If We Give a Workshop and Nobody Comes, is it still Professional Development?

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Abstract: This practitioner-focused paper is about an example of professional development failure in teacher education. We detail the real-life journey of the educational technology program during the 2013/14 school year in which training was planned to assist education faculty in the use of technology in their courses. This presentation outlines the hopes, the reality, lessons learned, and how failure can inform practice.

Introduction

The common refrain that getting faculty to do anything en masse is like "herding cats," was never truer than in the 2013/2014 school year when the Ed Tech program held educational-technology workshops for the faculty of the curriculum and instruction department at Texas State University. Workshops were planned and offered to the faculty over the course of the academic year, and despite best efforts, workshops were poorly attended, and in some cases, unattended by the faculty for which they were designed and offered. In many ways, that's the end of the sad story. However, in an effort to understand faculty nonattendance (and perhaps to salvage some meaning from the experience), we thought it would be useful to explore exactly what happened and find some future paths for faculty development that could be more successful.

Because of the limited number of credit hours students are allowed to take in pedagogical courses from the College of Education in the state of Texas versus courses in their content area (e.g., English, Math, Biology, etc.), an undergraduate educational-technology course is not taught at the university, and students are expected to receive technology-integration instruction in their regular methods courses. This is a commendable system, because if technology integration is the goal, than integrating the instruction of technology integration into the rest of pre-service teachers' education is fitting, and it matches the overlap of pedagogical and technological knowledge shown in the *technological-pedagogical knowledge* (TPK) component of the TPACK framework (Mishra & Koehler, 2006). However, as could be expected, the success of such a system depends on the personal knowledge and familiarity with technology integration -- the TPK -- of the individual methods professors. The workshops were designed to help these faculty members increase their educational-technology skills so that they, in turn, could provide better technology-integration instruction to their students.

It has long been recognized that there are barriers to professional development of higher education faculty. Caffarella and Zinn (1999) outlined four domains around which barriers (as well as supports) cluster:

1. people and interpersonal relationships,
2. institutional structures,
3. personal considerations and commitments, and

4. intellectual and psychosocial characteristics.

Compounding these barriers to professional development was the additional factor that this professional development was focused on educational-technology skills. Schrum (1999) argued that teacher professional development for technology is even less effective than professional development in other areas for several reasons: (a) learning about technology takes longer than learning, say, a new teaching model; (b) those learning how to use new technology need easy access to equipment and software to practice using the tools and build their confidence using it; (c) computer use and new technology is still frightening to some, and no one wants to look incompetent in front of their students; and (d) teachers need a compelling reason to integrate technology into their teaching and change the way they have done things (successfully) in the past. Schrum was looking at K-12 teachers, but the work is applicable to higher-education faculty as well.

Yet despite the difficulty in training faculty the new technology skills, their need for these skills continues to grow. As summarized by Becker et al. (2014):

> Faculty training still does not acknowledge the fact that digital media literacy continues its rise in importance as a key skill in every discipline and profession. Despite the widespread agreement on the importance of digital media literacy, training in the supporting skills and techniques is rare in teacher education and non-existent in the preparation of faculty. As lecturers and professors begin to realize that they are limiting their students by not helping them to develop and use digital media literacy skills across the curriculum, the lack of formal training is being offset through professional development or informal learning, but we are far from seeing digital media literacy as a norm. This challenge is exacerbated by the fact that digital literacy is less about tools and more about thinking, and thus skills and standards based on tools and platforms have proven to be somewhat ephemeral. (p. 22)

As indicated in the NETP (2010) recommendations and in line with faculty learning preferences, the training should consist of a series of short workshops that address relevant topics of integration strategies for practical technologies (i.e., free Web 2.0 tools, BYOD devices) and be presented in a convenient "just-in-time" learning approach that can be applied immediately within a course. Additionally, the workshops should address how faculty should model technology integration for the pre-service teachers within their courses. Hur, Cullen, and Brush (2010) suggested the Situated Technology Integration (SiTI) model to assist pre-service teachers in the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and an understanding of technology integration. Based on the theory of situated learning, SiTI seeks to authentically link theory and practice by incorporating five essential characteristics into the educator preparation environment that include: (a) providing concrete experience, (b) promoting reflection, (c) assisting knowledge application to actual practice, (d) creating communities of learners, and (e) developing TPACK. The SiTI model provides a practical way for teacher educators to nurture authentic TPACK development through a cognitive apprenticeship approach that incorporates preparation, exploration, and implementation of knowledge transfer (see Figure 1).

