Chapter 13

Promising Practices in Online Training and Support: Microlearning and Personal Learning Environments to Promote a Growth Mindset in Learners

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ABSTRACT

With increasing visibility for all educators to meet technology standards, teacher educators must prepare their teacher candidates for the increasing demand for education technology integration in preK-12 and higher education classrooms. Many university faculty, who are responsible for this preparation of teachers, feel unprepared for this challenge, which often pushes them out of their comfort zone. As teacher educators in a small university in Southern Texas, the authors explored specific engagements that serve as preparation of faculty for collaborative, online learning shared experiences and instructional strategy modeling that can enhance teacher candidates’ self-regulation skills to integrate technology as they prepare to enter classrooms. As they develop and implement multiple engagements for use within their teacher preparation program, the authors maintain a growth mindset to help improve the quality of their technology interactions and continuously renew their efforts to promote the integration of technology.

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INTRODUCTION

With increasing visibility for all educators to meet technology standards, teacher educators must prepare their teacher candidates to become empowered professionals who explore promising practices, support student empowerment with technology, inspire students to engage with and contribute to the digital world, collaborate across boundaries to share resources and design learner-driven activities using data to continuously improve practice and evaluate learning (ISTE, 2017). These technology-based teaching and learning practices transcend university faculty to teacher candidates to students’ classroom learning reflected in the increased demand for education technology integration in our preK-12 and higher education classrooms. Many university faculty, who are responsible for this preparation of teachers, feel unprepared for this challenge, which often pushes them out of their comfort zone. It is within this uncomfortable space that growth can occur or learners can disengage with technology. While it is common, and often required, for university faculty to utilize the Learning Management System (LMS) of the institution, this environment tends to maintain faculty and institution control over the dissemination of content, and does not often allow for student generated content to be incorporated (Dabbagh & Kitsantas, 2012).

As online and blended learning communities become an expectation in higher education, and educational technology continues to evolve in classrooms, it is imperative that a growth mindset (Dweck, 2006) be encouraged for both faculty and teacher candidates. While working to develop a growth mindset among learners, the inclusion of micro learning interactions that provide a stage for technological success helps build educators’ confidence in their own skill set and encourages the necessary shift toward flexibility in using new technologies in the classroom. This chapter focuses on the ways that two university professors seek to build microlearning engagements into the teacher education pedagogy of their educator preparation program.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The underpinning of growth mindset (Dweck, 2006) posits that experience developing new skillsets can cultivate change, and as a theoretical framework this provides affective domain support for the delivery of required technology and professional standards for teacher education. In consideration of these technology standards, teacher educators are expected not only to adopt and implement educational technology in their practice, but also to promote and ensure that teacher candidates are prepared to adapt to evolving technology to support student agency in the technological focused classroom. This expectation for continuous adaptation causes stress among university faculty who are not familiar with the technology as a learner centered teaching strategy, but also to the teacher candidates who are learning to teach and may or may not see technology as a tool to enhance learning. A growth mindset encourages the passion for stretching yourself and sticking to it, even (or especially) when it’s not going well (Dweck, 2006). Effort-praised faculty and students maintain their faith in their abilities, keep on enjoying the task, and show markedly improved performance over time. The effort praise keeps them focused on what matters for their motivation and performance (Dweck, 2008). Through collaboration to define promising practices, both faculty and students can identify and incorporate Web 2.0 technologies, while recognizing that Web 3.0 is quickly approaching and seeing value in contributing to this new digital world.