Chapter 10

Mentoring Preservice EFL Teachers for Technology Integration: A Cloud-Based Internship Project

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ABSTRACT

This chapter proposes an integrated mentoring model in the context of established and emerging Information and Communications Technology (ICT) tools to be applied into teacher professional development. Twenty preservice English as a Foreign Language (EFL) preservice teachers participating in a Cloud-based internship project were involved in a series of training activities, including virtual technology training workshops, in-class methods instruction, design and implementation of teaching projects on a Cloud platform, and subsequent face-to-face and online discussions on teaching practices. Multiple qualitative data collected offers evidence to examine the potential of employing this mentoring mechanism to make amends for what has been rarely exploited in the extant technology teacher training models in the foreign language education field. Based on the research findings, a revised mentoring model is suggested for further investigation.

INTRODUCTION

Teacher educators have advocated the preparation of prospective teachers to act as change agents for technology integration in an attempt to impact student learning outcome (Jimoyiannis, 2010; Mouza, Karchmer-Klein, Nandakumar, Ozden, & Hu, 2014; Polly, Mims, Shepherd, & Inan, 2010). Previous researchers have investigated the effects of mentoring preservice teachers’ learning to teach with technology in the past decade. Most of these studies are related to the effects of coursework instruction on teacher candidates’ technology professional development in the fields of educational technology, mathematics, or science (e.g., Funkhouser & Mouza, 2013; Holmes, 2009; Jang & Chen, 2010; Koh & Divaharan, 2011;
Preservice teachers in these studies were mostly involved in campus-based preparation activities in which they learned and designed potential technology infusion to simulate subject matter instruction. Yet, Niess (2011) pinpointed that the major failure for many courses to prepare teachers to teach with technology can be attributed to the emphasis on acquisition of technical skills, with less focus on how technology may interact with teaching content and content-specific pedagogy (see also Chai, Koh, Tsai, & Tan, 2011). While previous researchers vigorously examined the experience or perceptions of preservice teachers’ learning to teach with technology after completing teacher preparation courses, limited studies have been conducted to explore an in-depth analysis of how preservice teachers apply the technology they have learned into real classroom practices (Young, Young, & Shaker, 2012), especially in the foreign language education field. As reiterated by researchers (e.g., Chai, Koh, & Tsai, 2010; Pamuk, 2012), lack of pedagogical experience is the major barrier to prepare preservice teachers for technology integration.

In addition to face-to-face field-experience, with the advent of ICT applications online practicum mechanism has been promoted to offer teachers additional professional growth experiences without geographical barrier (e.g., Allaire & Laferriere, 2005; Chen & Chan, 2011; Jiyoon, 2008; Seo, Templeton, & Pellegrino, 2008). Preservice teachers with experience of technology-enabled internship implemented on the Internet could have direct access to various multimedia tools to be applied into subject teaching. Most of them were proved to have more motivation to use technology in future instructional practices. This new trend of practicum echoed Kennedy and Archambault’s (2012) contention that teacher education programs need to provide coursework that includes online pedagogy curriculum as well as instructional design work in online learning environments with the aim of meeting the digitalized educational trend in the 21st century.

This chapter reports partial findings of a research project sponsored by the Ministry of Science and Technology in Taiwan. The yearlong project aimed to explore the development of preservice EFL teachers’ technological pedagogical content knowledge (TPCK) when blending TEFL Methodology Course with a Cloud-based internship project. The focus of this chapter is to further propose an integrated mentoring model to facilitate preservice EFL teachers’ technology integration after examining the effectiveness of the aforementioned internship project. In the teacher education field, conventional programs are criticized for their failure in facilitating preservice teachers’ critical re-examination of the connection between the affordances of technology and their teaching practices (Chien, Chang, Yeh, & Chang, 2012; Jang, 2008). Lagging behind the general education field, foreign language teacher education also does not provide enough preparation for preservice teachers to integrate technology into their emerging teaching practices (Chen & Chan, 2011; van Olphen, 2007). This chapter hence investigates the application of an integrated mentoring program which may provide a viable context for mentoring preservice teachers’ learning to teach with technology. The following research questions serve to guide this investigation.

1. How did the preservice EFL teachers learn to teach with technology in the professional development program?
2. What were the difficulties or concerns, if any, these preservice teachers encountered when they were engaged in this program?
3. What were the factors, if any, that facilitated or hindered the teacher educators’ online mentoring in this program?