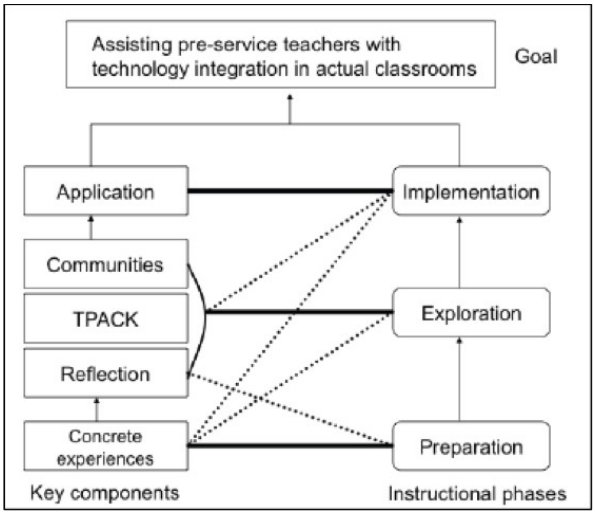

Figure 1. SiTI Model (*From* Hur, Cullen, & Brush, 2010, p. 170).

The Hopes (The Plan)

Using a transactional responsive model (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, & Worthen, 2010), a formative program evaluation was conducted during spring 2013 to assess and understand the levels of technology integration in the pre-service teacher program within our department. Including a naturalistic, participant-oriented approach that is used to gain a deeper understanding of the program being evaluated in order to address the concerns of the stakeholder audience (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Stake, 2003). This evaluation sought to identify what the program looked like from different vantage points, by including perspectives from the 53 faculty who taught at least one course in the program and 58 undergraduate students who were enrolled in at least one C&I course during the spring 2013 semester. Multiple data sources were used, including syllabi analysis, faculty survey, faculty observation, faculty interview, and student survey.

Results from the program evaluation indicated that faculty barriers resulted in a lack of consistent modeling of technology integration, which resulted in a lack of student knowledge and/or confidence regarding technology integration strategies to support their future teaching (see Figure 2).

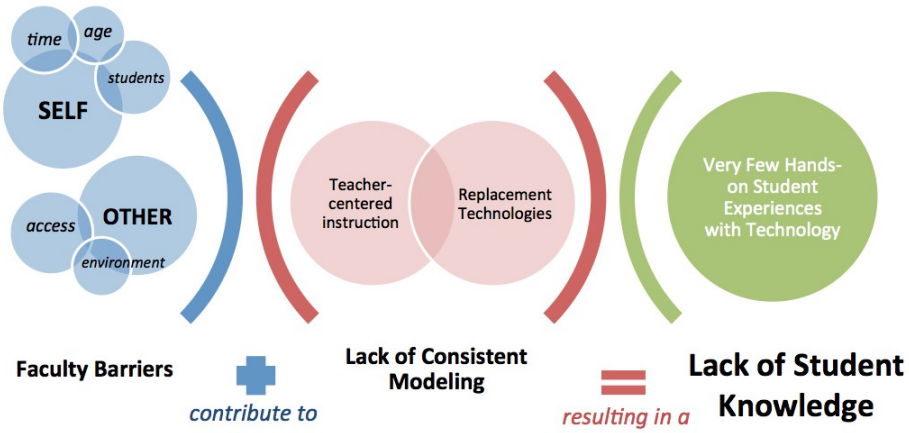

Figure 2. Results from Formative Program Evaluation of Technology Integration in Teacher Preparation Program.

