Teacher Education Candidates Providing Educational Technology Professional Development to the University Community through Service-learning

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ABSTRACT

Technology use in education has grown at a rapid pace throughout the last decade. However, the COVID-19 pandemic created a lasting impact on technology use for instruction in pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade (PK-12) classrooms and college courses. This creates an even greater need for preservice teachers to be provided with opportunities to develop knowledge and skills related to technology integration. This study explored the impacts of an educational technology service-learning opportunity on undergraduate preservice teacher candidates as well as university instructors. Undergraduate teacher candidate participants completed a course assignment in which they researched and presented various educational technology tools. University professor participants attended these presentations and completed a brief survey on the experience. Through the study, the researchers determined the impacts on each group and implications for further study and development of resources related to the use of educational technology in college courses and preservice teacher candidate preparation.

Service-learning is a versatile and diverse activity used in a broad range of educational settings, where educators aim for students to have meaningful and confrontational learning experiences (Carrington & Saggers, 2008). To simplify, service-learning entails the connection of theoretical knowledge gained in the classroom with practical experience gained in the community and has particular resonance in subjects where academics seek to expand and transform their students' understanding of diversity within their communities (Mergler & Carrington, 2018). The Department of Teacher Education and Nicholls State University utilizes service-learning in a variety of courses to ensure student career preparation.

Educational Technology has been available to K-12 and higher education educators since the 1990s. During the COVID-19 pandemic, educators around the world had to operate remotely and thus K-12 and higher education institutions had to adapt to remote instruction through the use of various technologies. Additionally, due to The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding students had access to devices through 1:1 initiatives (Department of Education, n.d.).

As vaccines were developed and social distancing protocols enacted, higher education intuitions began to adapt to lower COVID-19 infection rates by providing hybrid and face-to-face instruction. However, both students and instructors had become acclimated with access to devices and using educational technology in

their courses. Additionally, faculty have indicated in numerous surveys both the researchers' institution and others a need for training in the area of educational technology (Arya et. al, 2022). Many faculty have indicated that due to institutional requirements to provide instruction, service, and research, they have little time for exploring various types of technology they can incorporate into their courses.

Upon the completion of a teacher preparation program, candidates are expected to possess the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of an effective classroom teacher. This includes knowledge and skills related to the use of technology for all aspects of teaching including but not limited to: lesson planning, instruction, assessment, parent communication, and more. Teacher preparation programs are expected to provide opportunities for teacher candidates to effectively integrate technology into lessons in a meaningful and effective way. To help preservice teacher candidates prepare for the use of technology in the classroom they are required to take an introductory course focused on educational technology. This course is at the beginning of the curriculum so that candidates can develop these skills and apply them throughout their teacher preparation program. The course not only provides the opportunity to expose candidates to the vast number of educational technologies but also how to effectively integrate technology into all aspects of teaching to have positive impacts on student learning.

This study was designed to identify if a preservice education technology assignment could be utilized as a service-learning opportunity to provide professional development to higher education instructors. Specifically, the following objectives were met:

1. Utilize a capstone preservice teacher education assignment as a service-learning opportunity.
2. Identify if the service-learning opportunity influenced college instructor choice/use of educational technology.
3. Examine if the service-learning opportunity influenced preservice teacher preparation for future presentations and lesson implementation.

Service-Learning in Education
In higher education, service-learning has increasingly gained an appreciation for its use as a pedagogical tool for student development (Mason & Dunens, 2019). This increased interest is supported by various external entities that claim the value of service-learning in post-secondary education (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996). Notable supporters include entities such as the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) which cites service-learning as a catalyst for improved student engagement and insight (AAC&U, 2007) as well as the Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) whose standards require teacher candidates to use service-learning to develop and apply a deeper understanding of content areas in meaningful ways (InTASC, 2013). Along with interest from national entities, significant research has been conducted on the effects of implementing service-learning in a variety of settings. Service-learning benefits are cited as ranging from short-term academic achievements to broader areas such as improved civic and social engagement (Clever & Miller, 2019). Research also provides evidence that service-

learning positively affects "personal, attitudinal, moral, social, and cognitive outcomes" (Bringe & Hatcher, 1996, p. 223).

As supported by associations such as AAC&U, service-learning opportunities are often embedded throughout institutions of higher education. Educator preparation providers are no exception. Research specific to departments of teacher education has found that service-learning opportunities have the potential to enhance preservice teacher interest, provide more meaningful and collaborative experiences, improve teaching performance, and build lifelong skills (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996; Carrington, & Saggers, 2008; Dean & Wright, 2017). Furthermore, service-learning has been used as a pedagogical tool for preservice teachers to gain a greater understanding of diverse populations and deepen their knowledge of specific content areas (Clever & Miller, 2019; InTASC, 2013). This impact can empower future teachers through active and more meaningful participation in course-embedded opportunities (Niemi, 2002).

