Tutor Training Procedures in Higher Education:

Creating a Community of Lifelong Learners

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In an effort to showcase the value of helping a professional educational setting to transform to a learning organization, a solid instructional initiative must be developed. Tutors' knowledge and skill base is strengthened through systematic and purposeful training procedures that are designed to enhance tutorial methodology and foster social interaction. The benefits of fostering ongoing peer-interaction among tutorial personnel significantly benefit the stakeholders of an academic assistance program in higher education. The development of learning communities through the incorporation of collaborative as well as self-paced strategies that are appropriate for the traditional face-to-face and the online setting foster a culture of learning agility in an academic support program in an institution of higher education.

The ancient Greek philosopher Plato proposed that instruction is an integral part of the human experience that encourages and showcases individual as well as social progress (Plato as cited in Grube, & Reeve, 1992). Currently, as noted by Lim and Lee (2014), institutions of higher education aim to uphold these very principles of lifelong learning through the development of learning communities. Chen and Liu's (2011) work presented such communities through peer assistance that is offered to help learners

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achieve their educational objectives in higher education; in particular, Vogel, Fresko, and Wertheim (2007) discussed the correlation between student academic success and tutorial assistance as it is evidenced by holistic training procedures. Through appropriate training and a sense of mutual responsibility, tutors can be given the opportunity to comprehend unique perspectives and enhance their critical thinking skills in a nurturing setting (University of Missouri-Kansas City, 2003). This article examines effective tutor training procedures in higher education that are designed to create a community of lifelong learners.

Learners commence their educational endeavors at institutions of higher education to achieve their chosen educational and professional goals (Pluviose, 2008). Tutorial support services are invaluable resources through which learners develop and enhance their skills (Kostecki & Bers, 2008). Academic support programs offer a multitude of services, which often times include one-on-one appointments, walk-in assistance, study groups, workshops, in-class tutoring as well as supplemental instruction (SI) (University of Missouri-Kansas City, 2006). Tutorial assistance services must be monitored closely to ensure consistency and optimal methodology (Kostecki & Bers, 2008). As these avenues of support are available to students registered at a given institution, learning assistance centers can employ hundreds of peer (student) and professional (degree holder) tutors on a given semester to accommodate tutees' unique learning styles (University of Missouri-Kansas City, 2003).

Tutor training is essential in ensuring that learners receive optimal academic assistance (Fetner, 2011). As tutors are expected to be able to effectively accommodate a plethora of learning styles, training procedures must be examined and enhanced over-

time to meet stakeholders' needs (Fetner, 2011); the fundamental principles of guided academic support must be reinforced purposefully (Blohm et al., 2014). It is important that the training experiences are designed to nurture tutors' current knowledge and skill base while promoting a sense of community among peers (Gagné, Wager, Golas, & Keller, 2005). Content, interpersonal, and technology skills are crucial for tutors to be able to interact and communicate effectively with their tutees as well as college personnel, such as tutorial supervisors and college administrators (Fetner, 2011).

Rationale

Organizations are driven by goals that serve an identified vision (Schein, 2008). Academic support programs' dedication to lifelong learning should be demonstrated actively in order for the personnel to engage in ongoing professional development (Vogel, Fresko, & Wertheim, 2007); a learning culture is characterized by intrinsic engagement in enhancing oneself (Schein, 2008). Instructional design allows for the eclectic utilization of theories and strategies that guide stakeholders' decision-making processes (Piskurich, 2006). Tutors as well as instructional designers must possess a highly adaptive leadership mindset that can be influenced heavily by the rapidly evolving technological environment (McLuhan & Gordon, 2003).

Institutions of higher learning provide students of all backgrounds and abilities the opportunity to obtain valuable educational experiences (University of Missouri-Kansas City, 2003). Learners' skills are oftentimes enhanced by tutorial support services that complement their strengths and help them develop comprehensive reading and study habits (Hendriksen, Yang, Love, & Hall, 2005); supplemental assistance is crucial for academic success (Vogel, Fresko, & Wertheim, 2007). Tutors,

however, who are not provided with systematic and purposeful training experiences or feel detached from the organization, can hinder their tutees' learning (University of Missouri-Kansas City, 2003). It is important to examine whether the development of streamlined procedures based on purposeful training strategies can nurture a community of tutors into becoming independent and lifelong learners.

Tutor Training

The professional experiences to which tutors are exposed must be purposefully planned to enhance tutorial methodology as well as facilitation skills, such as active listening and checking for learners' understanding (University of Missouri-Kansas City, 2003). The proposed outline is as follows.

