



# The Rise of Webinars as Professional Development Modality: Investigating the Opinions of Teacher Educators of English

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**Abstract**

*Professional development is the essential part of education. Rapid development globally, technology dominated our life. Language teaching and learning was mainly shaped by the digital mode and this necessitates teacher educators to relay on webinars to maintain professional exchange and networking during pandemic. Even after, it seems that webinars continue to be a part of professional lives. However, not many studies have been conducted about its impact on teacher educators. Given that a great amount of time and effort is invested in preparing and attending professional webinars, it is a good time to hear the participants' voices. With this in mind, a total of 115 English language teacher educators were requested to evaluate their webinar-attending experiences. The data were collected through an online survey and focus group interviews. Participants mentioned that webinars generally are male keynote-speaker dominated, need improvement and propose some implications to increase the effectiveness of future webinars.*

**Keywords:** Webinars, Teacher Educators, Efficacy of Webinars, Professional Development

**Introduction**

Heraclitus's projection of 'the only constant is change' dominates almost every part of our lives even today including professional knowledge bases along with executing professional endeavors. We are living in a world where we can reach mountains of new knowledge with a single click. In the teaching profession, parallel to the advances in instructional technology, there have been several changes varying from taken-for-granted teaching techniques to new teaching modalities. The proliferation of knowledge results in the emergence of a need to update pedagogical knowledge bases. The concept of professional development (PD henceforth) operates on the premise that professionals, should continue to develop themselves professionally throughout their careers. In alignment with this premise, teacher educators of the English language engage in a variety of PD activities and conference attendance is one of them.

In the related literature, [Gebhart and Oprandy \(1999\)](#) come to the fore as primary researchers who studied the significance of attending professional conferences. They asserted that people might develop a sense of membership by attending professional conferences. In the same vein, [Borg \(2015\)](#) states

the potential benefits of attending conferences as the expansion of professional knowledge, increased motivation, and confidence. [Aubrey and Coombe \(2010\)](#), in [Mohammadkarimi et al., \(2021\)](#) surveyed the impacts of attending TESOL Arabia conferences and found similar findings that conference attendance establishes a networking community, and provides opportunities to keep up to date with the profession. On a more personal level, to [Harrison \(2010\)](#), conferences have the potential to create enthusiasm and ignite sparks of new ideas for research.

One of the major purposes of academic conferences is to furnish the attendees with the latest developments in a particular field and provide a scholarly platform to exchange ideas and establish a network. Conference attendance is recommended by researchers as a form of professional development. Based on the listed citations so far, we can deduce that traditional face-to-face conferences are worth mentioning in terms of their potential benefits. However, the replacement of scholarly meetings through webinars calls for empirical studies.

The pandemic has changed every routine we hold on to including our professional networking and professional development. Since the onset of the pandemic, conferences, seminars and similar professional gatherings that teacher educators once attended in person were replaced by online modalities. Much has been written about the impact of the pandemic on teaching and learning practices so far. It would not be hypothetical that a data pool on pandemic-related issues has already emerged in many a discipline so far. During the pandemic period, teaching, learning, and maintaining professional development modalities have changed. Being the most prevalent modality of professional exchange webinars have started to take place in the professional practices of people from every walk of life.

Although we are far from estimating now what exactly will be in the future globally, we can envision that online modalities of professional gatherings such as webinars will have resorted when a need arises.

Although conventional conference attendance is an under researched area in itself, the studies on webinar attendance being a new phenomenon, are almost nonexistent in the literature. With this in

mind, the researchers aspired to explore the opinions of the teacher educators about webinar attendance.

## Literature Review

### Professional Development and Conference Attendance

The teacher is believed to be one of the leading forces in learning and correspondingly the quality of a teacher depends on the quality of pre-service education as well as in-service training endeavors. In-service training is a part of professional development which is considered an effective tool in teacher's development ([Tanaka and Ortega, 2021](#); [Büyükyavuz, 2016](#); [Philips, 2008](#); [Rao, 2019](#); [Mitchell 2013](#)). To [Philips \(2008\)](#) "Professional Development is critical for improving, maintaining teacher quality and the effect flows on into the classroom" (p. 1).

