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Investigation into the Participation Activity Rate of Foreign Languages Teachers in Specially Focused Network Pedagogical Communities

Abstract

The authors present the results of research carried out in the 2017/2018 academic year among foreign languages teachers at eight higher education institutions. The aim of the study was to find out the connection between the participation activity rate of foreign languages teachers in specially focused network pedagogical communities and the level of professional self-realization through their self-efficacy. We used methods of mathematical statistics, computer data processing and discursive reflexion for drawing logical conclusions from experimental data. 267 foreign languages teachers from Ukrainian universities participated in the first stage of research. During the second stage, 108 selected foreign languages teachers completed a questionnaire for collecting data and evaluating the level of their self-efficacy. Results indicate a significant difference in the professional self-realization levels among the members and non-members of specially focused network communities and confirm the suggested hypothesis.

Keywords: *network community, foreign languages teachers, self-actualisation, professional self-realization, self-efficacy, disciplinary self-efficacy, instructional self-efficacy, professional activity, higher educational institution*

Introduction

Self-actualization is a state in which people are at their very best (Joseph, 2016). This idea was introduced by Maslow, who believed that every person has a strong desire to realize his/her full potential, in other words, to reach the level of 'self-ac-tualisation'. According to Maslow, self-actualising people are rather confident, show much concern for their own personal growth, do not show concern for other people's opinions and are interested in fulfilling their potential (Maslow, 1943; Maslow, 1954). In their workplace and in their everyday actions, self-actualising people are efficient in how they perceive reality, able to form deep relationships, guided by their own inner goals and values, able to express emotions freely and clearly. They also accept themselves and other people and appreciate life (Maslow, 1943; Maslow, 1954; Joseph, 2016).

At any educational establishment there are different levels at which self-effi-cacy operates as an important contributor to academic development, namely: students', teachers' and faculties'. Teachers' beliefs in their personal efficacy to motivate and promote students as well as their collective instructional efficacy contribute significantly to their schools' level of academic achievement (Ban-dura, 1993). Moreover, teachers whose efficacy level is very high are not only able to motivate their students, they are also able to reach the highest level of fulfillment in their workplace. In this respect, we share the opinion of Cherry, who thinks that people with a strong sense of self-efficacy view challenging problems as tasks to be mastered, develop a deeper interest in the activities in which they participate, form a stronger sense of commitment to their interests and activities, recover quickly from setbacks and disappointments (Cherry, 2017). And people whose sense of self-efficacy is weak usually avoid challenging tasks, believe that difficult tasks and situations are beyond their capabilities, focus on personal failings and negative outcomes, quickly lose confidence in personal abilities (Cherry, 2017).

In our research, we are interested in finding out the connection between real-ization of foreign languages teachers' potential and the level of their self-efficacy through participating in specially focused network pedagogical communities. We consider that network communities can be regarded as groups of people linked by their participation in computer networks (Rheingold, 1993). Therefore, a spe-cially focused network pedagogical community is defined as a group of specialists bound by common professional interests and challenges, which is organized on a voluntary basis, and whose communication is possible through different online platforms. The main advantage of participating in network communities is that its

participants have no face-to-face contact, are not bound by the constraints of time or place, and use computers to communicate with one another (Rheingold, 1993). The main aim of specially focused network pedagogical communities is to provide deliberative interaction between all its participants, develop their intellectual and creative activities, discuss challenges facing teachers in different educational institutions, create a system of information and methodological support among all its participants and share agentic experience of solving existing challenges. It is during such a participation of foreign languages teachers in network pedagogical communities when they have the opportunity to share and accumulate their best practices of meeting modern standards in education, avoiding some problems in teaching different languages, using innovative teaching techniques, that their capability of self-realization is being developed to its fullest (Malykhin, 2009; Aristova, 2018).

