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Adult, Continuing, and Community Education**

Evaluating Instructors Sitting at the TABLE
(Technology Access for Better Learning and Employment)

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Abstract: This paper focuses on the Technology Access for Better Learning and Employment Checklist developed by the authors. This evaluation tool was created and then used to measure eight instructors' ability to use technology in their teaching in four adult programs sponsored in part by the Ohio Cooperative Extension Service and a partner, Godman Guild, a settlement house located in a Columbus, Ohio neighborhood identified as located in an empowerment zone. Funding through the Federal Department of Education for a Community Technology Center was granted for this project which required an instructor pre and post evaluation component to be conducted by the Center on Education and Training for Employment. The data collected using this instrument was then used to design customized professional development plans and interventions to address technology usage as well as general instructional competen-cies for effective adult teaching for learning. The contribution of this paper is the TABLE Checklist and professional development system designed for this project.

Introduction

One goal of the Technology Access for Better Learning and Employment (TABLE) project was to improve instructors' competence using technology integrated into their teaching. Work cited by Gallant (2000) suggests a "design" versus the usual "default" approach to professional development to help adult educators adopt new technologies. If a needs assessment is conducted to understand the individual instructor's approach to teaching and learning, appropriate professional development opportunities can be provided more efficiently and effectively. Her work suggests that a wise professional developer, who understands the key issues of adult educators, can assist them in accepting and using new learning technologies.

Problem Statement

If adult educators are going to be able to help their learner (clients) learn how to use technology more effectively, then it is important to address the needs of those adult educators as learners themselves. To address this issue, a TABLE Checklist was developed as an instructor pre-assessment and post -evaluation system to improve instruction using technology. However, the problem focused on a main research questions faced by the evaluators: *How can we design an evaluation system to capture good instruction using technology and support a reflective approach to professional development for adult educators?* Our idea was to use the checklist to conduct a needs assessment as an input to professional development plan and interventions identified in partnership with the instructor. The checklist would then be used again as a post evaluation after 6 months of practice integrating the professional development and using

technology in their teaching. The desired outcome is to see demonstrated improvement in integrating teaching competence with technology skill in their instruction.

Methodology

A total of eight (8) instructors were assessed between The Ohio State University (OSU) Extension Learning Center and the partner settlement house, Godman Guild. The four programs represented were: GED/ABLE (3), Job Success (2), Computer Skills (2), and Life Skills: Money Management (1). Each instructional evaluation session consisted of an initial meeting, followed by a 2-4 hour observation of their instruction to a client group, finishing with a debriefing with immediate feedback after the session. The TABLE Checklist (see below) was the tool created for this project by the authors. It was then used for assessment (pre) and will be used for final evaluation (post). The TABLE Checklist has an instructional systems design foundation (Romiszowski, 1981) based on principles of criterion-referenced test construction (Schrock & Coscarelli, 1989) with a section on assessment, design/development, implementation and instructor's use of technology, and evaluation. The statements describing good instruction using technology was developed in part using the training literature on instructor excellence (Powers, 1992) and instructor use of technology in distance learning (Dessinger, Brown, Reesman, & Elliott, 1998).

Following the pre-assessment session with the adult educator using the checklist, a verbal debriefing was followed by a written summary report sent to each instructor. The written report served as a guideline for individual professional development over the next 6 months based on the conversation following the pre-evaluation session. Instructors were told the individual feedback was confidential. They were also told they would be evaluated again in the fall of 2003 (Phase III) to observe instructional improvements and technology integration based on Phase I and per the TABLE grant.

Phase II solutions have been identified and are being addressed at the time of writing this paper by instructors in concert with peers and supervisors in program content.
Using the TABLE Checklist of Instructional Competencies as the evaluation framework for observing instructor behaviors and performance in an actual instructional setting, the evaluator was able to specifically identify when and if the instructor utilized technology in their instruction. The stages of the TABLE project are available from the authors.

