How English Teachers Use Instagram and Other Social Media Platforms as Professional Development and Emotional Encouragement

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How English Teachers use Instagram and other Social Media Platforms as Professional Development and Emotional Encouragement

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Background Information:
- Social media platforms such as Instagram, Pinterest, YouTube, Teachers Pay Teachers, Twitter, and personal blogs offer professional development through the sharing of classroom materials and advice.
- Research is only beginning to recognize the popularity of social media platforms for teachers' professional development and emotional encouragement.

Research Questions:
- Do English teachers think of social media platforms as online channels for professional development?
- How do these sites encourage and support English teachers?
- Do English teachers turn to social media sites if they are experiencing symptoms of occupational burnout?

Methodology:
- Content analysis of three popular Instagram pages created by high school English teachers
- Descriptive content and textual inquiry through interviews with English teachers and a Qualtrics survey for senior English teaching students

Results of Content Analysis:
- The first 35 Instagram posts of three different teaching accounts were categorized. 78% of the posts were dedicated to different aspects of English teaching.
- The overall percentage of posts relating to encouragement and mental health was 21.9%.
  - Of the mental health category, 26% of the posts had a direct reference to occupational burnout.

Results of Interviews and Qualtrics Survey:
- Of the student participants, 70% considered social media sites as a form of professional development.
- In contrast, teachers responded somewhat negatively toward social media in general and had not thought of social media platforms as professional development.
- All teachers had experience with occupational burnout and felt that discussions over social media could be a way to brainstorm solutions for the issue.

Conclusions:
- Pre-service teachers do regard social media sites as online channels for professional development.
- Experienced teachers do not share that view, but they do see how aspects of social media could be helpful in terms of advice, materials, and collaboration.

Figure 1: Most popular social media sites as professional development

Figure 2: How Qualtrics participants feel about social media from a professional standpoint