Technology Integration

Educator preparation programs are facing various new challenges. The Covid-19 pandemic in conjunction with the continuously changing landscape of academia has presented barriers in education that have never been seen before (Kasraie & Kasraei, 2010; Rapnta et al., 2021). With these new challenges have come advancements in technology that have the potential to empower pedagogy in the field of education (Kasraie & Kasraei, 2010). Technologically enhanced teacher tools have found their place in education and are creating innovative ways to motivate students and revitalize the classroom (Delgado-Almonte et al., 2010). With advancements, however, comes the responsibility of efficient and effective use. During the pandemic, many educators were required to transition to emergency remote teaching without training or support (Rapnta et al., 2021). Rapnta et al. (2021) called this experience the "unplanned and forced version" of teaching with technology (p. 715). While difficult, this changing landscape has provided an opportunity for preservice teachers to become leaders in best practices and in leveraging educational technology to improve student learning (ISTE, 2021; Rapnta et al., 2021). The International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) provides standards as a foundation for technology innovation related to learning, teaching, and leading (ISTE, 2021). While these standards are all-encompassing including a framework for students, educators, education leaders, and coaches; they specifically cite educators continually improving their practice, exploring proven and promising technological practices, and advocating for access to educational technologies to meet the diverse needs of all students (ISTE, 2021, p. 5). There is a current and increasing need to invest in technological teaching tools and pedagogy to aid educators in reaching all students in an ever-changing academic environment (Evans, 2021; Kasraie & Kasraei, 2010; Rapnta et al., 2021). As Evans (2021) stated, "If you're going to invest in technology, invest in the training, support, monitoring, and maintenance to make it work" (p. 1). Educator preparation programs have the chance to train preservice teachers to be leaders in these initiatives, but candidates must be technically and socially prepared to succeed in their journeys as educators (Hankey, et al., 2017, p. 97).

Professional Development for Educational Technologies

With the need to improve the investment in technology-enhanced teaching tools comes the need for increased professional development to support these processes. The effects of a global pandemic further emphasized the need for professional development and support of teachers effectively using technology (Onyema et al., 2020). This is evident in the educator preparation programs that integrated technology into their frameworks prior to the pandemic showing a significant advantage over programs that did not (Onyema et al., 2020). The programs that support educational technologies have provided evidence of improved "teachers' beliefs about teaching and comfort with using technology" and of students in these classrooms "benefiting from the added technology resources" (Blanchard, et al., 2016, p. 216). It is vital for institutions to understand that engagement with and proper use of educational technologies requires an ongoing commitment. Despite the increased reliance on these technologies, many preservice and current teachers are still not supported and are not ready to effectively integrate technology into their practices (Blanchard, et al., 2016; Onyema, et al., 2020; Petegem, et al., 2021). A key factor in professional development related to technology is how aware educators must be of the unrelenting need for continuous knowledge and understanding of the increasingly digital educational environment (Strydom, 2021). "Embracing the digital world and growing as a digital scholar requires us to embrace the notion of continuous professional development." (Strydom, 2021, p. 156). This means that not only is professional development for educational technologies necessary, but that continuous engagement may be just as important.

Course Assignment

The assignment required preservice education candidates to develop a presentation on a variety of specific educational technology tools. The summative assessment meets the main learning objectives for the course, introduction to technology integration for teachers. This assignment also meets national and departmental standards in which candidates are required to utilize a variety of instructional strategies to provide equitable and inclusive learning experiences.

Candidates become experts on the individual technology tools that they present but are also asked to review peer's presentations to learn about the other tools popular in K-12 education. This ensures that candidates build a knowledge base of various technology tools that can be used in K-12 classrooms. Additionally, the assignment requires them to research and discuss specific ways the tool can be used in K-12 lessons which contribute to their ability to import internet-based artifacts into lessons they will develop in the future as they progress through the program.

