

Teaching with Technology

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This semester I am taking Introduction to Distance Education Systems in Adult Education (D525) and also Introduction to Adult Education Theory (D500). My D500 class has been my first introduction to philosophy and philosophy concepts related to adult education. The first two weeks of that class have left my head spinning as I have been trying to understand the difference between philosophy and theory and then how to apply the two practically to my practice. Surprisingly, it took *this* course (D525) to help me understand these concepts; last night I felt it finally click! In Kanuka's chapter in *Theory and Practice of Online Learning*, she clearly explains the philosophy and then the role of technology under that philosophy. As I was reading this chapter, I felt myself *finally* understand how philosophy, theory, and practice are practically applied. I feel like that moment was important in my academic and professional growth and also my conceptual approach to teaching in a distance setting.

My conceptual approach to teaching at a distance derives from my philosophy of education. I recently took Lorraine Zinn's Philosophy of Adult Education Inventory (PAEI), which helped me start to develop my own philosophy of education. According to this inventory, I tend to side with teaching from a humanistic and progressive approach. Humanistic education encourages personal growth, self-directed learning, and the belief that all humans have limitless learning potential. Progressive education also promotes personal growth and experiential learning through problem solving (Zinn, 1998). With my educational philosophies in mind, I can then determine my approach to teaching with technology. According to Kanuka (2008), both the humanist and progressive approaches align with the *uses determinism* orientation. This orientation, or view of technology, posits that technology is a tool, one that can be used for education and learning, one that does not control the learner. "Carpenters use their tools to build

things; the tools do not control the carpenter. Similarly, computers should be used as tools for helping learners build knowledge; they should not control the learner (Kanuka, 2008, p. 96).”

This viewpoint promotes the idea that learners are separate from their technologies and are not controlled by the medium.

I agree with the *uses determinism* orientation and my conceptual approach to teaching with technology aligns with that orientation. Using the humanist approach to teaching with technology, I would heavily integrate group work, workshops, discovery challenges, and other types of teaching that help make the student self-directed in their learning. This type of teaching allows the teacher to be a helper, encourager, and facilitator always promoting student growth and development. Learning lies solely with the learner. And according to Kanuka (2008), “the act of learning is a personal activity that involves intrinsic motivations, self-concept, perception, and self-evaluation” (p.107). Moreover, this approach is very learner centered and encourages students to be very self-directed in their learning.

Using the progressive approach to teaching with technology, I would also be focusing on learners’ personal growth and development. However, with this approach I would integrate more of the problem and situation based learning. Experiences of the learners would be heavily relied on to direct the flow of the teaching. This type of approach views the learners as products of their environment and ultimately wants them to improve their life in society and ultimately improve our society (Kanuka, 2008, p.104). In this approach teachers are meant to help, facilitate, and coach their learners. The relationship between learner and student is an interactive partnership. Teaching with these concepts in mind, I would have to purposefully and pointedly understand my students’ backgrounds and learning objectives.

My teaching approach in a distance setting would include both the humanist and progressive approach. Encouraging students to be self-directed in their learning, promoting growth, and learning from each-others experiences would be my goal. I would take on the role of facilitator, encourager, and interactive partner.

Learning with Technology

Throughout my undergrad years, I got a chance to experience *many* different types of online teaching styles. The worst, being a professor whose entire curriculum was voice recordings for PowerPoint slides, with the ugliest slides you have ever seen. This professor had us watch and listen to his slides and then take quizzes and tests over the material...the entire semester. Needless to say, I did not learn anything in that class. And the best online teaching style was a professor who encouraged us to video chat and collaborate with other students on a regular basis.

However, now in my master's program, I feel as if all my undergrad years of online classes do not even compare to the richness of the courses I have been taking. There was a lack of clear purpose in many of the assignments I did in my undergraduate classes that were online; I have a huge need for my classes and assignments to feel purposeful. The other thing I value in my classes is clarity in the instruction and presentation of materials. Online graduate courses are already intimidating enough, there is no need for confusion in the presentation and assignments. So far in this master's program, I have been thoroughly impressed with my professor's abilities to create learning environments that foster such growth and development in their students. I have also been very pleased with the variety of teaching methods and tools my professors have used in my courses. My professors seem to be teaching from a humanistic and progressive approach to technology, which is definitely how I learn most effectively in a distance setting. I can see that

some of my professors align with the *uses determinism* orientation to technology, which is seen through their use of Canvas. They use Canvas as a tool, or rather a vehicle by which they carry out their teaching.

I absolutely love our Learning Managements System- Canvas and am very excited that Ivy Tech is moving to this system for our students. I believe this system when used in a humanistic or progressive teaching approach is a great tool with which I learn. I believe this tool affords the teachers the ability to interact with students on a deeper level; the students the ability to interact with other students well; and it gives the students the ability to interact with the material in a clear and growth promoting fashion. Some of my professors use specific tools within canvas as vehicles for teaching- like the discussion forums, collaboration areas, video chat systems, voice recording tools, etc. The discussion forums allow me to read and glean from other students' life experiences, the collaboration corners allow me to seamlessly interact with students on projects, and the group assignments allow me to interact with students many times via video chat. These types of interactions are invaluable to my growth and development as personally and professional. Like the progressive approach, I appreciate things like “experimental, problem solving, and situational approaches to learning” and the humanist approach, I appreciate things like “group relations training, group processes, sensitivity workshops, encounter groups...and self-directed learning (Kanuka, 2008).”

I learn best in a distance setting when those tools/teaching methods are used for assignments that promote interaction with students, interaction with my environment, interaction with my professors, and interaction with the content. When my professors encourage those types of assignments I learn and grow the most.

References

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