Introduction

The turbulence created by trying to link pedagogy, technology and learner needs in online teaching in higher education has been described as a ‘perfect storm’ (Kim & Bonk, 2006). Given that most faculty have significant face-to-face teaching responsibilities, publishing expectations and supervision responsibilities, what will motivate them to invest time and energy in the professional learning needed to develop effective online teaching? Some faculty may consider the time, difficulty, and trauma to be too high a personal cost and be resistant to significant change. Others...
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may relish the challenges involved in shifting their teaching practice to better suit the online environment and teaching in a digital age. This chapter will present the influences both theoretical and practical that informed the design and teaching of an online initial teacher education course in a New Zealand tertiary setting. These influences include: the lecturers’ beliefs and values around effective teaching practices; feedback from students in the initial teacher education programme; two of the authors’ doctoral studies, in teaching and learning for the digital age, and the use of blended action learning to support professional development; and involvement in a Faculty Digital Technology Working Party. The three authors will share how they developed their online course so that content was not ‘delivered’, rather the learning activities were underpinned with pedagogical approaches aligned with learning theory relevant in a digital age. Although the faculty involved in this teaching did not take part in any formal professional development process, their experiences can be used to inform future professional learning experiences for faculty teaching online.

The objectives of this chapter are to:

• Present a model of learning in the digital age and provide examples of each aspect
• Present the experiences of faculty involved in a teaching successful online course
• Analyse the factors supporting this effective teaching experience
• Identify elements of effective professional learning experiences for faculty teaching online

The chapter will begin by setting the context and describing the relevant online course. This will be followed by a review of the literature that informed the way the course was taught. A pedagogical model for the digital age underpinned by connectivism which incorporates critical and creative thinking, collaborative learning, making connections, and the development of conceptual understanding will be outlined and linked to aspects of this course. The lecturers’ preparation and their online teaching experience will be described and student feedback on the teaching and the learning will be incorporated. How the professional learning from this development process has been shared across the university setting to influence how faculty teach in other online courses will also be described. The chapter will conclude with implications for future research and practice.

BACKGROUND

The course that is focus of this chapter is the final course in a one year online graduate diploma of teaching programme in a New Zealand university. There were 138 students in the course, entitled The Teacher in Context, and all were training to be early childhood, primary or secondary teachers. The objectives for this course included: demonstrating an understanding of the impact that contextual factors have on teaching and learning; critically reflecting upon their identities as teachers and understand the impact this has on their practice; and demonstrating an understanding of the ethical, professional, moral aspects of teachers’ work and the legal requirements with which teachers work. Although the course had been available on campus the previous year, 2010 was the first year it has been offered online. Feedback from the students in previous courses in the programme had not been positive and therefore the Associate Dean of primary and secondary education, set up a Digital Technology Working Party to address student concerns and to help ensure the online learning environment for this final course was underpinned with digital age learning theory. Involvement in this working party and reflection on their values and beliefs around effective teaching and learning encouraged the two lecturers responsible for teaching the course (Thornton & Service) to carefully consider how their online teaching could reflect these values and beliefs.
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