

Chapter 5

Meeting Emerging Needs of Online Coaching in Teacher Education: Communication, Pedagogy, Technology, and Reflection

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ABSTRACT

The chapter examines emerging priorities and trends in virtual or online teacher education courses using empirical research findings on online courses. The benefits and challenges of the online practicum course are explored, as well as the efficacy of online coaching if it impacts on participants' teaching practice. The uniqueness of this online course is that it uses synchronous one-on-one coaching as an innovative way of leading them to the next level of inquiry. This virtual course facilitates mutual and progressive improvement through synchronous and asynchronous communication tools. The results include the procedure of the interactive and effective online course development, benefits and challenges of taking well-designed online courses, and impact of guided and reflective virtual coaching as well as future direction.

INTRODUCTION

Online learning has become a popular delivery method for teaching and learning in higher education settings (Koh & Hill, 2009), and its growth is hard to ignore. Survey responses from over 2,200 U.S. colleges and universities have shown

that almost 3.2 million students were enrolled in at least one full online course in 2005, an increase of almost one million students from the previous academic year (Allen & Seaman, 2006). Many universities continue to use online classes as a long-term strategy to handle growing student enrollment and shrinking space and budgets (Thompson, 2004 in Clark-Ibanez & Scott, 2008). It is not the exception in teacher education pro-

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grams that the demand of developing and offering online courses increases.

It takes time, skills, and attitude to excel at effective online teaching (Rose, 2012). Effective online courses need to use a student-centered and constructivist approach where the instructor facilitates student learning. Successful online teaching needs to demonstrate the deep comprehension of the academic content, critical pedagogies of teaching and learning, inquiry and problem solving, cultural understanding, and reflection (Stigler, & Stevenson, 1991; Darling-Hammond, & McLaughlin, 1995). Ongoing modifications regarding teaching strategies are essential for online instructors depending on learning styles, technology skills and cognitive thinking capability. Students' comments from anonymous reflection could convey their perspectives on strengths and challenges while they are taking online courses. Developing an online class is possible with early planning and an awareness of how to engage students with an online course designer (Clark-Ibáñez & Scott, 2008). In developing teacher education online courses, practicum course development is most challenging because virtual or online supervision is required. Most of the times the students upload their teaching videos, and the instructors provide the feedback.

The specific objectives of this chapter are:

1. To share how on-line teacher education courses were developed to enhance active inquiry-based learning and teaching pedagogy;
2. To report on how the participants perceived benefits and challenges of the online practicum course; and
3. To demonstrate reflective teaching practice using online coaching as a supervision tool at the online practicum course.

For Objective 1, the author shares research-based strategies for designing an effective online course and draws upon prior experiences in teach-

ing online TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) courses. For Objective 2, the author uses the participants' reflection on benefits and challenges of one online TESOL practicum course to explore if the current research supports them. Objective 3 is a case study to determine the effectiveness of online supervision that uses a three step guided coaching plan.

BACKGROUND

Efficacy of Online Course

When carefully crafted to ensure student engagement, online courses can provide a dynamic learning environment (Clark-Ibáñez & Scott, 2008). Online courses provide new means to interact with experts and colleagues, and students can experience new forms of teaching and learning (Kleiman, 2004). The basic tenet of online teaching and learning is that student learning should come first, followed by technology. Another tenet is that learning happens not only through readings or recorded instructor-centered lectures, but also through interaction and active participation (Clark-Ibáñez & Scott, 2008).

Online group work is another significant area that contains dimensions of mastering tasks or course objectives, developing social relationship and improving technological skills (Carabajal, Lapointe, & Gunawardena, 2003). Group work can be used to develop students' critical thinking and reflection skills through sharing their ideas and forming academic learning communities to trigger deeper understanding of concepts (Conrad & Donaldson, 2004; Palloff & Pratt, 1999). The important aspect of group work is the level of interaction and engagement experienced within the group. Increasingly, researchers view a group as a social system. According to Forsyth (1996), groups are systems of interacting individuals within a dynamic environment; their development is affected by many different elements. To gain insight into

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