TABLE Checklist

The TABLE Checklist is the focus of this paper and noted in Figure 1. The intent of the checklist was to be used as a development tool, not as a punitive evaluation or job performance appraisal. The authors hope that this tool may be useful to others as a model or framework for assisting adult educators using technology in their instruction. It is used as a one page, two sided form with space for the instructor to discuss their needs and reflection following the review. Due to space requirements for this paper, spaces on the form were reduced. The authors can provide electronically per request.

TABLE (Technology Access for Better Learning and Employment) CHECKLIST TEACHING in TECHNOLOGY ENHANCED PROGRAMS

Instructor:_____

Program: _____

Date of Evaluation: _____   Supervisor: _____

Evaluator: _____

Directions: While developing and integrating interactive distance learning technologies into a program, the instructor skill and development were cited as very important in this grant application. It was determined that a review of the technology-enhanced programs should include an evaluation of the instructor using a checklist to ensure effectiveness. Any "NO" answer indicates that learning by the participants is in jeopardy. The recommendation following the first quarter evaluation is that the program should be revised to account for the missing elements. A follow-up evaluation in 6 months should correct the problem.

CHECKLIST:

Assessment:	**YES**	**NO**
Were Learners' Needs Assessed?	___	___
Were there goals/objectives for the session?	___	___
Was the technology (soft/hard) integrated into the classroom?	___	___
Design and development of the Program – The program was …	**YES**	**NO**
Developed around the needs of learners?	___	___
Designed around the course content or larger curriculum objectives?	___	___
Designed around the used of the technology (changed how taught before)?	___	___
Designed for appropriate audience?	___	___
Designed with the proper amount of time?	___	___
Implementation of the Program – The instructor …	**YES**	**NO**
Showed evidence of the advanced planning for the program	___	___
Explained the session objectives	___	___
Explained the evaluation procedures	___	___
Showed enthusiasum for the subject	___	___
Posed challenging questions	___	___
Used time effectively	___	___
Explained the program material in class	___	___
Was available to meet with individuals in the class personally/Uses their names	___	___
Treated all students equally	___	___
Facilitated class discussion	___	___
Listens well to student questions	___	___
Articulates and communicates clearly	___	___
Pauses sufficiently for students to respond to questions	___	___
Respects students questions and perspectives	___	___
Makes student concentrate on how to get the right answer, not what the right answer is	___	___

Figure 1 Continued

At appropriate times is willing and plans to let the student
    have control of learning   ___   ___

Handwriting is clear and legible   ___   ___

Is aware of any student having a problem   ___   ___

TABLE Checklist Continued …

Avoids nervous habits (okays, paces floor, etc.)   ___   ___

Smiles, uses good body gestures, maintains eye contact   ___   ___

Manages classroom   ___   ___

Provides good instructions   ___   ___

Provides encouraging feedback or appropriate discipline   ___   ___

With the use of technology _____, instructor …	**YES**	**NO**
Is prepared ahead of time with equipment	___	___
Is comfortable with the use of technology in teaching	___	___
Has instructions that students can follow	___	___
Uses Power Point or other technical communications effectively	___	___
Is not the sole source of information	___	___
Helps students locate and find information	___	___
Was able to teach with the technology	___	___
Handled technical problems appropriately (Did not panic/had back-up plan)	___	___
Provided students with personal assistance when needed	___	___
Reviewed the assignment(s) given that utilized technology	___	___
Assures that student has space to work, see demonstration, etc.	___	___
If applicable - Responded to emails	___	___
Responded to phone calls	___	___

Evaluation	**YES**	**NO**
Circulates to monitor progress of students during activity?	___	___
Has a structured closing?	___	___
Allows for clean-up and additional questions?	___	___
The course evaluation methods were based on course objectives?	___	___
The test or evaluation covered the assigned content?	___	___
Notes lesson strengths and weaknesses?	___	___

COMMENTS ABOUT MY TEACHING PERFORMANCE:

Your opportunity to address anything that should be repeated, changed or improved?

Explain any adjustments made during the session?

OVERALL:	**YES**	**NO**
Classroom Atmosphere with technology is positive:	___	___
Organization is evidenced in instruction with technology:	___	___
Creativity is demonstrated in session using technology:	___	___
Overall Communication Skills are good using technology:	___	___
Uses instructional time wisely:	___	___
Utilization of appropriate materials with technology:	___	___
Flexibility/Adaptability was demonstrated with technology:	___	___
Knows subject matter and was able to integrate technology:	___	___
Uses student motivation techniques:	___	___

Figure 1 Continued

Is a dependable/responsible instructor: ____   ____
Has a positive attitude about technology: ____   ____
Is mature working with adults: ____   ____
Can make judgments with tact: ____   ____
Is Professional with students, peers, supervisor, and community relations: ____   ____

Figure 1: TABLE Checklist modified to fit Mid-West page requirements Implications/ Use of Results for Theory and Practice

Implication of for both theory and practice in adult education focus on how technology will forever change the way we teach and learn (Kirkwood, 1998). Technology enhanced instruction is essential given the changing world of work and life (Brown, 2000; Kerka, 2001). However, we must not forget that good instruction is based on assessment of the learner needs and technology is not always the solution (Gallant, 2000). Professional development is the vehicle for assisting adult educators in the integration of good teaching strategies and methods with technology to create exceptional learning environments (Gillespie, 1998). The instructor is in the best position for deciding how technology can be integrated into their content. The TABLE project is fundamentally an adult education project that favors self-directed and peer learning that will assist a client in achieving client's personal and professional goals. Using technology to enhance this outcome is definitely a lifelong learning process.

Importance to Adult, Continuing, Extension, and Community Education Practice

The TABLE program is a collaborative effort—a true partnership on the part of several experts in adult education: (a) Godman Guild (GG) a settlement house which has its historical roots in adult education, OSU Extension (OSUE) Service and it Learning Center, and outreach and engagement efforts for citizenship and workforce development though the Center on Education and Training for Employment (CETE). None of this could have been possible without the support of the Department Of Education. The creation of a new on-line community of learners was also developed through the Community Technology Center Network which extends adult, continuing, and community education.

The TABLE Leadership Team saw a need and the TABLE project was designed to bring about learning that leads to the empowerment of local residents in the Weinland Park Community, located in a Columbus, Ohio empowerment zone. By providing access to technology through a collaborative community computing center developed in this partnership with GG, OSUE and CETE. The focus of TABLE is on the delivery of GED/ABLE, job readiness, computer and life skills using technology to empower. The grant required the evaluation of the instructors and their competence to successfully use technology in their teaching of the content in these areas. As a result, the TABLE Checklist was created. Without access to professional development for adult educators involved in literacy, employment, computers and life skills needed for successful citizens, these residents and direct participants of the programs will continue to be challenged in learning skills that can help them contribute to

society. This evaluation and grant project cut across adult, continuing, extension, and community education—the foundation that is about the learning of the people who made it happen!

Conclusion

Burge (2000) suggests that learners and learning are the real issues and supports a professional development strategy that provides a holistic, conceptual framework for applying technology for adults to use in their learning. She emphasizes, "(Learners) want whatever works best for them. Ignoring the new learning technologies is not an option, but . . . use [sic] them appropriately alongside traditional teaching and learning media" (p. 90). Her strategic thinking and proposed eleven themes on the use of learning technologies specifically for adult learners provided these authors a way to assess their own contribution of what the TABLE Checklist was able to do as a teaching performance improvement intervention. The eleven strategies are italics. *Ownership* of the learning was the responsibility of the instructors; *Reality Check* on what the instructors could initially do; It served as a *Self-Assessment* tool for continuous reflection for their teaching of adults; *Legitimation* of why they teach adults; Responsibilities were established for all partners involved: *Development* – this grant was about improving everyones learning – not just the participants! *Access* and *Adviser* to resources and professional development through the evaluator; *Diversity* through peer instructor sharing of learnings; *Critical questioning* about how technology will effect their learners and finally *Elegance i*n the technology application based on the content taught and the talents of each instructor!

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