Chapter 6

Professional Development Programme in the Use of Educational Technology to Implement Technology–Enhanced Courses Successfully

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ABSTRACT

Universities globally have realised that they need to educate instructors, lecturers and teachers in how to integrate technology into education. Some higher education institutions have already introduced professional development programmes in educational technology to ensure that technology will be effectively utilised, which in turn will enhance the quality of their educational practices. In this chapter, a case study of the implementation component of the e-TUTO programme will be discussed in depth with the findings from the participants who participated in the programme during June 2005 to June 2006. An overview of professional development programme in the use of educational technology to assist lecturers to implement technology-enhanced courses successfully is presented, as well as an overly demanding e-TUTO programme, which might hinder the successful implementation of a technology-

INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions should take advantage of Internet technology to improve and supplement traditional courses. An advancement of the Internet is that it brings change in the process and organisational structure of teaching and learning (Ma & Runyon, 2004). The advantage of Internet technol-ogy to improve and supplement traditional courses is explored in this chapter. In this regard, I explore in detail a professional development programme that utilises educational technology to assist lecturers to implement technology-enhanced courses success-fully. This chapter illustrates the implementation component of the e-TUTO programme and also discusses the findings from the participants of the period, June 2005 to June 2006.

The case study was conducted in 2007 at Tshwane University of Technology (TUT). The aim of the study was to examine the implementation component of the e-TUTO programme. This was accomplished in order to identify the success indicators and the challenges that prevent a successful implementation of the technology-enhanced courses. Qualitative data was collected by means of a case study that uses an interpretive approach and incorporates elements of ethnography. The participants in the study were fifteen staff members who participated in the e-TUTO programme from Tshwane University of Technology (TUT). E-TUTO is a development programme in educational technology for professionals that was devised and initiated in 2004 by the Directorate of Teaching and Learning with Technology at TUT. This programme was funded by the institution.

Professional development programmes should empower faculty members to utilise and integrate technology to enhance the quality of teaching and learning. The question is no longer about the value of the use of the Internet in higher education institutions but rather about the quality, influence and effectiveness of the online courses that are created. Based on this debate, I argue that, if higher education institutions are to implement technology-enhanced courses successfully, then they should consider empowering lecturers through professional development programmes. Further, institutions should ensure that success indicators are stipulated right at the beginning. Such a process will be helpful in monitoring progress throughout the implementation of the professional development programmes.

The chapter initially analyses and summarises literature relating to professional development programmes that use educational technology globally. This is followed by a review of research focusing on professional development programmes and the way these influence lecturers' teaching practices. Research methodology employed will be explained. A discussion of the case study of participants of the e-TUTO programme will follow. In this discussion, the focus will be on when implementing technology-enhanced courses, which include the e-TUTO programme, adequate funding, time management, lecturers' attitudes, capacity-building and computer skills. Finally, an argument on challenges that were encountered by the participants during the e-TUTO programme that hindered the successful implementation of technology-enhanced courses is advanced.

SETTING THE STAGE

What is a Professional Development Programme?

A professional development programme is a programme that teaches and empowers lecturers and non-academic staff members in both formal and informal ways to learn new skills, to develop new approaches to pedagogy and teaching practices, to discover and explore new technologies, and to understand both content and resources. According to Grant (nd), professional development is more than what is implied by the term training, with its implication of learning skills. The phrase professional development programme includes formal and informal means of helping lecturers not only to learn new skills but also to develop new insights into pedagogy and their own practice. It also implies helping lecturers to understand the content of their courses and the resources available to them. Grant(nd) notes that professional development also includes supporting lecturers as they grapple with the challenges that come from putting their evolving understanding of the uses of technology into practice. Current technologies offer resources to meet these challenges. They also help lecturers to grow in their professional skills, their understanding and their personal interests.

In this chapter, a "professional development programme" is defined as a programme that teaches and empowers lecturers and non-academic

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