Power and Empowerment: A SMART-Goals Approach for Teachers Development Using Technology in Teaching and Learning

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Abstract: Power is defined as the potential to influence behavior. Empowerment means to enable and help people develop a sense of self-confidence, to support people to overcome feelings of powerlessness or helplessness, to energize people to take action, and to mobilize intrinsic motivation to accomplish a task (Whetten and Cameron, 2002). This paper is to introduce and explore how can a SMART-goals approach be adopted in teachers' development using technology in teaching and learning. The SMART-goals were identified by Locke and Latham in 1990 and were considered as the best effective goals to enhance one's empowerment and to guide individuals' behavior as they work on their tasks. A successful teachers development of using technology for teaching and learning must address individuals' differences and strengths, must be sensitive to each teacher's expertise and experience. Therefore, the SMART-goals approach is worth of exploring and discussing.

Tightening her fists, raising her arms, Susie said excitedly to herself, "I made it!" after she has reviewed her project. This is in an in-service teachers training class. The class is creating a learning portfolio template with Microsoft Power Point. Susie has successfully completed a 20-slide template, beautifully made a master slide with a watermark image as its background, and creatively inserted all hyperlinks within and outside the template. She is proud of her achievement; the whole class has congratulated her success. She has obtained the power, knowledge and skills of Microsoft Power Point. She is certainly empowered in using the technology for her teaching and learning.

Power and Empowerment

Power is defined as the potential to influence behavior (Whetten and Cameron, 2002). There are two basic factors to determine a person's power. They are personal attributes and his or her position characteristics. Whetten and Cameron (2002) believe that one's expertise, personal attraction, effort and legitimacy are four important sources of personal power. Expertise indicates the knowledge that can gain from formal education, self-directed learning, or on the job-related experience. Attraction is defined as the ability to inspire followers with devotion and enthusiasm, an attractive impression and a divinely conferred power or talent. Effort means to do "whatever it takes" to get the job done. And the legitimacy focuses on the acceptance by others.

Empowerment means to enable and help people develop a sense of self-confidence, to support people to overcome feelings of powerlessness or helplessness, to energize people to take action, and to mobilize intrinsic motivation to accomplish a task (Whetten and Cameron, 2002). It usually indicates the ability of individuals to become aware of their powers to be a capable decision maker and feeling in charge. The empowerment is often facilitated by personal experiences and interpersonal relations (Taly-Ongan, 2004). Susie has not only possessed the wherewithal to accomplish her class project, she has also changed of her thinking of herself. Before the class, she was hesitated, scared and frustrated with the requirements of the class. Now, she feels great and empowered to continue using technology for teaching and learning.

SMART Goals Approach and Teachers Development of Using Technology

To gain the power, or knowledge, and empower others, one may find multiple approaches or strategies. However, one strategy seems work well for teacher development of using technology for effective teaching and learning. That is SMART goals approach. The SMART goals were identified by Locke and Latham in 1990 and were considered as the best effective goals to enhance one's empowerment and to guide individuals' behavior as they work on their tasks (Whetten and Cameron, 2002). SMART goals consist of specific goals, measurable goals, aligned goals, reachable goals, and time-bound goals. Specific goals are those goals identifiable, behavioral and observable. Measurable goals mean those goals that have outcome criteria associated with and that can be assessed objectively and evaluated with performance outcomes. Aligned goals indicate those goals that are congruent with the overall purpose and vision of the organization. Their accomplishment contributes to the broader good. Reachable goals are also named as realistic goals. These goals are not so far above the capacity of the individual to discourage him or her. Meanwhile, reachable does not mean easily achieved. The challenge goals can always motivate one's behavior and help predict higher level of accomplishment. Time-bound goals usually have clear deadlines for achievement. It is believed that goals have no ending point are not effective at all.

Research on teachers development of using technology found that despite increased access to computing and other related educational technology for teachers and students, schools are experiencing difficulty in effectively integrating educational technology into existing curricula (Brand, 1997). Based on recent literature review on professional development of teachers and educational technology, Brand (1997) highlighted ten insights for successful training programs. They are 1) substantial time, 2) individual's needs, 3) flexibility of professional opportunities, 4) provisional support, 5) collaborative environment, 6) remuneration and recognition, 7) sustained development, 8) linkage of technology and educational objectives, 9) intellectual and professional stimulation, and 10) clear administrative message.

