Chapter 21
Improving Student Learning in a Fully Online Teacher Leadership Program:
A Design-Based Approach

Scott L. Day
University of Illinois Springfield, USA

Leonard Bogle
University of Illinois Springfield, USA

Karen Swan
University of Illinois Springfield, USA

Daniel Matthews
University of Illinois Springfield, USA

Emily Boles
University of Illinois Springfield, USA

ABSTRACT

This chapter describes how faculty in a fully online Master's program in teacher leadership are using a design-based approach, grounded in theory and informed by data, to iteratively improve core courses and student learning from them. Specifically, the authors revised their courses to meet Quality Matters (QM) standards for online course design, and then made incremental and ongoing revisions focused on course implementation and based on student responses to the Community of Inquiry (CoI) survey. The first part of the chapter describes the online program in which course improvements are taking place, and the QM and CoI theoretical frameworks. In the main body of the chapter, specific course revisions are discussed and initial findings reported which show significant improvements in student outcomes as a result of these revisions. This section also describes the design-based approach the authors adopted and provides recommendations for others who might want to similarly improve individual courses or program offerings as a whole. The chapter closes with a brief discussion of directions for future research and conclusions, which highlight what the authors believe are the most important aspects of this work.

INTRODUCTION

In the past ten years, the number of higher education institutions offering online courses has increased dramatically; in fall 2010, for example, 31% of all higher education students, over 6.1 million students, took at least one online course (Allen & Seaman, 2011). Given the rapid growth of online education and its importance for postsecondary institutions, it is imperative that institutions of higher education provide quality online programs (Kim & Bonk, 2006). At the same time, state requirements for the improvement of teacher education programs are also increasing. In response to the U.S. Department of Education Title II guidelines and state regulations for teacher certification, teacher preparation programs are embracing the use of technology more readily. Online instructional delivery is one model with which schools of education have experimented in response to this mandate for change (Ragan, Lacey & Nagy, 2002).

This chapter will demonstrate how the Quality Matters (QM) and Community of Inquiry (CoI) frameworks can be applied at the program level to enhance curriculum development and maintain programmatic rigor when evaluating and updating course material for a teacher leadership program. First, we summarize the QM and CoI frameworks. We then describe how the QM standards were applied to individual core courses in the Teacher Leadership program to ensure they had high quality designs. We then describe how the CoI survey was employed across subsequent semesters to improve the implementation of these courses and ensure the development of social, cognitive, and teaching presence within them. We conclude with practical advice for others desiring to make substantive improvements in online learning at the programmatic level.

BACKGROUND

Teacher Leadership Program

The Masters Degree in Teacher Leadership was developed in 1999. Since the 1970's the educational leadership (EDL) department had offered one Master's degree focused on the Principalship. By the early 1990's, professors discussed the need to take the program in an additional direction since many students admitted to enrolling in this master's program when they had no interest in becoming school principals. However, some course content and assessments had less value for students who did not want to become administrative leaders. This collaborative discussion was a precursor to large-scale change in our department.

With a growing literature calling for the re-thinking of organizational structures that facilitate teacher leadership from within the classroom (Silva, Gimbert & Nolan, 2000), a discussion about changing our program was begun. The faculty wanted to clearly separate the curriculum and develop two distinct master's degree programs. Our guiding question was to determine what was needed to affect student achievement in schools and to better prepare educators for their work with families, the community and social service agencies. To this end, courses, content, and assessments were designed to develop teacher leaders with instructional, curricular, action research, and assessment experiences.

We invited professors from two other programs in the College of Education and Human Services – teacher education and social work -- to join the development team, bringing together experts in school leadership, K-12 education, and the social work fields. Developers focused on what types of content, training, and assessments would result in the greatest amount of change in schools. We were also fortunate to receive a degree development grant from the Sloan Foundation, which was interested in assisting universities who were trying to offer teacher-oriented degrees online. This online

22 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/chapter/improving-student-learning-fully-online/67988

Related Content

Understanding Adult Learners' Needs and Integrating Technology for Effective Online Education: Adult-Centered Approaches for Teaching and Learning
Ashley S. Love, Joan Labay-Marquezand Ruben Valadez (2023). *Handbook of Research on Innovative Frameworks and Inclusive Models for Online Learning (pp. 172-193).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/understanding-adult-learners-needs-and-integrating-technology-for-effective-online-education/329186

A Virtual World Environment for Group Work
E. Brown, M. Hobbsand M. Gordon (2008). *International Journal of Web-Based Learning and Teaching Technologies (pp. 1-12).*
www.irma-international.org/article/virtual-world-environment-group-work/2995

Application-Oriented Talents Training for Music Majors in Colleges and Universities Based on Internet Remote Technology
Lin Shui, Yuan Feng, Mengting Zhongand Yu Qin (2024). *International Journal of Web-Based Learning and Teaching Technologies (pp. 1-12).*
www.irma-international.org/article/application-oriented-talents-training-for-music-majors-in-colleges-and-universities-based-on-internet-remote-technology/340388

Introducing the Teaching and Learning Benefits of the WWW in Aboriginal Schools: Trials and Tribulations
Judith Rochecousteand Rhonda Oliver (2017). *Optimizing K-12 Education through Online and Blended Learning (pp. 128-137).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/introducing-the-teaching-and-learning-benefits-of-the-www-in-aboriginal-schools/159554

What Online Writing Spaces Afford Us in the Age of Campus Carry, "Wall-Building," and Orlando's Pulse Tragedy
Rebecca Hallman Martiniand Travis Webster (2017). *Handbook of Research on Writing and Composing in the Age of MOOCs (pp. 278-293).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/what-online-writing-spaces-afford-us-in-the-age-of-campus-carry-wall-building-and-orlandos-pulse-tragedy/172592