

Chapter 9

Although Palloff and Pratt are big advocates of Constructivism, it remains, for the most part, un-proven. In fact most of the empirical evidence shows that learner centered pedagogy, where a student's preferred learning style is matched with the appropriate teaching methods, show no significant improvement and studies that claim to prove otherwise are majorly flawed (Dembo & Howard, 2007). *Double loop* in the learning process may have some merit as it appears to be nothing more than a fancy title for meta-cognition for which there is a lot of data in support of in the context of cognitive psychology principles (Alessi & Trollip, 2001). Palloff and Pratt state that the essence of transformative learning is when a student notes that a transformation has occurred for them and in the process they seek to understand why and that self-reflection is a critical component of transformative learning (2007). Which may be true, all they offer is their opinion. My question is how does this apply and do all students have to have that light-bulb moment in order to learn? In my experience many of my students need to reproduce a skill that has been shown to them first in order for them to be able to attempt to extend beyond what is taught. In my opinion the ability to extend shows their comprehension of the mechanics involved in the skill more than it demonstrates some kind of reflective moment in which they had an ah-ha moment. From the perspective of Palloff and Pratt writing right, grammar, vocabulary and language are neither important aspects nor used as criteria for grading where a reflective journal is concerned. I can see their point here for this specific method of writing. However, as a programming instructor I know that following the rules of syntax is very important to getting a software program to work as expected and I'm quite sure it will be very important when writing our thesis papers.

Chapter 10

Formative and summative evaluations are tried and true methods of assessing students' performance and have large support from the educational community at large. Formative allows for evaluation to take place incrementally throughout the course and summative evaluations summarize a student's overall performance. Plagiarism is always an issue for online instructors because of the vastness of written document available from the Internet. Plagiarism is one of the things I found myself have to battle a lot in my online programming courses because in a lot of cases it can be very easy to copy another student's code. Turn-it in obviously is not a useful tool in this case. What does tip of plagiarism a lot of times is when I see the identical mistake being made by two different students on an assignment. This is where it helps to be familiar with each student's coding styles and flaws. For instance one student my comment a lot in their code whereas another may not. Should the student who does not comment a lot all of the sudden have comments appearing in their code or vice versa, it can be a did giveaway, especially if I can match the two documents up side-by-side, and line by line. It's virtually impossible that two students code exactly alike. Another problem with assessments in an online course is that there is always the possibility that the person completing the assessment is not the student at all. We have heard lots of reports to this affect. What is being discussed at our school is requiring student to complete a certain amount of assessments at designated assessment centers where two form of proof of identification are required.

Chapter 11

“Distance learning will never replace the traditional classroom” is something I hear and debate a lot with my colleagues and friends. I believe I mentioned before that I have a friend who is a Biology professor at RCC and his mantra is that the best learning comes from a good teacher with chalk and a chalkboard. My argument to him is how are you going to show your students on chalkboard, mitosis as it is occurring, that can compete in any way shape of form with the experience of seeing it in a video of the live event? We have one instructor at the college where I work who is constantly bashing our online courses. I recently learned from my Department Chair that this professor has the highest number of complaints from students in both his face-to-face and online courses. In this case it is the teacher, not the medium that makes a class bad. Regarding the six essential elements, honesty, responsiveness, relevance, respect, openness, and empowerment which Palloff and Pratt reiterate from Chapter 1. I agree with all of them and employ them in all my courses online or otherwise. I am always honest with my students, perhaps sometimes too brutally, but I think it’s important they know where they stand and sometimes there is no way to sugar coat it. Responsiveness is a key to my success as an online instructor. I keep my students motivated by responding to their problems and questions as quickly as I can, and I am sure to always post scores for their assignment within 7 days of the assignment’s due date. Something I think is lacking in a lot of online course I’ve taken. Relevance is something I give a lot of thought to. I try to give relevance to the course from day one by explaining why I think the course is important for students and by asking the students how relevant they feel the subject matter is to their lives. I also try to begin each lesson with a brief explanation of why the information they are about to learn is important building block in the class. I think I do a good job of showing my students respect. Admittedly I have to work at better understanding certain student circumstances, but I am aware of this and try to improve continually. For me empowerment is what I am able to give to students when they are successful at whatever they are attempting to accomplish in my class. I make a point of the fact that students are afforded the opportunity to fail and to have additional attempts at being successful and that I am always ready and willing to give them guidance. References

Works Cited

Alessi, S. M., & Trollip, S. R. (2001). *Multimedia for learning: Methods and development*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Dembo, M. H., & Howard, K. (2007). Advice about the use of learning styles: A major myth in education. *Journal of College Reading and Learning* 37(2) , 101-109.

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

Patti,

You stated that "I concur with Palloff and Pratt that course evaluations done at the institutional level are 'not very useful in determining whether the course was successful in achieving course objectives' " (p. 216).

I'm still considering this exact dilemma. We had a training session the other day for developing departmental learning outcomes (DLOs), program learning outcomes (PLOs), and student learning outcomes (SLOs). There was quite a heated debate during the meeting over whether these methods of assessment would have any merit or not. Like I said, I'm not sure either way; I mainly sat and listened to others who were doing the arguing. One thing I did gather from listening is that WASC is insisting that we implement these types of assessment strategies and that if we want our programs to continue to receive funding we will have to develop learning outcomes for all of our courses, programs and departments at the college, and document our implementation and results, or suffer the consequences.

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