Research Problem

Entering the labour market, many foreign languages teachers are not ready and able to realize their full potential. In most cases, the reason for this lies in the lack of teaching experience, lack of knowledge of how to share innovative ideas with other colleagues and even fear to ask for advice on issues of concern. There is no easy way out of this situation, but due to the spread of the Internet, easy access to information resources, services and specially focused network communities specialists of different spheres can discuss acute problems, share personal experiences in coping with them, improve their self-efficacy and, as a result, achieve their creative potential and contribute greatly to the organization or company they work for. Foreign languages teachers are not an exception and specially focused network pedagogical communities are not a recent phenomenon. Nowadays, participation of foreign languages teachers in specially focused network pedagogical communities can help them meet high expectations set for them by the challenges of modern life and society and as a consequence of requirements of higher education institutions for training future professionals. As we strongly believe that the level of a person's self-efficacy clearly affects unleashing his/her potential, the presented research attempts at investigating the correlation between realization of foreign languages teachers' creative potential and the level of their self-efficacy through participating in specially focused network pedagogical communities.

Research Methodology

Research General Background

The research was conducted to find out the connection between the realization of foreign languages teachers' potential and the level of their self-efficacy through participating in specially focused network pedagogical communities. The study was carried out in two stages in the 2017/2018 academic year among the foreign languages teachers in eight higher education institutions.

Research Sample

During the first stage of the research, we interviewed 267 foreign languages teachers, who work in different higher education institutions all over Ukraine. Then after data processing, we divided all the respondents into three homogeneous groups according to the rate of their participation activity in specially focused network pedagogical communities (Table 1). Foreign languages teachers from eight Ukrainian universities: National University of Life and Environmental Sciences of Ukraine (26 teachers), National Technical University of Ukraine «Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute» (20 teachers), Ivan Franko National University of Lviv (4 teachers), National Aviation University (24 teachers), Ternopil Volodymyr Hnatiuk National Pedagogical University (19 teachers), Donetsk National University of Economics and Trade (10 teachers), State University of Telecommunications (5 teachers) were selected for participation in the next stage of research. In total, 108 foreign languages teachers to0ok part of this research.

Table 1. Distribution of respondents (N)

Participation activity	N
Non-members	36
Non-regular members	36
Active members	36

Instrument and Procedures

During the first stage of the research, a questionnaire developed by the authors was used. The questionnaire comprised two questions concerning the participation activity of foreign languages teachers in specially focused network pedagogical communities:

Are you a member of any specially focused network pedagogical community? Yes/No

Please comment on how participation in specially focused network pedagogical communities contributes to your professional self-realization.

During the second stage, we used another questionnaire. The questionnaire on teacher self-efficacy (A. Bandura, 2006) used in the research was adapted to evaluate self-efficacy of university foreign languages teachers in instructional and disciplinary self-efficacy and efficacy to influence decision making. The university foreign languages teachers were asked to rate 14 statements by recording a number from 0 to 100.

Efficacy of Influencing Decision Making
Influence the decisions that are made at university
Freely express my view on important university matters
Get the instructional materials and equipment I need
Instructional Self-Efficacy
Get across to most difficult students
Get students to learn when there is a lack of support from home
Keep students on tasks on difficult assignments
Increase students' memory of what they have been taught in previous lessons
Motivate students who show low interest in university work
Get students to work well together
Overcome the influence of adverse community conditions on students' learning
Get students to do their homework
Disciplinary Self-Efficacy
Get students to follow classroom rules
Control disruptive behavior in the classroom
Prevent problem behavior on the university grounds

Data Analysis

During our research, two questionnaires were given to the university foreign languages teachers. First, we used a questionnaire to find out the rate of the university foreign languages teachers' participation activity in specially focused network pedagogical communities. The questionnaire consisted of 2 questions. The data was analysed quantitatively. Then, we used a questionnaire to evaluate the self-efficacy of the university foreign languages teachers in instructional and disciplinary self-efficacy and efficacy of influencing decision making. Each questionnaire was administered in the presence of the authors and all the respondents were guaranteed total anonymity.

