

Networking vital to help teachers through lockdown

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Fewer than a fifth of UK primary school teachers had received any formal training in remote learning before the COVID-19 pandemic sent pupils home from schools – but consulting online networks helped them

to rise to the challenge, according to new research.

Researchers from Anglia Ruskin University (ARU) surveyed almost 300 primary teachers from across the UK, and carried out additional follow-up interviews with 24 during June 2020, reflecting on their experiences during the first lockdown during the previous spring.

Of those surveyed, only 17.7% had received training in using technologies to support children's learning remotely before the pandemic began. A further 18.5% had received training since the start of the pandemic, and 63.8% had not received any such training.

However, the researchers found that teachers shared ideas and also took the lead from senior staff who researched effective online teaching methods in order to upskill themselves as home learning continued.

Teachers also drew on online resources such as social media networks to find out what others were doing. One teacher said "I follow education lists on Twitter and (there was) support and camaraderie for colleagues that you've never even met, who stick together and keep you going. I think that Twitter has really made me feel like I'm part of something, when I felt very isolated."

Some teachers were able to use school closures as an opportunity to develop their subject knowledge and ideas for teaching in the classroom, as well as enhance their remote teaching skills. However, others found it challenging to try and learn new skills whilst juggling increased workloads and additional demands at home, and found social media to be an added pressure.

Another teacher said "I am on some social media groups [for teachers], and they have just been producing ream after ream of lessons plans. And I'm just sat there going, 'I'm not doing anything, I'm trying to teach my

[own] kids'."

Lead author Dr Sara Spear, Head of the School of Management at ARU, said that "the rapid move to emergency remote learning during the first lockdown in England was an unprecedented challenge to primary teachers and schools."

"While some schools were able to provide limited training on new systems before lockdown, most schools were not, and traditional forms of professional development, such as face-to-face training sessions, were not always possible."

"Informal learning through networks enabled teachers to continue their professional development in difficult circumstances, and this should be acknowledged and valued by schools. Teachers should be given guidance and time to build their networks and engage in informal learning as part of their working week, rather than this becoming another task that extends into their own time."

"The value of this informal learning activity would also be increased by providing opportunities for [teachers](#) to share knowledge and insights with colleagues, and using this to develop whole-school approaches to teaching and learning."

"Teachers have experienced many challenges during the pandemic, but the skills and knowledge that they have developed will have value beyond the emergency remote learning period."

The research was published in *Impact: Journal of the Chartered College of Teaching*.

More information: Research: impact.chartered.college/article/primary-teachers/

Provided by Anglia Ruskin University

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