Each candidate was assigned a technology tool designed for or used in the field of education. Candidates were required to research, explore, and test the tool they were assigned and were instructed to become 'experts' on their assigned tool. After an exploration phase, candidates designed a presentation to showcase their assigned tool. Presentations were to include an introduction, links to appropriate websites, embedded tutorials, and other related information. Candidates were also required to discuss how the tool could be used in K-12 and higher education classrooms including specific examples of how the tool could be used in each setting. If applicable, candidates were also asked to develop example activities or prepare to demonstrate the tool in use

during their presentation. To prepare for the presentation day, candidates were instructed to develop talking points to showcase their tool and how it can be used within 2 - 5 minutes. Candidates were also instructed to be prepared to answer attendee questions. This ensured that candidates developed a deeper understanding of their assigned tool rather than basic knowledge only. (See Appendix A for assignment instructions provided to candidates).

Utilization of Student Assignment for Service-Learning

The university's center for teaching excellence in partnership with the department of teacher education created a university-wide event. University faculty and staff were invited to attend the student showcase of educational technology.

During the showcase, faculty were provided a feedback form to fill out during each student's presentation and demonstration of educational technology (supplement 1). On this form faculty and staff were instructed to provide critiques in the following areas:

- Candidate knowledge of educational technology
- The presentation and demonstration of the educational technology
- The candidate's ability to answer questions regarding the educational technology presented
- The candidate's professionalism

Directly after the event faculty and staff were asked to fill out a survey about the event and the presentations they attended.

Results and Conclusion

Nine faculty attended the event and all were part of the College of Education and Behavioral Sciences or College of Liberal Arts. Faculty were from a variety of ranks including instructor, assistant professor, and full professor. When asked "How often do you use educational technology excluding the learning management system Moodle and video conferencing software Zoom in your courses?" 33 percent responded with always meaning they use an educational technology every single class. Forty-five percent of participants indicated they use educational technology occasionally or a few times during the semester and 22 percent of respondents indicated they use educational technology consistently or at least once a week or unit in their courses.

When asked if the student presentations are helpful in educating them on new educational technologies, 100 percent of the respondents answered "Yes". Eighty-nine percent indicated on the survey that they planned to adopt a technology that was presented by the students in future courses.

The researchers also requested faculty comments on the event. The following comments were:

"I enjoyed seeing candidates teaching faculty about educational technology and becoming the subject matter experts".

"Next time, provide a greater variety of technologies, many of the educational technologies presented were about google extensions which are great but I would love to see technologies specific to teaching my subject area"

"Continue doing this program for the university and in subsequent years, choose a campus location more centralized to the faculty community."

The faculty who attended this event use educational technology in their courses at least a few times a semester. All participants found the event to meet the objective of learning about educational technologies that were new to them. The majority of the faculty participants also indicated they planned to adopt a tool that was presented. The faculty who will not be adopting the technology presented by candidates may have educational technology that meets their instructional needs or did not have a tool presented that meets their current needs.

A key component of service-learning as defined by Bringle and Hatcher (1996) is to participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs (p. 112). This highlights the importance of community voice in the development, implementation, and assessment of the impact of a service-learning (Bringle & Hatcher, 2009). To address university faculty community needs we plan to have candidates engage with the faculty community earlier in the semester. This engagement may include surveying faculty on the challenges of using educational technology in the classroom. This will strengthen the project and provide a stronger community buy-in to attending the end-of-semester presentations. The low number of faculty and lack of diversity in colleges attending the event may be due to short notice in advertising the event to the university community and that the event was held at the end of the year when instructors are preparing for final exams and final assignments. In the future, the researchers plan to advertise the event earlier in the semester and choose a more centralized campus location for the event.

Service-learning for the preservice teacher candidates occurred during the candidate's summative assessment in which candidates researched and taught short lessons around educational technologies that professors and instructors in the university community could adopt in future semesters. This assignment meets the idea that *service-learning is academic work in which the community service activities are used as a "text" that is interpreted, analyzed, and related to the content of a course in ways that permit a formal evaluation of the academic learning outcomes (Furco, 1996; Zlotkowski, 1996).* Another core component of service-learning is for student participants to reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of personal values and civic responsibility (Bringle and Hatcher, 1995, p. 112). After the presentation day was complete, candidates were asked to reflect on their experience. Eighty-four percent of candidates felt their presentations went well or

really well, eight percent of candidates felt their presentations went great, and eight percent felt that their presentations were "OK".

