Chapter 16
Faculty Training Strategies to Enhance Pedagogy–Technology Integration

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ABSTRACT

One of the unprecedented benefits of campus-wide distance learning strategies has been the incorporation of more technology-based pedagogy into traditional classrooms, thus, increasing faculty and student teaching and learning opportunities. This "hybrid" or "blended" teaching has emerged largely due to a desire to widen access to educational opportunities, continuing education, and university resources (Curran, 2004; Garrison & Kanuka, 2004). However, a major challenge to this technologically enhanced pedagogy has been the training of higher education faculty. This article focuses on faculty technology literacy, the implementation of technology into traditional faculty pedagogy, and the need for effective faculty training to enhance appropriate technology integration into classroom instruction (Keengwe, 2007). In this paper, the authors recommend two tier training as a possible strategy to technology integration training challenges that instructors face in their pedagogical practices.

INTRODUCTION

Universities and colleges across the globe have focused upon creating Information Technology (IT) infrastructures to enhance the quality of teaching and learning, especially one that is provided though e-learning or distance education platforms. State of the art technology, access to the Internet, asynchronous learning tools (teaching platforms), and teacher training facilities are present in many institutions of higher education around the world. Additionally, efforts to meet the demands of the 21st century learner have led to dramatic increase in the number of online courses offered by many institutions of higher learning across the nation.

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In the United States, almost 64 percent of all institutions offer at least one online course and 55 percent of all institutions offer at least one blended course (Allen, Seaman, & Garret, 2007). Distance education technology programs are seen as a means to broaden enrollment and increase gross margins. As a result, at some point in their teaching career, university instructors will consider teaching their classes either partially or fully online (Clark-Ibanez & Scott, 2008). However, the move from traditional to online teaching has created additional responsibilities for participating faculty members as well as students.

The pathway of course migration to online learning environments often begins with the assumption that instructional designs, grading procedures, and other methods that typically work in the traditional classroom would remain the same in online settings. However, that is not the case – the major challenge to this technology-enhanced pedagogy remains that of providing training to faculty to ensure transition of this process. Specifically, there is need for professional development activities and support programs that will help faculty successfully teach online.

Faculty need to prepare graduates who can effectively use technology as a learning tool, yet the faculty themselves are new to various technology uses and have no personal experiences as students themselves in technology-infused classrooms (Jacobsen, Clifford, & Friesen, 2002). Further, while it is evident that university and department sponsored trainings are often employed to create a more technology literate faculty, the question remains whether or not these training opportunities are effective. The focus on pedagogy and technology is crucial since instructors have a primary role of preparing graduates who will use technology in their workplaces. According to the International Society for Technology in Education (2000):

Today's classroom teachers must be prepared to provide technology-supported learning opportunities for their students…being prepared to use technology and knowing how that technology can support student learning must be integral skills in every teacher's professional repertoire (p. 2).

Technology Literacy

Technology literacy is the ability of an individual to responsibly, appropriately, creatively, and effectively use appropriate technology tools to communicate; access, collect, manage, integrate, and evaluate information; build and share knowledge; and improve and enhance learning in all subject areas and experiences. Technology literacy is different from information literacy; The American Library Association's (ALA) Association of College and Research Libraries (2006) states that technology literacy is concerned solely with understanding technology and the skillful use of it.

Brandt (2001) suggests that it is not enough that students and faculty "have rudimentary skills in using a given technology—instruction could be given one day in how to use a system, but the interface or underlying technology could change overnight" (p. 74). Therefore, to help students incorporate technology into their lessons requires that faculty use technology beyond their office; faculty must design courses that require their students to use technology themselves (Wetzel, 2001). Given that a majority of students enrolled in our colleges and universities have grown up in the digital environments, Evans (2005) warns:

To view technology in terms of an autonomous tool is to ignore the fact that one's use of technology is wrapped up in a sense of identity and in the social contexts that shape both technologies and identities (p. 15).

There is a sort of commonality present in the different technology tools, instructional design strategies, and hybrid course creation. This commonality is the learning object in the form of a media asset or digital object. Polsani (2003)