

**FLIPPED PROFESSIONAL MOOC:  
PROBLEMS AND NEEDS AMONG ESL EDUCATORS**

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**Abstract:** Today, the shortcomings of the traditional professional development programs have spurred the idea of a flipped professional development in coping with the current pandemic where almost everything is going online. In most cases, it is mostly held in the form of workshops aimed at delivering pedagogical content to educators; however, they leave no time for the design and implementation of the content. Thus, the idea of flipping the professional development program via integration of technology was emphasized. This research was carried out among 46 ESL educators in a private university in Perak to develop a flipped professional development Massive Open Online Course. This research was carried out to identify the problems faced and the needs by ESL educators in the existing professional development programs and thus, develop suitable training programs for ESL educators that will be essential for educators in coping with the current trend in technology. Mixed mode was the design of this research and it was employed beginning with the needs analysis, design, and development of a MOOC. The pyramidal Train-to-Learn framework for research is adapted from theories namely the (i) Bloom's Revised Taxonomy and (ii) Zone of Proximal Teacher Development (ZPTD) along with Gagne's 9 Events of Instruction. This study adopted Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) instrument. Implications for future research is to look into the experiences and readiness of these educators to attend such type of professional development training, to have wider positive perceptions, same visions and goals about technology integration.

**Keywords:** Flipped MOOC, ESL Educators, Problems, Needs, UTAUT

## INTRODUCTION

The effectiveness of e-learning in higher education has been proven by numerous research (Chu et al., 2017). MOOC, which stands for Massive Open Online Course, is a trend in e-learning (Shapiro et al., 2017). MOOCs are online courses with a huge number of participants and are typically offered at a low-cost or for free. MOOCs have also started to be integrated into traditional learning institutions (Sein-Echaluce, Fidalgo-Blanco, García-Peñalvo, 2017).

Today, e-learning plays such an essential role that in fact, the Malaysian government has proposed the Globalized Online Goal (GOL) initiative to transform Malaysia into an international education hub, where e-learning plays a vital role (Ally, Embi, & Norman, 2019). To help achieve GOL, the National e-Learning Policy (DePAN), is a three-phase plan proposed by the Ministry of Education in 2014 (Ministry of Education, 2014). The three phases are Phase 1 (2015), Phase 2 (2016-2020) and Phase 3 (2021-2025). This research was conducted in 2020 and in Phase 2, high learning educational institutions are expected to have 75% of their academic staff to be equipped with TPACK, basic competency of e-learning and blended learning practice. 50% of the academic staff should also contribute to e-learning.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

However, the current professional development in higher learning educational institutions needs improvement. According to researchers such as Darmi and Albion (2017), Singh (2019) and Azmimurad and Osman (2020), the English language competency of undergraduates is lacking and in fact, affecting their job opportunities. Researchers such as Joseph Jeyaraj and Harland (2019), Choo and Li (2017), Ismail and Omar (2018) and Omar, Taib and Basr (2017) have given various recommendations on how to improve professional development for university ESL educators as there is a lack of research being conducted on using MOOC as a platform for university ESL professional development, despite the potentials of MOOCs.

This is especially a problem when traditional professional development, which mainly consists of short-term workshops and seminars, is found to be lacking in terms of effectiveness (Darling-Hammond, Hyler, & Gardner, 2017; Khan, 2017). According to Stronge (2018), such workshops also lack follow-up and they rarely get back to the educators for feedback. Such issues are also prevalent in Malaysia (Ismail et al., 2019).

Although traditional forms of professional development remain popular, they are heavily criticized in the literature on professional development (Abu-Tineh & Sadiq, 2018). Because they tend to adopt ‘one-size-fits-all’ approaches, all teachers receive the same professional development program regardless of their individual subject area, grade level, level of experience, or needs.

In a collaborative online professional development (OTPD), it was found that the participating educators had positive perception in terms of its effectiveness (Teräs, 2016). However, Teräs (2016) explained it is challenging to cater to different needs in the program. Elliott (2017) claimed that OTPD reduces distance and time constraints for teachers compared to conventional, face-to-face teacher professional development programs. A survey conducted by Gunter and Reeves (2017) found that most teachers not only have a positive perception about technology integration, but they also have the motivation in learning the latest educational technology. However, there is still a lack of online professional development programs based on mobile application. To increase the effectiveness of OTPD, researchers such as Desjardins and Bullock (2019) recommended embedding problem-based learning into OTPD.

On the other hand, the idea of flipped professional development was introduced by Doolittle. Unlike the one-time events in traditional professional development, this approach has three stages, as seen below.



Figure 1. Traditional Vs. Flipped Professional Development Sequence (Doolittle, 2014)

In the “before” phase, teachers are able to learn important concepts at their own pace, which is something that is not possible in a live workshop. The “during” phase is conducted in face-to-face workshops, where teachers engage in higher-level learning in creating classroom activities, as well as in practicing, evaluating and revising these activities. In the “after” phase, through a strong support mechanism, assimilation of new concepts occur, as teachers form meaningful discussions with fellow teachers and experts, especially on areas of improvement.

## METHODOLOGY

Before a flipped professional development can be developed, there is a need for a needs analysis to obtain insights on the current professional development for the need of a flipped professional development program. This study aims to study the perceptions of ESL Educators in a University about existing professional development programs. Thus, these are the objectives of this study.

1. To identify the problems faced by ESL educators in the existing professional development programs.
2. To identify the needs of the ESL university educators in the professional development programs.

This research has utilized a mixed method research design, which uses both quantitative and qualitative research data (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, and Turner, 2007). Creswell (2005) explained that such an approach yields richer and well-rounded data because triangulation of data is achieved. To be more specific, this research has adopted sequential exploratory research, where qualitative data is collected after quantitative for further explanation (Ivankova, Creswell & Stick, 2006).

To examine the educators’ acceptance towards existing professional development training, a survey is first conducted. The survey was adopted from the instrument from Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology [UTAUT] by Venkatesh et al. (2003). UTAUT is proposed as an alternative to technology Acceptance

Model (TAM). Technology acceptance (behavioral intention) is the dependent variable and the dependent variables are performance expectancy, effort expectancy, and social influence, facilitating conditions, perceived value, attitude, self-efficacy and trust. Thus, 34 questions were created and the survey was taken by 46 ESL lecturers. The questions were also based on Likert scale. The survey was distributed as Google Forms.

After the survey was conducted, a semi-structured interview was conducted on three experienced ESL university educators and six novice ESL university educators. After analysing the results of the survey, the interview questions are formulated to provide further insights. As recommended by Creswell (2012), purposive sampling helps in getting rich interview data because of the interviewer's connection to the interviewees. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the interviews were conducted and recorded online. After transcribing verbatim, key coding was applied to obtain important themes in the survey responses.

This qualitative descriptive single case study focuses on the understanding of a lower secondary school teacher in MICSS who had three years of collective learning experiences. The single case study design was chosen because it allowed the researcher to summarize respondent's perspectives on specific events, without being limited by specific data collection methods (Yin, 2003). The current section begins with a detailed description of the research context and respondent, followed by an explanation of the data collection and analysis approach that was applied.

## FINDINGS

The gender distribution of the survey participants is as follows.

*Distribution of Gender (n = 46)*

Gender	Percent
Female	12
Male	34

*Figure 2. Distribution of Gender*

There were almost three times more male participants than females.

*Distribution of Years of Teaching Experience (n = 46)*

Years of Teaching Experience	Percent
1 – 5	41.3
6 – 10	34.7
11 – 15	15.2
>16	8.8

*Figure 3. Distribution of Years of Teaching Experience*

Most of the participants have not more than 10 years of experience. This number decreases further to 15.2% for participants with 11 to 15 years of experience. Only 8.8% has more than 16 years of teaching experience.

Using SPSS, the UTAUT survey results were analysed.

*Correlation between the Independent Variables and the Dependent Variable*

Variables	Behavioral Intention Score
PE Score	0.194
EE Score	0.679**
SI Score	0.673**
FC Score	0.343*
A Score	0.166
SE Score	0.179
AX Score	-0.063

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

*Figure 4. Pearson's Correlation between the Variables*

Significant correlations were found in the independent variables, effort expectancy, social influence and facilitating conditions, with the dependent variable, behavioral intention. Most variables share positive correlations with the dependent variables, except for anxiety scores. Other than the three significant correlations, the remaining independent variables have correlations of almost 0 with behavioral intention. However, since the anxiety score only has a -0.063 correlation, it may indicate that the participants have a growth mindset and are resistant to anxiety.

## DISCUSSION

After analysing the interview transcripts, the following themes are found in the responses.

### *The university's approach towards implementing e-learning*

- The lecturers' motivation and willingness to attend professional development courses related to e-learning.
- Problems and challenges faced by the lecturers in implementing the new methods or strategies acquired from the existing professional development training.
- E-learning problems and challenges faced by the lecturers in the ESL classroom.
- The lecturers' needs and requirements for professional development training.

### *The university's approach towards implementing e-learning*

Despite the initiatives from the ministry of education, many of the lecturers are not aware of such policies. As stated by (L1):

*I would say that, in terms of knowing exactly what actually <interviewee's university> has come out with e-learning, ugh, I would say that I'm not, ugh, I do not really know that much. (L1:81)*

Furthermore, (L8) stated:

*To be honest, I'm not 100% sure about the requirements, but-but, ba-based on the guidelines or emails that I've received from the university, I-I might know just a bit of, ugh, some of the requirements. (L8:37)*

(L6) said that:

*Some are using Zoom, some are using Microsoft Teams. (L6:90)*

This could be explained by how the university allows the lecturers to make decisions such as learning platform. This, in turn also caused some confusion.

### *The Lecturers' Motivation and Willingness to Attend Professional Development Courses related to E-learning*

All in all, the lecturers are highly motivated and willing to develop their online teaching skills, as evident in their awareness of latest technological trends.

As claimed by (L1):

*I do not deny that OTL is somehow helpful and it has its own effectiveness in some ways. In terms of LMS, because to me, I scale my OTL is convenient, so I'm gonna rate ugh, very good too. Training, umm, because I am.. Not to say that I am very much IT savvy, I am still learning. (L1:147)*

Furthermore, (L6) stated:

*I believe that we are indeed towards the era where ugh, e-learning is being used a lot on, of course, in the education system. Ugh, oh, and I believe the students can also get-they are actually attracted to it. (L6:86)*

**Lecturers' effort to improve E-teaching**

Not only are the lecturers motivated to learn about online teaching, they also take the initiative to improve themselves, either by self-learning or taking extra courses.

As stated by (L4):

*I've actually registered for ugh, one online training on ugh, how to teach online, engage participants online. Yeah, I-I paid and attended the training. Apart from that, I always watch YouTube videos whenever. (L4:197)*

(L5) went on further and add on that:

*Ugh, so, I think okay la, I think I'm quite well-versed and I think ugh, I also try to develop myself in e-learning, okay, constantly try to develop myself la. (L5:159)*

(L6) said:

*I feel that I would love to attend more training on how to ugh, how to deliver a lesson using the technology. (L6:88)*

**Strengths and Weaknesses of Existing Professional Development Training**

The lecturers reported having attended various professional development training from the university. In fact, there was even an exchange of ideas between lecturers from different departments.

As stated by (L2):

*Yeah, and I think the training would ask us to ugh how to use different online platform to teach differently. (L2:248)*

(L4) also quoted that:

*Many e-learning trainings were done ugh in the university itself, through forums and sharings by many other lecturers from different disciplines. So for example, one I had attended with the other lecturer, who's from the medical faculty. She explained how she uses sketchpad to teach, so that's something new for me. (L4:180)*

Meanwhile, (L6) said:

*Okay, umm, for e-learning training, ugh, basically I learnt on-I-I have received training on ugh, teaching using the 21st century education style, which involve the usage of technology. (L6:218)*

However, although the university has given training for different learning platforms, some lecturers perceived a lack of guidance from the university. In response to the pandemic, training for Microsoft Teams was done hastily. In fact, Interviewee 7 and 9 reported not being given any training at all. However, this could be due to the fact that Interviewee 7 joined the university while it was busy with the pandemic and it was Interviewee 9's second year teaching. As claimed by (L1):

*Because sometimes yeah, I'm still like wondering ugh, what are more, you know, that actually <interviewee's university> really want the staff to achieve. (L1:145)*

(L2) said that:

*I just upload the ugh teaching plan, ugh course assignment briefs and all the notes, tutorial questions there and I conduct all my meetings on Microsoft Teams and all my announcements are made on Microsoft Teams. Not really achieving much also actually. (L2:169)*

(L7) added that:

*So far I did not undergo any e-learning training, basically I learnt most of the-most of the ugh e-learning or online platforms by exploring myself. (L7:111)*

(L8) expressed that:

*And we are, ugh, being trained how to set up Microsoft Teams, but that-that's only it, it's not very detailed. (L8:113)*

Lastly, (L9) added that:

*Training, not a lot. But because of the pandemic, they gave us a training in Microsoft Teams. (L9:76)*

### ***E-learning Problems and Challenges faced by the Lecturers in the ESL classroom***

During the COVID-19 pandemic, some interviewees expressed preference towards physical classroom due to the lack of student feedback in e-learning, mainly due to difficulty in student communication. As mentioned by (L1):

*I think this one is very much needed the fact that we could say that having students, to you know, to respond to us either verbally or just typing in chat box. (L1:179)*

(L9) added on further that:

*Because now we're doing in Microsoft Teams because of the pandemic, so sometimes, it's very hard to know whether the students are there or not, then many don't want to turn on the cameras and they only want to reply in the textbox. (L9:128)*

In fact, classroom management was a challenge due to lack of motivation, internet connection issues and unfamiliarity with online learning.

*Where whenever we introduce to students, they can actually have, you know, learn the applications on themselves. (L1:223)*

(L2) mentioned that:

*Yeah, because some students they don't really have Internet. Yeah, they have slow Internet connection. It kind of hamper the process. (L2:300)*

Followed by (L7) who said that:

*Because everyone will be behaving in the same way, we-we don't see them. (L7:174)*

*We don't ask them to turn on their videos and even if we do, they will have reasons for them for not turning on. (L7:178)*

### **The lecturers' Needs and Requirements for Professional Development Training**

The lecturers have provided various suggestions on their e-teaching and professional development needs. Although Microsoft Teams is widely used by many companies, some suggested using a learning platform specifically made for ESL classrooms.

As mentioned by (L1) that:

*So, I think my suggestion, umm, I would say that maybe, ugh, in terms of to come up with a more simple application. (L1:218)*

(L4) expressed that:

*Maybe on creating our own LMS, something like that? (L4:243)*

*Yes, okay, maybe, maybe anything else, any other idea would be, maybe like creating a language website. (L4:338)*

(L5) conveyed:

*I really like to know how I can you know, use different platforms. (L5:237)*

At the time of the interview, after more than 6 months of e-teaching, some lecturers suggested that e-teaching is different from teaching in a physical classroom in terms of course outline, assessment and learning objectives. These differences should be focused in professional development for e-teaching. As stated by (L2):

*I'm actually thinking should we revamp the course to yeah, to adapt to this COVID-19 crisis, the change of domain. (L2:336)*



As mentioned by (L2):

*Hmm, I think I would, I would need more on ugh data, data management, data analysis. (L2:278)*

(L9) declared that:

*E-learning classes should have different objectives, compared to your-your traditional classes. (L9:142)*

The lecturers expect e-teaching professional development to heavily emphasize on practicals. As said by (L1):

*So, maybe we can come up something like doing practical. (L1:199)*

(L3) said that:

*I think I'm looking for ugh, hands-on activities, more hands-on activities. Ugh, for example, ugh, e-learning on the LMS, learning management system. I think, I think, throughout this training, alright, ugh, the trainer, ugh, has to get the trainees, okay, or the academic staff, all the staff, to be ugh, adapted to use the ugh, software, or the, any application, or any option. (L3:219)*

Also, (L5) added that:

*So, the objective must be clear that we are going-you know, some training is like the title, the objectives doesn't really go umm, the content is-is somehow misleading, so we thought oh I'm going to learn this, but end up on learning something else, okay? (L5:290)*

Lastly, (L6) believed that:

*So, there has to be a clear objective that is being used. (L6:126)*

Because in general, they are well aware of latest trends in e-teaching, they want professional development training where other technologies are integrated.

As mentioned by (L7):

*So, I want to have variety in my, ugh, in my teaching. So, what kind of tools can I include more? And I also would like to know how to, how to ugh integrate AR and VR in teaching, like for example, VR is normally used in, in, ugh, more practical, ugh, fields, but how can we adapt that to language learning classroom? (L7:203)*

As quoted by (L9) that:

*So yeah, things like MMORPG, multimedia, I mean multi, multi I don't know what for second M, online role playing game. Like, students can play as different characters and we conduct like lessons on teaching students on language skills like reading and writing. (L9:163)*

## CONCLUSION

From this research, two implications have been identified. Firstly, the technological expertise of these educators are not carefully considered and examined. Besides looking into the importance for these ESL educators to undergo professional development training, one must also look into their knowledge and readiness concerned with professional development training. A better way to solve this is to first inspect these ESL educators' knowledge, level of understanding and their expertise when it comes to technology thus it would be easier to set the training programs accordingly.

Secondly, miscommunication may hinder if both management and lecturers are not well informed. They ought to be on the same page about the vision and aims of the incorporation of technology. Management is responsible for providing resources about technology integration while lecturers are in charge of giving best insights, recommendations and the implementations. Management's sole intention is to give these lecturers the flexibility to select the professional development, but this might be wrongly perceived as lack of direction from the management. To avoid this conflict, a less top-down approach in decision making is suggested for future research.

Thus, based on these findings, there is a need for a flipped professional development program for the ESL lecturers of the university.

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