

Ohio University
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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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Experiences of Students and Instructor in an Online Technology in Education Course: A Case Study

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The purpose of this qualitative case study is to examine and describe the instructor and student experiences in an undergraduate Web-based course. The design, development and implementation process of the course is investigated in depth to understand the events involved from the instructor's perspective and experiences. Student experiences and the meaning students give to their experiences are explored to understand student behavior in a Web-based learning environment. The study setting was a ten-week, Web-based "Technology Applications in Education" course at a large Midwestern university. The course was designed and implemented by the instructor to support an active learning environment for the students. Study participants included the course instructor and 22 undergraduate pre-service teachers. The theoretical framework was a constructivist grounded, active learning framework, "Rich Environments for Active Learning," proposed by Grabinger and Dunlap (2000). The attributes of rich environments for active learning are student responsibility and initiative, generative learning activities, authentic learning contexts, authentic assessment strategies and cooperative support. Multiple sources of information were used to gather data: interviews, email interactions, student weekly journals, instructor's reflective journal, two peer-reviewers' reviews of student portfolios, course documents, a background student questionnaire on technology use, discussion board transcripts, an anonymous feedback forum and course evaluations. Thematic data analysis procedures were used to analyze the data. The study describes the instructor's pedagogical, social, managerial and technological experiences in the design, development, implementation and evaluation of the online course. The student experiences related to independent learning, active learning strategies, communication, interaction and collaboration, differences between face-to-face and online learning, and the meaning and values that the students give to their experiences.

The study findings imply that the online environment requires the reconstruction of student and instructor roles, relationships and practices. The instructor experiences in the online environment can change the outlook of the practice of teaching. Preparing students for engaging in active learning should be emphasized in both face-to-face and online environments. A clear understanding of active learning and student behavior in online learning and the instructor's capabilities and limitations need to be recognized to effectively converge these elements for online teaching.