

Washington State University

College of Education

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Will defend the dissertation

Date: February 7, 2019

Time: 1:00 P.M.

Location: Pullman - Education Addition 202

Faculty, students and the general public are encouraged to attend.

ONLINE TEACHER EDUCATION: LEARNING COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND SELF-DIRECTED PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Chair: Joy Egbert

With the rapid increase in the amount of online learning opportunities available has come with it an increase in challenges concerning how to support effective teaching and learning in online learning spaces. Through two research studies, this dissertation seeks to issues in the field of online teaching and learning: community development and self-directed teacher professional learning.

The first study explores how the implementation of course elements, supported by guidelines developed by Yuan and Kim (2014), could be used to support development of feelings of community in an online ELL teacher education course. Course participants reported that course elements that allowed them to regularly interact with classmates and the course instructor, such as bi-weekly synchronous live chats and weekly asynchronous small-group discussions, supported the development of feelings of community within the online learning space. However, they also reported that a lack of familiarity with online learning, peer participation issues, technological issues, and scheduling issues suppressed the development of feelings of community. This study provides research and practical implications for the development of future online teacher education courses.

In the second study, the researcher explores how a group of 89 novice American English teachers, each placed in elementary and junior high schools in rural communities throughout Taiwan, self-directed their own professional development through the use of an online learning repository developed using Hew, Law, Wan, & Yeung's (2016) model of self-directed learning. Qualitative analysis of participant surveys, a focus-group interview with repository facilitators, and actions taken by participants within the repository show that participants accessed the repository most prior to arriving in Taiwan to get to know the program and other participants and to ask pre-departure questions. Once school started, they used the repository to explore lesson planning resources. By spring semester, however, engagement with the repository had dropped significantly as participants reportedly began using their own online social media groups to exchange problem-solving ideas and lesson resources, reducing their need for the repository. Implications for future iterations of the repository and future research on supporting self-directed teacher development are discussed based on these findings.