1. Learning culture among full- and part-time tutorial personnel

    a. Definition of a learning culture in an academic support program

2. Tutor training procedures for the traditional face-to-face setting

    a. Collaborative learning strategies that are appropriate for this setting

    b. Self-paced strategies that are appropriate for this setting

3. Tutor training procedures for the online environment

    a. Collaborative learning strategies that are appropriate for this setting

    b. Self-paced strategies that are appropriate for this setting

4. Reinforcement of content knowledge

    a. Discipline-specific

    b. Reading comprehension

    c. Writing across the curriculum

5. Reinforcement of tutorial methodology

a. Redirecting questions

   b. Exercising wait-time

   c. Checking for understanding

6. Formative and summative assessment

7. Stakeholder benefits

Learning Culture among Full- and Part-Time Tutorial Personnel

Learning Culture in an Academic Support Program

Learning agility incorporates a multifaceted set of interconnected principles. Clark and Gottfredson (2008) presented a solid outline of five leading factors that can enhance an organization's vision: (a) environmental context, (b) learning mindset, (c) learning behavior, (d) learning technology, and (e) organizational support. Although each item pertains to specific areas, ranging from individual skills to institution building, it is the connection among each factor that strengthens organizational agility (Clark & Gottfredson, 2008). The goal of maintaining or enhancing industry standards should inform the operational procedures of a given setting; exposure to appropriate learning opportunities as well as leadership patterns can be complemented by technology. Naturally, overall support from the institution can solidify the operational efforts of a given setting; as Clark and Gottfredson (2008) noted, valuable educational experiences are generated through the incorporation of organizational and employee support. It is imperative that professional environments promote such learning practices to encourage lifelong learning and increase morale (Gilroy, 2012).

Problem-Based Learning (PBL)

Evaluation procedures must be implemented to assess learners' active participation abilities, independent learning, and critical thinking skills (Parrish, 2009).

PBL incorporates a wide range of approaches; observing learners' problem-solving strategies as they occur can reveal which areas of the educational experience have been successful as well as what aspects might need additional reinforcement. Parrish (2009) concluded that the group learning interaction could demonstrate each individual's mastery of the skills necessary to address a problem-based situation. In order for one to be able to work collaboratively, individual milestones such as knowledge attainment must be reached; the ease or difficulty exhibited while working alongside a group of peers will demonstrate the level of mastery over the concepts explored.

Tutor Training Procedures for the Traditional Face-To-Face Setting
Collaborative Learning Strategies

The University of Missouri-Kansas City (2014) has recommended an extensive range of individual as well as group activities that are based on collaborative instructional strategies. Based on the schema theory, the construction of a K-W-L chart promotes engagement through the visual representation of what learners already know about a given topic, what they would like to know, and what they have learned (Tok, 2013). Specifically, Tok (2013) examined the effect of outlining learners' prior knowledge and expectations as they pertain to an instructional experience; thus, this method can be utilized by incorporating flexibility within curricula development.

Also, another collaborative instructional strategy is the think-pair-share model. Kaddoura (2013) examined the ways through which this strategy can be utilized to strengthen learners' unique skills by allowing them to individually develop their

perceptions about a proposed matter, pair up with a peer to exchange opinions, and share with the larger group their findings.

Self-Paced Learning Strategies

The "one minute paper" strategy is oftentimes used in the classroom as an opportunity for learners to reflect on the information with which they have been presented (Anderson & Burns, 2013). This strategy can successfully assess learners' understanding by asking each individual to consider how the material presented in the classroom environment can be applied in a real-life situation. Anderson and Burns (2013) explained that self-reflection in the form of a structured brainstorming activity, such the "one minute paper," helps learners make significant connections between course concepts and application of knowledge.

Tutor Training Procedures for the Online Environment

Collaborative Learning Strategies

Concept mapping can be used to evaluate learners' ability to visually portray the interconnection among core course concepts (Gallenstein, 2013). As a cross-cultural learning strategy, concept mapping can be utilized to online interactive, yet asynchronous activities among peers; for example, tutors may be asked to illustrate designated discipline-related sections that will ultimately reveal the value of learning across the curriculum. Gallenstein's (2013) revealed that the basis of this strategy lies in helping the audience understand how to learn; as tutorial personnel are responsible for communicating such learning strategies to their tutees, it is important to present them with the opportunity to utilize various activities during training.

Self-Paced Learning Strategies

The incorporation of relevant videos demonstrating simulated tutorial sessions can help strengthen methodology. Short videos that present real-life scenarios can be made available for critical review. Instructional design practices can be utilized to identify key areas in need of reiteration and develop streamlined processes that can offer consistent and unified experiences to learners (Reiser & Dempsey, 2013). For example, a significant aspect of Lúcia and Rubens' (2004) article lies in the development of learning objects (LOs) that can be reused in multiple contexts with minimal adaptations; thus, specific tutorial practices can be determined and purposefully incorporated in tutor training across a range of disciplines.

Reinforcement of Tutorial Methodology

Effective tutorial sessions should be facilitated by tutors who are able to utilize purposefully selected techniques to improve learners' skills and engage them in their learning process (University of Missouri-Kansas City, 2014). Specific instructional strategies are recommended by the University of Missouri-Kansas City (2014) for supplemental instruction, a model of academic support that relies on the SI Leaders' cognitive abilities to effectively redirect questions, exercise wait time, and check for understanding. Trained tutors, who serve as near-peers, are expected to actively listen to students' content-based concerns, identify critical areas for analysis as well as engage learners during their peer-facilitated sessions (Krathwohl, 2002).

The effective development of intellectual skills requires the implementation of comprehensive training procedures (Blohm et al., 2014); it is imperative that educational

environments promote such practices to encourage independent learning and increase retention (Gilroy, 2012).

