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Looking for the hype in hypertext: An essay deconstructing pedagogical assumptions associated with online learning and instructional design.

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Abstract

This paper aims to debunk the metaphysics of presence informing modernist pedagogical assumptions. Systematic instructional design, predicated on teleological and eschatological modern metaphysics, superordinates designer's goals at the expense of learners. Tracing structuralist pedagogical theory to Bobbitt (1997) and Tyler (1949), one can readily see the roots of popular instructional design models, such as Smith and Ragan (1993), Mager (1997), and Dick and Carey (1996). If, however, we look to pragmatism and post structuralism, we can find alternatives to reductive and straight-line pedagogical theories and thereby construct emergent and transactional learning spaces in which learner input is valued. Pragmatist and postmodernist pedagogies, moreover, place an emphasis on mediation.

Introduction

The hype is that online, virtual sites will free students, instructors, and administrators from many of the limitations proximal lectures have presented over the years fro m universal, homogenized pedagogies to reduced infrastructure costs. This paper will examine certain entrenched modernist learning assumptions and counterpoise these with post-modernist and pragmatist sensibilities that seek to take advantage of the current digital revolution in order to improve the educational possibilities for online learning. The emphasis here is pointedly on learning not education as a social institution. As Dewey (1944) noted in the earlier half of the last century, institutionalized education can stifle the natural urge to learn when a society's goals become superordinate to the individual learner's, thereby dampening a learner's desire to grow in an educational context. Typically, instructional design models predicated on fixed objectives seriously limit the likelihood for an emergent learning transaction to occur. The purpose of this paper is to deconstruct many of the underlying pedagogical assumptions informing typical and popular instructional design models, particularly systematic ones, and to offer some alternatives. Using such alternatives will hopefully open hypertextuality to more dynamic potentials for realistic learning.

Modernist pedagogies

The torturous route to Modernist assumptions of knowledge have roots dating back to the Platonic dialogues and Aristotle's philosophical works, through the Neo-Platonists (Augustine) and Medieval Scholastics (Thomas of Aquinas), adopted by such seventeenth century philosophers as Descartes and Newton, and passing through Philosophers such as Diderot and Rousseau. In the modern era, the two most commanding figures influencing curriculum theory and underlying assumptions of knowledge transfer are Bobbitt (1997) and Tyler (1949) (Applebee, 1996; Gress & Purpel, 1979; Flinders & Thorton, 1997; Walker & Soltis, 1986).

Bobbitt's Curriculum

Franklin Bobbitt's The Curriculum(1997) initiated modern curriculum theory (Walker & Soltis, 1986). Bobbitt should be considered what Eliot Eisner (1994) refers to as a rational humanist. A rational humanist believes that foremost, humans are rational animals capable of discerning truth from dedicated and exhaustive empirical study. While this seems a just attitude for determining intelligence at first glance, a more dedicated and exhaustive examination reveals that the rationalist believes that the universe is ultimately knowable if one only discovers certain physical truths. The pseudo-scientific emphasis then resorts to what Dewey (1944) calls the metaphysical fallacy that knowledge preexists inquiry and is fixed with a final end. Even Rousseau's Emile (1962) underscores this faith in ultimate and final knowledge that the enlightened mind can achieve when living in accord with one's natural attributes uncorrupted by society. Dewey critiques this fallacious assumption:

> But the notion of a spontaneous normal development of these activities is pure mythology. The natural, or native, powers furnish the initiating and limiting forces in all education; they do not furnish its ends or aims (p. 114).

The problem with both Rousseau's natural development pedagogy and Bobbitt's social efficiency pedagogy is that they are based on teleological paradigms: for Rousseau, the best education takes advantage of a

person's innate abilities as if abilities are a priori and not learned behaviors; for Bobbitt, a society should train future citizens to do the job of today for 30 or more years in the future as if economic and social needs will remain static. Dewey points out just how myopic Bobbitt's social efficiency, structuralist planning model is:

> Industry at the present time undergoes rapid and abrupt changes through the evolution of new inventions. New industries spring up, and old ones are revolutionized. Consequently, an attempt to train for too specific a mode of efficiency defeats its own purpose. When the occupation changes its methods, such individuals are left behind with even less ability to readjust themselves than if they had a less definite training (p. 118).

A social efficiency progressive believes that society can determine what is best for itself and use this knowledge to call upon certain educational reforms aimed at improving the nation. Such assumptions underscored the drive for Physics and Mathematics after the Soviets launched Sputnik and the current emphasis on business training in education so that American educational products can compete in a global market. This underscores education external to a learner, that society determines what is best for the pupil. In contrast, social justice progressives, championed by Dewey, sought expanded democratic participation, social reform, and more equitable wealth distribution. Bobbitt favored preparing students for society, as expert planners perceived it actually existed or would exist. The difference lies in that social justice progressives favored a fluid planning society while social efficiency progressives favored a fixed, planned society.

