Final Learning Reflection

LDTE 5700: Issues, Practices, and Research in Learning, Design, and Technology
By Reva Lobatos

Reflection

As I reflect on my journey through LDTE-5700, I am struck by how much my mindset has evolved when it comes to understanding the role of funding in the work of instructional designers and learning technologists. Coming into the course, I understood funding as something necessary but peripheral, an external hurdle to get over so that the "real" work could begin. Now, I see it differently. Funding isn't a barrier; it's a bridge. It's the mechanism that can carry good ideas from vision to implementation, and perhaps most importantly, it forces us to deeply consider what matters most in the learning experiences we are trying to design.

One of the most valuable aspects of this course was how it positioned funding not just as a financial issue, but as a reflective and strategic process. Each grant proposal and assignment required me to think critically about *why* I wanted to design certain experiences, *who* would benefit, and *how* I would measure success. Writing my grant proposal for children's yoga teacher training in my classroom, for instance, wasn't just an exercise in asking for money, it was a deep dive into aligning my educational philosophy with tangible, research-backed practices that address the growing social-emotional needs of students.

This experience challenged me to blend the emotional side of teaching, the connection, the care, the community, with the practical realities of limited resources and competitive funding environments. I had to make the case for something I believe in deeply, using data, research, and strategic language. That process alone taught me that passion and pragmatism can (and must) coexist if we want to see lasting impact in our schools.

Throughout the course, I also gained a more nuanced appreciation for the landscape of educational technology funding. The readings and discussions shed light on how systemic inequities and policy decisions influence what gets funded, and what doesn't. I now recognize that funding decisions are never neutral. They often reflect broader societal values, and as learning designers, we have a responsibility to advocate for equity through our proposals and our practices.

One major shift in my thinking came from learning how to write with funders in mind. I tend to write from the heart, narrative, experiential, reflective. But writing for grants required a different kind of discipline: being clear, concise, and compelling while tying every element of my project to outcomes, budgets, and timelines. I didn't lose my voice in the process, I found a new one. A voice that can navigate both the emotional and the analytical, one that can speak to the heart *and* the spreadsheet.

The peer feedback and collaborative elements of this course were another highlight. Being able to review classmates' proposals and receive feedback on mine helped me see different angles and approaches to similar challenges. I loved seeing the creativity of my peers and how they tied funding to everything from VR labs to culturally responsive curriculum design. It reminded me that innovation in education doesn't always have to be flashy, it just has to be intentional, grounded, and responsive to real human needs.

Another big takeaway from this course was the idea that funding is part of the design process, not an afterthought. When we embed funding considerations early into our planning, we naturally begin to think more holistically about sustainability, scalability, and impact. I've started to think more deeply about how to design initiatives that don't just "launch" but actually *last*. This is especially important in public education, where funding can be inconsistent and initiatives can easily fizzle out if they're not deeply integrated into the school culture and systems.

Future Research Idea

A possible research study I've been thinking about stems directly from my proposal to bring children's yoga teacher training into the classroom. I'd love to explore the long-term impact of implementing mindfulness and yoga practices on elementary students' behavior, focus, and emotional regulation, especially in high-need classrooms.

Research Question:
How does implementing a structured, innovative, technology-led yoga and mindfulness program impact student behavior and classroom climate over the course of a school year?

This study could use a mixed-methods approach, incorporating behavior tracking, teacher and student reflections, and social-emotional learning (SEL) assessments. I see it as a way to not only validate the approach through data, but to tell a powerful story of how small shifts in practice, when supported by funding, can transform a learning community.