Chapter 2

Instructor Immediacy and Authenticity: Engaging in Cognitive Vulnerability within the Online Instructional Environment

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ABSTRACT

Online instructors necessitate the implementation of immediacy and authenticity on a continuous basis within an instructional endeavor. Towards more fully understanding the immediacy and authenticity of an instructor’s efforts, aspects related to interactive activities, instructor’s philosophical beliefs systems, and understanding cognitive vulnerability within an online instructional environment are vitally important to learner success. Further, while developing a community of practice supports the instructor’s efforts to engage learners more fully within the instructional success capable within an online instructional environment, while also focusing upon enhancing the talent pool within the course environment. A talent-propelled instructional environment supports the learners while also enhancing the instructor’s viability and strength of positive instructional experience.

INTRODUCTION

As with each new innovation that is integrated into the instructional environment, the cries that teachers will no longer be needed and that teachers will become extinct arise. From the time that radio was introduced, to film and even television, each societal shift was introduced into the instructional environment and the inherent fear mongering that teachers will be retired due to inherent extinction of viable need has been realized as ridiculous. With the latest introduction of the Digital Age’s Internet access and Information Age’s conceptual freedom of information on a global scale, again cries arose that quality instructors will become an unnecessary job that would be fondly remembered by the older generations (Arnett, 2013; Galant, 2013; Kessler, 2013; Kopp, 2013; Ravitch, 2013; Trucano, 2015). Again, after a longer
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period than one might have imagined, society again come to the realization that the instructor is inherently necessary and ultimately a vital component throughout the shifting influences of the Digital Age.

**Information Age’s Impact upon Teaching and Learning**

Of interest is the discussions revolving around labels, as pertains to the name Information Age, Digital Age, or perhaps even Computer Age. What is most important within these labels that define the shift from traditional engagement with knowledge and attainment of information through a process defined by time and effort, within the Information Age the digitally-based availability of information is merely a few mouse clicks or a few finger movements away. Meaning, the concept of “knowledge is power” has shifted within the Information Age; previously controlling the knowledge was how power was defined, but within the Information Age all knowledge is available quickly so the power is held by those persons who have cognitive skills and who can work with the information in creatively new and different ways of understanding. Knowledge is no longer the power broker within society; instead, the ability to produce new information that is not only personalized but also creatively meets a societal need reflects a Knowledge Economy thought process. Technological progress has merely made knowledge available more swiftly and more easily than ever before; within the Information Age the knowledge overload is a concern, wherein the ability to use information in new and different ways is not only shifting the educational arena but also the world of business and industry. The impact of the Information Age upon the educational system is obvious, as knowledge acquisition must be framed beyond the traditional face-to-face instructional environment and towards an anywhere-anytime cognitive availability.

**Instructor Immediacy and the Instructional Experience**

The instructor is vitally important within this Information Age shift must be recognized, as the instructor’s immediacy and instructional presence within an instructional environment inherently reflects the necessary conditions and support structures inherent within any cognitive endeavor. Yet, what is instructor immediacy? One may suggest that instructor immediacy is the ability of an instructor to communicate and engage learners with the subject matter and with course colleagues, across distances of time, space and knowledge base. As described by Cheese, Thomas and Craig (2008), although associated with the realm of business and industry, the conception of talent-propelled organizations recognize the following realization that educational institutions are only now beginning to comprehend:

... the conditions faced by every organization in the search for talent are changing with astonishing rapidity in every part of the world. Familiar talent pools are shrinking, new ones are emerging; new technologies are transforming the nature of work, the skills demanded at work and the ways in which people can work; new elements are arriving in the global talent mix with new attitudes and ambitions. All these trends are making talent an ever more critical and complex issue for every organization. (p. 2)

As the business and industry realm recognizes the importance associated with not only talented people inherent throughout organizational personnel, but also the shifting types of talent that are emerging more swiftly than one might imagine. This suggests the need for even more high quality instructors, who bring forward a sense of immediacy and authenticity that supports the learners even more fully than previously realized. As Naisbitt emphasized within one of his best-selling books entitled High Tech