

## **Discussion Forum Instructional Design and Organization for Sustainable Professional Development in Online Communities of Practice**

*Katerina Kourkouli*

National and Kapodistrian University of Athens

Email: [kkourkouli@enl.uoa.gr](mailto:kkourkouli@enl.uoa.gr)

### **Abstract**

This paper explores the instructional design and organization of discussion forums within four online Communities of Practice for the professional development of EFL teachers in Greece. Grounded in the theory of situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991), these communities are established as sustainable models for effective teacher development. Employing mixed methods, the research examines variations among the communities' designs to draw conclusions. Focus group interviews and questionnaires were first analyzed to identify principles that promoted active participation, influencing the overall organization of the communities. Teachers' post-participation questionnaires then gauged perceived learning and effectiveness. Discussion forum transcripts were also analyzed to assess the coordinators' instructional design and organization discourse. Finally, this content analysis was compared with the findings of the survey research for the final findings report. The findings advance the current understanding of effective instructional design and organization for sustainable discussion forum teacher education. They validate the framework's effectiveness and identify key principles for success: a well-defined forum structure, integrated synchronous meetings, consistent rhythm, adherence to netiquette, and robust instructional design and organization discussion forum discourse. These elements contribute to vibrant online communities reporting perceived learning and effective teacher professional development.

*Keywords:* Online teacher Communities, professional development, discussion forum, instructional design, organization, discourse

### **Introduction**

The rise of online learning environments in education has opened up new avenues for teacher professional development (PD), particularly through the use of online Communities of Practice (CoPs). Recent technological advancements and challenges, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, have accelerated the shift from conventional face-to-face learning to online or blended modes. This shift has led to increased attention towards online spaces for the professional development of educators. In particular, online CoPs provide an accessible, flexible, and dynamic space for collaboration, reflection, and the enhancement of teaching practices.

While the benefits of participating in CoPs are well-documented (Wenger, 1998; Wenger-Trayner et al., 2015), their practical implementation and long-term sustainability still pose challenges. The effectiveness of online CoPs is largely dependent on the instructional design, organization, and facilitation of key activities and asynchronous forum discussions, which serve as the backbone of online CoPs. These discussions are often where the richest forms of

engagement, reflection, and peer-to-peer learning take place, forming the cornerstone of collaborative knowledge construction. Yet, effectively designing these discussions to promote deep learning and meaningful participation requires more than simply providing an online space for teachers to interact.

Lave and Wenger's (1991) theory of situated learning emphasizes the importance of collaboration and social interaction in professional development. Similarly, Harasim's (2017) collaborative-sociocultural perspectives emphasize that effective engagement in online CoPs requires structured interactions, asserting that success depends not on the technology itself but on the intentional design of learning activities. A key factor in the success of CoPs is "teaching presence," as defined in the Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework by Garrison et al. (2000). This concept involves the design, facilitation, and direction of cognitive and social processes to achieve meaningful learning outcomes in a community. However, as Anderson et al. (2001) note, the lack of paralinguistic cues in online environments, such as tone and facial expressions, necessitates that instructors be particularly explicit in providing directions, establishing expectations, and maintaining engagement.

The benefits of online CoPs in providing ongoing, widely accessible and sustainable professional development opportunities for teachers have been well established (Schleicher, 2016; Holmes, 2013; Kourkouli 2018; Wenger-Trayner et al., 2023). The current body of research has acknowledged that teaching presence can enhance learning outcomes (Caskurlu et al., 2021; Garrison, 2021; Kourkouli, 2024). However, effectiveness is largely contingent on clear guidance on how to organize the discussion forum so that it fosters sustained engagement and meaningful professional development (Barton & Maness, 2017).

Therefore, the question of how the discussion forum and the teaching presence can be most effectively designed and organized in online CoPs for the professional development of teachers, remains an open one. In other words, it is not clear how to best design and organize the discussion forum and teaching presence, so that they can consistently promote active engagement and perceived effectiveness. Garrison (2019) has called for more research into the instructional practices that lead to vibrant, engaged CoPs, emphasizing the need for both qualitative and quantitative insights into what works in online professional learning environments.

To address these gaps, the present study examines the instructional design and organization of discussion forums within online CoPs, aiming to promote the professional development of EFL teachers in Greece. Utilizing a mixed-method approach, the research employs focus group questionnaires and interviews to identify principles that boost participation, alongside discussion forum transcript analysis to assess the design and organization teaching presence of coordinators. Finally, post-participation questionnaires assess participants' perceived effectiveness. This comprehensive examination seeks to elucidate the pivotal role that discussion forum instructional design and organization (D.O.) plays in cultivating engaging and transformative learning experiences for EFL teachers. By identifying key principles that enhance community liveliness and effectiveness, this study contributes significantly to our understanding of how online CoPs can be optimized for sustainability and effectiveness. Consequently, the paper addresses a critical gap in the literature, by identifying strategies for designing and organizing online CoPs that promote active engagement and perceived effectiveness among participants.

In the subsequent section, the theoretical background and prior research that underpin the study's approach will be presented in detail.

## **Background**

### **Evolving Professional Development Paradigms**

The educational landscape is witnessing a pivotal transformation from traditional, formal teacher training methods to ongoing, practice-based teacher education. This shift is also driven by the integration of innovative technologies that facilitate continuous, collaborative, and sustainable professional development (UNESCO, 2024; United Nations, 2023). Unlike traditional models characterized by episodic and contextually detached seminars, modern PD practices dictate the engagement in immersive, practical, and reflective learning experiences that align closely with teachers' real-world challenges and professional needs (United Nations, 2023; Higher Education Sustainability Initiative, 2024; OECD 2020).

In particular, contemporary research advocates for PD modes that embrace adult learning principles, emphasizing the importance of fostering collaborative and peer-supported learning environments (Korthagen, 2017; Lieberman & Pointer Mace, 2010; Liu & Kleinsasser, 2014; The Council of the EU, 2014; Wenger et al., 2011). Effective PD is also characterized by its relevance to actual teaching practices, opportunities for active engagement, and the creation of supportive, community-driven learning spaces. This new paradigm necessitates a departure from traditional training to more coherent, lifelong learning processes embedded within professional practice. The PD paradigm, which aligns with modern educational approaches, is online CoPs, discussed below.

### **Online Communities of Practice as Platforms for Professional Development**

Online CoPs have become pivotal in reshaping professional development, particularly within the realm of teacher education. These online communities provide invaluable spaces for peer-to-peer learning and reflection, enabling teachers to explore new pedagogical approaches and refine their teaching practices. As Wenger-Trayner et al. (2015) highlight, the core strength of a CoP is its capacity to promote in-depth, reflective discussion among its members, fostering the development of new skills and broader educational support. This aspect of CoPs is especially crucial in settings where teachers are geographically dispersed, often isolated from conventional professional development resources.

In accordance with Wenger et al.'s (2002) concept of a Community of Practice, learning is a communal process that takes place as a result of the participation in a community and its interactions. Communities are built on the principles of a shared domain of interest, community engagement and the practice of sharing resources and experiences. These principles not only strengthen the community ties but also create an environment conducive to learning. As a result, communities enable the facilitation of continuous professional growth and learning in a manner that is both informal and structured, allowing members to thrive within a supportive network.