SMART Goals approach is not contradict with these ten insights of teachers development of using technology, but can effectively enhance and facilitate a learning process for teachers to gain the power, knowledge and skills, and to empower themselves and their students using technology for teaching and learning. In speaking of the time, teachers must have substantial time for acquiring technological knowledge and skills to effectively and completely infuse technology into their curricular areas. Providing teachers with sufficient learning time, they will learn to use computers effectively for personal and instructional uses. Setting up deadlines for the completion of tasks of learning, they will be able to schedule their time efficiently. Although teachers' development time can vary according to individuals, it should be able to satisfy a teacher's needs for exploratory learning that includes knowledge, implementation, and the empowerment for their students (Guhlin, 1996; Brand, 1997). The time-bound goals in SMART approach will certainly enhance this insight by setting up a deadline for the learning achievement in professional development programs.

A successful teachers development of using technology for teaching and learning must address individuals' differences and strengths, must be sensitive to each teacher's expertise and experience. Even the training opportunities for individuals are available, personal anxiety associated with such opportunities can be different with their various abilities and learning needs. If teachers can be involved in training planning, they will certainly be able to have their specific needs address at the very beginning (Guhlin, 1996; Brand, 1997). In terms of SMART goals approach in teachers development of using technology for effective teaching and learning, having aligned goals and reachable goals for the development is no doubt to have the development and individual's learning needs aligned more realistically, and to make the learning performance become more measurable.

Reachable goals in SMART approach also allow teachers to set up their realistic goals for gaining the power and reach the level of empowerment. Each individual is to be motivated as well as challenged to reach his or her own goals by completing the training within learners' own schedule and if necessary on their own time. According to research, the teachers development programs are always effective if the programs designed can allow flexibility in programming and instructional learning opportunities (Brand, 1997). This can certainly be applied to the programs of teachers' development using technology for effective teaching and learning. Unless the goals of development are reachable and realistic, teachers can feel confident and motivated to implement advanced technology into classroom teaching and learning activities.

Using technology for teaching and learning, teachers' development must have a focus and address the integration of technology into curriculum (Guhlin, 1996; Brand, 1997). Specific goals in SMART goals approach are defined as those goals identifiable, behavioral and observable. Having specific goals for teachers development in educational technology training helps emphasize an instructional focus that illustrates how technology can support curricular objectives. With specific goals, the development programs become meaningful, the outcomes tend to be measurable, and integration of technology in curriculum will result in a magnificent success.

To power and empower teachers using technology in teaching and learning, several other supports must be explored and considered. It is believed that one of the most effective ways of teachers' development with the school

goals is to invest someone with experience in both technology and curriculum, and provide provisional support (Kinnaman, 1990; Brand, 1997). Another support is to provide a collaborative learning environment. Collaborative learning provides a non-threatening environment, which the effective technological development of teachers can be built around. Although a number of collaborative learning models are available, peer coaching and modeling have been most effective in transforming knowledge and skills obtained from training to classroom teaching and learning (Browne & Richie, 1991; Brand, 1997). A further support is to celebrate a teacher's commitment to educational technology by providing incentives, remuneration, and recognition. This will make teachers feel good about investing time and energy to acquire new computing and related technological knowledge and skills. In addition, the supports include a continued, ongoing learning, and on-the-job support; administrator's commitment of support; and intellectual and professional stimulation. These supports are equally necessary to be embedded in teachers development programs. Research shows us that there is a tremendous need of these supports in teachers' development using educational technology for effective teaching and learning. As far as these supports and substantial efforts are in place within the development programs, teachers will become more powerful and capable to empower students using the educational technology for teaching and learning (Harvey and Ournell, 1995; Brand, 1997). However, once SMART goals have been set up, all these learning supports should naturally be considered and implemented to reach the goals. While these supports are supplement measures to reach the technology development goals, SMART goals are the keys to direct a successful training and learning.

Conclusion

SMART goals of teachers' development using educational technology in teaching and learning can be summarized as following.

- **S**et up specific goals for the technological knowledge and skills acquisition, technological integration in curriculum disciplines, and performance-outcomes in academic achievements.
- **M**easure the goals with reasonable criteria and detailed rubrics for gained knowledge and skills, level of empowerment for students' learning and achievements.
- **A**lign the goals of teacher development using technology in teaching and learn with individual's specific needs, curricular objectives, and available supports.
- **R**each the goals that are realistic, appropriate and reasonable at the different levels, and have goals set up full of reachable challenges.
- **T**ime the leaning pace, set a deadline for the completion of tasks and the outcome of achievements, and monitor closely the learning progress towards the specific goals.

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