Chapter 12
Developing Online Instructional Resources: Building Organizational Capacity and Promoting Professional Competency

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ABSTRACT

Online delivery of content is emerging as an efficient means for training and development in the private and non-for-profit sectors. At the same time, preservice teachers face a growing need to become effective leaders in the use of technology to support instruction. This chapter presents a framework for developing effective online learning resources for building organizational capacity while strengthening professional competency of preservice teachers. Specifically, mutually beneficial partnerships created with a regional campus of a Midwest university teacher preparation program and non-profit organizations resulted in the creation of online instructional resources. An examination of two grant-funded cases involving non-profit organizations and preservice teachers illuminates the benefits and limitations of such service-learning partnerships.

INTRODUCTION

The need for teachers to use technology effectively to help support learning in the classroom is growing. Simultaneously, a strong need for companies and corporations to deliver materials electronically to support knowledge transfer is emerging. At this nexus lies the opportunity for fulfilling two distinct yet related needs. In undergraduate teacher preparation programs, it is essential that future teachers are taught effective instructional uses of technology. In the world of corporate and non-profit organizational training, technology is a key component which supports internal and external content delivery. The gaps in knowledge and skills within these two separate contexts create a rich opportunity for a service-learning experience. This chapter explores the complexities surrounding this intersection of two distinct enti-
ties. On the one hand, there is the value and the limitations for building capacity of corporate training programs. On the other, there is the opportunity to extend the technological understandings and beliefs of preservice teachers through service-learning.

The impetus for this project was the design and funding for two service-learning projects designed to increase technological competency among teacher education candidates and build the capacity of two non-profit organizations. The framework for this project set forth guiding principles to determine the value and impact on the knowledge and beliefs regarding technology among preservice education candidates in the program. For the undergraduates to have an authentic setting in which to build real-world technology skills, faculty at the Purdue University Northwest School of Education and Counseling, a mid-sized regional university established a partnership with Junior Achievement of La Porte County and United Way of Porter County both in Northwest Indiana. From there, the future teachers – undergraduate students in the teacher preparation program at the university - developed web resources and materials to meet the needs identified by the two non-profit organizations. Ultimately, the goal of the service-learning projects was to shape the knowledge, skills and, most important, beliefs about the use of technology to support learning.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

To set the stage for this project, it was necessary to identify the foundations that constitute the guiding principles of the framework. To conceptualize this framework and structure a systematic examination of the intersection of community partnerships and preservice teacher engagement, a review of literature was conducted. The guiding principles of the framework include: 1) technology learning standards for preservice teachers; 2) gaps in the teacher education curricula which address technology usage; 3) the need among corporate and non-profit organizations for online instructional resources; and 4) the value of service-learning for preservice teachers. The case studies and the literature review offered a lens through which to examine the structure and function of a framework to support a service-learning model. The result was the application of this framework to create two funded projects during which preservice teachers developed online resources for non-profit organizations.

**Technology Learning Standards for Preservice Teachers**

The field of research regarding preservice teachers’ need to understand the impact and implication for technology to support teaching is not new. The International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) is a well-established organization which offers many professional development opportunities for teachers. ISTE has designed standards for teachers, students, and administrators on appropriate uses of technology for teaching. One of the standards for teachers highlights designing and developing digital age learning experiences (International Society for Technology in Education, 2000). Educause, another professional resource, is a support network for educators interested in technology. Since 1998, Educause has actively engaged “colleges and universities, corporations, foundations, government, and other nonprofit organizations to further the mission of transforming higher education through the use of information technology” Educause (2000). These standards of best practice in technology use are an integral foundation for this project.