The concept is based on Lave and Wenger's (1991) theory of situated learning and sociocultural perspectives of learning which assert that knowledge is not only collaboratively constructed but also deeply tied to the actual contexts in which it is applied (Harasim, 2017; Putnam & Borko, 2000). This interactive, community-based approach allows members to forge

meaningful connections with the subject-matter and each other, ensuring that learning is both impactful and closely connected to their professional realities. Such a view is particularly vital to online CoPs, where the digital environment facilitates ongoing collaboration and shared inquiry, key elements for effective professional development. Online CoPs effectively overcome geographical barriers by leveraging technology to facilitate both synchronous and asynchronous interactions. These technological affordances make professional development more accessible, inclusive and sustainable, allowing communities to grow and thrive.

However, the success of online CoPs constitutes an area of ongoing investigation as it is contingent upon several critical factors. Wenger-Trayner et al. (2023) emphasize the importance of careful planning and nurturing to ensure the longevity and viability of CoPs. They argue that while CoPs can be powerful tools for professional development, they require intentional design and facilitation to keep members engaged over time. Other success factors include a clear purpose and vision, and an emphasis on fostering participation, engagement, collaboration, and community building, as highlighted by previous studies (Baran & Çağiltay, 2006; Cambridge et al., 2005; Thang et al., 2011). Moreover, research studies highlight that strong leadership and effective coordination prove to be essential for nurturing a climate of trust and support that foster a sense of belonging (Vangrieken et al., 2017; Parrish et al., 2021; Singh et al., 2022). Building upon these conclusions, this study aims to explore how the design and organization of teaching presence and discussion forums within online CoPs can be optimized to enhance the professional development of EFL teachers. By addressing these aspects, the research seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of best practices in online teacher education, paving the way for further investigation into specific design elements and organizational strategies that promote effective and sustainable online communities. The subsequent section presents the established theoretical frameworks that underpin the study and leads to the identification of existing gaps and research questions this study will address.

### **Participation and Discussion in online CoPs**

Current educational research acknowledges that participation in online CoPs is effectively enacted through asynchronous text-based discussion forums. This form of communication provides a valuable platform to investigate significant aspects of social learning that lead to meaningful educational experiences (Hara et al., 2000; Pachler, 2012).

The Community of Inquiry (CoI) model (Garrison et al., 2000) is pivotal in understanding the dynamics within online CoPs, especially in analyzing asynchronous, text-based forum discussions. This framework delineates three critical dimensions of an online community: social presence (SP), cognitive presence (CP), and teaching presence (TP). Each component plays a vital role in cultivating a rich educational experience where structured discussions foster deep learning.

Teaching presence (TP) is often considered the cornerstone of the CoI framework, essential for facilitating meaningful educational interactions (Garrison, 2021). Anderson et al. (2001), divide TP into three main categories: instructional design and organization (T.P.D.O.), facilitating discourse (T.P.F.D.), and direct instruction (T.P.D.I.) with specific indicators and examples for each one of them (see Appendix).

Instructional design and organization (T.P.D.O.), being the primary focus of this study, involves the meticulous planning and structuring of course content and activities. This process

begins well before the course starts, with instructional designers carefully crafting the learning environment and the curriculum and continues throughout the duration of the course as instructors actively manage the discussion and learning materials to suit the evolving needs of the learners (Kovanović et al., 2018).

Focusing on T.P.D.O., this study aims to critically examine and optimize the design and organization of forum discussions in online CoPs. Building on Guskey's (2000) framework for professional development evaluation, the research will evaluate the design and organization of the learning experience using indicators such as reports of development of teaching knowledge/skills, satisfaction with the usefulness of the experience, fulfillment of teacher development needs and finally, implementation of new knowledge/skills. By examining how discussion forums can be effectively designed and organized, this research seeks to provide actionable insights that could significantly enhance the engagement and pedagogical effectiveness in online teacher communities. The rationale for this inquiry along with the specification of the research questions, are detailed in the next section.

### **Rationale and Research Questions**

The effectiveness of online CoPs for EFL teachers in Greece is fundamentally influenced by the quality of instructional design and organization. This aspect of teaching presence is critical due to the absence of paralinguistic cues in online environments, which necessitates that instructors should be explicitly clear in providing directions and establishing expectations (Anderson et al., 2001). As Garrison (2019) and Kourkouli (2024) assert, the challenge lies in crafting engaging online learning experiences that are structured effectively to foster lively, sustained participation and meaningful learning outcomes.

Research by Barton & Maness (2017) supports the importance of organized and well-designed learning environments for enhancing student satisfaction. This aligns with findings from Wenger-Trayner et al. (2023), who identify a strong correlation between the careful planning, nurturing of communities, and their long-term viability and success. Moreover, the need for a deep understanding of how online CoPs can be systematically designed to maximize engagement and effectiveness is now widely recognized, prompting calls for comprehensive research that combines both qualitative and quantitative methods (Garrison, 2021; Kovanović et al., 2018).

This study seeks to address these gaps by exploring the discussion forum instructional design and organization within online CoPs that can optimize professional development outcomes for EFL teachers. It aims to identify the principles that underpin lively and successful online CoPs, focusing particularly on design and organization issues. The development and investigation of the four online CoPs in this study aimed to address this gap by answering the following research questions (RQs):

1. What are the critical success factors for the design and development of lively and successful online Communities of Practice for EFL teachers?
2. To what extent is there reported effectiveness of the training experience in relation to teachers' teaching practice per online Community?

3. What instructional design and organization teaching presence (Anderson et al. 2001) is displayed in each online Community and how does it correlate with Communities scoring higher on perceived learning and effectiveness?

The following section outlines the research design and methods used in this study, followed by a discussion of the findings and their implications for enhancing online professional development practices.

## **Method**

### **Research Design**

The study employs mixed methods to identify key principles for effective discussion forum instructional design and organization in online CoPs. It begins with a focus group investigation based on questionnaires and interviews to identify principles that promote active participation and enhance organization. Additionally, discussion forum transcripts were analyzed to evaluate coordinators' instructional D.O. teaching presence within the forums. Subsequently, post-participation questionnaires were administered to evaluate perceived effectiveness and PD outcomes. Finally, the content analysis of the discussion forum transcripts was compared with the survey findings for the final findings report. This approach offers a comprehensive understanding of the key elements that foster active and effective online CoPs.

### **Study Context**

The study is set in the context of in-service teacher education in Greece, traditionally characterized by optional short-term seminars. This approach has been criticized for aligning with traditional "deficit" models, which lack coherence and provide insufficient opportunities for sustained professional development (Day & Sachs, 2004; Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, Greece, 2016). Therefore, the shift towards exploring and implementing innovative models for teacher education has become imperative.

In this context, the study was informed by the evaluation of the PEAP in-service teacher training program, a nationwide program developed by the Research Centre for Language Teaching, Testing, and Assessment of the Department of English Language and Literature at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens to facilitate the introduction of English to the 1st grade of primary school. This evaluation underscored the need for continuous professional development for teachers that integrates classroom experiences with collaborative community learning (Karavas & Papadopoulou, 2014).