[Mitchell \(2013\)](#) states that PD is an essential element of teachers' practice to maintain and improve standards in the face of expanded educational provision and increasing globalization. As [Kim and Kim \(2015\)](#) suggest "Global orientation, which was the most decisive initial career motive is considered reflective of the distinctive feature of EFL teaching profession" (p. 84).

[Stevenson \(2010\)](#), emphasizes the continuity of PD as 'The continuation of a teacher's professional development is beyond their initial training, qualification, and induction'. No matter what quality education the teacher has received in pre-service education, PD is seen as a requirement throughout the teaching career. Continuing professional development of teachers can both improve the quality of teaching and learning, ([Verloop, 2003](#); [de Vries et al., 2013](#)). Along with the above mentioned benefits, PD also provides opportunities for teachers to examine their teaching systematically, ([Mitchell, 2013](#)).

To [Mitchell \(2013\)](#), the purpose of PD is to meet the needs of globalization and the standards of the education system. ([Mohammadkarimi et al., 2021](#)) mentions the reflective role of continuing professional development and adds "PD often involves examining different dimensions of one's practice as a basis for reflective review".

Given that teachers' professional growth is essential conferences, seminars, and webinars are considered to be an essential part of this growth. [Mohammadkarimi et al., \(2021\)](#) suggest that in-service PD activities are crucial as they help English teachers to implement novel techniques and approaches in their classrooms. Researchers stated that although all other types of PD such as workshops, action research, and peer observation have been studied by plenty of researchers, online conference attendance and its impact on teachers' professional development have been surprisingly under researched ([Moore et al., 2016](#); [Mohammadkarimi et al., 2021](#); [Borg 2015](#); [José Sá et al., 2019](#)).

[Borg \(2015\)](#) examined the opinions of 66 teachers and educational administrators on the impacts of attending L2 teaching conferences. He found that participants expand their knowledge of teaching practice, increase their level of confidence, and motivation and develop good networking with other professionals. Admittedly, the studies documented so far indicate the positive impact of even short-term conferences on expanding teachers' knowledge, improving teaching skills of the teacher, teacher's developing good networking with other professionals. Within this frame, ([Aubrey & Coombe, 2010](#); [Mohammadkarimi et al., 2021](#)) present the reasons for attending conferences, and the effect of these conferences on teachers' development they found that teachers favor conferences to establish a networking community of the same professionals and remain up-to-date. [Büyükyavuz \(2016\)](#) also investigated the 83 ELT professionals' purpose for attending conferences and found that the Turkish ELT professionals want to expand their knowledge, and obtain new information related to their profession.

Regarding the primary aims of attending professional conferences, [José Sá et al., \(2019\)](#) asserted that the majority of participants want to present themselves so that they can maintain professional visibility and discuss the issues with the other attendees.

[Tanaka and Ortega \(2021\)](#) conducted a semi-structured interview and a questionnaire to identify the impact of conferences on 68 English language teachers' beliefs, values, and teaching practices. The study revealed that attendees perceived an impact

on their professional development and established professional relationships during and after the conference which positively affected their sense of belonging to the ELT community. The same study did not establish any connections between the knowledge attendees gained at the conference and the change in their teaching practice. However, only 23 out of 68 respondents reported that they apply what they learned from the conference. To the authors, this is an indication of the low magnitude of the impact of the conference on attendees' teaching practice that needs to be investigated.

In the last two years, as a result of substantial changes in technology in the first place ([Rao, 2019](#)), webinars have become the most common activities engaged by academics. [Rao \(2019\)](#) explored the influence of webinars in developing the teaching skills of English language teachers and how far the webinars are useful for them. He maintains that webinar events have become a great gain for English language teachers and professionals and that the teachers implement the latest techniques and approaches they have learned via webinars in their teaching practices. Today and during pandemic period, webinars have started to remain the main channel of professional exchange among teacher educators.

