Chapter 11

Interactive Digital Instruction: Pedagogy of the 21st Century Classroom

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ABSTRACT

This chapter explores the concepts of pedagogy and its development in the typical higher education classroom as a lecture-focused activity, to how improvements could be made to the process of teaching students from a critical perspective utilizing constructivist principles. The author details the process of moving from a teacher-focused closed system of learning to a student-centered digital pedagogy that engages the student in uniquely rigorous ways utilizing varied technologies. The author describes the development of the process from its inception to the most advanced stages and offers critiques and insights for others to follow utilizing TPACK.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores how to deepen student learning and increase engagement through embracing Digital Pedagogy. There is a gap between increased student engagement because of a lack of implementation of digital pedagogy. However, due to the consistent development of and advancement of technology in our global society, learners of today are primed to engage with such instructional and social networking tools, yet pedagogical structures need to be developed and embraced in order to meet this challenge. “A body of literature has developed recently that links social constructivist theory with the use of new media technologies in terms of pedagogical best practices” (Churcher, Downs & Tewksbury, 2014, p. 34). This development demonstrates that there is a growing interest in recognizing such connections and seeing them as valuable components when it comes to change. Exploration of such interactions lead us to explore the concept of pedagogies as part of the teaching construct.

Existing pedagogies in higher education are varied, but the vast majority of college professors were still educated in a system that did not include robust digital instructional technological tools. The curriculum structure for college students too often revolves around the lecture. Lecture has been a staple of higher education since higher education was first established in the United States with Harvard
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University in 1636. The term lecture comes from the French word lecture and the French influence is seen through the structure of the lecture which was a staple of their higher education system. Dick and Lupton argue “While lectures communicate rhetorically through appeal, inclusivity, and empirical groundedness, books must communicate through consistency, distinction, and discipline…” (2013, p. 118). The advent of social and other digital technologies changes the curriculum’s traditional structure of simply books and lecture. The curriculum is made up of instructional pedagogies that must change. The curriculum and the instruction is not relating to current students’ culture and experience. When this is the case a disconnect exists between those elements. The greater the disconnect the more students are disengaged and learning decreases. It is because the lecture format does not link to the students’ culture that students often disregard readings and tune out during class time when instructors would like them to be intellectually present.

Critical Thinking is the basis for deep learning; however, what critical thought looks like in the 21st century classroom is different from what many professors and instructors experienced themselves. The curriculum, inclusive of pedagogy, replicates itself through systemic educational process; therefore, many professors and instructors teach the way they were taught. This curriculum does not meet the needs and desires of our students. The cause of this is the fact that the way students learn is changing as are their intellectual and pedagogical expectations of their educational process. Digital engagement is becoming an expectation for students and universities as well. Additionally, students are expecting to engage in social media and other technological tools. Churcker, Downs & Tewksbury (2014) state

...social media offer many possibilities as relatively new pedagogical tools to be used aside traditional classroom techniques, and our experiences have shown a number of applications that have furthered student learning beyond what could be achieved otherwise. (p.47).

This is evidenced by the fact that many students take notes on laptops and phones, using technology to capture learning content. These techniques have grown out of individuals’ increased usage of such technological tools. Students are approaching learning in ways their professors by and large have not considered in any meaningful way. The challenge for professors is to embrace a new critical paradigm of thought in relation to their students’ learning. The fact is students are engaged in digital pedagogy. Professors are the ones creating the pedagogical landscape, “…the teaching or learning processes leads to distinguish the paradigms of pedagogy…” (Alfuqaha, 2013, p. 40). Kinchin (2012) states “It is however, the pedagogy (composed of values, beliefs, theories and assumptions) that drives teaching and not vice versa…” (p. E45). Thus, it is up to the instructor to reflect and act critically with regard to pedagogical decisions.

There are many ways to explore this topic area, but the author will challenge higher education instructors to question their own practices of pedagogy and look at how TPACK (Technological Skill, Pedagogical Skill, and Content Knowledge)- a framework for engaging in technological teaching popularized by Mishra & Koehler in 2006 can help. Using a critical multifaceted perspective as a vehicle to ultimately enhance student learning by deepening critical thinking through using digital pedagogical solutions is key to personal pedagogy development and increased student engagement. One such way to do such is to utilize a digital notebook platform such as, OneNote. The professor should question the value of the lecture to her by-and-large Millennial and Generation Z population. The lecture is generally a one-sided event that does not allow for deep interaction through technology. A pedagogical system where students use the OneNote platform to take digital notes at a higher critical level enhanced by images,