To address this need, four online CoPs were developed and hosted on the "2gather" platform, based at the university. This platform was equipped with discussion forums, a member directory with avatars, and features supporting both synchronous and asynchronous communications.

### **Participants**

The participants in this study included 49 in-service EFL teachers from primary schools across Greece, organized into four distinct CoPs. Each community was coordinated by an Education Coordinator, one of the 40 appointed nationwide by the state based on their geographical jurisdictions. CoP\_2 was additionally supported by a Deputy Coordinator to assist with its

activities. These Coordinators were responsible for facilitating discussions, organizing activities, and providing feedback to participants.

More specifically:

CoP\_1 consisted of 16 EFL teachers from a major metropolitan area, with teaching experience ranging from 1 to over 11 years.

CoP\_2, supported by a Deputy Coordinator as well, consisted of 15 EFL teachers from smaller municipal areas, with experience varying from 1 to over 11 years.

CoP\_3 consisted of 12 teachers, from smaller municipal areas, with teaching experience between 6 and over 11 years.

CoP\_4, the smallest group, consisted of 6 teachers from smaller municipal areas, with experience ranging from 1 to over 11 years.

Finally, as the Administrator, the author was responsible for overseeing the setup of the CoPs, promoting innovative training approaches to all participants, providing coordinators with the necessary training resources, and managing the collection and analysis of data.

To facilitate collaboration and engagement, each CoP was equipped with its own exclusive discussion forum, accessible solely to members of that specific community, ensuring a private space for focused interaction. To stimulate active participation, coordinators regularly posted monthly activities on the forum, with clear deadlines and specific guidelines to facilitate interaction (see Figure 1 below).

**Figure 1. Group Forum Ground Rules**

The screenshot shows a forum interface for 'gather'. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links: Home, About 2Gather, Members, Groups, Forum, Activity, and Announcements. On the right, a user profile for 'Hello Katerina' is visible, including a 'LOG OUT' button and a notification icon with the number '4'. Below the navigation, there are buttons for 'ANNOUNCEMENTS' and 'MEMBERS'. The main content area has a green header with the title 'Group Forum Ground Rules'. Below the title, it shows 'GROUP ANNOUNCEMENTS', the user 'Katerina', the date 'February 8, 2015', and '0' comments. The main image is a calendar grid with a red circle around the date '24' and the word 'DEADLINE!' written in red. Below the image is a list of seven ground rules:

1. Follow start and due dates.
2. There is a minimal number of posts – you must respond to at least two colleagues' postings.
3. Support your arguments with evidence (established theories, empirical data etc).
4. Keep one point per short message.
5. If no one answers your posting, you can send invitations to 3 colleagues for responses.
6. You must always reply to responses to your posts.
7. Reflective journals (reflections on experience) are to be sent on every due date.

The activities within each CoP were structured in two phases. The first phase was designed to foster reflection, individual study, and engagement with the training content. Following this, the second and most essential phase (Wenger, 1998) engaged participants in applying new insights practically, facilitating deep discussions and peer feedback. This approach marks a shift from the traditional model where an Education Coordinator serves primarily as a knowledge provider, towards a more interactive framework that encourages teachers to collaboratively explore and reflect, thereby enhancing their role as dynamic participants in their own professional growth.

## **Data**

The study involved the following three data sources allowing for a detailed examination of the research questions presented in section 2.4 above.

1. Focus group investigation: 12 of the 16 teachers in CoP\_1 volunteered to participate in focus group questionnaires, which were supplemented by 2 interviews to gain deeper insights into their experiences and perspectives. This CoP had already managed to gain momentum, unlike other communities still struggling to find their pace. The feedback provided was crucial because it offered insights into the success factors for the effective design, organization, and strategies, essential for kick starting and boosting participation and liveliness across all the communities involved in the study.

2. Forum transcripts from the 4 CoPs: Collected throughout the five-month training period, these transcripts were intended to identify coordinators' instructional design and organization (T.P.D.O.) teaching presence. The total word count of these transcripts was 225,914 words, with CoP\_1 contributing 72,330 words, CoP\_2 contributing 49,663 words, CoP\_3 contributing 68,625 words, and CoP\_4 contributing 35,296 words.

3. Post-participation questionnaires: Conducted with all 49 teachers across the four CoPs, these questionnaires were designed to evaluate the effectiveness of the training within each online CoP.

## **Analysis Procedure**

Based on the mixed-methods design presented in section 3.1, this section provides a detailed account of the analysis procedure.

### *Focus Group Analysis*

The initial phase of the analysis focused on insights from 12 of the 16 teachers in CoP\_1 who volunteered for focus group questionnaires, supplemented by interviews with two of these participants. This investigation provided valuable feedback on critical success factors for the effective design and liveliness of the online CoPs. Key themes identified included:

- Factors contributing to liveliness and the sense of community
- Factors enhancing perceived value and usefulness.
- The structural design and organization of activities that promote engagement and active participation.
- The overarching goals, as defined by its members.



These themes were systematically grouped and coded as critical success factors, guiding the design and development of the online CoPs in this study. The interviews were also analyzed in line with the codes for the recurring themes above. Overall, the focus group investigation was instrumental in identifying elements crucial for fostering lively and active participation within these communities.

#### *Discourse Analysis of Coordinators' Instructional Design and Organization in the Discussion Forum*

The discourse analysis of discussion forum transcripts from the four CoPs, which operated over a five-month training period, focused on evaluating coordinators' teaching presence with a specific emphasis on instructional design and organization (T.P.D.O.). This component is a critical aspect of Anderson et al.'s (2001) well-established teaching presence framework (see Appendix). The procedure entailed counting the frequencies of each indicator within the category of instructional design and organization (T.P.D.O.), displayed by the coordinator(s) in each CoP as exemplified in Table 1 below.

**Table 1. Anderson et al.'s (2001) instructional design and organization (T.P.D.O.) coding scheme**

Indicators	Examples
<b>(T.P.D.O)</b>	
a. Setting the curriculum	This week we'll be discussing...
b. Designing methods	I'm going to divide you into groups...
c. Establishing time parameters	Please post a message by Friday...
d. Utilizing medium effectively	Try to address issues others have raised...
e. Establishing netiquette	Keep your messages short

By coding and analyzing the transcripts, the study evaluated the implementation of T.P.D.O. practices by coordinators to structure and guide discussions in each CoP. This analysis aimed to assess the effectiveness of these practices in fostering meaningful engagement and enhancing the overall quality of the online learning experience. Insights from this analysis were further informed by findings from the post-participation evaluation survey presented below.

#### **Post-Participation Survey Procedure**

The post-participation evaluation survey was conducted with all 49 teachers across the four CoPs to address the 2<sup>nd</sup> research question (section 2.4) assessing perceived learning and the effectiveness of the training experience. Guided by Guskey's (2000) evaluative framework for professional development, the survey focused on four key indicators of effectiveness aligned with the training objectives:

1. Reported development of teaching knowledge/skills
2. Reported satisfaction with the usefulness of the experience
3. Reported fulfillment of teacher development needs and

#### 4. Reported implementation of new knowledge/skills

Participants' responses were gathered using a four-point Likert scale. It's important to note that student learning outcomes were beyond the scope of this investigation. This process yielded a total of 49 questionnaires, with a complete response rate: 16 from CoP\_1, 15 from CoP\_2, 12 from CoP\_3, and 6 from CoP\_4.

