An Open, Online Class to Prepare Faculty to Teach Online

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ABSTRACT

Professional development opportunities are too limited for faculty who are learning to teach online. Preparation is typically provided in the form of technology training, with little focus on the pedagogy of teaching over the web. In addition, most professional development programs offer their workshops on campus instead of providing an opportunity for faculty to be learners online. The Program for Online Teaching Certificate Class created a possible model for better preparation with a free, open, year-long online class focused on pedagogy and tool choice, with participants engaged in active reflection as part of a community. Participants in the 2011-12 class were surveyed regarding several objectives, including whether their learning goals were achieved within the framework of the class. Participants, including 16 who earned a certificate through full participation, overwhelmingly indicated the achievement of their personal learning goals, satisfaction with the community developed within the class, and increased confidence in their ability to build online classes around their pedagogy rather than being led by the technology tools. The results of the study indicate that an open, online class may be an effective model for faculty development in online teaching.

Keywords: online teaching, open education, survey, professional development, faculty development, massive open online course, online learning, open class, college teaching

Introduction

Online college classes become more and more popular as the years go by. A number of colleges and universities have responded by offering more classes on the web and assigning them to their faculty. Realizing that teaching in the online environment may involve different skills than classroom teaching, many of these institutions prepare faculty for teaching online through professional development programs. Such preparation typically begins with the college's Learning Management System (LMS). Most colleges run their own installations of Blackboard or WebCT, systems that help instructors track student activities, post materials, and keep a gradebook. Some use Desire2Learn or open source LMSs such as Sakai or Moodle. Sometimes LMS use is mandated and sometimes it isn't, but either way faculty assigned to teach online are typically pointed toward the LMS and LMS training. Such workshops, focusing on course creation and management inside the college-supported system, are usually provided in campus labs with hands-on workshops.

Once trained to use the system, an instructor's first experience with teaching online often consists of uploading the syllabus and other documents into the system, using the default menus and settings. As time goes on, some online instructors explore the larger world of the web to expand their teaching options, but many do not. The design of LMSs encourages dependence on them, and imposes a particular pedagogy on courses, particularly for novice instructors without much experience on the web (Lane, 2009). The focus on the LMS, and technology training in general, thus provides a limited view of what constitutes the "classroom". Technology training in Learning Management Systems, or even a small set of institutionally-sponsored tools, such as a common gradebook or portfolio application, does not constitute full preparation to teach online in today's web environment. Preparation that takes place in closed systems and focuses on training fails to take advantage of the learning opportunities available on the open web for faculty development, course design and student learning.

The central goal of professional development for new online teachers is based on re-training classroom teachers to work in the online environment, with an emphasis on the tools provided by the institution. In the usual preparation model, on-campus workshops are seen as the training venue, and the LMS is seen as the new "classroom." Faculty participate actively in uploading materials and creating assessments, with helpers standing by. But face-to-face training does not mimic the setting in which faculty will be working, and the LMS is not the only option for teaching online. Ones colleagues in such training tend to be from the same institution or district, so the work is heavily grounded in the institution's culture and technology resources. Instead, preparing faculty to teach online should include extensive experience using the web as a broad classroom, enabling instructors to teach online in a manner consistent with the nature of the internet itself. Such preparation could inspire a more creative approach to designing classes inside an LMS, as well as introduce the idea of creating courses with open tools and alternative pedagogy. This would offer deeper preparation for teaching online through an authentic experience in the online environment.

Not everyone is familiar with open courses on the open web. Open courses have no entrance requirements; they welcome global participation. Although there could potentially be many forms of open courses, the major MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) that have been offered in the last few years have common features: an expert facilitator or facilitators, forums or blogs for communication and cross-fertilization of ideas, suggested readings or viewings, a schedule of topics, and a set duration for the class. These classes can sometimes be taken for university credit by a limited number of students, but most of the participants (including mentors and presenters) are not formally enrolled, and the course itself may not be associated with any particular institution. Such an approach can be advantageous in countering the more closed world of institutional technology training, and broaden horizons for online teaching. The model of the open, online course can be effectively used to prepare college instructors to teach online by emphasizing pedagogy over

technology, fully utilizing the affordances of the web, and offering an opportunity for developing a community of practice among online faculty. Instead of focusing on training in a closed, institutional system, using the open web as the new "classroom" can engender a larger, more inclusive view of online teaching.

The Program for Online Teaching's (POT) Certificate Class provided an open, online class designed to prepare faculty to teach online while emphasizing experience with multiple pedagogical models and tools. A limited version of the class was offered in academic year 2010-11. The 2011-12 class was expanded into a completely open course, with over 90 participants enrolled at the start, most of them declaring the intent to earn a certificate in the 24 weeks of study and activity. The majority were college faculty, but participation was global and included people from outside higher education. The class was facilitated by a volunteer group of faculty from a community college in southern California and volunteer mentors from within the class and from previous classes. The course intentionally modeled the possibilities for pedagogy in an open environment as well as exploring various other methods for online instruction.

This paper explores the POT Certificate Class as a possible model for faculty professional development in online teaching. A detailed explanation of the objectives and structure of the POT Certificate Class will present the framework. Participants were surveyed in several areas, including their learning experience, their opinion of the class design, their experience in the class community, and their confidence in selecting tools that would fulfill their teaching goals.

Literature Review

The number of students enrolled in online college classes continues to grow. A 2011 study noted that enrollments in online classes increased 10% while overall college enrollments increased only 2%

(Allen & Seaman, 2011). As this growth has occurred over the years, faculty have "moved" their courses online, or taught packaged courses created by companies and teams. Many "early adopters", and faculty who do not have access to instructional designers or pre-packaged models, design their own courses. Regardless of their technical expertise or preferred teaching style, faculty experience training which tends to focus on technology rather than pedagogy, almost always inside a closed professional development context. In contrast to this paradigm, the affordances of the web have created an environment of openness and participation that could encourage faculty to explore different approaches and techniques, and new theoretical frameworks for education are developing that more fully utilize the open architecture of the web. The purpose of this literature review is to examine the professional development of online faculty in light of the recent theoretical shift toward open online education.

Shifts in Pedagogy

Educational methods are not static; they develop over time to answer society's needs. Theories of how people learn usually guide the development of pedagogy, and arguably this activity has been going on since Socrates, and includes work by such figures as Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky and John Dewey. The current trend is shifting away from more instructivist methods, such as lecture and presentation, to more constructivist approaches, where students participate actively in creating their own learning through experiences. The literature on learning theory shows this shift in understanding, which has encouraged less cognitive-behaviorist pedagogy and a greater emphasis on social constructivism. The constructivist focus has been increasing in classrooms since the 1970s, and is now being accelerated by the affordances of the internet, especially the easy access to information, resources, viewpoints and perspectives provided on the web. One of the most recent manifestations of this trend is emergent learning theory (Kays & Sims, 2006), which is based on the idea of full participation of the student in the learning experience. Another recent innovation is

connectivism (Siemens, 2005), arguably a new learning theory, which is based on the idea that connections among people, groups and information are the central source of learning. Anderson and Kron (2009) propose that there are now three distance learning pedagogies (cognitive-behaviorist, social-constructivist, and connectivist), and that they should be combined based on the community-of-inquiry model to allow for a focus on cognitive, social and teaching presence.

Open Teaching and Learning

Although the trend is moving toward student-centered learning in an effort to realize these theories more productively, the work with students tends to take place behind closed classroom doors. The Learning Management System (LMS), with its passwords and courses that close at the end of the term, is the online version of the closed classroom. The open education movement seeks to open those doors. Open education online means the opportunity to experience the entire web, communities of practice, and new tools, and to share ones learning and teaching. Acknowledging that colleges tend to lag behind the cultural changes toward openness, Wiley and Hilton (2009) note that new models of openness are nevertheless emerging, including open courseware from major universities, open publishing, and open courses. Even without an institutional sponsor, personal learning networks can be created through the use of multiple web tools to help learners manage their own learning (Couros, 2010). These tools, part of the architecture of the open web, can be used for learner collaboration and reflection, as in the studies of blogs and wikis by Steve Wheeler (2009). They can also provide an opportunity to research pedagogical models (Laurillard, 2008), create virtual communities (Fini, Fomiconi, Giorni, Pirruccello, Spadavecchi, & Zibordi, 2008) and communities of practice (Lu, Todd & Miller, 2011; Bond & Machedo, 2010), and provide a place for the active sharing of teaching and learning artifacts (Mott & Wiley, 2009). These approaches go far beyond technology training or the LMS.