Though these results are common findings, the solution is always more challenging due to the need to appropriately tailor to the context of the specific population in need. The evaluation provided the opportunity to show faculty data (from the voices of their own students) that supported the need for a new approach to be considered.

Among the recommendations, a new approach to faculty training ranked high on the list. There was a general consensus among faculty that the training provided by university-wide support services did not make practical connections to their own classroom needs and that a lack of follow-up support resulted in them not fully integrating what they had learned. One participant described their training experience, "if a technology is too difficult or time intensive to be demonstrated in a workshop, is it really appropriate to model for my students?" Unanimously, the interviewees agreed that training needs to be "just in time", practical for various ability levels, have a supportive follow-up component, and arm them with specific strategies for immediate integration with their own students.

With support from the department chair, the educational technology program faculty designed a series of short workshops for C&I faculty that met one Friday each month throughout the academic year for one-hour. The hands-on workshop series focused on categories of technology tools that supported instructional needs and included follow-up support from the Educational Technology program faculty and graduate students. Guided by the TPACK framework and Domain 3 of Danielson's (2007) Framework for Teaching, the Educational Technology program faculty designed a series of workshops to assist faculty in the selection of technology tools to amplify and transform their instruction. Each 1-hour workshop was face-to-face and consisted of hands-on activities. Supplemental learning modules for each instructional theme were made available on an internal website and included the following components:

- Text and Video: Everything You Need to Know in Under 5 Minutes,
- Text and Video: Plugging In -- 5 Minute Demonstration of the Tool,
- Text and Artifact Examples for Differentiation within each Content Area,
- Formative Assessment Resources: Student Artifact Checklist and Rubric, and
- Suggested Resources: Appropriate Articles, Videos, and Web Links.

The Reality

The Educational Technology program faculty were optimistic though having been "warned" by senior faculty that these efforts still might not work. Despite planning the workshops for Friday from 10-11am - a day and time that did not conflict with any courses - excuses for not attending were plentiful, including "I wish I could, but I teach during that time" (personal communication). Table 1 shows how the seven workshops focused on tools that were representative of instructional themes that were deemed appropriate for the faculty needs. Each workshop highlighted one or two specific technology tools that were easily accessible to faculty (i.e. free, web-based tools). Attendance to the workshops varied; however, high attendance to the sessions offered in November and February, which were faculty meetings and attendance was expected.

Table 1. C&I Faculty Technology Integration Training 2013-14

DATE	INSTRUCTIONAL THEME	STRATEGIES & TOOLS	ACTUAL ATTENDANCE
10/2013	Inductive Thinking	· Visualization with Concept Maps: Coggle & Popplet	4
11/2013	Direct Instruction	· Video Feedback: Jing Screencasts · Web Curation: Diigo · Interactive Multimedia Poster: Glogster	19 15 11
12/2013	PBL & Differentiation	· Digital Storytelling: PhotoStory, Movie Maker, & iMovie	9
1/2014	Reflection	· Reflective Practice: Blogs	2
2/2014	Co-Constructionism	· Collaborative Workspaces: Google Sites · Collaborative Multimedia: VoiceThread · Blended Learning: Educannon, Blendspace, & TedEd	 12 10
3/2014	Communication & Dialogue	· Class Communication: Edmodo · Virtual Discussion: Twitter	1
4/2014	Interactive Presentation	· Interactive White Boards: SmartBoard, Mimio	2

Lessons Learned

In his book *Failing Forward* (2000), John Maxwell speaks of redefining failure and the way in which we react to failure. One key concept to looking at a failure is examining how we respond to failure through our thoughts and actions. In the table below (Table 2), Maxwell outlines the differences between "Failing Backward" and "Failing Forward", in other words, using failure as a means for improvement and innovation.