The survey findings, presented in frequencies and percentages, were compared across the four CoPs and integrated with discourse analysis findings to identify factors driving effective and sustainable professional development practices in online CoPs, detailed in the following sections.

## Results

### Critical Success Factors

The focus group questionnaires and interviews, which included 12 out of the 16 teachers from CoP\_1, the group that managed to head-start and gain momentum while other communities were still struggling to find their pace, offered valuable insights into the critical success factors for the effective design and development of lively and successful online CoPs for EFL teachers, thus addressing the 1st research question.

The analysis of the focus group questionnaires revealed several key factors that were further corroborated and expanded upon during the interviews. Together, the findings emphasized a combination of critical success factors as central to fostering lively and successful online CoPs. These factors include:

- 1) **Activities that generate energy and rhythm (83%):** Participants underscored the importance of incorporating engaging activities such as quizzes, reflection tasks, and interactive study materials (e.g., videos and hyperlinks to articles or journals). They also noted that such activities energized members and maintained participation over time.
- 2) **A monthly structure for every discussion topic (75%)** consisting of:
  - a. a reflection task to initiate engagement and
  - b. provision of study material Provision of study materials during the first fortnight to build a theoretical foundation and
  - c. further discussion activities and integration with practice during the 2nd fortnight.
- 3) **Specification of learning outcomes (66%):** Setting clear objectives was highlighted as essential for focusing the CoP's activities. Examples included cooperative production of teaching materials, which provided a shared purpose and direction for members.
- 4) **Group forum ground rules and deadlines (58%):** Clearly defined rules and deadlines were essential for maintaining organization and structure. Posting them on the CoP's Announcements Board ensured visibility and fostered a well-organized and productive learning environment.

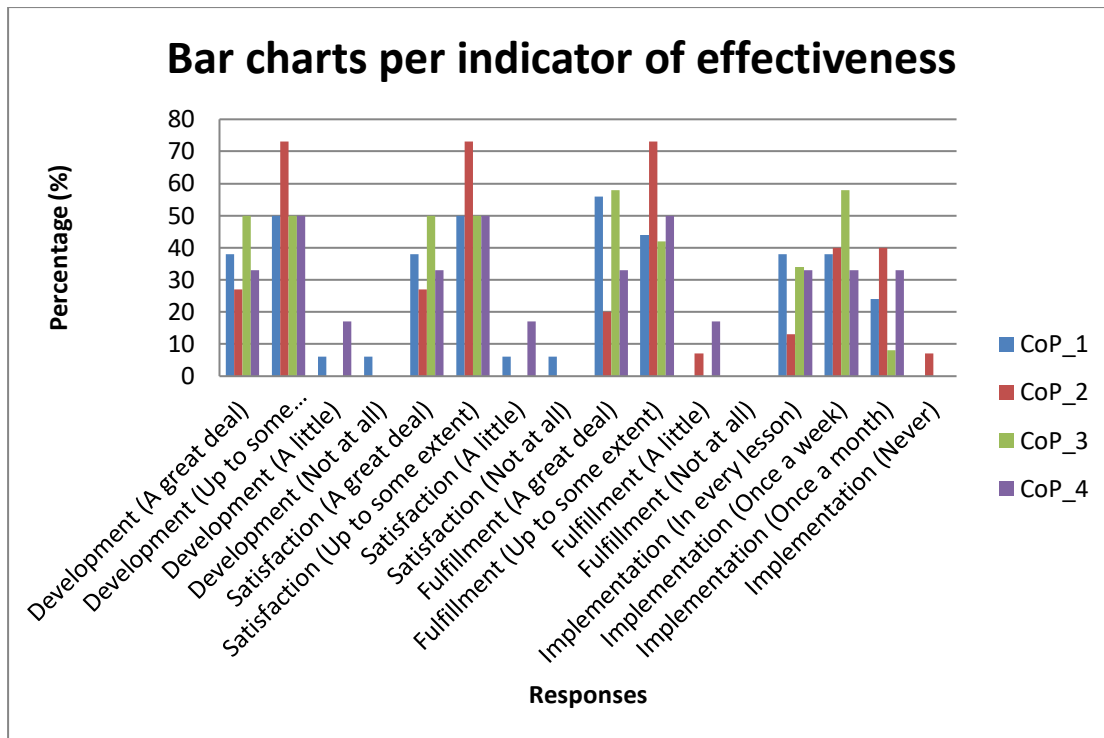
- 5) **Integration of a kick-off session and 1-2 synchronous meetings (58%)**: An initial kick-off session, combined with one to two synchronous or face-to-face meetings during the CoP's lifespan, was described as instrumental in building rapport, establishing a sense of community, and sustaining momentum.
- 6) **Support for sociability, participation, and liveliness (50%)**: Promoting a supportive and interactive environment was emphasized as vital for encouraging active participation. Suggested strategies included informal interactions, networking opportunities, and fostering a culture of collaboration.
- 7) **Continuous provision of feedback, guidance, and motivation (50%)**: Regular feedback and targeted guidance were seen as essential for maintaining engagement. Incentives such as participation certificates, awards, and publicity events were suggested as effective methods to motivate and recognize contributions.
- 8) **Organization of events for the ongoing recruitment of members and promotion (41%)** of the work accomplished as well as creation of a good practices archive for publicity and future reference purposes.
- 9) **Practical and relevant discussion topics (50%)**: Focusing on topics aligned with teachers' professional needs was identified as a key factor in initiating and sustaining engagement.
- 10) **Opportunities for reflection (50%)**: Creating opportunities for reflection was identified as a crucial component of professional development, enabling teachers to critically examine their practices and enhance their professional growth.

### Perceived Effectiveness

Regarding perceived learning and effectiveness of the training experience in relation to teachers' practice in each CoP (2nd RQ), participants generally provided positive evaluations across the four indicators: reported development of teaching knowledge/skills, reported satisfaction with the usefulness of the experience, reported fulfillment of teacher development needs, and reported implementation of new knowledge/skills. However, a clear pattern emerged, with CoP\_1 and CoP\_3 consistently perceived as more effective than CoP\_2 and CoP\_4 across all indicators, as detailed in Table 2.

Specifically, for development of teaching knowledge and skills, CoP\_3 had the highest percentage of participants (50%) reporting substantial gains, followed by CoP\_1 (38%). Similarly, for satisfaction with the usefulness of the experience, CoP\_3 and CoP\_1 led with 83% and 81% of participants, respectively, rating their experiences as highly useful for everyday teaching practice. Regarding the fulfilment of teacher development needs, CoP\_3 again ranked highest with 58% of participants responding very positively, followed closely by CoP\_1 at 56%. Finally, in terms of implementation of new knowledge/skills, CoP\_1 outperformed others, with 38% of participants reporting daily application, followed by 34% in CoP\_3

**Table 2. Indicators of Effectiveness Across the Four CoPs**



This recurring pattern in the data suggested the need for a closer examination to better comprehend the underlying factors contributing to the enhancement of the perceived success of CoP\_1 and CoP\_3. To gain deeper insights, a discourse analysis was conducted to examine the instructional design and organization teaching presence of the four coordinators in the discussion forums, offering an insider’s look into the conditions that fostered the success of these online CoPs. This analysis is presented in the subsequent section.

