Chapter 1

Bolstering Reflective Practice Through Digital Tools in an Online Practicum

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ABSTRACT

In this formative experiment, researchers focused upon reflection in an online practicum when studying the following research question: How can digital tools be used to build reflection on teaching practice into an online practicum experience? This formative experiment was conducted in a 100% online, asynchronous master’s-level course at a research university in the Southeast United States. The authors focus on data from four participants across two sections of an ESOL online practicum course during the fall semester who were completing the course for their add-on ESOL certification. To reach the study goal of building more reflective teaching practice, the intervention enacted was defined by three essential elements: (1) the microteaching cycle, (2) reflective teaching, and (3) digital, multimodal tools through an online learning management system. The authors discussed six focused codes combined with quantitative data leading to three pedagogical assertions regarding online practicum and teacher reflection.

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INTRODUCTION

Practicums can often be focused on learning strategies or inadvertently replicating existing practice rather than reflecting on practice more holistically (Hixon & So, 2009; Zhang & Cheng, 2011). As practicums are increasingly put online, more research is needed on their effectiveness regarding teacher reflection. Research has noted that reflection is important though missing from teacher preparation (Marzano, Boogren, Heflebower, Kanold-McIntyre, & Pickering, 2012). In this formative experiment, researchers focused upon reflection in an online practicum when studying the following research question: How can digital tools be used to build reflection on teaching practice into an online practicum experience?

This formative experiment was conducted in a 100% online, asynchronous master’s-level course at a research university in the Southeast United States. This master’s-level course is part of an online program for current teachers pursuing a master’s degree in literacy that allows them to earn two endorsements: as a literacy teacher and literacy coach or literacy teacher and English as a Second Language (ESOL) teacher. This course can also be taken separate from the master’s program for those wishing to add ESOL certification to an initial teaching certification. The term ESOL is used for this field as that is what this certification is termed in state licensure requirements. The course of this study was the practicum experience required for those teachers adding their ESOL endorsement. Researchers collected data over one semester of this three-hour credit course. This course requires students to spend at least 15 hours with emergent bilinguals in the classroom through the assessment, planning, implementation, modification, and reflection of the microteaching cycle and other activities of the course. The term emergent bilinguals is used to refer to students who are learning to speak English as a second language and emphasize the asset of their emerging bilingualism (see Proctor, Boardman, & Hiebert, 2016). The assignments of the course included completing online discussion board postings, creating a teaching philosophy, completing an initial assessment of the emergent bilingual student to be tutored, and to enact several lessons through three phases of a microteaching cycle (Zhang & Cheng, 2011).

In Phase One of this microteaching cycle, the students submitted a lesson plan and a screencast, using Zoom (https://www.zoom.us), discussing their design of their lesson plans for their colleagues in the course. They then received feedback both from the course instructor and two of their colleagues in the course. After Phase One, the students then revised and implemented their initial lesson plans in Phase Two. In Phase Two, the teachers video-recorded their implementation of the lesson with their emergent bilingual students. After they recorded this lesson, they then edited their recording with Camtasia software (https://www.techsmith.com/video-editor.html), which was available to them for free through the university. The teachers edited their lessons to show how these lessons aligned with the Center for Research on Education, Diversity, and Excellence (CREDE) rubric (CREDE, 2019a, 2019b). The teachers included in these video reflections how their teaching aligned with the CREDE rubric, how they incorporated feedback between Phases One and Two, and the next steps for their emergent bilingual students. After they recorded this lesson, they then edited their recording with Camtasia software (https://www.techsmith.com/video-editor.html), which was available to them for free through the university. The teachers edited their lessons to show how these lessons aligned with the Center for Research on Education, Diversity, and Excellence (CREDE) rubric (CREDE, 2019a, 2019b). The teachers included in these video reflections how their teaching aligned with the CREDE rubric, how they incorporated feedback between Phases One and Two, and the next steps for their emergent bilingual students. The teachers received feedback from the instructor on Phase 2. The teachers completed two lesson plans that went through both Phase One and Two of the microteaching cycle. The teachers’ summative assessment for the course was Phase Three of the microteaching cycle, a final reflection in which they included the following: a summary of each phase, reflection upon their incorporation of colleague and teacher-educator feedback, and how they viewed their instruction in relation to their initial teaching philosophy (i.e., did they accomplish their goals-why or why not; did their philosophy or goals change in any way, and did the microteaching cycle affect this philosophy in any way). In addition to these microteaching cycle assignments, the teachers responded to nine discussion board topics in which they were required