### **Webinars as a Tool for Professional Development**

With the onset of the pandemic, in-person conferences have been replaced by webinars. In almost every discipline webinars are resorted as the major source of professional development activity. Online conferences and webinars are part of online professional development, create learning experiences, and provide a free learning environment and free access to resources, ([Masters et al., 2010](#), p. 356) cited in [Emre \(2019\)](#). However, for webinars to be productive there need to be some points taken into consideration. [Wolsey \(2015\)](#), highlighting the significance of webinars being "well-constructed" asserts that webinars are a part of professional development, and have the potential to provide the attendees with a combination of pedagogical skills and content knowledge.

Webinars seem to be beneficial in terms of professional development, have turned to become

more popular than ever, and seemingly will maintain and secure their place in our professional lives. Being relatively a new modality of PD, there is considerably a dearth of studies on webinars. Additionally, the research carried out so far and mentioned above has only focused on the benefits of in-person conferences, but several questions with regards to webinars such as; the preferences of webinar attendees, the motivation behind webinar attendance, decision-making processes involved in attendance, preferred length of the webinar, the impact of online interaction remain unanswered and need to be investigated from the lenses of attendees.

Although the scholars mentioned above consider the role and incontestable positive impact of in-person conferences on the professional development of English language teachers there are not many studies that scrutinize the empirical findings and the impact of webinars on the professional development of English language teacher educators ([Borg, 2015](#); [Tanaka & Ortega, 2021](#)).

To [Tanaka and Ortega \(2021\)](#), it is crucial to seek the impact of webinars on language teachers as well as conference organizers considering the time and effort invested in the realization of such events and the scarcity of studies conducted on webinars. One of those rare researches reflecting the preferred length of time for an ideal webinar was conducted by BigMarker via Medium. It was stated that the length of the ideal webinar of the 45-minute webinar is preferred by 44% of the attendees and a 30-minute webinar is favored by 41% of the attendees, whereas, only 10% of attendees are more interested in a one-hour duration of a webinar and only 5% are interested in a 20-minute duration. But, speaking about the ideal time of the webinar, The BigMarker cites, “The ideal length of a webinar should be 30 to 45 minutes long, with 41% of people choosing a 30-minute webinar, and 44% performing a 45-minute webinar”. A survey report conducted on the webinar viewing time by ON24 and their 2018 Webinar Benchmarks says, “The average webinar viewing time in 2018 was 56.4 minutes and most webinars run for an hour”. According to these survey reports, the ideal webinar should last for 40 to 45 minutes.’ ([Rao, 2019](#)).

[Moore et al., \(2016\)](#), cited in [Mohammadkarimi et al., \(2021\)](#) examined the extent of interactivity and satisfaction of 1696 participants from 109 countries in the International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language conference and found that online conferences are beneficial for teacher’s professional development, suggest further studies on online conferences and specifically an appropriate pedagogical method for a huge number of participants in such conferences need to be investigated.

[Mohammadkarimi et al., \(2021\)](#) conducted a study with 192 participants and found that attendees believe that webinars on ELT in Iran have positive effects on professional development as they become aware of the new trends in the ELT. The findings also revealed that the participants complained about low-quality presentations based on theoretical knowledge rather than practice, and the attendees join these events only to receive a certificate. The researchers believe that this might be the cause of demotivation for ELT teachers to attend future conferences and to eliminate this the authors suggest guidelines for presentations and a double-blind review system, to attract more keynote speakers and international presenters. The authors suggested that future conferences must suit the real needs of teachers and give them practical instructions needed in a classroom rather than theoretical presentations, also to eliminate the drawbacks of online conferences mentioned above the teachers should submit their action research at the conferences as this may motivate other teachers to reflect on their learning.