Failing Backward	**Failing Forward**
• Blaming others • Repeating the same mistake • Expecting never to fail • Expecting to continually fail • Accepting tradition blindly • Being limited by past mistakes • Thinking "I am a failure" • Quitting	• Taking responsibility • Learning from each mistake • Knowing failure is part of the process • Maintaining a positive attitude • Challenging outdated assumptions • Taking new risks • Believing something didn't work • Persevering

Adapted from John Maxwell (2011)
Table 2 - Comparison of Failing Backward and Failing Forward

Maxwell also stresses the need to examine key questions in failure in order to learn from them and move forward. Questions that need to be examined include:

- What caused the failure? Where did things fall down?
- Was what happened truly a failure or just fall short – was the goal unrealistic?
- What successes are contained in the failure?
- What can I learn from what happened?
- How can I turn this into a success?
- Who can help me with this issue? Learn from the mistakes from others as much as possible.

With these questions in mind, we began to look at the lessons learned from our professional development failure.

Lesson learned: Timing is everything

The timing in offering faculty professional development seems particularly problematic. The workshops were scheduled on Fridays which for most faculty are a day with no teaching responsibility. However, since this is the one day in which most faculty are not teaching, it is also the day for research groups, departmental meetings, general faculty meetings, personnel meetings, conferences, and a host of other opportunities. Often we would find that one of the workshops which had been scheduled months in advance was in direct conflict with a departmental meeting called at the last minute. From our perspective, a positive takeaway from this lesson is learning that a traditional workshop approach will not work for our situation.

Continuing questions:

- Is there a time that will ever work?
- Is there a different format that might work?
- How can faculty fit extra time into an already busy schedule?

Lesson learned: Experiment with non-traditional training formats

The Edtech faculty chose a traditional professional training format with the consideration that faculty would feel most comfortable with a model used in most public schools. However, it quickly became apparent that traditional models of professional development do not work with a non-traditional, independent faculty.

Continuing questions:

- Is there any format that would be engaging enough to persuade reluctant learners or those pressed for time?
- Would peer cohorts made a difference? (we did in fact have a peer cohort formed from our successful learners)
- Would a blended format work or flipped classroom approach in which faculty would study materials online and then use workshop time to create a products to be directly used in their courses?

Lesson learned: Pay attention to extrinsic motivation and commitment

Although needs analysis surveys of faculty and students showed an expressed and felt need for incorporating additional technology into teaching and student assignments, many faculty still did not commit to learning from the offered workshops. Faculty do have other options from which to choose in technology training, primarily workshops offered by Instructional Technologies but often convenience and timing appears problematic with education faculty. In light of the university training problems, the Edtech program sponsored workshops were met with initial enthusiasm. However, it should be noted workshops were more of an administrative backed solution. The top down approach to technology training clearly does not foster commitment and as Georgina & Hosford (2009) noted, "The research shows that far too often only a few individuals end up making choices that affect entire departments or colleges." (p. 695)

When the technology workshops were conceived there was also the belief that most of the faculty (learners) were intrinsically motivated to learn about integrating technology into their courses. While it is safe to say there were cases in which this was evident, for the most part extrinsic motivation seemed to play a large role. According to Dirksen (2012), four ways to engage extrinsically motivated learners is to 1) tie the task to a real world situation, 2) look for pain points of the instruction to make it easier, 3) avoid excessive theory and background, and 4) use interesting hypothetical problems. Briggs (2013) notes that at several institutions with successful technology PD programs, grants and stipends are part of the incentive to encourage and reward faculty for participation. At UMass Amherst, for example, support grants ranging from $1,200 to $10,000 are awarded to instructors and other programs offer release time for integration of technology projects. Georgina & Hosford (2009) also recommend release time for training and supplemental pay increases to faculty who are the most involved with the evolution of the integration of technology into pedagogy.

Continuing questions:

- What are some ways to motivate extrinsically motivated learners to learn technology skills? (Is any carrot big enough?)
- Is money or release time the only way to motivate faculty?
- Can we help with the "pain points" in learning about technology integration?
- Could extra teaching credit be given to instructors who make efforts to create blended learning courses in which technology is integrated?
- Although surveys reported students overwhelmingly wanted more technology used in their lessons, why are faculty are still reluctant to use it?

