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Leadership and Its Ripple Effect on Research

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Introduction

In this chapter we would like to address the impact visionary leadership can have on a field of research. Through forward-looking ideas and projects, an organizational leader's influence on those who test, research, and inquire into issues that build and deepen the knowledge base in second language acquisition and foreign language education is illustrated through an innovative professional development program that was developed during Helene Zimmer-Loew's tenure as executive director of the American Association of Teachers of German (AATG). The ripple effect of progressive leadership that inspires others to contribute actively to the well-being of a profession, or an organization, can be felt far and wide. The research studies described below provide substantial evidence of the powerful impact of an organization's forward-thinking leadership on classroom instruction and student learning.

"Going the Distance": GOLDEN

In the early 1990s, when standards were first being developed in the language profession, it became clear that in order for professional standards to reach the classroom level, professional development opportunities addressing and modeling the principles promulgated in these standards would have to be created. In collaboration with the Goethe-Institut/InterNationes, critical topics were selected for professional development for teachers of German in the United States. The AATG and the Goethe-Institut New York selected a team of experts in the field to begin the process of developing the curriculum and determining how it would be delivered. Digital technology

and the Internet were beginning to emerge at this time and offered the promise that professional development could be made much more accessible to teachers. Funding was received through the German Program for Transatlantic Encounters (Transatlantic Program), financed from the European Recovery Plan (ERP) funds provided by the Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology to develop the content of the selected online distance modules created by language experts associated with the Goethe-Institut/InterNationes. As chair of this project, dubbed "Going the Distance," it became clear to Aleidine J. Moeller that online professional development for teachers had to present content using pedagogically sound strategies and tasks that engaged participants (German educators) in actively constructing knowledge and building skills, while also offering the opportunity to integrate them into the German classroom.

The team that created the initial storyboard for the online modules consisted of Kathy Corl (Ohio State University), a German content specialist; Moeller, a foreign language teacher education professor at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL); and Stephen K. Panarelli (UNL), a technologist. All spoke their own specialized language and it was soon apparent that designing a distance education course, and negotiating German content, language pedagogy, and online delivery, would be a very complex and challenging task. A dissertation emerged from this project that explored the dynamics of the author team through an in-depth qualitative case study.[1] This study provided guidelines for working collaboratively in online course development, explored the affective aspects of teamwork, and identified the challenges of working across institutions of higher education and professional organizations. This dissertation provided important feedback to designers of distance courses and highlighted lessons learned to improve the development process.

The need for professional development combining German language and culture with language pedagogy was growing, as school districts were requiring graduate work in content areas rather than in education. An online master of arts degree in German Language Pedagogy emerged at UNL in the late 1990s to meet the needs of German teachers across the United States. The MA program was termed German Online Distance Education Network (GOLDEN), a degree program that, at present, has thirty-five teachers of German enrolled. The platform for development of the online courses was created by UNL's technology specialist and soon had to be adapted to Blackboard (Bb) to meet university requirements for course delivery. All courses were reconceptualized and updated, placed on Bb, and offered as graduate courses. GOLDEN faculty continue to develop additional courses through external funding in the areas of technologyenhanced language learning (GOLDEN Web 2.0): Kinder-Jugendliteratur (children's and adolescent literature); Deutsche Kulturgeschichte (German cultural history); Writing

in the German Language Classroom; Instructional Planning; Assessment in the German Language Classroom; and, now under development, Digital Storytelling. This unique program offers teachers in the field further professional development in German language and culture and language pedagogy, while using research-informed practices designed to be immediately integrated into their German language classrooms. The impact of these professional development courses on the teachers who participated, and the learning of their students, is an example of the ripple effect of Zimmer-Loew's visionary leadership.

