

Chapter 29

Implementing the Remote Observation of Graduate Interns: Best Practices and Lessons Learned

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ABSTRACT

In this chapter, unexpected challenges, “lessons learned,” as well as the best practices that have resulted during the implementation of a program involving the remote observation of graduate interns are addressed. More specifically, best practices and lessons learned related to a series of logistical, pedagogical, and technological issues encountered during both the pilot and full implementation of the ROGI process are presented. Logistical best-practices and lessons-learned address gaining school- and district-level approval to conduct remote observations; communication, verification, and documentation of the remote observations; gaining university supervisor and student intern buy-in; and e-documentation involved in the ROGI process. Pedagogical best-practices and lessons-learned attend to conducting face-to-face seminars and post-conferences remotely and camera movement during the observation. Finally, technological best-practices and lessons-learned focus on hardware and software selection and support for university supervisors and graduate interns.

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INTRODUCTION

Rationale for ROGI: Teacher Shortages

Each year North Carolina's public schools seek to hire over 10,000 teachers just to staff existing classrooms. With increased yearly demands for teachers, attention shifts to teacher education programs. Yet, these programs fall short in addressing the needs of North Carolina's public schools by annually producing approximately 4,000 licensed teachers (Stancill, 2006). The North Carolina University system general administration, has noted this impending crisis and has challenged teacher education programs in the UNC system to "produce quicker and better solutions to the state's public school teacher shortage" (pg. 5). Administrative expectations call for the examination of existing programs for a critical analysis of student needs to determine if there are more creative and efficient methods. According to U.S. Department of Education, Office of Innovation and Improvement (2004), schools cannot simply rely on traditional teacher preparation programs to meet the growing demands of highly qualified teachers in every classroom. Instead, teacher preparation programs need to develop new routes to teacher certification that provide greater access to more teacher candidates.

According to Fulton, Glenn and Valdez (2004), the best teacher preparation programs need to constantly analyze, reflect on and renew their programs to make certain "they are responsive to changing expectations for teachers and to make sure the programs take advantage of the opportunities offered by ever more powerful technologies for teaching and learning" (pg. 3). Graduates of teacher preparation programs need to be exposed to these technologies and equipped with the knowledge and skills that will allow them to provide effective technology integration for their future students. Technology can certainly enhance student learning; however, this only occurs when

teachers use technology effectively to support instruction. This underscores the importance for institutes of higher education to model appropriate and effective uses of technology within a teacher preparation program.

Impending changes within teacher education, whether motivated by national or state educational mandates, teacher shortages, shifting teacher education candidate needs, growth of second career professionals seeking employment, or tighter operating budgets, have encouraged teacher education programs to seek alternative methods for teacher preparation programs that promote growth while considering budget constraints. These changes come at a time when emerging technologies are being explored as pedagogical tools for new learning pathways.

Although many education programs have investigated or implemented online coursework and teacher preparation experiences (Sharpe et. al., 2003; Kent, 2007; Good et. al., 2005), challenges of conducting clinical experiences and teaching observations in a virtual setting still pose a barrier limiting the scope of online licensure opportunities. Addressing these issues require new approaches to current practices, course offerings, and program structures, which must be done through the careful and thoughtful examination of existing programs.

Teacher Education Programs Respond

In response to the teacher shortage in North Carolina, the Department of Middle, Secondary, and K-12 Education created the Graduate Certificate program for teacher licensure. This program allows teacher candidates with bachelors' degrees the opportunity to achieve teacher licensure in a timely manner. The Graduate Certificate program was initially placed online so that lateral entry classroom teachers could take courses conveniently and obtain licensure. Lateral entry teachers are teachers in their first three years of teaching

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