Lesson learned: Presenters are seen as experts

One unexpected result of the workshops was the fact that presenters were often looked at as "experts" in using technology. Rather than inspire the instructors to use technology with their classes, the presenters were now looked at someone who could be used a "guest speaker" in the class while the instructor took no role in the actual ownership of teaching the technology skill which was quite the opposite of the intended outcome.

Continuing questions:

- How can we get faculty to not rely on "experts" for presenting

Lesson Learned: Don't overreach

Educational technology faculty tend to be what Malcom Gladwell (2000) in the *Tipping Point* describes as "mavens". Mavens are primarily educators who love to share knowledge with others just for the sake of sharing information, often providing too much information. In retrospect, another failure of the plan was offering many tools for faculty to choose from. Work (2014) suggests to introduce one thing, do it well, then add to it, "Select only one or two of these areas and make a concerted effort to help those teachers who are struggling. One big mistake when introducing technology is either too much or too little professional development. Teachers that struggle with technology might feel overwhelmed if you introduce too much too soon. On the flip side, if you don't provide enough PD, teachers may feel isolated." (paragraph 5, 6)

Continuing questions:

- How many tools should be introduced and how fast?

- Should training focus on just using one tool, mastering it and then add another?

Lesson Learned: Is it really a professional development problem?

Virtually all instructional design models have five main components, analysis, design & develop, implementation, and evaluation. Implicit in the analysis phase is the process of analyzing the need for an instructional solution. Before beginning the long and complex process of creating workshops and training the question needs to be asked "Is professional development really the solution to the problem?" Often upon close inspection, it is found that performance gaps are attributed to something else. Dirksen (2012) and Moore (2013) detail main areas which need to be examined when performing an analysis to find performance gaps which are listed below with accompanying questions to be considered..

Knowledge gaps occur in performance when all that is missing is information needed to perform the tasks desired:

- Do faculty have technology skills but lack information in how to integrate technology into their lessons?
- If faculty have tech knowledge can quick how-to sheets or online training modules help as performance aids?
- Would a list of possible programs or apps to choose from in categories help (web curation or blended learning with video for example)?

Skill gaps occur when there may be a lack of technology skills and practice present in order to integrate technology into teaching:

- Do faculty have the basic technology skills to even begin professional development in tech integration?
- Do faculty personally use technology in their daily lives?
- Is age a factor in required technology skills? Zelick (2013) found a high correlation in the use of technology for teaching and the age of faculty.

Motivation gaps occur when a faculty member knows what to do but chooses not to do it (discussed previously)

Environment gaps are present when the environment hinders the use of technology:

- Does the gap exist because there is no recognition for performing well and/or no consequence for not performing as desired?
- Do faculty have access to equipment in the classroom to use the new technology?
- Are faculty given opportunity to experiment with blended learning?
- Do faculty have enough time to integrate technology or practice with it?

Communication gaps are the result of goals and expectations not being clearly communicated:

- Are the expectations of technology use being communicated to faculty?
- Do the sponsors of the professional development also attend the training?
- Is the training itself valued by the faculty as an opportunity or is it looked upon as another requirement?

If the answers to most of these questions fall outside the skills gap, professional development may not be the answer but a possible change in motivation, environment, knowledge, or communication may be the solution.

Conclusions

Coming back full circle, we ask ourselves "how can failure inform practice?" Though we, as a program area, accept that failure can indeed be reconceptualized to provide an enriched learning opportunity for what to improve upon for the next attempt, we also question how it is possible to succeed in something that is so dependent upon individual perspectives of the value of technology integration and varying levels of intrinsic motivation toward a desire to learn more technology integration strategies. Knowing full well that the only way to impact attitudes and beliefs is to provide opportunity to explore the concept in question, we question how this can occur if no one takes advantage of the professional development opportunity. Are we just another statistic of the familiar saying that "there just isn't enough time in the day?" Is there really a solution to this problem? And if there isn't a solution to our specific set of circumstances, where do we as technology teacher educators, go from here?

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