Research Results

After a careful analysis of the respondents' replies concerning their participation activity in specially focused network pedagogical communities we drew the following conclusions. The representatives of each group shared a common idea about their participation activity in specially focused network pedagogical communities Thus, the replies of non-members of specially focused network pedagogical communities were approximately the same:

I don't have any need to be a part of any specially focused network pedagogical community because I don't think that somebody's professional experience can inspire confidence in all actions I do in my workplace and influence the realization of my potential. You will never be able to take sound decisions on problematic questions until you experience them in your workplace and cope with them. I strongly believe that your experience is only your experience. Somebody's ideas of using teaching aids will not necessarily be successful in your classroom. What is more, to be a member of any specially focused network pedagogical community requires spending much of your precious time in front of the computer. I don't want to spend it discussing something with people I don't know.

Non-regular members of specially focused network pedagogical communities took the very same view, namely:

I know that nowadays there are many network communities on the Internet and people can easily join them. I am not an exception and I am a member of several communities. But I don't think that I am a very active one. Yes, I have to admit that being a part of any specially focused network pedagogical community can be very useful as some ideas shared by other members are so sound that you start using them in your classroom. And you understand that they really work. On the other hand, people often discuss some problems which arise in the classroom but their opinions differ greatly and you don't know what to do if you have such a problem. So I take part in some discussions only when I want to find a solution to the problem which arises in my classroom.

Active members of specially focused network pedagogical communities shared the opinion that:

"Participating in specially focused network pedagogical communities you can get free access to additional materials, which you can use while you are working with students. You can also gain support and get some advice on any problem you face in the

classroom. In my mind, one of the indisputable benefits of being an active member of specially focused network pedagogical communities is the possibility to interact with other colleagues and discuss any topic you are interested in even if you are many miles away from them. You can share useful information concerning teaching and learning, attending seminars, webinars, conferences, etc. Having such support from my colleagues I feel confidence in coping with any challenge I face in the classroom with my students, making any decision in my workplace".

Then, all the foreign languages teachers selected to take part in the second stage of our research were asked to respond to the questionnaire. The respondents' replies were analysed and processed according to three following categories mentioned in the questionnaire: efficacy of influencing decision making, instructional and disciplinary self-efficacy.

The results of data analysis related to finding out the level of efficacy of influencing decision making among the foreign languages teachers depending on the rate of their participation activity in specially focused network pedagogical communities are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Foreign languages teachers' efficacy of influencing decision making depending on the rate of their participation activity in specially focused network pedagogical communities

Category	Respondents' participation activity in specially focused network pedagogical communities (N)	Respondents' degree of confidence		
		Low N (%)	Medium N (%)	High N (%)
Efficacy of Influencing Decision Making	Non-members (36)	20 (55.6%)	14 (38.8%)	2 (5.6%)
	Non-regular members (36)	10 (27.8%)	19 (52.8%)	7 (19.4%)
	Active members (36)	4 (11.1%)	18 (50.0%)	14 (38.9%)

Figure 1 shows the rate of the foreign languages teachers' participation activity in specially focused network pedagogical communities and their efficacy of influencing decision making in their workplace.

Let us look at the results obtained in the research in more detail. According to the results presented in Table 2, fourteen foreign languages teachers (38.9%) who are active members of specially focused network pedagogical communities have a high level of efficacy of influencing decision making. Most of them also mentioned that after joining specially focused network pedagogical communities
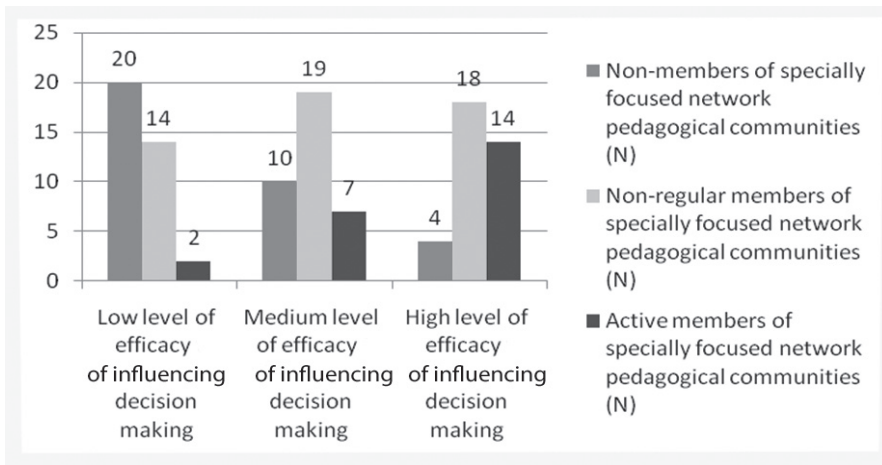
Figure 1. Comparison of foreign languages teachers' efficacy of influencing decision making depending on the rate of their participation activity in specially focused network pedagogical communities and control class
Source: own study.

they joined different action groups, whose activities are focused on improvement of future specialists' training and during their meetings they discuss all pressing issues which influence the functioning of a higher education institution. Eighteen foreign languages teachers (50.0%) and four foreign languages teachers (11.1%), respectively, show medium and low level of efficacy of influencing decision making. Another conclusion that can be drawn from Table 2 is that 27.8% of the non-regular members of specially focused network pedagogical communities show a low level of efficacy of influencing decision making, 52.8% – medium level and 19.4% high level. The majority of the non-members of specially focused network pedagogical communities show a low level of efficacy of influencing decision making – 55.6%, 5.6% show a high level and 38.8%.

The findings of data analysis concerning the level of instructional self-efficacy among the foreign languages teachers depending on the rate of their participation activity in specially focused network pedagogical communities are presented in Table 3.

The connection between the rate of the foreign languages teachers' participation activity in specially focused network pedagogical communities and their instructional self-efficacy level is illustrated in Figure 2.

Table 3. Foreign languages teachers' instructional self-efficacy level depending on the rate of their participation activity in specially focused network pedagogical communities

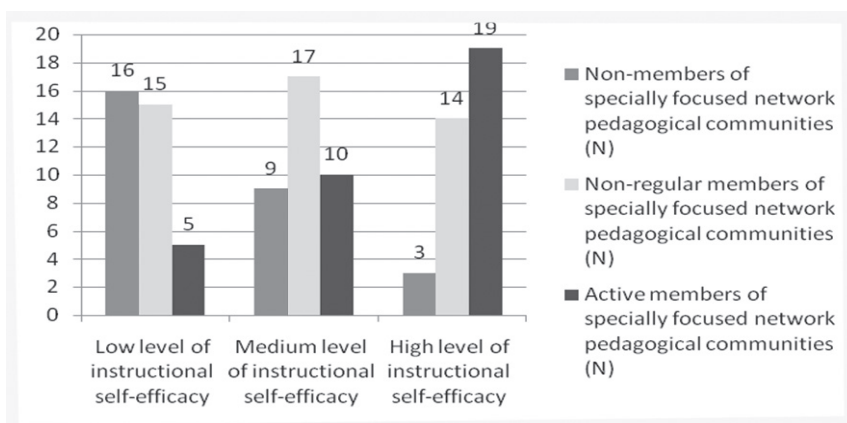| Category	Respondents' participation activity in specially focused network pedagogical communities (N)	Respondents' degree of confidence		
		Low N (%)	Medium N (%)	High N (%)
Instruction-al Self-Effi-cacy	Non-members (36)	16 (44.4%)	15 (41.7%)	5 (13.9%)
	Non-regular members (36)	9 (25.0%)	17 (47.2%)	10 (27.8%)
	Active members (36)	3 (8.3%)	14 (38.9%)	19 (52.8%)

Figure 2. Comparison of foreign languages teachers' instructional self-efficacy level depending on the rate of their participation activity in specially focused network pedagogical communities
Source: own study.

Almost 52.8% of the active members of specially focused network pedagogical communities have a high level of instructional self-efficacy, whilst such a result is shown by only 27.8% of non-regular members and 13.9% of non-members. As presented in the table, 38.9% of the active members of specially focused network pedagogical communities have a medium level of instructional self-efficacy, 47.2% of the non-regular members and 41.7% of the non-members. 8.3% of the active members of specially focused network pedagogical communities, 22.0% of the non-regular members and 44.4% of the non-members have a low level of instruc-tional self-efficacy.