In 2005, Ekaterina Koubek and Moeller published a multiple case study examining how teachers enrolled in a GOLDEN online instructional planning course constructed knowledge and used that knowledge to transform their teaching, beliefs, and sense of selves as professionals.[2] Extensive multiple-data sources, including open-ended interviews, online observations, e-mails, participant narratives, and course documents and artifacts, were triangulated to reveal various categories and themes. Time-series analysis was used to trace patterns of change over time.[3]

The course created opportunities for learning that promoted and challenged participants to examine and reconsider their own teaching practices and beliefs. Participants used their own classrooms as "learning laboratories" to implement concepts learned in the course. It was evident that teachers succeeded in translating theory into practice. The study found that

1. deep learning occurred that caused participants to revisit their beliefs and practices;

2. participants were able to describe their instructional practices using appropriate theoretical/pedagogical language;

3. all participants grew by varying degrees in their understanding of their work and their students;

4. although the course was demanding and time-consuming, participants described it as meaningful, substantive, useful, and impacting; and

5. the online format was found to be a useful venue for professional development.

Findings gleaned from this study informed the development of subsequent courses designed for the GOLDEN MA program, including GOLDEN Web 2.0.

Three additional studies—one mixed-methods study incorporating both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, and two qualitative case studies—were conducted to explore the impact of the GOLDEN Web 2.0 course on teacher beliefs, teaching practices, and the integration of technology.

The focus of the online course was to increase the participants' knowledge in the use and application of Web 2.0 technologies, improve their pedagogy and content knowledge in German language and culture, and create educators who could later serve as teacher trainers in their schools, districts, and professional organizations. These studies fill important gaps in the research regarding:

1. the impact of an online professional development program;

2. how teacher practitioners learn to use and integrate Web 2.0 technologies in the foreign language classroom;

3. the unexpected consequences of participation in the GOLDEN Web 2.0 online course; and

4. the impact this course had on German teachers' content knowledge, pedagogy skills, and technology integration.

Professional Development

Since the greatest factor affecting a student's achievement is the influence of his or her teacher,[4] and because the effect teachers have on student achievement depends in part upon meaningful professional development experiences,[5] it is imperative that these experiences be as effective as possible in connecting new knowledge to respective content areas and in integrating best pedagogical practices in authentic and meaningful ways. When professional development offers active learning opportunities and teachers are not passive "recipients" of information, the effect on teachers' instruction increases.[6] Professional development that models best practices can foster sustained changes in teachers' educational technology knowledge, ability to design and implement technology-supported experiences for students, and beliefs about teaching and learning with technology.[7]

Integrating technologies such as Web 2.0 into teaching requires technical skills, as well as adequate pedagogical foundations. Teachers need to acquire the essential skills through proper instruction and practice.[8] Mark Warschauer identifies the need to train a sufficient "body of teachers with the knowledge, skills, and attitude for innovatively designing, adapting, and applying technology in the classroom."[9] Research has shown that many K–12 teachers use technology in a pedagogically unsophisticated way,[10] and that this unproductive use of technology is due in part to the ineffectual training teachers receive in this area.[11] Part of the problem regarding technology integration and inadequate professional development is the inclination to view technology as a tool while failing to consider how it is used from a

pedagogical and content perspective. Many professional development programs are short-term and focus mainly on technical skills as opposed to the application of technology to classroom practice.[12] Furthermore, many scholars agree that this type of technology training will not produce the understanding that can support teachers in becoming effective users of technology in the classroom.[13]

Mishra and Koehler note that knowledge of technology is typically considered separate from knowledge of pedagogy and content.[14] Yet interactions between and among content, pedagogy, and technology are essential for developing good teaching, providing an understanding of the representation of concepts using technologies, and learning how to implement pedagogical strategies that use technologies in effective ways to teach content. Mishra and Koehler have captured these features in a theoretical framework for teacher knowledge dubbed TPACK (Technology, Pedagogy, and Content Knowledge) that integrates technology, pedagogy, and content. [15] This framework served as the theoretical lens for the development of the course entitled GOLDEN Web 2.0, which is the focus of the three studies presented here.

Research Studies on GOLDEN Web 2.0

All three studies are rigorous inquiries into the impact of this unique professional development project on the field of German, specifically the impact on the teachers and their students. These studies have contributed to a better understanding of effective professional development models that influence instruction and learning at the classroom level.

Study 1: Qualitative Intrinsic Case Study

The first study, a qualitative intrinsic case study, focused on the fourteen participating teachers' experiences with Web 2.0 technologies and their integration into the German language classroom, and addressed a gap in the research regarding how foreign language teachers learn to use and integrate Web 2.0 technologies into instruction.[16] Unstructured, open-ended interviews were conducted, audiotaped, and transcribed verbatim. Data were analyzed and coded using MAXQDA software, and codes were collapsed into themes resulting in a table of themes, codes, and passages from the interviews. Methodological triangulation of numerous data sources was used to verify the findings in addition to member checking.[17]

The following four themes emerged from these data:

1. A Hands-on Experience: *We are placed in the role of learners.*

2. Technology, Pedagogy, and Content: *It just seems so natural.*

3. Discussing Pedagogy: *Experiencing technology as a student and talking about it as a teacher.*

4. Technology Integration: *If I can do this, my students can do this.*

These four themes capture the essence of how the German teachers described their experiences in the course. The teachers appreciated the opportunity to learn about new technologies by creating learning products in the same way that their students would, as this gave them a deep understanding of the processes and challenges that might emerge when integrating a new technology tool.[18] One participant noted, "Because I went through it as a student it better helps me to prepare my lesson and anticipate areas that my students might not understand or struggle [with], so it does not become a lesson about the technology tool." The participants found the TPACK framework particularly relevant; as one stated: "It's all three that are interwoven, so it just seems so natural." Some compared this applied-technology learning to conferences they attended, with one putting it this way: "In this course we have to use the technology and make something; in seminars you go there and hear about it." The ability to create technology products and integrate them into the German classroom caused teachers to reflect, "How does this work? What did I learn? What was my thought process?" An important part of the course was the discussion that followed the creation of the products and the application of the technology tool in the classroom. "You are forced to reflect, and I think that's an area that I neglect; as a professional I don't have time to reflect, so the discussion thread forces that piece of pedagogy," noted one of the participants. Several stated that the discussion board served as a motivator to take a risk and integrate the new technologies into their classes: "Seeing that other people in the course were doing it in their classes made me decide to do it. This was an unexpected form of motivation, a kind of secret competition. … They are using it, I am gonna use it too!"

The GOLDEN Web 2.0 course helped teachers integrate the technology into their own classrooms: one commented that "I know how to do this now, so I feel more comfortable asking my students to do it." Teachers gained skills and motivation to implement technology by working through different projects that resulted in further exploration of how to integrate additional tools into their classrooms; one expressed this as follows: "It's so cool for me because this is the first class where I am literally taking what I learned in the class and doing it immediately in my own classroom." Another participant proclaimed: "[My students'] excitement is contagious. When you realize you've done something that just turns them on to do the projects, you know everything is worth it."

The benefits of using Web 2.0 tools in the German classroom were clearly recognized by the participants. Most valued was the hands-on approach of the course as they actively experimented with the technology in the role of a learner and then implemented these tools in their classrooms. Participants described reflection and dialogue via the discussion board as the main pedagogical piece of the course that promoted deeper processing of information. The course also aimed to practice and promote German language proficiency as the participants relished the opportunity to use the target language in an authentic and meaningful context as they communicated with the instructor and peers. This did, however, result in mixed views regarding the use of German as the sole language of communication in the course. Some participants expressed concern about language accuracy and a lack of vocabulary to communicate more complex thoughts. This provided a useful "teachable moment" to examine how their own learners may feel about using only the second language (L2) in the foreign language classroom, and to provide strategies to address this anxiety and discuss the role of error correction.

Study 2: Embedded Mixed-Methods Case Study

The second study was conducted by Ricardo Varguez. In this embedded mixed-methods case study, Varguez followed all fourteen GOLDEN Web 2.0 teacher participants (all nonnative speakers of German) over one year and described their experiences and changes in technology, pedagogy, and content knowledge (TPACK) at the course's onset, during it, and at its end. The purpose of this study was to describe and understand the experiences of these teachers within an online course.