Example reflections from candidates

Reflection Prompt	Example of student responses
How did your presentation go? What went really well? What could have gone better?	*Overall I think my presentation went by smoothly. I was able to talk to a lot of my previous professors and share with them some google chrome extensions they maybe didn't know about! A thing I wish I could've done better was to find lesser-known extensions and possibly included more.* *My presentation went really well. I was nervous before the presentation, but when I actually started talking about my google tool, it seemed like all my anxiousness faded away. I was comfortable and very knowledgeable about Google Forms to the point where I did not have to refer to my slides. Personally, I do not feel like it could have gone any better because I explained really well, I accepted feedback and I was able to have professional conversations with important education faculty.* *My presentations went really well once I started talking to people. I was able to educate people who actually did not know much about Google forms and answered questions that they had about using the app. In order to make the presentation better, I wish I would have been more confident and comfortable talking to other professionals about such a simple topic.*

When candidates were asked to reflect on technologies they wish their professors would use, the majority mentioned Nearpod, Kahoot, Google Forms, and Google calendar. Interestingly the candidates reflected that many of the educational technology tools they recommend their professors use in their classes were the same tools they would recommend in a K-12 classroom. For example, when asked which tools would be most beneficial for K-12 classroom teachers, many candidates recommended Google Extensions, Kahoot, and Nearpod. The researchers also observed that candidates felt technologies like Quizziz and Book Creator would be beneficial in a K-12 classroom.

Example reflections from candidates

What are some tools you wish college professors should take more advantage of? Provide a specific example	*Another tool I wish professors used more is google forms. One of my professors did use google forms and I really liked that she did. Forms are great for getting feedback from students, and they can access the forms at almost any time, anywhere.* *Kahoot- This is an interesting application that allows review sessions for students. This website is very creative, and students love Kahoot. It is kid friendly and would work in all type of classroom settings.* *I think another tool that professors should use is Nearpod.I have one professor who uses Nearpod and it definitely helps. With the Nearpod, it keeps me engaged in the lesson and allows me to learn and see everything up close. I can also provide and receive feedback which is a huge plus on my part.* *One tool I wish professors would use is Google Calendar. I think it would be super easy to check for due dates or dates for tests. The teacher would be able to share the calendar with the class so we can see the dates.*
What are some tools you think K-12 teachers/students could benefit from? Provide a specific example	I *think Kahoot or Quizizz are both good tools for students because it adds fun into learning. Studying might be hard for some students so having it in a game form can be really beneficial.* *I think K-12 teachers/students would benefit from using Google Drive, Google Classroom, Kahoot, and Nearpod.* *Google Docs and Google Slides I feel would benefit the best because it is a very easy app to use and it is a great way for students to organize their material and stay on pace with their assignments.* *Quizziz would be beneficial to teachers and students in k-12 classrooms because it is a platform for low-stakes quizzes. These quizzes can be completed from anywhere on any device. They can have accommodations available such as larger texts/pictures and read aloud questions/responses.* *A tool that I think is so cute and allows students to be hands on in their learning is Book Creator. This interactive tool allows students to create books related to what they are learning in an age appropriate and creative way*

Finally, candidates reflected on how the activity helps prepare them for future presentations and the teaching profession. All reflections were positive, most responses indicated that the students will need to prepare notes or practice their presentations ahead of time. Some examples include:

This helped me prepare for presentations and lessons I will have to do in the future because not only did it show me a way of displaying my information, but it also allowed me to see the steps that would be necessary for a successful presentation. I learned that I must provide research and learn about my topic before I present it. Also, I must have a plan on what I will do and backups in case my idea doesn't go as planned.

My presentation went really well. I was nervous before the presentation, but when I actually started talking about my google tool, it seemed like all my anxiousness faded away. I was comfortable and very knowledgeable about Google Forms to the point where I did not have to refer to my slides. Personally, I do not feel like it could have gone any better because I explained really well, I accepted feedback and I was able to have professional conversations with important education faculty.

In this presentation, we had to teach listeners about something they knew little about. I was incredibly nervous, but in the future, I think my nerves will not be as prominent. Also, this presentation was like you were teaching a small class. Everytime someone would come up to you, you had to be professional, speak clearly and confidently. That is what teachers have to do every day.

This initial attempt to incorporate service-learning into a teacher preparation educational technology course was a success. The assignment increased meaningful learning and students' social engagement with fellow educators. Candidates were provided an opportunity to utilize their subject matter expertise to meet the needs of the campus community instructors as well as reflect on what they learned through this process and how it will better prepare them for the profession of teaching. The service-learning opportunity will be improved with additional community engagement earlier in the semester to identify faculty technology needs along with further student reflection on how they will incorporate the technology presented in their curriculum as a teacher.

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Appendix A

Course Assignment Instructions

Teacher Education Technology Tips Presentation

For this assignment, you will work on a slide presentation that you will present on the scheduled presentation day. Instead of giving a presentation to a large group of people, you will prepare a 2-5 minute sales pitch for your assigned tool. Presentation day attendees will be able to walk around the room to learn more about educational technology tools. They will stop by your 'station' to learn more about your tool and ask questions they have about how it can be used.