[Borg \(2015\)](#) suggests an orientation session for webinar attendees with relatively less experience in attending such events. In doing so, he argues, any potential drawbacks of online conferences could be eliminated. Similarly, [José Sá et al., \(2019\)](#) seek the advantages, limitations, and potentials of the two major models of virtual and face-to-face academic conferences emerged and the challenges to be faced shortly. The authors claim that virtual conferences are sustainable but lack face-to-face contact: state, To them, academic conferences have always been privileged spaces and moments for the dissemination of new scientific knowledge. The authors argue that in such conferences women are under-representation, and male Keynote Speakers usually predominate in

such conferences. Besides gender orientation, race, religion and other factors may be effective in the selection of Keynote Speakers. In the same study, it is stated that free participation will promote a large number of participants and it is not only morally correct but also the best means for conferences to fulfill their goal of fostering communication and a moment of scientific learning, (Richards 2015; cited in José Sá et al., (2019)). In the same study one of the negative aspects of webinars is mentioned to be bidirectional communication of spoken and written that causes lack of less opportunity of synchronous communication between the participants.

Similarly, Emre (2019) found that university lecturers' prior webinar experiences, having more years of teaching experience, older age, and being native or non-native English speakers significantly affected teachers' perceptions. The study revealed that the participating EFL teachers need more input and experience in using webinars.

### Methodology

This article aims to hear the voices of teacher educators working in the English language teaching departments (ELT) and attending professional webinars. Examining webinar attendance attitudes of teacher educators is important as it stands out as the primary channel of PD nowadays. With this in mind, the study aims at exploring the opinions of teacher educators in light of the following research questions;

1. Who are the ELT professionals in terms of:
  - gender,
  - current status,
  - years of teaching experience,
  - the total count of webinars attended,
  - the source of the webinar announcement,
  - whether presented at a webinar as a speaker,
  - the driving force to attend professional webinars?
2. How do the attendees act before, during, and after a webinar?
3. What are their recommendations to make webinars more viewer-friendly and more productive?

### Data Collection Instruments

A two-part online questionnaire was developed for data collection. The first part consists of six

questions eliciting biographical information. The second part hosted eight questions seeking responses from the participating webinar attendees responses regarding their behaviors before, during, and after a webinar session. In this part, five questions were open-ended type while the rest was on a Likert scale. To triangulate the questionnaire data two focus group interviews were conducted with the participation of ten faculties representing a variety of ranks.

### Data Collection

Data were collected through the online survey designed by the researchers. Following expert opinions about the items, the survey was piloted with a group of professionals representing the sample. After necessary modifications such as; wording and item replacements were made, the finalized survey was found to be valid with 0.86 Cronbach Alpha. The final version of the online questionnaire was shared in a google forms version in a WhatsApp group chat consisting of 230 teacher educators working at various ELT departments housed in state and private universities in Türkiye.

The following semi-structured interview questions were addressed to the participants.

1. "What is the driving force behind your webinar choice?"
2. "What have you learned from the webinars you have attended so far?"
3. "What is your desired webinar duration? Why do you prefer it."
4. "Do you prefer to do online webinars or face-to-face? Why? Why not?"
5. "What do you think are the characteristics of a good webinar?"

The focus group interviews, which lasted two hours, were conducted with ten volunteers via Zoom.

### Data Analysis

All data were analyzed through SPSS. The open-ended questions were analyzed with content analysis and specified in the form of codes and themes. The distributions of categorical variables are expressed as percentage frequencies. In the analysis of the data, the assumptions that must be met were first tested to decide which tests (parametric/nonparametric tests) to apply. In two independent categorical group comparisons, Chi-square and Fisher's Exact tests were used.



During the focus group interviews, each of the researchers took notes. The whole session was recorded and rewatched by the researchers. The emerging codes were compared to sustain homogeneity among researchers.

Responses to open-ended questions were evaluated through content analysis.

## Participants and Setting

**Table 1 Demographic Characteristics**

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Years of teaching experience	3,00	49,00	20,54	8,92

		N	%
Gender	Male	45	39,1
	Female	70	60,9
Current status	Full Professor	16	13,9
	Associate Professor	24	20,9
	Assistant Professor	59	51,3
	Lecturer	16	13,9
How many webinars (local and international) have you participated in so far?	1-5	22	19,1
	10+	70	60,9
	6-10	23	20,0
Where do you mostly find out about webinars?	Colleague	40	34,8
	Website	66	57,4
	Other	9	7,8
Have you participated in a webinar as a speaker?	Yes	54	47,0
	No	61	53,0

As it is displayed in Table 1, a total of 115 teacher educators participated in the study 60.9% (n.70) of them are female and 39.1% (n: 45) are male. Of the participants, the majority 51.3% (n: 59) are assistant professors, while 20.9% (n: 4) are associate, and 13.9% (n:16) are full professors while 13.9% (n:16) were lecturers. The average teaching experience for the participants was 20.54 with a minimum of 3 and a maximum of 49 years. As shown above, more than half of the participants (n: 70; 60.9 %) have attended

webinars more than 10 times. The majority of the participants (n: 66; 57.4 %) stated that they find a webinar through websites that are followed by a colleague (n: 40; 34.8 %) and almost half of them expressed that they participated in a webinar as a speaker.

## Results

As for how the participants decide on a webinar to attend, the major driving force behind their preference for a webinar is keeping professionally up-to-date (n:37; 32.1 %). It was found that the topic of the webinar (n: 23, 20 %) and maintaining visibility in the professional community (n: 18; 15.7 %) are also important for teacher educators when deciding which webinar to attend.

**Table 2 Participants' Webinar Preferences and Behaviours**

What is the driving force behind your preference for a webinar?	Convenience of time	8	7,0
	Desire to keep professionally up to date	37	32,1
	Maintaining visibility in the professional community	18	15,7
	Possibility of research ideas for my future studies	12	10,4
	Speaker	17	14,8
	Topic	23	20,0
	How do you usually prepare for a webinar session?	I don't do anything	7
I prepare questions in advance		52	45,2
I check the speaker's recent studies		13	11,3
Other		43	37,4
I multi task while listening to webinars.		46	40,0
I remain muted and inactive		15	13,0

What do you usually do while viewing a webinar session?	I take notes	54	46,9
How do you weigh your professional gains out of the	I gained very little	1	0,9
	I gained little	17	14,8
	I gained some	35	30,4
	I gained	46	40,0
	I gained a lot	16	13,9

Codes	Digital instructional tools	5	(5,26)
	Interaction with colleagues	8	(8,42)
	Learn a little or nothing	28	(29,47)

The participants were also asked to state their preparation, if any, before webinars. Of the 115 participants, 52 (45.2%) stated that they prepare questions in advance while 11.3 % (n: 13) check the speaker’s recent studies. The participants were asked to state what they are usually doing while viewing a webinar session. The majority of the participants stated that they take notes (n: 54; 46.9 %) while the second largest group, 37.4 %, stated that they multitask (n: 43).

When the answers to the question “How do you weigh your professional gains out of the webinars so far” are examined on a scale from 1-5 the findings are promising with a total of 62 participants (53.9 %) checking either 4 or 5. In this part, 18 (15.6 %) out of 115 participants evaluated their professional gains from webinars as somewhat inadequate.

To get a closer look at the professional gains, the participants were asked to specify what things they have learned from the webinar sessions they have attended in an open-ended question. The following table displays the codes and corresponding themes. Out of 115 participants, 95 responded to this question. The responses were grouped under various codes as displayed in the table below.

**Table 3 Participants’ Professional Gains from the Webinars Attended**

		N	(%)
Codes	New research topics, ideas, concepts, topics for my postgraduates’ dissertations	35	(36,8)
	Positive impact on lessons	3	(3,15)
	Sense of motivation, up-datedness and professional development	16	(16,84)

The findings above on the gains as stated by the participants can be interpreted that the webinars have been beneficial for the teacher educators. One-third of the respondents (n: 35 out of 95) stated that they have learned new topics, ideas, and concepts from the webinars. Webinars were also found by the participants as beneficial in the way that they felt motivated, updated, and professionally developed (n: 16; 16.84 %). However, 29.47 % of the respondents provided negative thoughts that they have either learned little or nothing at all. This finding somehow contradicts the former question that asks the participants to weigh their gains out of the webinars. The majority of the responses (53.9 %) to this question were clustered under 4 and 5 implying ‘much gain’ on a scale between 1 and 5.

