

CHAMPIONING TECHNOLOGY INFUSION

IN TEACHER PREPARATION

A Framework
for Supporting
Future Educators

EDITED BY ARLENE C. BORTHWICK, TERESA S. FOULGER, AND KEVIN J. GRAZIANO



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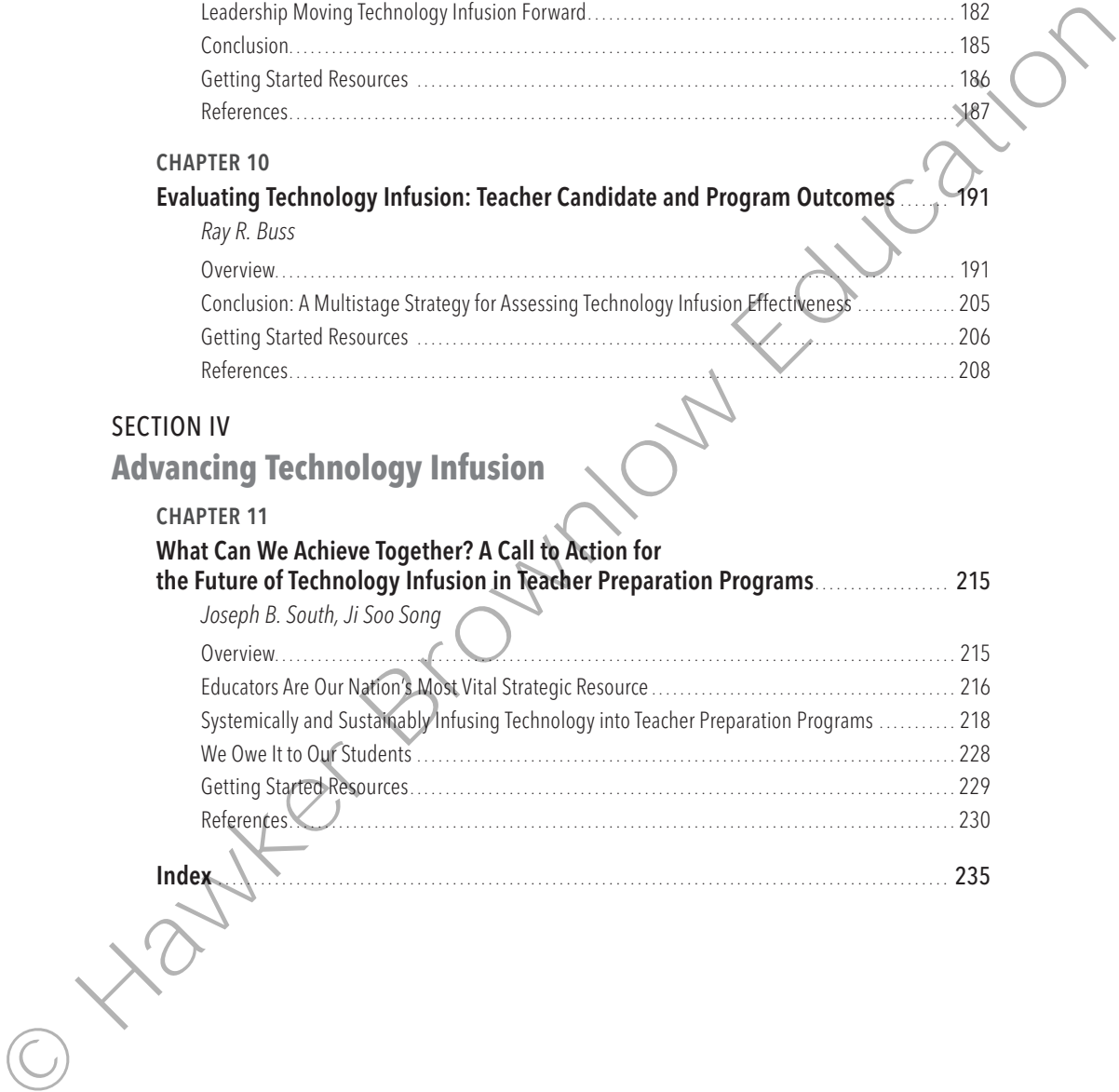
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PREFACE

Champions as Water Carriers: Prioritizing Technology Infusion in Teacher Preparation

ARLENE C. BORTHWICK
NATIONAL LOUIS UNIVERSITY

TERESA S. FOULGER
ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

KEVIN J. GRAZIANO
NEVADA STATE COLLEGE

Change that is well managed and well led is much more likely to be beneficial and accomplished more quickly. Whether institutions apply formal frameworks and theories or generic best practices, more institutions are including change management as a component of new initiatives and organizational development.

— Grajek, S., & The 2017–2018 EDUCAUSE IT Issues Panel, 2018, p. 14.

We have been hoping for change. We have research, articles, and even books that clarify the concepts and strategies for leadership and change. But what we need are champions—a champion at each institution who brings vision, motivation, and tenacity, and who is supported by a culture that embraces innovation.

Infusing technology in teacher preparation is the vision. Hard work will be required, as exemplified by the champion who is also willing to serve as a water carrier. According to Walker (2018), carrying water is the “invisible art of leading from the back” (p. 133). Champions are individuals who provide support through their interactions, serving as a conduit to elevate priority setting, decision making, and achievement. Champions who are water carriers know when to step forward and when to lead from the sidelines, staying attentive to needs and timing. They also know when to retreat and regroup to be more strategic. Consider the scenarios below—examples of the kind of well-managed change, hard work, and water carrying that is needed by champions of technology infusion.