The quantitative portion of the study included results from an online survey administered at the onset and completion of the course. Teachers were asked to rate themselves in relationship to their TPACK expertise. An analysis of data conducted using a matched-pairs statistical design revealed significant positive changes from the pre- to the posttest. A survey conducted one year later showed that the positive changes tended to remain, and in some cases improved.

The qualitative portion of the study consisted of open-ended questions at the course's beginning, during it, and at its completion and a thorough analysis of the postings that participants submitted on the discussion board provided within the online course, as well as interviews with a sampling of participants. All interviews were conducted one year after completion of the course and were transcribed, coded, and grouped by themes. Themes that emerged included Sense of Accomplishment, Leadership, Realization, Student-Centered Instruction, and Problem Solving.

The qualitative data collection examined the experiences that the participants had as a result of their participation in the online course at different stages, while the survey data provided information on the changes that participants experienced in areas related to pedagogy, technology, and content knowledge at different stages. A convergence of these two data sets allowed the researchers to gain a deeper understanding of how this professional development course impacted teacher participants' TPACK.

Findings of this study confirmed some of the same experiences expressed by participants in a study by Carolina Bustamante and Moeller,[19] but went beyond it by interviewing participants one year after completion of the course. Furthermore, the precourse and postcourse surveys allowed the researcher to discern the level of impact on the participants' technology integration, increase in content knowledge of German language and culture, and pedagogical skills as a result of the participation in the GOLDEN Web 2.0 course.

The struggles most often cited by participants early on in the course were frustrations regarding slow bandwidth at their schools, firewalls, and a lack of time to be as creative as they would have liked in generating their products. During the course, the participants described the online professional development as providing satisfaction, pride, and motivation as they gained experience and confidence in using the technology tools and applying them to teaching German. They began to find ways to overcome the initial frustrations expressed at the onset of the course. As teachers created products and implemented technology in their classrooms, the reaction of their students fueled their motivation and propelled them to take greater risks and seek additional ways to use the Web 2.0 applications they had learned about during the course.

At the end of the course, teachers expressed a strong sense of confidence, and one year after completion of the course, the quantitative and qualitative data indicated significant growth in technology use, pedagogical skills, and German language content knowledge. Attaining the expected technology, pedagogy, and content knowledge goals in the Web 2.0 professional development course based on the TPACK model was pivotal, but other unexpected consequences that occurred unrelated to those three stated goals were notable as well. The impact this professional development had on the teacher participants' identities and changing roles in their schools and school districts was also worthy of inquiry.

Study 3: Qualitative Case Study

Sheri Hurlbut explored these unexpected consequences that teacher participants experienced as a result of the GOLDEN Web 2.0 course in a separate qualitative case study.[20] Consequences in the context of this study were

defined as unexpected when they were not directly related to technology, pedagogy, or content knowledge or when the degree of importance participants placed on the consequence was particularly high. These consequences were examined by accessing multiple sources of data, including discussion boards, self-reflections, interview transcripts, and classroom observations. Using qualitative research methods, the GOLDEN Web 2.0 course was analyzed for evidence of these unexpected consequences and the following themes emerged: Professional Support System, Emergence of Teacher Leaders, Teacher Motivation, Confidence, Teacher as Learner, and Student Recruitment and Retention. Each of these themes will be explored in detail.

Professional Support System—I'm Not Alone!