Webinars have entered into our professional lives relatively recently. It is important to hear the voices of the target population to further improve webinars. This open-ended question asked the ELT teacher educators to share their recommendations. Looking at the codes in Table 3 closely we understand that respondents are more concerned about the delivery (logistics, mechanics, content accessibility of webinars later) of the webinars. Responded by a total of 82 teacher educators the most repeated code appears to be related to the issue of interaction (n: 35 46.6 %). As known, during the webinar, interaction is usually limited to instant chat box messaging and the participants’ microphones remain muted throughout the session.

**Table 4 Participants’ Recommendations for the more Productive Webinar**

What are your recommendations to make the webinar sessions more productive?		N	(%)
Codes	Competent speakers with effective presentation skills	75	(8,5)
	More interactive	35	(42,6)
	Concise	18	(21,9)

Codes	Recognition by the Council of Higher Education as an academic incentive	2	(2,4)
	Informative and interesting topics	17	(20,7)
	Access to the recorded sessions afterward	3	(3,7)

Table 4 shows that almost half of the respondents recommend webinars to be more (n: 35; 42.6%) interactive and the duration to be short (n:18; 21.9). More informative and interesting topics stand out as the third recommendation. As mentioned earlier, the desirable duration of webinars in a study conducted by Big was found to be 35-45 minutes maximum. The participants were asked to specify their preferred duration of webinars and the reasons.

**Table 5 Participants' Desirable Webinar Duration**

What is your desirable webinar duration? Please specify your ideal time and why you prefer it.		n	(%)
Reasons	Duration		
Monotony	20-30 mins	6	(18,75)
Health concerns related to immobile posture	30-45 mins	8	(25%)
Difficulty in sustaining concentration	35-60 mins	18	(56,25)

More than half of the respondents (n: 18; 56.25%) stated their desired webinar duration as between 35-60 minutes. Difficulty in sustaining concentration was reported as the major reason for the provided length of time. 25% of the respondents stated their preferred duration as between 30-45 minutes. Some health problems such as stiff neck or back resulting from the sedentary position of viewers were provided as a reason. Of the respondents, 18.75% (n:6) legitimized their ideal length of 20-30 minutes by stating that webinars turn out to be monotonous beyond that duration.

Another question in the study asked the participants their preference between two modalities: face-to-face or online and their reasons. They were also asked to state the reasons to rationalize their preferences. The table below reveals the responses and legitimate reasons proposed by the respondents.

**Table 6 Participants' Preferences of the Modalities**

Do you prefer online webinars to face-to-face ones? Why?		n	(%)
Codes	Yes – flexibility of time, no cost of transportation, accommodation, and ease of access	31	(37,8)
	No – lack of socialization, lack of interaction, and lack of scholarly ecology	50	(60,9)
Theme	Online seminars are preferred for practical reasons		
	Face-to-face seminars are preferred for, socialization, interaction, and scholarly ecology they prevail		

38.3% (n: 31) of the participants stated that they would prefer online webinars, while 61.7% (n: 50) stated that they opt for face-to-face seminars. Regarding their reasons; the answers of those who said no to webinars yielded the codes of “flexibility of time, no cost of transportation, accommodation, and ease of access”, while the answers of those who preferred face-to-face webinars were combined under the codes of “lack of socialization lack of interaction and lack of scholarly ecology environment”.