Many open, free tools are available on the web for creating learning environments for teachers and students. Social media use by faculty appears to be increasing. A recent study by Pearson and Babson Research group (Moran, Seaman, & Tini-Kane, 2011) indicates that faculty access sites like YouTube, Facebook and Twitter by faculty for personal, professional and classroom use, although they rarely assign student work that would be shared on these sites. Open teaching can model the use of those tools that are beneficial to student learning and help develop more student-centered learning environments (Couros, 2010). Blogging, for example, can provide an opportunity for open reflection and peer commentary and support for developing professional identity (Luehmann, 2008). Social bookmarking, using services such as Diigo or Delicious, can provide a place for student-discovered resources to be collected and annotated (Edwards & Mosley, 2011). Video sharing via YouTube or Vimeo can encourage the creation of videos at low or no cost, providing a visual and aural way to relate information and share viewpoints (Mitra, Lewin-Jones, Barret, & Williamson, 2010). Free broadcasting using Livestream or Ustream makes it possible for students to broadcast live events. Slideshows can be created in Slideshare or Sliderocket, shared openly, and commented upon. An entire Personal Learning Environment (PLE) can be created in combination with more formal methods to create a more open learning platform (Mott, 2010). Such student-created PLEs can provide a focus for the collection, aggregation and critique of multiple web resources. The web puts powerful tools in the hands of everyone, not just the instructors, providing students an opportunity to both curate and create their own content around a topic instead of relying on an instructor's selections.

MOOCs

Open teaching is the method used by many instructors who encourage a more student-centered approach using these web resources. Much of the research in open teaching comes from studies made of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), beginning with open courses offered by David Wiley at Utah State University (Wiley, 2007) and Alec Couros at University of Regina (Couros, 2007-2010).

The first large MOOC was offered in 2008 on the topic of connectivist learning theory. This course, and subsequent others facilitated by George Siemens and Stephen Downes, created much data for both quantitative and qualitative research. These courses featured a loose structure of weekly topics and guest speakers, widely distributed conversation, and an ever-growing collection of resources, relying on the learners to create their own Personal Learning Environments to cater to their own learning needs. Such courses intentionally depend on the skills and knowledge of the participants, enabled by open meeting places and collaboration (McAuley, Stewart, Siemens & Cormier, 2010). The foundational theory for the MOOCs beginning in 2008 was connectivism. In contrast to behaviorist or constructivist approaches, connectivism embraces technology and distributed learning, and relies on the connections made among people, groups and systems (Siemens, 2005). It considers the learner to be more than just a member in a community of practice, but also a node in a larger system of knowledge growth.

According to Kop (2011), "Connectivists advocate a learning organization whereby there is not a body of knowledge to be transferred from educator to learner and where learning does not take place in a single environment; instead, it is distributed across the Web, and people's engagement with it constitutes learning." A central assumption is that learner autonomy will be highly motivating, allowing the student to answer his/her own education needs. However, Mackness, Mak and Williams (2010) found that the potential of learners was limited by the lack of structure, and that many learners were not equipped to prefer the autonomy that was offered. Confidence and competence using tools appear to be necessary for students to participate fully in an open online class, and many enroll in such classes but do not create any digital artifacts (Kop, 2011). One study suggested that more attention needed to be paid to the pedagogy behind tool use (Fini et al, 2008). The weaknesses of MOOCs can be addressed by creating a more organized structure for open classes.

The lessons of open learning and open teaching can be easily translated into the challenge of preparing faculty to teach online. Professional development for online instructors is a major concern at colleges and universities, as the number of online course offerings continues to grow. A literature review of data-based studies by Dede, Ketelhut, Whithouse, Breit & McCloskey (2009) showed that far more research is needed to determine the effectiveness of professional development for transforming practice, the impact on student outcomes, and explanations for those programs that seem to be effective. Best practices based on empirical studies are practically non-existent, so most programs rely on campus tradition and ad-hoc workshops. Many faculty are subjected to low-quality programs lacking on-going support and mentoring (Dede et al, 2009). Examples of programs that use broader, cohort-based, experiential/collaborative learning, such as the Open University UK (Macdonald & Campbell, 2010), are few. Even when outcomes are clear and community of practice is the goal, the professional development opportunity is presented in a closed system, like Blackboard (Long, Janus, Kay & August, 2009). A broader scope could allow faculty to develop more open learning experiences.

Professional Development for Teaching Online

The design and purpose of professional development programs for online teaching vary at different institutions. Colleges may offer a series of on-campus workshops led by administrators or technologists (Shattuck, Dubins & Zilberman, 2011). Some offer hybrid experiences by extending conversation onto boards or discussion forums, or creating learning modules (Macdonald & Poniatowskab, 2011; Eib & Miller, 2006). Among those offering fully online experiences (*Teaching Online Certification*, n.d.; Bell & Morris, 2009), none are open to the web nor focused on exploring open resources or pedagogies. A more recent class for K-12 teachers, in New Zealand, does go beyond technology into pedagogy, and gives teachers the opportunity to experience the challenges of being an online student, but the class is offered inside the institutional learning management system

(Dabner, Davis & Zaka (2012). The combination of fully online, pedagogically based, and globally open professional development has yet to emerge as a model for preparing online instructors.