Redirecting Questions

Brookfield and Preskill (2005) are both representatives of the discussion approach to learning. The instructor serves as a facilitator and participant whose purposeful redirection of learners' questions and skillful exercise of the Socratic Method leads to higher order learning domains (Reigeluth & Carr-Chellman, 2009); Pullen-Sansfaçon (2012) stated that through the process of redirecting questions, learners and facilitators engage in dialogue which emphasizes critical thinking and guides learners to identify contradictions.

Wait-Time

Aarnio, Lindblom-Ylänne, Nieminen, and Pyörälä's (2014) study revealed that tutors must be better equipped to exercise wait-time in order for learners to attain the outlined objectives of their tutorial sessions. The University of Missouri-Kansas City (2014) promotes the utilization of instructional strategies to exercise wait-time prior and after receiving a response in an effort to assess each learner's understanding in a nurturing environment.

Checking for Understanding

Performance objectives and measurements communicate the determined goals and the ways through which they will be accomplished (Gagné, Wager, Golas, & Keller, 2005). Instructional sequence, sequencing of objectives and instructional strategies are additional elements that are essential in the decision making process of ID; designers

must demonstrate a solid understanding of the gaps in order to eclectically determine the most appropriate procedures.

Formative and Summative Assessment

The Organizational Learning Model for evaluation fosters continuous professional development among employees (Russ-Eft & Preskill, 2009). Staff members are encouraged to share areas of expertise through seamlessly integrated practices. Appendix A demonstrates the connections among the staff and the streamlined communication that leads to a democratic learning experience. A committee with internal and external stakeholders should be formed with the objective to formally investigate tutor training procedures and determine the return on investment (ROI).

The Organizational Learning Model along with the Success Case Method (SCM), which as per Bersin (2008) "uses surveys and interviews to identify trainees who have been highly successful recipients of a given program" (p. 68), will allow the committee to collect a wide range of data as well as analyze the information using appropriate methodologies.

The primary stakeholders include the tutors and the tutorial supervisory staff members who are conducting the trainings; the secondary stakeholders, yet equally important to the success of the program, are the learners and the college community at large. Key evaluation questions for the tutors may include the following: (a) how does the training impact your tutorial methodology? (b) what topics have you found to be the most relevant? (c) tell me about the most transformative training session you have attended, and (d) which delivery method would you say has been the most successful?

Stakeholder Benefits

Ardichvili, Mitchell, and Jondle (2009) explained that effective guidance is crucial for the lasting success of a program or organization. Through tutors' skillful direction, tutees can become confident in their academic abilities; therefore, the level of productivity and efficiency is proportional to the atmosphere fostered during tutorial session (Chen & Liu, 2011). Hickman (2010) presented a solid collection of theories that can be utilized to accomplish the desired goals of a range of operations; instructional design guidelines promote long-term benefits that can derive when social responsibility is exercised toward the community at large (Code of Professional Ethics - Association for Educational Communication & Technology, 2007).

Inclusiveness

Tutorial personnel can be comprised of individuals with a wide range of personalities, unique abilities, and aspirations (Carter & Yam, 2013). Thus, as Lim and Lee (2014) noted, it is crucial to identify the means through which consistency can be implemented to develop a culturally conscious initiative that will effectively create a community of lifelong learners. The blended instructional model can help bridge the gap among cultural and academic barriers (Lou, Chung, Dzan, & Shih, 2012).

Time- and Cost-Effectiveness

The time and effort invested for tutor training must be quantified to determine whether it results in a worthwhile ROI. The cost must be examined carefully since in order to sustain such professional development opportunities requires resources that should result in measurable outcomes. Face-to-face sessions oftentimes require time that organizations cannot invest (Sheehan, 2014) while fully online initiatives may lack

the follow up necessary for learning to occur (Liang & Chen, 2012); the time and resources allocated for tutor training should result in worthwhile outcomes.

Conclusion

As a multifaceted field that encompasses a multitude of theories and learning strategies, instructional design fosters the development of successful interventions that derive from holistic and purposeful practices (Piskurich, 2006). Designers are entrusted with the development of instructional opportunities that can have a lasting effect on learners' knowledge and skill base (Dirksen, 2012). It is imperative that educational environments promote such practices to encourage independent learning and increase retention (Gilroy, 2012); training sessions that are effectively planned and facilitated by designated personnel can improve tutors' skills while engaging them in their learning process (Fetner, 2011). A community of tutors can benefit tutees, institution of higher learning, academic support program, and the community at large.

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Appendix A

Organizational Learning Model – Training or Educational Setting

Name	Model Description	Goal of Evaluation Model	Setting of Intended Use
Organizational Learning Model	Organization members share areas of expertise through seamlessly integrated practices	During training sessions, dialogue and constructive feedback among an organization's members promotes teamwork as well as professional development	Training or educational training

e.g. The implementation of cross training procedures among staff members |

The Organizational Learning Model fosters continuous professional development

among employees (Russ-Eft & Preskill, 2009). Training sessions facilitated by

employees who are given the opportunity to showcase their skill can be rewarding as

well as productive.