**Table 7 Participants' Opinions about the Features of a Good Webinar**

In your opinion, what are the features of a good webinar?		N	(%)
Codes	Interactive, concise session	47	(46,11)
	Competent speaker with effective presentation skills	20	(19,66)
	Informative, engaging topics	12	(11,88)
	Face-to-face	23	(22,55)

Participants' answers to the option “features of a good webinar”; 46.11% (n: 47) with “interactive, short and concise session”, 22.55% (n: 23) “face-to-face”, 19.66% (n: 20) “expert speaker with effective presentation skills”, 11.88% (n: 12) “informative,



interesting topics” codes. The codes created the themes of “Interactive, short and concise seminars held face-to-face” and “Speaker with expert and effective presentation skills”.

To triangulate the questionnaire data, two focus group interviews with structured questions were conducted with the participation of ten faculties. Each session was conducted in Turkish and lasted almost 90 minutes. The sessions were recorded for transcription upon receiving the interviewees’ consent. The participants were asked the following three questions:

- What are your criteria for joining a webinar?
- What do you do during the webinar?
- What are your expectations from a webinar?

**Table 8 Demographics of the Interviewees**

Position	Number	Teaching Experience Mean
Professor	2	28
Associate Professor	2	25
Assistant Professor	4	20
Instructor PhD	2	24

### The Results of the Interview

#### Criteria for Attending a Webinar

The first question aimed at eliciting the opinions of the respondents as to how they decided to attend a webinar. The topic and the speaker ranked as the first two criteria for the participating faculty to attend a webinar. The probe questions into the details of the topic revealed that the participants are likely to attend the webinars where the topic piques their interest. The following quotations reveal their decision-making processes.

*P1 (full professor): “If the topic is popular and different it will attract me and also the speaker’s competence on the subject would grab my attention.”*

*P3 (assistant professor): “if the topic is my area of interest if the speaker is someone familiar or someone whose work I admire.”*

Along with the topic of the webinar, the speaker was found as an important criterion for their decision. This finding is in alignment with the questionnaire

findings that 14.8 % of the respondents point at the speaker while 20 % stated the topic is an important reason for their decision.

*P3 (assistant professor): ‘...if the topic is a very theoretical one then I look at how the speaker makes the connection between the theory and practice as there should be a balance between the theory and practice. I prefer webinars that reflect global and local contexts and are related to field experiences. I also prefer topics related to classroom practice.’*

The convenience of time was also mentioned by one of the participants. When it is an international webinar time zone differences might set a drawback.

#### What Participants Do During a Webinar

The second question seeks the participants’ engagement during a webinar, They stated that sometimes they take a screenshot of the slides if the topic is new, new concepts or it is rich in content. The participants stated that they take notes and if they learn something new, immediately they do research while viewing the session. Some participants expressed that in order not to forget the question, they prefer to join through voice discussion rather than writing in the chat box. Another point raised by the interviewees is related to the notetaking process. With regards to the participants stated that in order not to forget their questions during the webinar they write down the questions and then addressed them to the speaker. The participants also mentioned that if the presentation includes tables and is rich in content then they try to follow the chatbox to read others’ comments. They also said, instead of writing, they sent emojis for thanking the speaker or other participants and use the chatbox function to benefit from document exchange. It was revealed that the participants benefit from an internet connection to engage in immediate online research while viewing a webinar session. One of the associate professors (P5) mentioned her during-webinar engagement as follows;

*“I keep a webinar diary and have a jotter to keep some key points of the webinar and take screenshots sometimes. If I am not familiar with the topic discussed during the webinar, I immediately search for the topic on the internet*

*so that I can get familiar with the topic and engage in discussion. I also take notes for my postgraduate students and it helps me to find potential interesting study areas for their dissertations. I find a lot of topics to search for, so webinars help me to find new topics to study on then I write articles on those topics. I regularly follow the chatbox to see what others say or what kind of questions are addressed for that specific topic and this helps me to find a new research area. Sometimes people share materials such as books, articles, google documents, and websites in the chat box and these are helpful. I also announce webinars to my students and then request them to write their reflections about that webinar.”*

The study revealed that teacher educators engage in a variety of activities during webinars. Chatbox communication is generally devoted to documenting exchanges. The probes during the interviews revealed some other findings.

### **Expectations from a Webinar**

The third question asked the participants about their expectations from a webinar.

