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ABSTRACT

Professional development has historically been a "one-shot" workshop wherein information barrages the learner in a streaming fashion and little to no information is retained. Even more exasperating is the lack of follow-up support once the workshops have concluded. Due to the desire for technologically appropriate professional development and classroom integration opportunities for educators from the PreKindergarten through graduate school levels, a renewed emphasis upon impacting the learning environments through technologically appropriate professional development and classroom integration opportunities for educators has become an exciting area of growth. This article outlines a pilot study wherein professional development opportunities lead the way towards a highly interactive, supportive learning environment. (Author)

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Impacting Learning Environments from PreKindergarten Through Graduate School: Technologically Appropriate Professional Development and Classroom Integration Opportunities for Educators

Abstract: Professional development has historically been a "one-shot" workshop wherein information barrages the learner in a streaming fashion and little to no information is retained. Even more exasperating is the lack of follow-up support once the workshops have concluded. Due to the desire for technologically appropriate professional development and classroom integration opportunities for educators from the PreKindergarten through graduate school levels, a renewed emphasis upon impacting the learning environments through technologically appropriate professional development and classroom integration opportunities for educators has become an exciting area of growth. This article outlines a pilot study wherein professional development opportunities lead the way towards a highly interactive, supportive learning environment.

Introduction

As a result of conversations with fellow university faculty, I became acutely aware that many faculty at UHCL do not have the necessary hardware and software training needed to support their jobs. This is an area of great importance to faculty and, therefore, my interest in offering technology training to university faculty. The technology-related and classroom-oriented workshop modules must be offered at all levels of the educational structure, from PreKindergarten through university-level, to reach the learners at all levels of learning. Due to these discussions, a plan formulated wherein the development of technologically appropriate professional development training modules to impact the learning environments from PreKindergarten through graduate school began to take shape. The focus of these efforts impacted the classroom integration of technologically appropriate opportunities for educators.

Background

The aspects associated with technology integration into a classroom environment are varied (Dede, 1987; Dede, 1994; Dede, 1995; Gagne, 1985; Hooper & Rieber, 1995; Johnassen, 1991; Merrill, 1991; Tobin & Dawson, 1992) and have led to numerous theories and models of instruction over the previous ten years; however, the appropriate integration of technology into the classroom environment still remains focused upon one goal: developing a learning environment for the learner. The learners must have a large

group format workshop, a follow-up group format workshop, the ability to have one-on-one tutoring sessions, the ability to review a tutorial-style interactive environment online that is available at all times, obtain access to interactive communications with not only subject matter experts (SMEs) but also other learners, and an opportunity to view the successful and appropriate integration of technology into the learning environment. Much of the interactive aspects of a technology workshop environment have been realized throughout the design, development, implementation and revisions associated with the World Wide Web-based coursework. Online learner support and a sense of an interactive community of learners are imperative to the success of the goals.

Procedures/General Work Plan

The procedures to be followed towards the attainment of the specific goals associated with this project are broadly outlined below. Due to the nature of the pilot aspect of this program, certain features will be implemented and lessons will be learned to further the knowledge and understanding of the technologically appropriate professional development training modules that will impact the learning environment from PreKindergarten through graduate school.

Creation of Technology-related and Classroom-oriented Workshop Modules

I will be focusing on the development of technology-related and classroom-oriented workshop modules. For each workshop module, the following aspects will be developed: large group workshop experience; small group workshop experience; face-to-face component; World Wide Web-based component; listserv; bulletin board; technical and instructional support. Through the process of design, development and revision, a model through which to create technology-related and classroom-oriented workshop modules will begin to take shape. This model will focus upon the faculty support necessary to maintain a high level of effort and understanding of the faculty member; however, the focuses of these workshops are upon the learner and the appropriate integration of technology into the educational environment.

Dissemination/Use of Results

During the initial design and development period, the professional development workshop components will be initially offered to all university faculty. The focus of the technologically appropriate professional development and classroom integration opportunities for educators workshop components is on the learners who will be impacted by the appropriate integration of technology into the classroom situation; therefore, the scope of this grant must extend beyond the inclusion of the University of Houston – Clear Lake learners into the Independent School Districts (ISDs) so as to reach the PreKindergarten through Grade 12 educators and, ultimately, the learners in the ISDs.

Conclusion

Due to the inappropriate nature of "one-shot" workshop training modules that have been historically implemented, the nature of the workshop environment presented herein will offer the workshop attendees the ability to develop a level of comfort previously unheard of within a professional development format. Although the pilot study nature of this article presents merely the building blocks of an innovative idea expression, the further discussion, reflection and delineation of thoughtful entities offer the ability and expertise necessary to redefine the nature of professional development within the PreKindergarten through graduate level presentation of materials within a classroom environment. The focus is the learners whom every trainer/facilitator serves; it is time that we make great strides towards an emphasis upon the importance of quality professional development.

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