### Discourse Analysis of Coordinators’ Instructional Design and Organization Teaching Presence

In response to the first part of the 3rd research question (section 2.4), the discourse analysis of the forum transcripts provided important insights into the coordinators’ instructional design and organization (T.P.D.O.) teaching presence category (Anderson et al., 2001) across the four CoPs. As shown in Table 3 below, the total frequencies of the T.P.D.O. discourse were significantly higher in CoP\_1 (94) and CoP\_3 (108) compared to CoP\_2 (51) and CoP\_4 (45). These variations reflect coordinators’ different provisions for instructional design and organization of the forum discussion, impacting participants' engagement and the overall effectiveness of the learning experience.

**Table 3. Instructional Design and Organization Teaching Presence (Anderson et al., 2001) in the Four CoPs**

Variable	Indicators	CoP_1	CoP_2	CoP_3	CoP_4
		Frequencies			
Teaching Presence - Instructional Design	a. Setting the curriculum	19	9	36	11
	b. Designing methods	36	29	49	17

	c. Establishing time parameters	21	7	12	8
	d. Utilizing medium effectively	15	5	9	7
	e. Establishing netiquette	3	1	2	2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>45</b>

Setting the curriculum, the first indicator of T.P.D.O., was prominent in CoP\_3 with 36 frequencies and CoP\_1 with 19 frequencies (see Table 3). Examples from the forum transcripts included clear descriptions of learning goals and objectives, such as:

Coordinator: *“In this distance learning workshop, participants will be introduced to the fundamental principles of teaching English to Young Learners. Participants in this workshop will be able to go through some of the most important elements of teaching the language to children aged 6-12 and have the chance to elaborate on the integrated skills and content-based, experiential approach which language acquisition is based upon at this age.”*

In CoP\_2 and CoP\_4, however, there were fewer instances of such discourse, with curriculum setting being less prominently defined or more implicit.

Designing methods, the second indicator of T.P.D.O., was prominently demonstrated by coordinators in CoP\_3 and CoP\_1, who were particularly active in exhibiting this type of discourse with 49 and 36 instances respectively (see Table 3), as exemplified below:

Coordinator: *“Choose another image on the Padlet Wall that interests you and describe it in the discussion forum, outlining why you find it interesting. You could think about the ways the image does support students’ social and emotional skills. Post your responses to the Discussion Forum.”*

Conversely, CoP\_2 and CoP\_4 coordinators demonstrated fewer occurrences of this indicator, with 29 and 17 frequencies respectively, which could have impacted focus and participation flow.

The establishment of time parameters, the third indicator of T.P.D.O., was also evident in CoP\_1 and CoP\_3, where coordinators explicitly outlined deadlines and timeframes, recording 21 and 12 frequencies respectively. Instances included:

Coordinator: *“I would be grateful if each of you posted your challenge or issue by visiting the Group Forum until about 15th November so that our discussion can start.”*

In contrast, CoP\_2 and CoP\_4 exhibited fewer references to time parameters, with only 7 and 8 frequencies, leading to less structured participation.

As for the effective utilization of the medium, the fourth indicator of T.P.D.O., CoP\_1 exhibited 15 instances while CoP\_3 exhibited 9 instances. Coordinators ensured participants could navigate the platform effectively, as reflected in posts such as:

Coordinator: *“Use the forum and post your reflections as an attachment (step 12-FAQs).”*

CoP\_2 and CoP\_4, however, demonstrated weaker consistent guidance, with Coordinators exhibiting only 5 and 7 instances, respectively, for the entire indicator.

Finally, establishing netiquette was the least prominent indicator across all CoPs. Coordinators emphasized respectful and professional communication through posts that reminded participants to:

Coordinator: “ *Write clearly. Avoid using ALL CAPS, abbrv of wrds (abbreviation of words), and excessive punctuation!!!!!!!!!!*”

*Be sensitive and polite. Let’s build a positive community. Be very careful with your words when discussing race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or controversial topics since others may be more sensitive to these topics than you are. Please post only appropriate content.”*

References to netiquette remained limited overall, with only 3 frequencies in CoP\_1, 2 frequencies in CoP\_3 and CoP\_4 and a single instance in CoP\_2 (see Table 3).

In summary, CoP\_1 and CoP\_3 demonstrated higher frequencies across all indicators of instructional design and organization teaching presence, reflecting the coordinators’ intentional and thoughtful discussion forum discourse. In contrast, CoP\_2 and CoP\_4 recorded lower frequencies, which align with less structured and organized teaching presence discourse from the coordinators. The findings suggest that variations in T.P.D.O. teaching presence may have significantly impacted the overall engagement and effectiveness of each CoP, providing a foundation for comparing findings with the survey results and further exploration in the subsequent sections.

