EDTHENA – Creating a Community of Reflective Teachers

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Introduction/Need for Innovation or Idea

While student teaching is an experience that is meant to be pivotal in terms of its pedagogic value, it has been noted that some experiences can also be *miseducative* (Dewey, 1938). At Oklahoma State University, each pre-service teacher is placed in the best program for his or her particular needs. Currently, the average, round-trip commute per student teacher visit is approximately six hours or 300 miles. Given that the Oklahoma State University teacher preparation program yields an average of 35 secondary educators each year and is limited in its number of teacher educating faculty members, each student teacher is only visited twice over the course of their 16-week experience. As such, pre-service teachers are limited in the quantity and quality of feedback they receive while student teaching. A need, therefore, existed to increase the frequency and caliber of feedback provided to pre-service teachers during their student teaching experience.

Some researchers (Kolb, Kolb, Passarelli, & Sharma, 2014) have suggested that assuming a coaching role can better facilitate constructive feedback. Consequently, many pre-service teachers and teacher educators may ask: How can we assume this role? Oklahoma State University has attempted to answer this challenge by adopting EDTHENA, a web-based platform that allows pre-service teachers to upload video recordings of their instructional practices for reflection, support, and peer and instructor feedback.

How it Works/Methodology/Program Phases/Steps

EDTHENA works to help student teachers analyze their instructional practices through the use of classroom video and online communities of practice. To begin, a student teacher records one of their lessons using any video capable device and uploads the video using the EDTHENA Video Tool. At this point, the student teacher may add descriptive information to the video and attach supplementary files, such as lesson plans, assessments, and visuals. The video is then posted to the student teacher's EDTHENA profile and shared with the student teaching instructors and cohort. To target and highlight specific instructional skills, instructors may create and assign *Explorations*. Additionally, groups are formed among the student teaching cohort in order to facilitate peer and instructor feedback on *Explorations*. Feedback may be tagged and provided in the form of questions, suggestions, strengths, or notes. Through the implementation of EDTHENA, instructors are better able to facilitate pre-service teachers' mastery of key teaching methods and classroom management strategies from afar.

One of the explorations utilized in a teaching methods course required that students complete the following:

1. Upload an 8-minute section of video highlighting effective questioning during the problem-solving microteaching session.
2. Upload the accompanying lesson plan as an artifact of the lesson.
3. Provide at least five elements of feedback on your personal video.
4. View the teaching video of two assigned classmates, and provide at least five elements of feedback related to questioning strategies.

5. Assess your own video using the teaching skills rubric embedded in the exploration.
6. Complete an overall reflection of the selected video and demonstration of effective questioning.
7. Submit the exploration to your coach for feedback and assessment.

Results to Date/Implications

Currently, 42 Oklahoma State University pre-service teachers are utilizing EDTHENA for purposes of instructional reflection and improvement. In only three months, these students have collectively uploaded and shared more than 100 videos. In total, these videos have facilitated over 500 instances of peer feedback and more than 100 instances of instructor feedback. Additionally, in reviewing and reflecting on their own instructional practices, teacher candidates have provided approximately 500 accounts of self-reflecting commentary.

Future Plans/Advice to Others

Oklahoma State University plans to continue utilizing EDTHENA to increase the quantity and quality of teaching feedback opportunities. Ideally, this technology will be integrated into additional agricultural education courses to provide more opportunities for exposure to instructional feedback and reflection. In the upcoming Spring semester, Oklahoma State University aims to use EDTHENA to include cooperating teachers more fully in the education of student teachers by including them in the online feedback process. Oklahoma State University strongly encourages the use of EDTHENA to other universities seeking to increase instructional feedback and efficacy among student teachers. A solid understanding of the program and a clear plan for implementation are highly recommended in order to maximize the efficiency of EDTHENA. One primary recommendation is to realize that EDTHENA is based on the assessment of teaching skills and behaviors rather than the assessment of an entire lesson. This paradigm shift required minor revisions to the objectives and schedule of the course, but brought about very powerful assessment and coaching opportunities. EDTHENA encourages each institution to provide a list of skills or competencies that are uploaded to the platform to facilitate feedback and assessment unique to the institution.

Costs/Resources Needed

In making EDTHENA a course requirement, students are now expected to purchase a subscription in order to satisfy this expectation. As student teaching already had a laboratory fee in place, incorporation of this expense into the preexisting course fee was relatively simple. EDTHENA does not publish a general cost or rate, but would rather work with each institution to create a custom price based on the program needs. As a policy, they discourage any publishing of specific prices, and as such, we complied with that request. EDTHENA shared that the cost per student is close to that of a standard textbook for a college course. A license is purchased for each student that can span one full year or a semester. The teacher education program must also have a means to record standard video, a means to store and transfer those video files to students, and an internet connection that supports the streaming capability of the EDTHENA platform. An iPhone application is currently in development that would allow recording from a personal device directly into the EDTHENA system eliminating the need for file transfer.

References

Dewey, J. (1938). *Education and experience*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.

Kolb, A. Y., Kolb, D. A., Passarelli, A., & Sharma, G. (2014). On becoming an experiential educator: The educator role profile. *Simulation & Gaming, 45*(2), 204-234. doi:10.1177/1046878114534383