

## My Philosophy of Online Facilitating/Learning

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“Education is interest” was written on a poster I once saw. This quote resonated with me because the issue of student engagement has not only led me to transform my teaching practise, but also influenced my decision to further my education. Shelley Wright states, “engagement is a genuine disposition for self-directed, deep learning, fostered from an early age and continues life long.” (Wright, 2013) Wright adds that the point of engagement is to foster life-long learning, “not to coerce kids into performing tasks we want them to do.” (Wright, 2013) Engagement is what I want for all my students so “they can think and live authentically.” (Lavery, 2006) An important aspect for transforming my teaching practise is revisiting my philosophy. As Lavery expresses, “philosophy has a dual role in teacher education: first, it prompts teachers to take individual responsibility for and become more reflective about the values expressed by their teaching practices so as to enable them to teach with greater authenticity; second, it provides teachers with a disciplinary technique that is useful in the facilitation of student reflection and dialogue so as to enable students to think and live more authentically.” (Lavery, 2006) My philosophy of online facilitation and learning has been formulated based on my experiences in teaching and my beliefs in the theories of constructivism and connectivism.

Based on my teaching experience, I believe creating and maintaining relationships within any learning community is the foundation for any course whether it is face-to-face or in a virtual classroom. The connectivist's view emphasizes that nurturing and maintaining connections are vital to facilitate continual learning. The social constructivism's view that all meaningful learning occurs when individuals are engaged in social activities also reinforces the need for relationships and networking. Kear points out that social constructivism “is the basis for learning approaches based on communication and collaboration and is therefore, a major theoretical perspective for learning in online communities.”(Kear, 2011, p. 12) I look towards Garrison and Anderson's (2009) Community of Inquiry framework that brings together social,

cognitive and teaching presence to bring structure to an online learning community. I agree with Kear, in that “the important aspect of the framework is the interaction between them.” (Kear, 2011, p. 21) How successful I am at combining social, cognitive and teaching presence will have a direct bearing on the effectiveness of the online community.

My most rewarding teaching moments occur when students take control of their own learning and contribute to the learning happening in our classroom community. I continue to implement technology tools to create a blended classroom where content is obtained online and is student-derived.

My photography students this year will be creating e-portfolios to demonstrate and reflect on their learning. Student teachers from Vancouver Island University will work one on one with my students. Not only will the student teachers be able to validate the life importance of e-portfolios to demonstrate and reflect on their learning, they also will be an added support for my students. Collaborating with professionals and peers outside of a learning community enriches the learning process and opens up new learning opportunities.

Along with e-portfolios, the development of a class wiki as a student-generated resource page will be implemented. In the past, I provided the content for my class. By controlling the content for my course, I was doing a disservice to my students. I took away the active learning and only expected my students to passively watch videos and view examples I provided. I would like my students to learn how to be successful researchers. As a group, they will collaborate and decide the best resource to add to the class content page. I plan to build a atmosphere of collaboration, communication and trust within the learning community.

Collaboration, communication and trust are important elements in an online environment for both facilitators and learners. Powerful learning occurs when connections are made outside the learning community. That connection can be illustrated in my professional life with awareness of Shelley Wright’s work. Recently, she

posted on Wright's Room (<http://shelleywright.wordpress.com/2013/01/11/the-problem-of-student-engagement/>) her PhD research on student engagement. Wright plans to use youth participatory action research not only to bring the student voice to the forefront of her research, but also to "empower her students to change the circumstances in which they learn". (Wright, 2013) She plans on having students photograph the events in their everyday lives at school and through these images merge them with stories that will provide "insight on how they conceptualize their circumstances and their hopes for the future." (Wright, 2013) Wright adds, "I hope to use technology as a tool to give a voice to students who are normally silenced, while at the same time empowering them to use technology to create an educational environment that allows and fosters self-directed, deep learning. Now I just need a classroom..." I would like mine to be that classroom. I only need to reach out and make that connection. This type of networking, technology use, and collaboration inspires me and puts my teaching philosophy into action. My students will become powerful learners in the process.

#### References for my Philosophy of Online Facilitating/Learning

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