### **Synthesis of Findings**

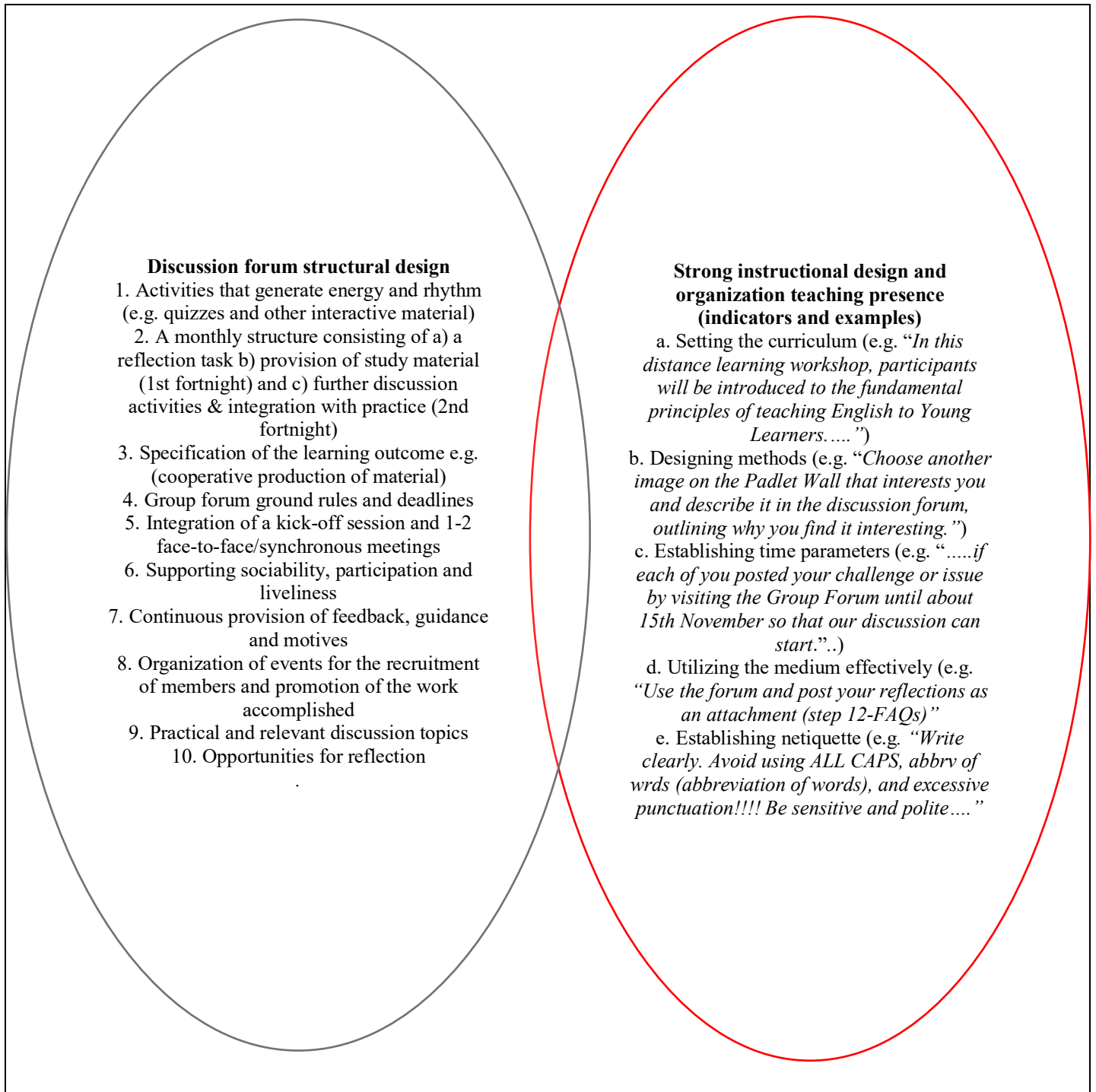
Upon comparing the findings from the discourse analysis with the survey results, a significant correlation emerged: the two CoPs (CoP\_1 and CoP\_3) that demonstrated higher frequencies of instructional design and organization teaching presence (Table 3), were also perceived by participants as more effective across all indicators of effectiveness (Table 2, Section 4.2). Indicators consisted of reported development of teaching knowledge and skills, satisfaction with the usefulness of the experience, fulfillment of professional development needs, and implementation of new knowledge and skills. This finding underscores the importance of structured instructional design and organization in fostering active engagement and perceived effectiveness within online CoPs. Communities with well-defined objectives, effective instructional design and consistent teacher guidance were more successful in achieving positive learning outcomes.

To complete the puzzle, the focus group findings presented in Section 4.1 provided a comprehensive overview of the critical success factors (CSFs) necessary for fostering vibrant and effective online CoPs. These factors, which include activities that generate energy and rhythm, clear learning objectives, a structured approach to discussion topics, and support for sociability and feedback, highlight the foundational elements that contribute to active engagement and sustained participation.

Bringing these insights together with the findings from the discourse analysis and survey results, a clear framework emerges for the design and organization of teaching presence and forum structure in effective online CoPs. This framework synthesizes all the identified CSFs, offering practical guidelines for the design and organization of lively and successful CoPs.

A comprehensive depiction of this framework is provided in Figure 2. These findings, along with their implications for the design and sustainability of online CoPs, are discussed in the subsequent section.

**Figure 2. Discussion Forum Structural Design and Instructional Organization Framework**



**Discussion**

**Foundations of Effectiveness in Online CoPs**

The findings underscore the pivotal role of instructional design and organization in fostering lively, effective and sustainable online CoPs for professional development. By examining the structural and instructional components of discussion forums, the study reveals that CoPs with thoughtfully designed activities, clear objectives, and proactive teaching presence achieve consistently higher outcomes. These include the development of teaching knowledge and skills, satisfaction with the usefulness of experience, fulfillment of needs and the application of new knowledge in professional contexts.

The results align with prior research emphasizing that well-organized online learning environments enhance engagement and satisfaction (Hosler & Arend, 2012; Barton & Maness, 2017). Evaluating CoPs is crucial for refining this model of teacher education (Doleck et al., 2021; Garrison, 2019), and the findings confirm that well-designed online CoPs provide participants with valuable learning opportunities (Galikyan et al., 2021; Heilporn & Lakhali, 2020; Vangrieken et al., 2017). However, participants reported varying levels of perceived effectiveness, which were further clarified through the analysis of discussion forum transcripts. Although limited research links CoI constructs directly to learning outcomes (Caskurlu et al., 2020), this study underscores the importance of explicit design, clear organization, and consistent instructor presence, especially in settings where paralinguistic cues are absent (Anderson et al., 2001).

The findings contribute to this growing body of knowledge by providing an integrated framework for discussion forum structural design and instructional organization, offering both theoretical insights and practical strategies for fostering lively, sustainable and effective online CoPs.

### **Discussion Forum Structural Design and Instructional Organization Framework**

The critical success factors identified in this study provide a comprehensive foundation for designing effective online CoPs. Activities that generate energy and rhythm, such as quizzes and interactive discussion activities, are central to boosting participation and ensuring continuity. These findings echo earlier research highlighting the importance of interactive and diverse content in keeping learners motivated and engaged (Archibald, 2011; Mills et al., 2016). The integration of a structured timeline, with phased activities from reflection to practical application, further supports continuity and engagement, aligning with Kupczynski et al.'s (2010) findings on the value of instructional design and organization for course success in online learning environments.

The findings also emphasize the significance of setting clear goals and practical learning outcomes. These provide direction and relevance, enabling participants to connect their inquiry to real-world applications. Such approaches resonate with Wenger's (1998) emphasis on the learning value that members find in CoPs. Additionally, fostering opportunities for sociability and interaction, such as synchronous meetings and networking activities, counterbalances the isolation often associated with asynchronous communication, and supports the development of vibrant and active communities. These factors contribute to sustaining engagement and collaboration, aligning with Garrison's (2017) concepts of purposeful communication and sustained relationship-building.

In addition, the instructional organization of teaching presence emerges in this study as a dynamic and ongoing process that underpins engagement and learning in online CoPs. Building



on the principles for the initial course setup, this study emphasizes the sustained role of instructional design throughout the training, ensuring participants remain aligned with objectives and actively engaged. This continuous instructional presence, reflected in designing activities, setting clear expectations, adhering to time parameters, and utilizing the medium effectively, integrates Anderson et al.'s (2001) framework for T.P.D.O. with the discussion forum structural design, demonstrating its critical role in fostering professional development in CoPs.

The findings of this study contribute significantly to the research on instructional design and organization teaching presence by demonstrating its dual role as both an engagement strategy and a determinant of perceived effectiveness in online CoPs. While previous research emphasizes clarity and structure in online learning environments (Barton & Maness, 2017; Caskurlu et al., 2021), this study extends these insights by identifying actionable practices that sustain vibrant CoPs. These include the use of diverse and interactive learning resources, the design of phased activities to build rhythm and continuity, and the strategic integration of time parameters and feedback mechanisms to keep participants aligned with objectives. By validating these practices in the context of online CoPs, the study offers evidence-based strategies for fostering active engagement, sustainable community building and professional development.

The proposed discussion forum structural design and instructional organization framework (Figure 2, section 4.4), serves as a practical guide for Coordinators and online CoP designers. It underscores the importance of integrating structured forum organization with dynamic instructional presence to achieve engagement and perceived effectiveness. Specific recommendations include setting clear learning outcomes tied to real-world applications, maintaining a consistent timeline to support sustained participation, and fostering a welcoming environment that encourages collaboration and mutual support. This framework provides a pathway for creating professional development environments that are not only effective in the short term but also resilient, scalable, and capable of sustaining long-term impact. Therefore, this study offers a tested and validated model that complements and supplements existing frameworks for instructional design and organization in online CoPs.

## **Conclusion**

This study confirms the value of online CoPs as a powerful tool for professional development, particularly in the context of teacher education. A central takeaway is the critical role of instructional design, organization and proactive coordination in fostering engaging and effective learning environments. The identified framework provides practical guidance for designing and organizing CoPs, emphasizing the importance of clear objectives, structured activities, and consistent instructor presence to enhance perceived effectiveness.

While this study focuses on teacher professional development, the potential of online CoPs extends beyond this domain. As highlighted by the OECD (2009), adult learning in general could benefit from applying the principles of online CoPs. The framework proposed here offers a transferable model that may inform the design and coordination of diverse online educational settings. By bridging research and practice, this study not only enhances the understanding of

CoPs in professional development but also lays the groundwork for broader applications in adult education and lifelong learning.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

This study has shed light on the importance of discussion forum structural design and instructional organization in online CoPs, Therefore there are several avenues for future research that would further validate and extend these findings. First, future studies should explore the long-term impact of this framework on the sustainability of CoPs. Given that this study only covered a five-month period, examining the effects of design features over a longer duration could provide valuable insights into the longevity of online CoPs.

Second, future research could investigate the applicability of these findings to other professional development contexts, as well as other subject areas beyond EFL teaching. Finally, exploring the role of asynchronous interactions in greater depth, particularly with the advent of emerging technologies like artificial intelligence, could offer further guidance on how to automatize online learning interactions for different types of professional development.

### **References**

- Akyol, Z., & Garrison, D. R. (2008). The development of a Community of Inquiry over time in an online course: Understanding the progression and integration of social, cognitive and teaching presence. *Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks*, 12(3-4), 3-22.
- Anderson, T., Rourke, L., Garrison, D. R., & Archer, W. (2001). Assessing teaching presence in a computer conferencing context. *Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks*, 5(2), 1-17.
- Arbaugh, J. B. (2008). Does the Community of Inquiry framework predict outcomes in online MBA courses? *The International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning*, 9(2), 1-21.
- Archibald, D. (2011). *Fostering cognitive presence in higher education through the authentic design, delivery, and evaluation of an online learning resource: A mixed methods study*. University of Ottawa (Canada).
- Atapattu, T., Falkner, K., & Vivian, R. (2019). Identifying cognitive engagement in discussion forums using word embeddings. *Proceedings of the 25th ACM SIGKDD International Conference on Knowledge Discovery & Data Mining*, 2065-2073.
- Baker, J. D. (2010). The impact of instructor immediacy and presence for online student affective learning, cognition, and motivation. *The Journal of Educators Online*, 7(1), 1-30.
- Baran, B., & Çağıltay, K. (2006). Knowledge management and online communities of practice in teacher education. *The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology*, 5(3), 1-8.
- Barton, D. H., & Maness, D. (2017). Teaching presence in online courses: Organization and design are key. *Innovation*, 12(11), 43-55.

- Cambridge, D., Kaplan, S., & Suter, V. (2005). Community of practice design guide. A step-by-step guide for designing and cultivating communities of practice in higher education. Retrieved from: <https://library.educause.edu/-/media/files/library/2005/1/nli0531-pdf.pdf>
- Caskurlu, S., Maeda, Y., Richardson J. C., & Lv, J. (2020). A meta-analysis addressing the relationship between teaching presence and students' satisfaction and learning. *Computers and Education*, 157, 103966. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2020.103966>
- Caskurlu, S., Richardson, J. C., Maeda, Y., & Kozan, K. (2021). The qualitative evidence behind the factors impacting online learning experiences as informed by the community of inquiry framework: A thematic synthesis. *Computers & Education*, 165, 104111. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2020.104111>
- Day, C., & Sachs, J. (2004). Professionalism, performativity and empowerment: discourses in the politics, policies and purposes of continuing professional development. In C. Day & J. Sachs (Eds.), *International handbook on the continuing professional development of teachers* (pp. 3-32). Open University Press.
- Doleck, T., Lemay, D. J., & Brinton, C. G. (2021). Evaluating the efficiency of social learning networks: Perspectives for harnessing learning analytics to improve discussions. *Computers & Education*, 164, 104124. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2021.104124>
- Fishman, B. J., Marx, R. W., Best, S., & Tal, R. T. (2003). Linking teacher and student learning to improve professional development in systemic reform. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 19(6), 643-658.
- Galikyan, I., Admiraal, W., & Kester, L. (2021). MOOC discussion forums: The interplay of the cognitive and the social. *Computers & Education*, 165, 104133. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2021.104133>
- Garrison, D. R. (2017). Social presence and interdependence. *The Community of Inquiry*. Retrieved from: <http://www.thecommunityofinquiry.org/editorial6>
- Garrison, D. R. (2019). *Thinking collaboratively: Learning in a community of inquiry*. Routledge.
- Garrison, D. R. (2021). Teaching presence meta-analysis. *The Community of Inquiry*. Retrieved from: <http://www.thecommunityofinquiry.org/editorial29>
- Garrison, D. R., Anderson, T., & Archer, W. (2000). Critical inquiry in a text-based environment: Computer conferencing in higher education. *The Internet and Higher Education*, 2(2-3), 87-105.
- Guskey, T. R. (2000). *Evaluating professional development*. Corwin Press.
- Hara, N., Bonk, C.J., & Angeli, C. (2000). Content analysis of online discussion in an applied educational psychology course. *Instructional Science* 28, 115-152. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1003764722829>
- Harasim, L. (2017). *Learning theory and online technologies* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Heilporn, G., & Lakhal, S. (2020). Investigating the reliability and validity of the community of inquiry framework: An analysis of categories within each presence. *Computers & Education*, 145, 103712. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2019.103712>