The findings of data analysis related to the level of disciplinary self-efficacy among the foreign languages teachers depending on the rate of their participation activity in specially focused network pedagogical communities are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Foreign languages teachers' disciplinary self-efficacy depending on the rate of their participation activity in specially focused network pedagogical communities

| Category | Respondents' participation activity in specially focused network pedagogical communities (N) | Respondents' degree of confidence | | |
		Low N (%)	Medium N (%)	High N (%)
Disciplinary Self-Efficacy	Non-members (36)	18 (50.0%)	14 (38.9%)	4 (11.1%)
	Non-regular members (36)	9 (25.5%)	18 (50.0%)	9 (25.5%)
	Active members (36)	4 (11.1%)	17 (47.2%)	15 (41.7%)

The connection between the rate of the foreign languages teachers' participation activity in specially focused network pedagogical communities and their disciplinary self-efficacy level is shown in Figure 2.
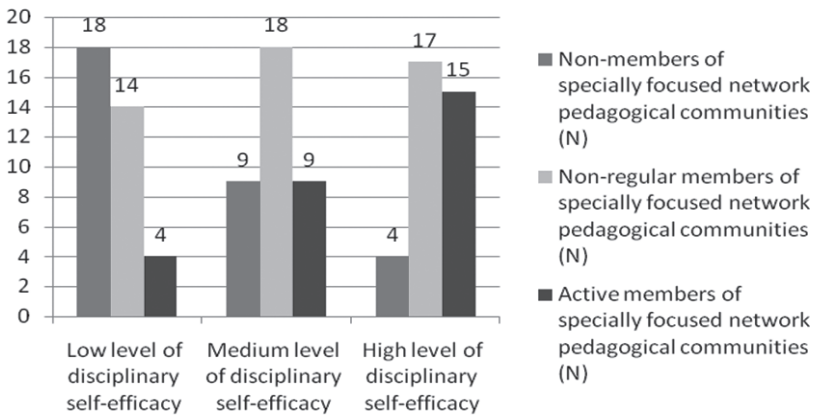

Figure 3. Comparison of foreign languages teachers' disciplinary self-efficacy level depending on the rate of their participation activity in specially focused network pedagogical communities

Source: own study.

41.7% of the active members, 25.5% of the non-regular members and 11.1% of the non-members of specially focused network pedagogical communities consider their level of disciplinary self-efficacy as high. Results show that 47.2% of the active members of specially focused network pedagogical communities, 50.0% of the non-regular members and 38.9% of the non-members have a medium level of disciplinary self-efficacy. A low level of disciplinary self-efficacy is declared by only 11.1% of the active members of specially focused network pedagogical communities, 25.5% of the non-regular members and 50.0% of the non-members.

Discussion

The aim of this study was to find out the connection between realization of foreign languages teachers' potential and the level of their self-efficacy through participating in specially focused network pedagogical communities. The reason for selecting foreign languages teachers was that when Ukraine joined the Bologna Process they faced a lot of challenges connected with educational reforms implemented in Ukraine in order to correspond to world educational standards in teaching foreign languages. As it turned out, the majority of them failed in achieving their potential in general and in influencing academic success of their students in particular. It happened more than ten years ago and foreign languages teachers had no opportunities to share their experience with their colleagues all over the world for many reasons and one of them was the lack of opportunity to seek the advice of other colleagues who face the same problems but live in other countries. Due to the development of the Internet and information technologies, modern Ukrainian foreign languages teachers can become members of specially focused network pedagogical communities and can discuss freely any topical issues. In our opinion, the opportunity to be a member of any specially focused network pedagogical community and possibility to share one's own experience in problem solving, sharing different teaching aids can improve foreign languages teachers' efficacy. A higher level of efficacy gives foreign languages teachers more chance to influence the decisions that are made in higher education institutions, motivate their students, and use up-to-date techniques in their classrooms. In other words, they are able to realize their full potential in the workplace.

Conclusions

The findings of the study confirm the strong connection between the foreign languages teachers' participation activity rate in specially focused network communities and the level of development of their professional self-realization.

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