

ABSTRACT

STUDENTS' ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN CURRICULUM DESIGN AND  
IMPLEMENTATION: A CASE STUDY OF A GRADUATE EDUCATION  
COURSE

BY

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The purposes of this case study were to better understand 1) the processes for involving students in curriculum design, 2) experiences of an instructor who actively involves students in curriculum design, 3) meanings students assign to their experiences with designing the course curriculum, and 4) the relationship between student participation in curriculum design and student empowerment. Data were gathered from observations of a graduate level educational technology course (EDTECH), interviews with the instructor and six graduate students, recordings of class meetings, students' coursework, and the course syllabus.

The instructor used five strategies to involve students in designing the course curriculum. These strategies were 1) articulating the rationale of student involvement in curriculum design, 2) pre-determining a set of procedures, 3) brainstorming in small

groups, 4) negotiating as a whole class, and 5) facilitating and guiding throughout the entire process. Regarding the experiences of the instructor, the instructor expressed that involving students in creating the course content enabled her to meet students' different learning needs, gave students a sense of ownership of the course, and gave students a sense of power over their learning. However, the instructor found that graduate students, after spending many years in traditional educational settings, have been trained to be dependent on an instructor or a teacher to teach them and make decision for them.

From the participating students' perspectives, involving students in curriculum design made the course meaningful, motivated them to learn, and gave them a sense of ownership and control of their learning. However, not having a basis of knowledge background made it difficult for some participants to come up with objectives for the course. Therefore, some participants emphasized the importance of balancing the instructor's input and students' input and the important role of the instructor as a facilitator.

Finally, all the participating students perceived the collaborative design of the course curriculum as an empowering experience. A feeling of partnership with the instructor, being involved in the assessment process, gaining self-confidence, and being listened to and taken seriously were central to student empowerment.