- Higher Education Sustainability Initiative. (2024). Summary of the Higher Education Sustainability Initiative Forum 2024. United Nations. Retrieved from <https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2024-09/HESI%20Global%20Forum%202024%20Summary%20final.pdf>
- Holmes, B. (2013). School improvement: International trends and directions for the future. *Journal of Educational Change*, 12(3), 345-357.
- Hosler, K. A., & Arend, B. D. (2012). The importance of course design, feedback, and facilitation: Student perceptions of the relationship between teaching presence and cognitive presence. *Educational Media International*, 49(3), 217-229.
- Huang, R., Spector, J. M., & Yang, J. (2019). *Handbook on blended learning: Global perspectives, local designs*. Springer Nature.
- Independent Group of Scientists appointed by the Secretary-General. (2023). *Global Sustainable Development Report 2023: Times of crisis, times of change: Science for accelerating transformations to sustainable development*. United Nations.
- Karavas, E., & Papadopoulou, S. (2014). Introducing a paradigm shift in EFL continuing professional development in Greece: the development of online communities of practice. In D. Hayes (Ed.), *Innovations in the continuing professional development of English language teachers* (pp. 179-206).
- Korthagen, F. (2017). Inconvenient truths about teacher learning: towards professional development 3.0. *Teachers and Teaching*, 23(4), 387-405. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2016.1211523>
- Kovanović, V., Joksimović, S., Poquet, O., Hennis, T., Čukić, I., de Vries, P., Hatala, M., Dawson, S., Siemens, G., & Gašević, D. (2018). Exploring communities of inquiry in Massive Open Online Courses. *Computers & Education*, 119, 44-58. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2017.11.010>
- Kourkouli, K. (2018). Investigating the Impact of Greek EFL Teachers Participation in Online Communities of Practice as a Means of Professional Development. *European Journal of Education*, 1(1), 56-75.
- Kourkouli, K. (2024). Unlocking in-depth forum discussion and perceived effectiveness: Teaching and social presence categories in online teacher communities. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 146, 104630.
- Kupczynski, L., Ice, P., Wiesenmayer, R., & McCluskey, F. (2010). Student perceptions of the relationship between indicators of teaching presence and success in online courses. *Journal of Interactive Online Learning*, 9(1).
- Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge University Press.
- Lieberman, A. & Pointer Mace, D. (2010). Making practice public: Teacher learning in the 21st century. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 61 (1-2), 77-88. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487109347319>
- Liu, M. H., & Kleinsasser, R. C. (2014). Fostering online professional development between EFL preservice and inservice teachers: Affordances and challenges. *English Teaching & Learning*, 38 (2), 29-64. <https://doi.org/10.6330/ETL.2014.38.2.02>

- Mills, J., Yates, K., Harrison, H., Woods, C., Chamberlain-Salaun, J., Trueman, S., & Hitchins, M. (2016). Using a community of inquiry framework to teach a nursing and midwifery research subject: An evaluative study. *Nurse Education Today*, 43, 34-39.
- Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, Greece [ΥΠΙΑΙΘ] (2016). Εθνικός και κοινωνικός διάλογος για την παιδεία: Πορίσματα. (National and social dialogue for education: Findings).  
[https://www.minedu.gov.gr/publications/docs2016/PORISMATA\\_DIALOGOU\\_2016.pdf](https://www.minedu.gov.gr/publications/docs2016/PORISMATA_DIALOGOU_2016.pdf)
- OECD (2009). The professional development of teachers. In creating effective teaching and learning environments: First results from TALIS. [www.oecd.org/edu/talis/firstresults](http://www.oecd.org/edu/talis/firstresults)
- OECD (2020). Education at a Glance 2020:OECD Indicators, OECD Publishing, Paris.  
<https://doi.org/10.1787/69096873-en>
- Pachler, N. (2012). Connecting schools and pupils: To what end?: Issues related to the use of ICT in school-based learning1. In *Issues in teaching using ICT* (pp. 15-30). Routledge.
- Parrish, C. W., Guffey, S. K., Williams, D. S., Estis, J. M., & Lewis, D. (2021). Fostering cognitive presence, social presence and teaching presence with integrated online—Team-based learning. *TechTrends*, 65, 473-484.
- Putnam, R. & Borko, H. (2000). What do new views of knowledge and thinking have to say about research on teacher learning?. *Educational Researcher*, 29 (1), 4-15.  
<https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X029001004>
- Schleicher, A. (2016). Teaching excellence through professional learning and policy reform: Lessons from around the world. International Summit on the Teaching Profession. OECD Publishing.
- Singh, J., Singh, L., & Matthees, B. (2022). Establishing social, cognitive, and teaching presence in online learning—A panacea in COVID-19 pandemic, post vaccine and post pandemic times. *Journal of Educational Technology Systems*, 51(1), 28-45.
- Thang, S. M., Ting, S. L., & Jaafar, N. M. (2011). Attitudes and motivation of Malaysian secondary students towards learning English as a second language: A case study. 3L; Language, Linguistics and Literature, *The Southeast Asian Journal of English Language Studies.*, 17(1), 40-54.
- The Council of the EU (2020). Council conclusions on European teachers and trainers for the future. *Official Journal of the European Union*, C 193/04, 11-19
- UNESCO & International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030 (2024). *Global Report on Teachers: Addressing teacher shortages and transforming the profession*. Paris: UNESCO
- Vangrieken, K., Meredith, C., Packer, T., & Kyndt, E. (2017). Teacher communities as a context for professional development: A systematic review. *Teaching and teacher education*, 61, 47-59. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2016.10.001>
- Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. Cambridge University Press.
- Wenger, E., McDermott, R., & Snyder, W. (2002). *Cultivating communities of practice*. Harvard Business School Press.

Wenger, E., & Trayner, B. (2015). Introduction to communities of practice, a brief overview of the concept and its uses Retrieved from: <https://www.wenger-trayner.com/introduction-to-communities-of-practice/>

Wenger, E., Trayner, B., & de Laat, M. (2011). Promoting and assessing value creation in communities and networks: A conceptual framework. Open University Press.

Wenger-Trayner, E., Wenger-Trayner, B., Reid, P., & Bruderlein, C. (2023). Communities of practice: Within and across organizations—A guidebook (2nd ed.). Social Learning Lab.

**Appendix: Discussion forum coding schemes**

Anderson et al.’s (2001) teaching presence coding scheme

Indicators	Examples
<b>(T.P.D.O)</b>	
a. Setting the curriculum	This week we’ll be discussing...
b. Designing methods	I’m going to divide you into groups...
c. Establishing time parameters	Please post a message by Friday...
d. Utilizing medium effectively	Try to address issues others have raised...
e. Establishing netiquette	Keep your messages short
<b>(T.P.F.D.)</b>	
i. Identifying areas of agreement/disagreement	Mary, Joe has provided a compelling counterexample to your hypothesis....
ii. Seeking to reach consensus/understanding	I think Joe and Mary are saying essentially the same thing
iii. Encouraging, acknowledging, or reinforcing student contributions	Thank you for your insightful comments
iv. Setting climate for learning	Don’t feel self-conscious about thinking out loud on the forum. This is a place to try out ideas after all...
v. Drawing in participants, prompting discussion	Any thoughts on this issue?
vi. Assess the efficacy of the process	I think we’re getting a little off-track here.
<b>(T.P.D.I.)</b>	
1. Present content/questions	Bates says...what do you think?

2.Focus the discussion on specific issues	I think that's a dead end. I would ask you to consider...
3.Summarize the discussion	The original question was ...Joe said...Mary said... we concluded that...
4.Confirm understanding through assessment and explanatory feedback	You're close, but you didn't account for... this is important because...
5.Diagnose misconceptions	Remember, Bates is speaking from an administrative perspective, so be careful when you say.
6.Inject knowledge from diverse sources (e.g. textbook, articles, internet, personal experiences (includes pointers to resources))	I was at a conference with Bates once, and he said... You can find the proceedings from... conference at <a href="http://www...">http://www...</a>
7.Responding to technical concerns	If you want to include a hyperlink in your message, you have to ...