German teachers are typically lone wolves in their school buildings and are often the only German teacher in the entire school district. They feel physically and professionally cut off from peers because they are without a professional support system. "As a German teacher in this part of the world, I am quite isolated," lamented one participant who teaches in a rural area. "I'm tired of having curriculum meetings of one!" When German teachers do participate in professional development courses, it is often as the only "German" present. GOLDEN Web 2.0 offered German teachers the prospect of a professional development course just for them, and they relished the opportunity. One wrote, "While I have always appreciated the input of my colleagues, regardless of language, the prospect of collaborating with [just] German teachers … filled my soul with excitement." For another, "One of the biggest advantages of this course was the discussion board that gave me the opportunity to share my ideas … and to get ideas from others." The social construction of knowledge that occurred there, said one participant, was "phenomenal." Participants exchanged tips and tricks, served as examples for one another, provided answers to problems, and functioned as pedagogical advisers. The sharing continued in the form of a professional support system that thrived well beyond GOLDEN Web 2.0. Now, one participant wrote, "I have an expanded network of professionals to contact [for] help or fresh ideas." This expanded network of professionals played an important role in the emergence of teacher leaders, the second theme identified in the study.

Emergence of Teacher Leaders—I'm Now the "Go-To" Person!

The course participants' enthusiasm for technology generated by the GOLDEN Web 2.0 course quickly began rippling out to others in their professional spheres, and the course participants emerged as teacher leaders. Manifestations of their leadership took many forms, ranging from informal

encounters all the way to organized in-service training sessions and conference presentations. Based on informal encounters, for example, other members of the world languages faculty started using Web 2.0 with their students, and in place of traditional PowerPoints, dynamic presentations created by the Web 2.0 application Prezi started popping up in English, math, and science classes. One principal asked a teacher participant to do an in-service about Prezi for his entire faculty after observing her German students using the application in class. In fact, he even used Prezi himself at a county principals' meeting soon thereafter. Numerous conference sessions, in-services, and workshops on Web 2.0 were presented by course participants at state and regional conferences, which enhanced their professional identity, improved their self-efficacy, and further nudged them into leadership roles.

Throughout the semester, teacher participants began to be seen as experts by their peers, who sought them out for advice and inspiration. They became the "go-to" people in the building for tech help. Because of this additional contact with colleagues, current professional relationships were deepened. One participant related: "As one of the oldest teachers on staff, I was proud to be able to introduce the younger, tech-savvy teachers to some new applications." New relationships were also fostered. One teacher developed a close relationship with a colleague in her building she had not previously met by sharing lessons learned in the Web 2.0 class.

Teacher Motivation—It's a Long Time Till Retirement!

The GOLDEN Web 2.0 course provided the motivational spark some participants were looking for to make a change. The course "lifted me out of the fog," reported one participant. It forced teachers to reevaluate what they were currently doing and to think about adding new approaches. Teachers have a desire to make progress every year but are not always sure how to go about it. GOLDEN Web 2.0 offered help by suggesting specific alternatives and by demonstrating through concrete examples how familiar applications might be used differently. One participant was honest when stating: "A couple of solutions that this course has encouraged me to finally use are LinguaFolio[21] and Google Sites."

One participant was motivated to incorporate more new technology into one semester than she had in all previous years: "I'd used that same textbook series for so long, I knew it backwards and forwards. I kept thinking, 'Oh, I've got to do something different.'" By using technology to make lessons more interesting to themselves and their students, teachers saw a change in their classroom environments: "It was the best thing to happen because those kids are so easy to teach for me now. It's barely a job, because I don't really have to get onto them about anything."

Confidence—Mensch, bin ich aber cool! (Man, am I cool!)

All GOLDEN Web 2.0 teacher participants grew in confidence over the course of the semester. The journey was not always easy for some, but usually the "setbacks and outright failures" inspired them to work even harder. In the beginning, some were worried that other course participants had more background knowledge in technology than they did. One participant recalled: "I remember being so jealous of some of those participants who could put together something in no time and it took me probably five or six hours." As the weeks passed, confidence began to build. "When you feel a little more confident … you can let go and not be so worried about it," wrote one participant. "It's getting easier with time, that's for sure."

Teacher participants learned not to fear technology when working with students and other professional colleagues. One of them shared: "I do not hold the secret to making everything work perfectly each time technology is used; however, I am not afraid." Eventually, pride replaced trepidation, and at the completion of each project they were proud of what they had accomplished and felt good about the process. In her final reflection, one participant wrote: "The project I am most proud of is my e-portfolio."

Because of increased confidence with technology, one participant even felt better about her teaching as a whole. She felt that a lack of confidence with technology had caused her to remain rigid in her teaching style as a way to maintain control, but by gaining in confidence she concluded: "It has made me a better teacher, so I hope that that trend continues. … You know it's just that matter of confidence, and knowing you can do it."

Teacher as Learner—I've Made the Paradigm Shift!

Teachers as learners discovered firsthand that the best way to understand their students was to walk a mile in their shoes. They had to wear (at least) two hats during the GOLDEN Web 2.0 course, by day their teacher hat and by night their student one. In so doing, they gained a greater appreciation for what their students go through on a daily basis, both positive and negative. Being put in the role of the learner helped one participant "sympathize with students when we ask them to read things that don't appeal to them." In opening her first graded Web 2.0 assessment rubric, one teacher participant wrote, "Imagine my delight and surprise, albeit tempered with trepidation, [when I received feedback that] provided confirmation to me about my progress through this class and I had forgotten to give that same insight to my students." Empathizing with student frustration and time demands was a common theme: "The first time that I would work with something would be the most frustrating, because it just seemed to take me forever."

But teachers experienced the positive emotions students go through, too, like the pride they feel after finishing an especially wellmade product.

Product-based assignments were the norm in GOLDEN Web 2.0: "Through our assignments and discussions, I was inspired to try out some new things … this year that I certainly would not have otherwise even thought of." This "trying out" ahead of time in their role of teacher as learner gave them the ability to overcome technical difficulties and catch errors in assignments before "letting the students loose." They were "more equipped to help the students find success" once they had struggled with a problem themselves.

Many participants described experiencing a "paradigm shift" at some point along their GOLDEN Web 2.0 journey as a result of being put in the role of the learner. They considered themselves more likely to take a risk. Although sometimes difficult, they felt taking a risk was warranted because they could see that adapting to the 2.0 world resulted "in stronger student participation and overall performance." Before, teachers were in the habit of using technology to *deliver* information to students, but they did not allow students to *create* the technology products themselves. After one participant's students had created a wiki using Google Sites, she journaled: "The biggest change in philosophy through the course of the semester has been that students should be the main users of technology instead of me." Not all of the "paradigm shifts" were earthshaking, but some were profound: "In the last 14 weeks my virtual world has expanded to the point that I actually look for ways to integrate technology into my classes on a daily basis." Some felt this daily integration of technology could be the key to the future of German education, because in many parts of the country, German is "dying out a little bit."

Student Recruitment and Retention—In German, We Try Harder!

As German programs in high schools and universities were at that time (and still are) facing elimination, one participant discovered that technology could be used as a student recruitment and retention tool to help counteract the trend. She wrote that "with the Web 2.0 class I was able to spark my teaching and therefore increase my enrollment." In one semester, her German 1 enrollment climbed from 25 to 40 in a small school with only 100 students in the entire ninth-grade class. Because German is an elective, teachers feel they need to offer something special in order to keep interest in the German program high. One teacher overheard a German student showing a non-German student how to use Google Docs. "This is so cool! Where did you learn to do that?" the non-German student asked. The teacher was so proud when her student answered, "Oh, it's something we do all the time in German. We do the coolest things! Too bad you took Spanish!" In German, teachers felt they had to try harder than those in other languages, especially Spanish, in

order to recruit and retain students. One way the GOLDEN Web 2.0 teacher participants found to compete was to teach technology skills, because they felt technology motivated students to learn and stay in German.

Hurlbut's study is particularly of interest as it reveals the continual ripple effect of innovative and meaningful professional development and captures fully the impact leadership, in this case the GOLDEN development team, has on subsequent generations of teachers and learners. As a German teacher, to be professionally isolated can mean feeling unsure, insecure, and stagnant. The development of a professional support system can help overcome this isolation, but it is not enough to interact with teachers who are outside one's area of specialization. The impact is much more powerful when one is supported by peers in one's own subject area. Having the chance to interact via online discussion boards facilitated the exchange of concrete, subject-specific ideas that led to meaningful changes in curriculum. A professional support system also provided important moral and emotional support when problems arose. This finding supports the conclusion of Mark Windschitl and Kurt Sahl that "professional isolation and minimal preparation time during the school day virtually assure that teachers will not make fundamental advances in their instruction or experiment with technology."[22]

Teachers need new ideas, strategies, and activities to engage learners and to sustain motivation and momentum. Participating in professional development courses that provide practical, classroom-ready technology solutions relevant to their unique subject areas motivates them with new tools to once again create dynamic lessons for their learners. The enthusiasm they see in fellow course participants and in their own students energizes and motivates them to stay positive and keep things fresh. By being exposed to new applications, they become less risk-averse and more optimistic about the future. A teacher's attitude has a significant impact on students, and motivation plays an important role in keeping a positive attitude. Teachers who are seen as enthusiastic and expressive are considered more effective. [23] "Teaching is not merely an intellectual matter. One cannot teach a subject without projecting some kind of attitude and feeling toward it to students."[24]

Teachers with an enthusiastic attitude become teacher leaders in their professional communities and their enthusiasm becomes contagious. When others see the spark in their eyes, they are curious and want to know more. As teacher leaders share their new knowledge with others, it begins to spread like ripples on a pond; first to others in their own departments and eventually expanding to individuals beyond their schools' walls. Empowered teacher leaders spearhead efforts to bring about change through committee work and other types of political involvement. This supports the findings of Walter Allan and colleagues, who found that teacher leaders emerge based upon involvement in TPACK-based training programs.[25]

Teachers as learners experience learning from the students' perspective. As a result, they develop empathy, appreciate the importance of choice, and are able to design more carefully scaffolded lessons that avoid potential problems students may have. Through firsthand experience, they gain confidence that transforms them into self-assured practitioners. With confidence comes a certain amount of flexibility and a willingness to relinquish control, thereby allowing the classroom to become more student-centered. Self-confidence, adapting to student needs, and having a genuine respect for students are three of the important characteristics of effective teachers as reported by Young and Shaw, all of which were manifested by our GOLDEN Web 2.0 participants.[26]

With German enrollments and programs being vulnerable in today's world, GOLDEN Web 2.0 participants see the motivational potential technology has to boost their recruitment and enrollment efforts. According to Robert Gardner, student motivation is the most influential factor in learning a new language; if teachers can increase motivation through the use of technology, they will be able to produce more successful language learners.[27]

This study revealed that developing a strong professional support system that encourages the formation of teacher leaders, placing teachers in the role of learner so that they develop confidence in their abilities through doing, and increasing teacher motivation by providing a stimulating yet practical learning environment are all factors that enhance the efficacy of the professional development experience. A resulting paradigm shift occurs in teachers involved in such an experience that allows them to look at the incorporation of technology differently. A by-product of this paradigm shift is increased German student recruitment and retention in response to the increase in technology use.

Conclusion

No one could have imagined that what began more than twenty years ago as a desire to educate teachers about standards-based instruction in the foreign language classroom would lead to changing the very nature of the delivery of professional development, and, most recently, the way teachers use technology in the classroom. A leader who connects at emotional and motivational levels with a team of followers can have unimagined impact on the profession and its members.

As a leader, almost everything one does has a ripple effect on others both inside and outside of one's organization. Visionary leadership and stewardship as displayed by those who facilitated, created, and sustained the GOLDEN professional development program illustrates well the ripple effect

on the German language teaching and learning profession. Like ever-expanding ripples in a pond, this initiative continues to flow outward, broaden, and expand. The research studies described here reveal at the micro level the ripple effect such leadership can have on the individual lives of teachers, their students, and the profession—ripples that flow and extend … without end.

Notes

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