Your audience will be current Nicholls Education candidates and Nicholls faculty in the Education department and across campus. The goal is to promote educational technology tools that can promote interactive and engaging lessons at any Pre-K - 12 level or within college classes.

Presentation Day:
Thursday, April 28th
*Failure to attend on presentation day will result in required make-up work for this assignment.

Before presentation day

1. **Presentation slides:**
   Create slides to use when you present your topic. A template that you may use is provided or you can create your own slides from scratch. Ensure that you include all of the required information.
   This will count as 50% of your grade for this assignment.

2. **Become an expert:**
   Learn everything you can about your tool. On the presentation day, you will be the 'expert' on this tool. Ensure that you will be able to answer questions attendees may have about how to use the tool in their specific setting (K-12 classroom or college course).

3. **Sales pitch:**
   Work on a 'sales pitch' for your tool. Prepare to speak for 2-5 minutes about your tool. This sales pitch should include a brief overview of the tool, how it works, how it can be used in a variety of settings, etc.

   - Also, prepare to give a 'product demo'. Log in or open your tool to show attendees what the platform looks like and how it works.

○ You will deliver this sales pitch and demo to any attendee that walks up to learn more about your tool.

Presentation day
Begins promptly at class time (9:00 or 10:30)
Location - 125 CEBS

Dress professionally:
Wear professional or 'teacher clothes' that you would wear to conduct observations or teach lessons for clinical experiences.

Arrive on time:
Plan to arrive at the presentation room at or shortly before class time so that instructions can be given and presentations can begin as soon as possible.

Display Your Slides:
Use any type of device (preferably a laptop or tablet with a large screen) to provide a visual aid for your sales pitch and to provide demonstrations of your tool in action.
● If you need to borrow a Chromebook or iPad please let me know at least 1 week prior to the presentation day so that it can be set up and ready for you to use on the day of.

Give Your Sales Pitch:
Present your tool to each person that stops at your station. Answer their questions and hold conversations with them about the tool.

Don't be Nervous:
The presentation room will be a no-judgment zone. A goal of this activity is to get you to practice presenting (or teaching) and communicating with other educators about a particular topic. As you move forward in your program and career, these are important skills to develop.

Earn a 5-Star rating:
Your goal with this presentation is to try to earn a 5-star rating. Each person that listens to your presentation will be asked to rate your presentation and the tool you are presenting. You will not be penalized for low ratings, but your goal is to present a tool to the best of your ability.

● This rating chart will serve as the observation instrument for your presentation. Instead of being rated on a rubric like you will be when teaching lessons, you will be rated using the chart provided below.

After Presentation Day

Reflect: Create a document and answer the following questions.

1. How did your presentation go? What went really well? What could have gone better?
2. How did this activity help to prepare you for future presentations or lessons you will teach in the future?
3. Locate the spreadsheet where links to all the Tech Tips Presentations have been submitted. Review slides created about the other tools. What are some tools you wish college professors should take more advantage of? Provide 2 specific examples.
4. What are some tools you think K-12 teachers/students could benefit from? Provide 2 specifics example.

Download your reflection document as a PDF to submit on Moodle.

For this assignment, you will receive points for creating the presentation slides, giving your presentation on the presentation day, and completing the reflection questions. Please ensure that you have completed each item in order to receive full credit.

Points breakdown:
Slides: 40 points
Presentation: 50 points
Reflection: 10 points
Total Points: 100

## Teacher Education Technology Tips Rating Chart
Please rate the technology presentation you just participated in using the chart below.

Candidate Name: _____

Presentation Topic: _____

Presentation Rating - Circle the number of stars you give this presentation.
Presentations should be rated based on candidate knowledge of the tool, confidence when presenting, ability to answer questions and overall professionalism of the presentation.
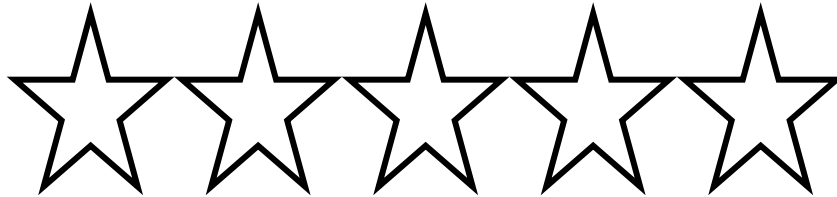
1 - 2 Stars: Needs improvement.

Please briefly explain your rating below: