

Chapter 3: Shared responsibility, rules & norms; Shadow issues; Role of instructor (of facilitator of knowledge) & student; Psychological and Spiritual issues; Cultural & Ethical issues.

Chapter 4: Synchronous & Asynchronous issues: this area particularly interests me as it is one of the topics in my doctoral research. Which one works best in an online/hybrid environment, its implications. Time related issues – especially of interest as e-learning takes a global format and students/instructors could be in different hemispheres or continents. AND the discussion on whether it takes longer to teach/learn in an online environment. Group issues – I would particularly like you to reflect upon your experience being in a cohort group –does working in cohorts supplement online/hybrid learning, or just makes it more complex?

The issue of security or identity – what about the naysayers who think it is too hard to keep online learning safe and ensure that the student enrolled is the student taking the exams/doing all the work.

Chapter 5: Technology as a tool, its implications and better usage; Technical support/training or lack of it.

Personally, I don't have a lot of need for human contact in an online environment. As long as assignment instructions are easy to locate and clearly defined I usually do not require any teacher interaction at all. The same appears to be true for a lot of the online students I teach, but there are those that require special attention for one reason or another. I attribute a lot of it to laziness, as it seems to not matter how big, bold or red an instruction is, one or more students will always email me or post to the Help forum, and ask me to repeat the exact same instruction to them personally. As I said I attribute this to laziness; students who can't be bothered to read my posted announcements or instructions and find it much easier to ask their questions to me directly instead of first checking to see if I have already taken the time to explain the answer to their question in great detail in an announcement or by other instructional means. After reading chapter 3 in Palloff and Pratt (2007), I am re-thinking my assessment and wondering if instead of laziness it could be an attempt at making contact. I have always viewed online courses as an asynchronous medium and felt it required little interaction between instructor and student, but while reading Palloff and Pratt's point of view, I thought that perhaps it comes down to learning styles. Some students learning styles don't require that they be held by the hand and some students are a little needier. The problem for the instructor is that when academic institutions demand 40 seat classes and a minimum of 5 sections taught per semester, the more needy the students are the more our workload increases; geometrically. I think their needs to be a re-organization of responsibilities. It seems that a lot has changed in the area of responsibility due to the increase of technology available to educators but there has been no paradigm shift that has occurred in the number of students teachers are assigned or the amount of work they are required to output to accommodate this new constructivist approach which requires that students receive individual attention via individual instructional methods. As an example, in most of my classes I record narrated, step-by-step tutorials demonstrating to my students how to complete their programming assignments. Not only do I have to continually re-record these videos as the version of the software I'm teaching changes, but now I am expected to provide my own closed captioning for each video in order to make my courses equally accessible to deaf students. As an instructor, I

feel I am most likely doing ten times the amount of work that the math teacher is who teaches face-to-face where the textbook book rarely changes. I think that there needs to be a change in assignments when it comes to online instruction. First there needs to be better support from administration by providing support personnel that can handle technical issues like encoding videos, publishing them to the right servers, and closed captioning them. In addition I think that more colleges should organize things like Stanford University does in their online programs. Stanford has staff who record instructor's lectures and demonstrations done in the classroom for the online version of the course and they assign group leaders to answer the day-to-day questions that other online students have as far as comprehension and completion of assignments – the instructor only meets with the group leaders. That way the content experts can focus more on keeping up-to-date with their subject matter and creating an articulate presentation of the material which can then be disseminated and proctored by others.

As far as shadow issues go, I don't think that there is much chance of it occurring in one of my online courses, because they are not setup for opinionated discussions. However, I can say that I have experience the phenomena in this program, I just didn't know it had a name at the time it occurred. In a previous class I posted my opinion about a portion of text we were reading and commented on the authors extremely left-leaning viewpoints, for which I received several response stating very matter-of-factly that my opinion was flat out wrong, one of which was a concurrence by the instructor. I simply ended the thread by saying "we'll have to agree to disagree." It was no big deal, I didn't feel threatened by it, but I do think it was an example of shadowing.

Synchronous vs. asynchronous is an issue I touched on briefly earlier, but I wanted to expand on my thoughts a bit more. In a hybrid course, at least the way I understand them, synchronous communication is mandatory at some point during the course. In the hybrid class that I teach, we are required to meet five times face-to-face in a classroom during the semester. But the online courses and even the online portion of the hybrid course I believe must be conducted asynchronously. In fact I think that asynchronous communication is one of the most appealing features about taking an online course. With most students, especially grad students, work full-time jobs and these days many companies work shifts go round the clock. I think that the asynchronous component of online courses is the most appealing feature that makes online courses so attractive to so many people. I realize with technologies like GotoMeeting, and iLinc, and increased bandwidth in many areas, there is a temptation to have synchronous components in online courses, but I think it is an attitude that will increase the gap between the haves and the have-nots. If synchronous communications is a requirement of a course I think it will make it less accessible to many potential students in rural areas where bandwidth is still an issue.

Works Cited

Pallof, R. M., & Pratt, K. (2007). *Building online learning communities: Effective strategies for the online classroom*. San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons.

