schools, and)7(high schools in Ajloun. The number of participants was limited as this was a very small-scale study, in effect generalisations were difficult to make. Notwithstanding it was a very enlightening journey enticing the author into continuing research to fill a void in the literature about how to know The Reflections of Teachers' Participation in eTwinning on Their Professional and Personal Development in Jordan

Conflict of interests:

The writer declare that he has no conflict of interest

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