P 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 “To learn something new, something that I can use in my class, to learn new theories and practices, to meet new professionals from the same field. Therefore we need novelty. During pandemic there were many webinars”

P 5, 6: “To gain insight and develop my knowledge in depth in my area of expertise. To expand my professional network. Does a webinar contribute to my area of expertise? This is my main question when I join webinars. I do not expect webinars to be long, for me the ideal length of time is an hour and I believe that one hour-webinar will be more beneficial”.

Another interviewee mentioned about one of the drawbacks of webinars that they do not have the same interaction as face-to-face as they cannot observe others’ behaviors and body language. Another interviewee pointed out an interesting issue as ‘Webinars are mainly male keynote-speaker-dominated, we wish to see females as well. Most of the webinars do not have an appropriate pedagogical approach structural framework therefore a theoretical

framework for arranging webinars as a professional development tools should be considered.’ This finding also validates another study by [Borgh \(2015\)](#) which also revealed that in webinar conferences women are under-representation.

### **Conclusion**

As discussed above professional development is continuing education and this is the core of teaching, particularly with the rapid change in technology and classroom change, professional development has become a primary goal for teachers’ training and therefore webinars are convenient ways to attain such training. In the current study, the participants made some suggestions for effective webinars for the future. These are: To design effective webinars and take the utmost benefits of them the length of webinars should not exceed 45 minutes, a guideline for the participants of webinars to become aware of the webinar rules and speakers must be prepared in advance so that each presenter should not exceed the allocated time of 45 minutes presentation, the presenters should not be allowed to read only through the slides during the presentation but be more interactive. The participants also suggested that the online conferences in the field of ELT should be free of economic concerns and speakers/presenters/ topics from another field that is outside the ELT field should not be accepted and teachers should be self-reflective during webinars. Being reflective is seen by the participants as a way to motivate other teachers.

The keynote speaker was found to be one of the criteria in the selection of the webinars, so it is worth taking this into account and inviting well-known scholars in the field as keynote speakers. Additionally, the participants in this study, mentioned that webinars should have more female keynote speakers.

Some conclusions found and suggested in this study before organizing webinars overlap with the findings of [Gichora et al., \(2010\)](#), cited [José Sá et al., 2019\)](#) such as the length of the webinar, the use of chatbox for sharing documents, and the time zone differences that need to be considered. Additionally, the participants see a Q&A session as a must for a webinar. Participants also raised their concerns

over poor quality of webinars especially during the pandemic. Considering its widely use and essential role in PD, webinars should be structured according to educational pedagogy and human learning. The webinar related issues could not be solved unless webinar organizers address to the needs of participants.

Data of this study is aimed to enhance the experience and draw conclusions from it. For webinars to be effective, this research made a few suggestions for future webinars:

Before organizing a webinar, the opinions of the attendees, and their interests should be investigated.

The chat box during the webinar should only be used for sharing files, useful links, and materials. This will minimize the search time to find out what is shared and will help attendees to reach those materials easily. Otherwise, a large number of participants writing in the chat box may take some time and cause stress and missing of some information. Using a chat box for discussion is not an effective way of communication as messages are alive and move up very quickly, having a short break for discussion and unmute the listeners so that they can ask or say something during the webinar, especially if the topic is too theoretical or complicated such short breaks will keep the attendees awake.

The ideal webinar duration was found to be 35-45 minutes. All these may help to organize future academic webinars.

When organizing webinars, the familiarity of the attendees with the software should initially be checked, the attendees should be given guidelines about the webinar.

More female keynote speakers would balance webinars.

Like any educational setting, the practical and pedagogical framework in terms of webinar content, delivery of content, strategies to be followed prior, during the webinar and learning experiences of attendees and the outcomes of the content are the key points to be considered.

As a result, this survey and related literature conclude that webinars are taking an increasingly key role in the future educational arena and it is worth analyzing the drawbacks of current webinar forms and the attendee's expectations and behaviors.

Keeping these components into consideration may enhance learning and empower educational webinars in the future.

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