The transformation of online teaching can be encouraged by embracing a different approach to professional development. A major literature review (McQuiggan, 2007) examined the potential for professional development in online teaching to transform educational practices, and concluded that without examination and reflection of pedagogical practice, instructors tend to rely on comfortable or traditional pedagogies instead of transforming their practice in response to the online environment. There is a potential also for instructors to be their own action researchers, creating pedagogies that help students learn, drawing conclusions, and sharing with each other (Laurillard, 2008). Communities of practice models could also provide the support that faculty need (Palloff & Pratt, 2011; Hinger & Orr, 2010; Long, Janus, Kay & August, 2009; Lu, Todd & Miller, 2011; Walker & Montes, 2011), as can mentoring (Hixon, Barczyk, Buckenmeyer, & Feldman, 2011; Marek, 2009; Miller, Wadkins & Davis, 2008). The goal of such professional development should be transformative learning. A term first presented by Jack Mezirow, transformative learning, shifts the learner's frame of reference through discovery and reflection, guided by a facilitator (Mezirow, 1997). The potential application of transformative learning to professional development for online instructors is also noted in the literature. Baran, Correia and Thompson's study (2011) pointed out that professional development for online teachers is currently focused on standards and competencies, but lacks an emphasis on faculty empowerment, critical reflection, or integrating technology into pedagogy. Open online classes that encourage faculty to realize their pedagogical goals through the use of the web could change the focus.

Method

Study Design

The study itself evolved with the class. Action research methods were used, but since access to the class was open, there was no predetermined study group, although it was assumed that the participants would consist primarily of educators. Since the idea of an open, online class designed to prepare faculty to teach online was a new concept, there were few previously written surveys or procedures to follow. Rather the objectives of the class developers were used to create questions of the surveys. The first step, however, was to determine what goals each participant had for their activity in the class. Participants indicated on the sign-up form what their goals were at the start of the class. For the mid-year and online surveys, participants' feedback was collected anonymously. The surveys also indicated that results and feedback might be used for research. Results were based on both surveys - see the text of the surveys in Appendix A (Mid-Year Survey) and Appendix B (End-of-Year Survey).

The central question of the study was to determine whether an open, online class might be appropriate for helping faculty learn how to teach online. While there may be many ways to assess the appropriateness of the model, this study examined several aspects through objectives which were formulated by the POT leadership. These were goals for both the course design and for the participants, based on the leadership's determination of what was lacking in basic technical training, according to their own judgment and experiences. These objectives were:

- The class needed to be a positive learning experiences for participants, enabling them to achieve goals they set for themselves ("personal learning goals").
- The class needed to offer its own pedagogy as a model.
- The class should assist in forming a community of practice through the active participation of its members, including the assistance of moderators and mentors, commenting on each other's blogs, and making available a Facebook group for conversation.

- The class should encourage transformative learning, and in particular increased confidence in selecting tools that would fulfill the participants' pedagogical goals instead of being led by the design of an LMS or other system.

Studying these elements implied a qualitative design. The primary instrument was the survey, providing quantitative data. Feedback was solicited throughout the class, through surveys, Facebook discussion and blog commentary, which guided the development of questions on the surveys. For the purposes of this study, most attention was paid to the surveys given at the mid-point and at the end of the course to assess the learning experience throughout the course, the effectiveness of the course's pedagogy, the growth of community, and the development of comfort and confidence in realizing one's own pedagogy through technology tools.

Participants

Initially, 100 people were involved in the class:

- 4 main facilitators from the Program for Online Teaching

- 17 mentors (13 of whom were also participants in the class)

- 79 regular participants

Of the initial 100, 41 were teaching at least part-time at the founding college in southern California, 36 were from other schools and businesses in the United States, three were in China, three were in New Zealand, two each were in Latin America, Australia, and South Asia, and one each were in the Middle East, Europe and South Africa. Over 50 worked in standard academic disciplines such as Spanish, Letters, History, or Computer Science. Others were administrators, coordinators and researchers at various companies and schools. At the beginning, 59 indicated an intention to earn a certificate. At mid-year that number had dropped to 26 of the 41 who filled out the survey. The diversity of the group was maintained – the only consistent loss from a global region was China where, although the participants were in Shanghai, the persistent government blocking of sites made

it difficult for them to read the blogs of others and to participate fully, despite the many workarounds that were implemented. The numbers were not sufficient to call the class format a MOOC (Massive Open Online Course), since 100 is by no means massive, and only about a third of that number completed the year-end survey. The ironic term SMOOC (Small to Medium Open Online Course) came to be used instead.

Course Evolution and Structure

The structure of the Program for Online Teaching Certificate Class for 2011-12 evolved out of several years of offering workshops, designing a POT website of resources, posting videos and tutorials, and recommending paths of study. In 2010-11, materials and on-campus workshops were cobbled together into a hybrid "class" that required participants to attend a certain number and variety of workshops on campus as well as online, and post weekly in a central blog administered by a faculty volunteer. Any faculty member, full-time or part-time, from POT's main institution or another college, could attend the workshops on campus, read and view material at the POT website, and complete a certificate by regularly blogging about their participation. At the end of the year, each participant submitted a self-assessment indicating completion of all requirements. Although the workshops and POT project were hosted at the college where the founding faculty worked, the certificate was issued by the Program for Online Teaching as an independent group. The certificate consisted of an online badge and a paper document, designed by a faculty member who taught graphic arts and signed by the POT director.

During this first hybrid effort in 2010-11, there were requests from faculty, particularly those at a distance from the founding college or who worked for the college part-time, that the certificate class be offered entirely online. Responding to this idea, an online syllabus was developed by the POT leadership, and a Wordpress site created for posting assignments and integrating feeds from participants' individual blogs, instead of having participants be authors on a central blog site.

As it evolved into a fully online class being offered on the open web, the opportunity for global participation became clear. Although only a few open invitations went out in social media forums (primarily Twitter and blogs), word-of-mouth led to outside requests to join the class. All were welcomed. Participant blog posts were aggregated on a central Wordpress blog called Pedagogy First! using the Feed Wordpress plugin. The blog site also included the syllabus and all class information. The syllabus detailed textbook readings and activities for each week, focusing on learning pedagogical foundations and experimenting with web tools. Synchronous sessions, focused on various topics and led by class participants, were available but not required. These were designed to focus on one topic, led by an expert facilitator, or engage a more active discussion of that week's topic.

More experienced participants acted as moderators and mentors. Some of these "co-teachers" were enrolled in the class, and were invited to mentor because of their obvious online experience. Other moderators and mentors were from the POT leadership at the founding college, had obtained their certificate the previous year, or were specifically requested to help the class because of their experience and perspective on particular topics. Moderators created a short, introductory video for each week, introducing the readings and tasks for that unit. The introductory videos were embedded in a "sticky" post that always appeared at the top of the aggregated blog. Moderators were also responsible for monitoring the discussions on the many blogs during that one week. Mentors were assigned to assist four or five participants for the entire year, to make sure they had help and prevent isolation in their blogging and working. On-campus mentoring has been shown to be helpful to faculty teaching online for the first time (Hixon, Barczyk, Buckenmeyer, & Feldman, 2011), so the effort was to apply this idea in the online environment. The class was structured into two 12-week semesters, avoiding the busiest times for most academics.

The course structure was organic in that the basic pattern was stable (readings, viewings, reflection and commenting) but the course elements evolved over the year. Weekly emails were sent out as reminders during the first semester, but not the second. Synchronous sessions were more spontaneous than planned, and occurred in several spaces, including Blackboard Collaborate, Google Plus Hangout, and Facebook Hoot. Thus experimentation was a factor not only for those taking the class but also for those facilitating it. A Twitter hashtag (#potcert11) was implemented, and the aggregated blog was continually tweaked, with additions including RSS feeds, maps and tutorials. In the middle of the class, a widget box was added to the main course page showing the top 40 participants (those who had the most posts) and there was some friendly competition. When it became difficult to track blog commenting, Google Reader bundles were created by one of the mentors for both posts and comments, and shared with the class. The mix of more and less experienced participants led to cross-fertilization and a feeling of excitement and dynamism throughout the year.

At the end of the year, participants who fulfilled all class requirements received both a badge they could display on their websites and a printable certificate. The effectiveness of such positive feedback and reinforcement has been noted in the literature (Deci, 1972), and the certificate represented achievement when contextualized within a course that included the ongoing comments on participants' blogs and the encouraging responses from course facilitators. Those earning a certificate were invited to "pay it forward" by mentoring or moderating for the following year.

Results

In terms of the class being a positive learning experience for participants, enabling them to achieve goals they set for themselves, there were some interesting distinctions in responses between the mid-year survey (n=41) and the year-end survey (n=31). The percentage indicating that the class was a

positive learning experience was similar, at 93% and 90%. The expression of overall personal learning goals also did not shift significantly, with "Improvement of my online teaching or training skills" at 61% and 65%, and "Increased familiarity with internet tools for teaching" at 22% and 16%. This indicated that throughout the class most faculty wanted to improve their teaching overall rather than just learn new tools. Few had a top goal of participation in an online community (5% and 13%), although it's notable that this increased at the end of the class. On the year-end survey, participants were asked in an open question the extent to which their personal learning goals were fulfilled. Comments were heavily positive, with many noting achievement in terms of both pedagogy and tools, and the only obstacles having been not being able to contribute enough time to the class. In commenting on whether their objectives changed over the course of the term, most said no, but some indicated they gave up on the certificate, either because of time restrictions or because they became more interested in what they were learning than in getting a certificate.

Our second objective was that the class needed to offer its own pedagogy as a model. In terms of the design of the course itself, the feedback was diverse. The weekly "sticky post", which contained a reminder of the syllabus assignment, commentary from one of the main facilitators, and an introductory video or screencast, was seen as helpful by 87% on the year-end survey. 71% found the media object helpful in itself. Most participants did not miss the weekly emails in the second half of the class, but 32% did miss them. Overall, the design of the class was satisfying. One participant noted:

> I enjoyed all the hands on assignments the most because it made me try out a lot of tools I might otherwise have never tried. I liked the blogs and reading others blogs because I think it was a great way to get ideas and refine my own ideas.

Another wrote:

I enjoyed and looked forward to reading posts from peers. I like to see how they handled the new information, tools, and materials each week. It made me feel like I was not alone in my frustration and joy.

There were also suggestions for improvement, including:

Maybe a couple of optional face to face sessions at the beginning for those who can attend, and even if there are a couple of POT participants [sic] in the same city, encouraging them to meet face to face at least once.

and:

I wouldn't mind seeing more emphasis placed on the weekly postings to each other's blogs. I felt there were a strong group of responders, and then there were many folks who simply did their post for the week, but didn't necessarily engage in replies.

Asked about their feelings in terms of being part of a community, there was a significant increase by the end of the class. On the mid-year survey, only 24% felt strongly part of a community, though 12% felt they would by the end of the class. On the year-end survey, 46% felt strongly that they were part of an online community. Some felt only partly connected and wanted more connection (22% and 23%). Most interestingly, some did not want too much community ("I feel only partly connected to my colleagues in this class and that's fine") – 39% and 26%. The technologies set up to create this community were also subject to examination. In terms of connecting with colleagues, 46% then 39% felt nothing needed changing, but 22% and 19% wanted the establishment of a Google group or forum. A few (7% and 10%) wanted more formal discussions in Facebook. Interestingly, a desire for more commenting on each other's blogs tallied at 24% and 32%, although commenting was an expectation throughout the class. So although blog commenting was intended to form the basis of community, and comments were highly desired by participants, not all participants commented much on other blogs. This challenge was noted by mentors, moderators, and facilitators, who then helped out by commenting more frequently. For some, blog commenting was clearly a new and different

form of discussion.

The Facebook group (which was already the group for the Program for Online Teaching) received mixed reviews as a venue for community. On the mid-year survey, 56% participated in it "some" and 37% not at all by choice. At year-end, 52% indicated the Facebook group was important to either learning or a sense of community, but 23% were neutral and 25% disagreed. This may indicate resistance to the use of Facebook for academic work. Mentoring was also more problematic than anticipated. At mid-year, 53% indicated their mentor was very or somewhat helpful, which rose to 67% at the end of the year. More worrisome were numbers indicating that mentors were not helpful but the participant didn't contact them (22% and 13%) or that participants never knew who their mentor was (24% and 16%), a clear failure of the set-up. A few mentors stopped out of the class without notification, and their participants had to be redistributed. Efforts to create common-ground cohorts (Spanish-speaking, technical education, etc.) were ineffective. Synchronous sessions were not well-planned and tended to attract only the more experienced participants, leading to great depth and meaning in the discussions but narrow participation. On the surveys, there was a shift toward seeing online teaching as its own discipline in the percentages (24% to 35%) but only one person (in terms of numbers) – many continue to see online teaching as just a different mode of delivery.

The most significant areas examined were those where transformative learning could be assessed. Asked the extent to which they had gained confidence in selecting tools to meet their particular needs, 75% in agreement at mid-year rose to 84% at year end. Even better, 94% of participants on the year-end survey agreed that they were ready to build a class around their own pedagogy instead of being led solely by the technology they're using. One participant wrote:

At the beginning I felt hesitant about Online Teaching. After 24 weeks of instruction and

hands-on practice, I feel capable, and competent to deal with the design and management of an

online course.

Another wrote:

Having never taught an online course, I really wanted to learn more about this method of

delivery and all that is involved is the preparation of online or hybrid courses. Were I now

asked to teach one, I feel confident that I could select the best tools for my needs and

organize a successful course after participating in this program.

In terms of the POT Certificate Class course design, 59% (mid-year) and 58% (year-end) said

nothing needed changing – the course design worked for them. One participant commented:

I appreciate all of the support that was given throughout this year, and the flexibility you gave

us in getting our work posted. I fell behind several times due to family illness, etc... and I was

not worried about "flunking out." Keep this flexibility.

Concerning the balance between pedagogy and tool exploration, 17% and 26% said the class would

be better with less tool exploration and more readings and pedagogy in the first semester. Participants

commented that the workload was heavy but it seemed necessary to be able to achieve the course

goals. One participant wrote: I think you all did a great job, I am just limited on time.

The most unhappy comments were invariably from participants whose work and family

responsibilities became priority, and several mentioned taking the class again next year.

Conclusion

The success of the POT Certificate Class indicates that an open online class may be an

appropriate format for advancing the professional development of online college instructors and

others engaged in online teaching. In departing from the typical model of hands-on campus-

based technology training, the class gave faculty and other participants an opportunity to be

online learners themselves, and to experience the resources and communities of the open web. An overarching goal of the class was developing one's own pedagogy, and realizing it through technology tools. Most of these tools existed outside the LMS or other institutionally-sponsored systems, and participants gained experience in using them and in designing their own materials and experiences for students. The extensive end-of-year survey results (available at http:// http://pedagogyfirst.org/wppf/), which indicated broad satisfaction with the course, affirmed participants' confidence in designing class experiences using a foundation of effective teaching rather than predetermined technologies. This approach to teaching online better mirrors the web itself as the new "classroom" for learning, encouraging a broader foundation for online education.

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POT Cert Class Mid-Year Survey

Please complete the mid-year survey so we can improve not only the second half of the class but future classes. Your completion of this survey also means that you agree to be a "research subject" (anonymously, of course) for any papers and presentations created about this class. Thanks!

* Required

So far, this class has been a positive learning experience for me. * Please indicate your level of agreement with this statement.

    Strongly Agree
    Agree
    Neutral
    Disagree
    Strongly Disagree

My overall objective in taking this class can best be expressed as: *

    Improvement of my online teaching or training skills
    Increased familiarity with internet tools for teaching
    Participation in an online community
    Other:

The phrase that best reflects my goal at this point is: *

    I want a POT Online Teaching Certificate
    I want to continue the class but am not interested in a certificate
    I want to learn through the resources posted on the syllabus, but will post only occasionally if at all
    I plan to participate in the community the Facebook group instead of blogging and commenting
    I plan only to comment on other people's blogs

I plan to earn a certificate to *

    fulfill my own expectations
    use for gaining or advancing employment
    I do not plan to earn a certificate
    Other:

I have participated in the class at the following level this semester (or will have by February 1) *

    Fulfilled all requirements as listed on the syllabus
    Fulfilled requirements, but adapted them to my needs
    Did not keep up, but will post makeup work to complete first semester of work
    Started but ended participation due to personal or professional conflicts
    Never really got going due to personal or professional conflicts

For spring semester, I plan to *

    fulfill all requirements to receive a certificate
    fulfill my own learning goals by participating in the portions of interest to me
    participate periodically as personal and professional commitments allow
    not participate.

In terms of feeling part of a community and learning from others *
    I feel strongly part of a community now
    I think I will feel part of a community by the end of the class
    I feel only partly connected to my colleagues in this class and would prefer a stronger connection
    I feel only partly connected to my colleagues in this class and that's fine
    I have no interest in being part of the online teaching community

I found the weekly "sticky" post at the top of the Pedagogy First! site to be helpful. * Please indicate
        your level of agreement with this statement.
    Strongly agree
    Agree
    Neutral
    Disagree
    Strongly disagree

I found the weekly email to be helpful. * Please indicate your level of agreement with this statement.
    Strongly agree
    Agree
    Neutral
    Disagree
    Strongly disagree

I participated in the Facebook group *
    not at all by choice
    not at all because I didn't know it was there
    some
    a lot

In terms of connecting with colleagues, I would like to see *
    nothing changed
    the establishment of a Google group or other formal place for discussion
    more formal discussions in the Facebook group
    more emphasis on commenting on each other's blogs

My mentor has been *
    very helpful
    somewhat helpful
    not helpful, and I didn't contact him/her
    not helpful
    I don't know who my mentor is

Having participated in the first half of the class, I would define online teaching as *
    A subset of teaching, which uses the same skills
    A different mode of delivery
    A separate discipline of study
    Other:

Concerning the selection of tools for online teaching, I have gained confidence in selecting these
tools for my particular needs. * Please indicate your level of agreement with this statement.
Strongly Agree
Agree
Neutral
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

I feel that I am ready to build a class around my own pedagogy instead of being led solely by the
technology I'm using. * Please indicate your level of agreement with this statement.
Strongly Agree
Agree
Neutral
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

It would have been better if the design of this class during the first semester (select all that apply) *
was just like it was - this design worked for me
had fewer readings and more tool exploration in the first semester
had less tool exploration and more readings in the first semester
had less work overall
had more challenging tasks
Other:

What did you enjoy most about the first semester? *

What would have made the first semester a better learning experience for you? *

Appendix B: End-of-year Survey

POT Cert Class Ending Survey

Please complete this survey so we can improve future classes. Your completion of this survey also
   means that you agree to be a "research subject" (anonymously, of course) for any papers and
   presentations created about this class. Thanks!
* Required

Please indicate your area of teaching or study *
   college instruction
   training for adults
   K-12
   other business related
   self-improvement
   Other:

This class has been a positive learning experience for me. * Please indicate your level of agreement
   with this statement.
   Strongly Agree
   Agree
   Neutral
   Disagree
   Strongly Disagree

My overall personal learning goal in taking this class can best be expressed as: * Please indicate your
   view.
   Improvement of my online teaching or training skills
   Increased familiarity with internet tools for teaching
   Participation in an online community
   Other

Were your personal learning goals satisfied as a result of your participation in this class? Please
   explain. *

At the beginning of the class, what was your primary objective in participating in the class? *
   Earning a POT Online Teaching Certificate
   Taking the class without interest in a certificate
   Learning through the resources posted on the syllabus, but posting only occasionally if at all
   Participation in the community the Facebook group instead of blogging and commenting
   Commenting on other people's blogs
   Other:

Did this objective change as you participated in the class? Please explain. *

At what level have you participated in the class? *
   Fulfilled all requirements as listed on the syllabus
   Fulfilled requirements, but adapted them to my needs
   Did not keep up, but learned anyway

Started but ended participation due to personal or professional conflicts
Never really got going due to personal or professional conflicts
Other:

I found the weekly "sticky" post at the top of the Pedagogy First! site to be helpful. * Please indicate
      your level of agreement with this statement.
Strongly agree
Agree
Neutral
Disagree
Strongly disagree

I found the video embedded in the sticky post at the top of the Pedagogy First! site to be helpful. *
      Please indicate your level of agreement with this statement.
Strongly agree
Agree
Neutral
Disagree
Strongly disagree

I missed the weekly emails in the second half of the class. * Please indicate your level of agreement
      with this statement.
Strongly agree
Agree
Neutral
Disagree
Strongly disagree
Other:

In terms of feeling part of a community and learning from others, how did you feel? *
I felt strongly part of a community
I felt only partly connected to my colleagues and wanted more
I felt only partly connected to my colleagues in this class and that was fine
I had no interest in being part of the online teaching community
Other:

Did you attend the synchronous sessions? *
Yes, frequently
Yes, occasionally
Yes, once
No

If you attended only once or did not attend the synchronous sessions, please tell us why? *

The Facebook group was important in my learning or sense of community for this class * Please
      indicate your level of agreement with this statement.
Strongly agree
Agree

Neutral
Disagree
Strongly disagree

In terms of connecting with colleagues, I would have liked: *
nothing changed
the establishment of a Google group or other formal place for discussion
more formal discussions in the Facebook group
more emphasis on commenting on each other's blogs

My mentor was *
very helpful
somewhat helpful
not helpful, and I didn't contact him/her
not helpful
I never knew who my mentor was

Having completed the class, I would define online teaching as *
A subset of teaching, which uses the same skills
A different mode of delivery
A separate discipline of study
Other:

Concerning the selection of tools for online teaching, I have gained confidence in selecting these
tools for my particular needs. * Please indicate your level of agreement with this statement.
Strongly agree
Agree
Neutral
Disagree
Strongly disagree

I feel that I am ready to build a class around my own pedagogy instead of being led solely by the
technology I'm using. * Please indicate your level of agreement with this statement.
Strongly Agree
Agree
Neutral
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

It would have been better if the design of this class (select all that apply) *
- was just like it was - this design worked for me
- had fewer readings and more tool exploration in the first semester
- had less tool exploration and more readings/pedagogy in the first semester
- had less work overall
- had more challenging tasks
Other:

Next year, beginning September 1, we will be asking former participants to assist in the class to "pay it forward". Which tasks might you be willing to commit to for 2012-13? (Please check all that apply) *
 - creating a video for one week and moderating discussion for that week
 - serving as a mentor to a few people throughout the class
 - becoming becoming part of the organizing team for the whole class (involves summer participation)
 - writing introductory posts that summarize the previous week's activity
 - hosting or organizing synchronous sessions
 - being a floating advisor, called on when needed
 Other:

What did you enjoy most about this class? *

What would have made this class a better learning experience for you? *

What other comments do you have that could help us make this a better class in future? *