Sound Familiar?

Picture yourself in one of these situations:

Scenario 1. The subject line in an email from the dean of the School of Education read, “Outcomes of the Spring State Legislative Session.” The email announced that the governor had signed a long-awaited bill for the construction of a new, state-of-the-art, 85,000-square-foot education building. The dean, delighted with the news, wrote: “Securing the funding for a new education building is something we have been working on for years. Now is the time to think big, share your vision for the space, and design a building that will help us place the School of Education on the map for its innovative technology.” The dean ended his email with a request: “Take time over the summer to think about your dreams for embedding technology into the new building. Be prepared to discuss your ideas at the fall retreat.”

Scenario 2. With an eye to the future, the College of Education Technology Committee at a large university lobbied the dean to accept the “challenge” issued by the Department of Education Office of Educational Technology (DOE/OET) to more adequately prepare teacher candidates to effectively use technology in support of teaching and learning. Following a proud moment when their institution was listed among other innovative institutions on the DOE/OET website (tech.ed.gov/edtechprep) that were willing to step up to this call, the committee quickly added references to the principles outlined in a DOE/OET policy brief to the college’s technology plan document. These principles included program-deep and program-wide experiences for teacher candidates and establishing systems of professional learning for faculty. As the committee reviewed the revised technology plan, they realized that a lot of the statements in the document were philosophical and “aspirational.” They did not really have an action plan and, further, did not have access to resources to support specific programmatic changes and faculty training. The academic year was coming to a close, and there would be several new committee members next year; they elected an incoming chair in anticipation of next year’s committee work.

Scenario 3. Due to the increase in virtual K–12 schools opening across the US, the dean from a small liberal arts college announced at a faculty meeting that she wanted the college to develop a teacher preparation program focused on training a cadre of teachers with a credential in K–12 online teaching. She noted that, as

outlined in the college's new strategic plan, key stakeholders such as teacher educators, liberal arts and sciences faculty, administrators and teachers from K–12 virtual schools, and instructional designers would be invited to be at the table from the onset of planning for the new program. An educational technology faculty member spoke up, insisting that planning for the new program must include someone to provide leadership to technology infusion throughout the curriculum, rather than in just one or two courses. Another faculty member expressed concern that even with significant resources devoted to development of the program, how could they be sure newly enrolling students would find the program of value to their future employment?

The faculty and staff from all three scenarios above were faced with deciding “What next?” Ideally, they will all work toward a similar outcome: that is, the infusion of technology throughout their programs. However, as outlined in the scenarios, each representing a different context, the participants must overcome obstacles that are unique to their situation.

Scenario 1 Obstacle. *Funding* for technology is just one element in achieving desired goals.

Scenario 2 Obstacle. Fluid *participation* of faculty and staff, as well as lack of action planning, can lead to the ball being dropped.

Scenario 3 Obstacle. Untested *instructional methods* may lead to failed or unsustainable programming or lack of enrollment.

Obstacles such as these must be considered and addressed in planning when programs are working to build capacity for effective change in teacher preparation. Given the complexity of teacher preparation programs, champions carefully ponder, “How should we proceed?”

A Vision for Technology Infusion

We believe that technology, when used in innovative and powerful ways, can equalize educational opportunities (especially in areas of diverse needs). We have been calling a program-deep and program-wide effort to address technology an “infused” approach. Some colleges and schools of education have eliminated a stand-alone educational technology course for an infused approach. We are aware

that other colleges and schools of education are considering this or other alternative methods for improving the way they prepare teacher candidates to teach with technology.

The vision for technology infusion is that teacher candidates are supported throughout all aspects of their preparation and that they are proficient in teaching with technology by the time they enter the field as certified teachers. For this vision to come to fruition, any and all individuals associated with a preparation program need to be responsible for and responsive to infusing technology. Thus, an infused program involves *all the systems and personnel* surrounding teaching and learning in preparation programs, including teacher educators, administrators, professional developers, instructional designers, field supervisors, district and school administrators, mentors, etc.

A large-scale change effort like this does not happen overnight, and long-term change requires close oversight of incremental adjustments. Success in academic transformation depends on educational leaders' commitment and strategic goals for leveraging technology and effective pedagogical practices (Grajek, S. & the 2017–2018 EDUCAUSE IT Issues Panel, 2018). In most cases, even with a strong leader who is focused on discovery, adoption, and implementation of new strategies (Freeman et al., 2017), a cultural acceptance of a systemic effort to adopt a technology-infused approach takes time. As experienced at Arizona State University, a cultural acceptance may not be attained for several years (Foulger, Wetzel, & Buss, 2019), and even then, preparation programs should be forewarned that needs shift, personnel changes, and visions evolve, making ongoing leadership, support, and championing all the more important (Buss, Foulger, Wetzel, & Lindsey, 2018).

At the core of each of the scenarios above lies an organizational champion, an “enlightened change maker who is personally committed to mutual values, rather than self-centered ones, and relentlessly driven by possibilities” (Thompson, 2009, p. 6). Change champions assist in instituting a change; advocating for and promoting the change from within, they are instrumental in the implementation of the change (Warrick, 2009). Champions for technology infusion are concerned with continually advancing a long-term change effort. In doing so, they rely on these skills: