Applying Modern Information Technology to Promote the Professional Development of Foreign Language Teachers in Universities

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Abstract: The development of modern information technology has had a disruptive impact on the traditional concepts, models, and teaching methods of foreign language teaching in universities, thus having a profound impact on the professional development of the foreign language teachers. Through literature analysis and interviews, the author found that modern information technology has natural advantages such as broadening students' horizons, enriching their imagination, stimulating their interest in learning, increasing teaching capacity, and improving teaching quality. Therefore, the application of modern information technology has become a prerequisite and key to the development of foreign language teaching in universities and that of foreign language teachers. The author proposes strategies to apply modern information technology to promote the professional development of foreign language teachers in universities, including creating a network teacher professional development alliance, enhancing their teaching and research capabilities, using information technology to construct teacher reflection mechanisms, improving teaching and research levels, improving the information technology skills training mechanism for them, and therefore promoting their professional development.

1. Introduction

With the continuous development of modern information technology, the internet has become an important tool for people to obtain information. Changing the teaching methods o is an important way to improve the quality of teaching.

The teaching philosophy, content, and teaching methods of teachers have a profound impact. The application of information technology plays an important role in promoting the professional development of English teachers in universities.

Many foreign studies (such as Willets 1992; Kramsch&Andersen 1999; Warschauer& Meskill 2000; Warschauer 2000; Strambi&Bouvet 2003; Etta & Elder 2005) have pointed out that foreign language teachers can combine information technology in teaching to create authentic contexts that are easy for learners to acquire a second language, improve teaching effectiveness, and apply technology to their own learning, improving professional and critical thinking abilities. Most empirical studies in China, such as Qin Xiubai in 2001; Li Guanyi in 2004; Jiao Jianli in 2008; He Anping in 2008; Xie Xuping in 2005; Zhou Yulin in 2005; Zhang Fengjuan and Qu Xin in 2013, have shown that foreign language teachers with higher information literacy can better integrate information technology with university English courses. The theoretical knowledge, practical operation ability, retrieval of network information resources, self-learning ability in the network, and integration ability of information technology and curriculum teaching about information technology systems are closely related to the implementation of foreign language teaching reform in the context of informatization. Therefore, the application of modern information technology to promote the development of university majors is closely related to the quality of talent output and the future development of universities.

2. The Impact of Modern Information Technology on Foreign Language Teaching in Universities

2.1. Modern information Technology Broadens Students' Horizons and Enriches Their Imagination

The traditional teaching method is dominated by language, occasionally using pictures or physical objects, which is relatively monotonous. However, in the process of multimedia teaching, visuals can account for a large proportion, making knowledge more vivid, thereby also improving the students' imagination.

2.2. Modern Information Technology Stimulates Students' Interest in Learning

The application of information technology in foreign language teaching in universities can stimulate students' interest in learning. Information technology, especially multimedia technology, is a collection of various media, including text, graphics, dynamic videos, music, illustrations, etc. Multimedia has characteristics such as interactivity, intelligence, and digitization. In the process of foreign language teaching in universities, the use of multimedia technology can visualize abstract teaching content and concepts according to the requirements and objectives of language teaching, increase the infectiousness of the curriculum, and this teaching method is of great significance for foreign language teaching in universities. It can not only help foreign language teachers carry out teaching work, but also effectively stimulate students' interest in learning and enhance their desire to learn, accelerate the perception process, deepen understanding of the knowledge, and enhance their memories. Meanwhile, the use of information technology can create a better learning environment for students.

2.3. Modern Information Technology Increases Teaching Capacity and Improves Teaching Quality

Effective teaching not only emphasizes achieving the overall effect of foreign language teaching in universities, but also requires achieving the effect within the specified time. Full use of limited time can be made of during the teaching process. Through the application of information technology, a large number of demonstrations can be conducted. Teaching enables students to learn in a relaxed and enjoyable atmosphere, effectively improving teaching effectiveness and quality.

3. The Connotation and Extension of Professional Development of Foreign Language Teachers in Universities in the Modern Information Technology Environment

In 2001, the United States approved the TESOL standards for the five dimensions of English teachers' professional development: language, culture, teaching, evaluation, and specialization. And it is pointed out that "specialization" is the core of teacher development, that is, foreign language teachers must be able to grasp the latest cutting-edge trends in language related fields on the basis of language ability, and accurately understand the internal laws of language teaching, guiding teaching practice with the latest theoretical achievements.[1]   Zhao Jie et al. proposed that teacher professional development is a process of continuous growth and progress in professional theory, knowledge, abilities, teaching experience, professional cognition, and teaching attitudes through independent learning or participation in teaching teams.[2]   Dai Weidong and Wang Xuemei proposed that the professional development of foreign language teachers should be an autonomous and conscious behavior of teachers. "Teaching" should not be considered as the output of knowledge or skills in a single direction. "Learning leads to knowledge deficiency, teaching leads to knowledge difficulty." This explains that teachers only realize their own knowledge deficiency after learning, and only after teaching do they realize their own knowledge confusion. [3]

According to the synonymous dictionary of the Education Resource Information Center (ERIC) database, professional development refers to activities that promote career development. These activities may include personal improvement, deep learning, peer collaboration, peer guidance , debate, continuing education, study groups, developing new insights into education and his own

practice, exploring new or advanced understandings of content and resources. In the context of modern educational information technology, the connotation and extension of the professional development of foreign language teachers in Chinese universities are constantly expanding. The professional development of teachers should actively apply modern education and teaching concepts, strengthen their own development awareness, use information technology, and various resources to continuously improve themselves and promote the improvement of teaching quality.

4. Strategies for Applying Modern Information Technology to Promote the Professional Development of Foreign Language Teachers in Universities

4.1. Establishing a Professional Development Alliance for Online Teachers to Enhance the Teaching and Research Capabilities of Foreign Language Teachers in Universities

The Network Teacher Professional Development Alliance can be understood as a learning organization. A learning organization is one that constantly innovates and changes.□It is forged through five practices: systematic thinking, self transcendence, mental transformation, shared aspirations, and team learning. In a learning organization, everyone is able to continuously break through their own ability limits and create sincerely desired results, cultivate a new, forward-looking, and open-minded way of thinking, fully realize common aspirations, and learn how to conduct team learning. In the network environment □ Learning organizations are no longer limited to one school . As long as we have a common desire ,□ no matter which province or region he is in, he can form a learning group . Mutual exchange of teaching experience, skills, insights, achievements, professional knowledge and skills further deepen the understanding and recognition of the problem. From a teaching perspective, teachers explore, share, and explore foreign language information resources together with all members, optimize course teaching resources, and cultivate their ability to search for teaching information and provide teaching feedback in a group atmosphere through communication platforms such as discussion forums, actively carry out meaningful practical activities such as teaching seminars, teaching reflections, peer assistance, and professional development.

The Network Teacher Professional Development Alliance is not limited to learning organizations that engage in collaborative learning and exchange development. It also has the functional characteristics of teamwork research, achieving collective results, and innovative development. From a scientific research perspective, teacher development alliances against the background of informatization can further promote academic discussions and information exchange. By using information technology networks to stay up-to-date with the latest scientific research information and trends, and showcasing and sharing personal academic achievements, one can construct a personal curriculum or research database. This not only facilitates the systematic organization of one's knowledge system, but also allows for extensive communication without being constrained by factors such as time, space, age, gender, educational background, and teaching qualifications, fully highlighting the characteristics of educational informatization such as openness, sharing, interaction, and collaboration.

4.2. Using Information Technology to Construct a Teacher Reflection Mechanism and Improve Teaching and Research Level

4.2.1. Teaching Reflection

Teaching activities have distinct practical characteristics, and continuous summarization and reflection on the practice is an effective way for teacher professional development. As a participant and manager in the classroom, reflect on whether you have designed the classroom reasonably, integrated content, and created a good classroom atmosphere. As teaching practitioners, teachers need to reflect on whether to combine teaching concepts with the practices reasonably, complete teaching content, and achieve teaching results. Having sufficient self reflection awareness and ability is the inner spirit and foundation for improving teaching effectiveness and promoting professional development of teachers, and it is also the essence of reflective teaching.[4] Information

technology provides advanced technology and platforms for teachers to carry out reflective teaching. At present, many teachers use blogs or teaching forums to summarize teaching activities, express their insights and experiences, and provide a convenient platform for teachers to exchange work through teaching forums based on WEB. Due to uneven teaching hours, university teachers have very limited time to concentrate on teaching and research activities. Teachers use teaching forums for teaching exchange and research, making teaching and research activities a norm. Teachers can initiate discussion topics for everyone to participate and express their own opinions, or they can jointly explore and seek the best solution to a certain problem in teaching. This type of teaching exchange activity conducted through online teaching forums is diverse in form and not limited by time and space. Teachers can freely and flexibly arrange their time to participate in discussions and exchanges, thereby continuously achieving their professional development.

4.2.2. Research Reflection Built on the Foundation of Teaching.

By organizing academic papers, reflections, and literature, a complete scientific research reflection system is formed, promoting education through research and introducing research through teaching. Through information technology, a complete teacher research reflection system is formed, using teaching logs, teacher interviews, classroom observations, teaching discussions, etc. to discover, reflect on, and solve problems. Modern information technology has transformed traditional paper materials into electronic texts, audio, and video materials that are easier to remember, read, record, and watch. This enables teachers to present their entire development process more quickly, vividly, and objectively, fully enhancing their teaching and research achievements, and achieving their professional development goals.

4.3. Improving the Training Mechanism for Information Technology Skills of Foreign Language Teachers and Promoting Their Professional Development

Teacher training in the information environment should include two aspects: first, teaching technology training, which includes the theoretical system of professional knowledge, educational psychology, teaching methods, and communication studies, etc;   On the other hand, it refers to the training of theoretical knowledge and skills in information technology, including the effective integration of network information technology and foreign language teaching, with a focus on training teachers' technical application abilities. According to the actual situation of each school, online and offline training models can be carried out, so that teachers not only use information technology in their learning, apply what they have learned, but also collaborate with peers through online platforms, share learning experiences, answer questions, reflect and summarize. Offline, specialized information skills training classes can be set up for foreign language teachers, inviting relevant technical teachers or purchased equipment and software development departments of our school for regular training to improve their ability to operate and use information technology equipment in the university. Targeted provision of complete and efficient hardware facilities for foreign language teachers, improvement of cutting-edge information retrieval engines, curriculum development, guidance, monitoring, and evaluation of learning activities, and optimization and integration of various information resources based on the characteristics of language learners and foreign language disciplines, can facilitate teachers and learners to adapt to the information technology teaching mode as soon as possible, and also promote cooperation and sharing among different types of universities.

For the training of teaching abilities for foreign language teachers in universities, there are both common and different needs for training among teachers at different stages of development and disciplines. Through school-based training, detailed and personalized training content and models are formulated according to different needs, enabling teachers to shift from passive training to proactive training, thereby truly promoting the professional development of teachers. The principle of combining school-based training with different stages of teacher development should be adopted. During the development process of their teaching career, university teachers generally need to go through the novice stage, growth stage, maturity stage, and even the expert stage. At different stages, the professional development of teachers presents different characteristics and development patterns,

and teachers at different stages of development also have different training requirements for teaching theory and teaching skills.[5] Therefore, considering the stages of teacher professional development, determining the level and development needs of teacher's educational technology capabilities, and formulating continuous and gradually increasing development plans are the key to achieving effective teacher professional development training.

5. Conclusion

Modern information technology has natural advantages such as broadening students' horizons, enriching their imagination, stimulating their interest in learning, increasing teaching capacity, and improving teaching quality. Therefore, the information literacy of foreign language teachers in universities has become a prerequisite and key to the development of foreign language teaching and the professional development of foreign language teachers. We can establish a professional development alliance for online teachers, enhance the teaching and research capabilities of foreign language teachers in universities, use information technology to construct a teacher reflection mechanism, improve teaching and research levels, improve the information technology skills training mechanism for foreign language teachers, and promote the professional development of teachers. Only foreign language teachers who actively, proactively, and well adapt to educational and teaching informatization can effectively promote their professional development.

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