As Bobbitt (1997) sees it, "the era of contentment with large, undefined purposes is rapidly passing. An age of science is demanding exactness and particularity" (p. 10). Then as now, this stance suggests rigid, external objectives, and standards of learning determined by science. What science meant for educators and politicians then as now is some version of positivism with it presumed "hard facts" along with theory and value neutral inquiry, or what Bobbitt calls investigations "without pre-suppositions" (p. 13). Bobbitt optimistically announced, "Experimental laboratories and schools are discovering accurate methods of measuring and evaluating different types of educational processes" (p. 10). It does not matter that the positivist image of science is theoretically dead; ghoulishly, it lives on to dominate educational practice.

Bobbitt (1997) supposes that aiming for externally expert determined goals, students have the highest likelihood for succeeding and so did the nation. Bobbitt wrote that to "train thought and judgment in connection with actual life-situations" (p. 9), will accomplish his goals. Accordingly, we can deconstruct Bobbitt's basic ideas from the following passage:

> Human life, however varied, consists in the performance of specific activities. Education that prepares for life is one that prepares definitely and adequately for these specific activities. However numerous and diverse they may be for any social class, they can be discovered. This requires only that one go out into the world of affairs and discover the particulars of which these affairs consist. These will show the abilities, attitudes, habits, appreciations, and forms of knowledge that men need. These will be the objectives of the curriculum (p. 11).

It is easy to identify the false social Darwinism embedded in the idea that we should educate social classes for their probable destiny. The "rationality" of social efficiency demands social reproduction. Tracking and the differentiated curricula associated with it serves as a social sorting machine for a society that avoids critical democratic deliberation. As Aldous Huxley (1965) wrote in Brave New World Revisited the social ethic that holds humans as entirely social organisms programmable to social needs as part of a collective hive undermines our humanity, our biological and social uniqueness. Such curriculum planning as Bobbitt advocated presumes such passivity and interchangeability to the socio-economic machine.

Gress and Purpel (1979) remark that Bobbitt's "model of curriculum planning . . . [has] survived a half century's thought and practice in one form or another" (p. 237). Walker and Soltis (1986) write, "The performance-based and competency-based teacher education movement of the 1970's repeated this mode of curriculum construction" (p. 55). The same holds for the "standards" movement over the last decade. The enduring appeal of Bobbitt's objectives and standards approach lies in its putative appeal to modern notions of "reason," objectivity, and measurement. The promise of permanent progress is also modern, though the reductive methodological assurances of a safe and secure, if narrow, path to a perfect and predetermined teleological essence, is pre-modern as is the metaphysics that supports it.

Tyler's "Rationale"

The most influential name in curriculum theory is Ralph Tyler (1949) (Applebee, 1996; Flinders & Thorton, 1997; Walker & Soltis, 1986). Gress and Purpel (1979) note that the "basic elements of" Bobbitt's "work underlie Tyler's classic formulation" (p. 237). The classic work is Tyler's Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction (1949). The following excerpt comes from Tyler's "rationale:"

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[F]our major tasks serve as the focuses of curriculum construction: The selection and definition of the learning objectives; the selection and creation of appropriate learning experiences; the organization of the learning experiences to achieve a maximum cumulative effect; and the evaluation of the curriculum to furnish a continuing basis for the necessary revisions and desirable improvements (p. 246).

Tyler focuses on predetermined objectives lying outside the student's activity. Presumably, these objectives are so valuable they must serve as the essential tools of all learning. Tyler assumes that concrete and predetermined objectives will make education more efficient and effective regardless of academic discipline; accordingly, Walker and Soltis (1986) state, "Tyler . . . proposes that a school's philosophy be used as a set of standards to 'screen' the objectives derived from this first step in the process. This will ensure that each objective is in harmony with the school's general philosophy and ideal aims" (p. 56). The assumption is that the philosophy of the school establishes the valued objectives for which Tyler has a value neutral tool of means-ends rationality for achieving. This tacitly assumes the old positivist fact versus value dualism as well as the means versus ends one. Most schools, of course, will presume that his methods like most others and most media are value neutral relying on traditional metaphysics' supposition that the ends, the content, are most essential in education.

One should also consider Tyler's (1949) stance on learning experiences. The guiding idea is that of "sequence and integration" (p. 251). Tyler declares,

Curriculum makers can also identify significant skills that are sufficiently complex and pervasive to serve as organizing elements to achieve sequence and integration. And, for objectives involving attitudes, appreciations, interests, and personal commitments, curriculum makers can identify important values that can serve as organizing elements (p. 251).

This is the seductive old idea of curriculum vitae as a straight line, secure, and certain method for being safely shepherded through hazardous terrain. While this straight-line approach, with proscribed learning goals as predicated by Mager (1997) and Dick and Carey (1996), makes creating instruction easier, it does little to prepare learners for the unknown realities of tomorrow.

Finally, there comes evaluation to which the code word today is accountability. "I employ the term," writes Tyler, "to include the process of comparing the ideas and assumptions involved in curriculum development with the realities to which they refer" (p. 252). Although he does not say so, evaluation presupposes a philosophical bent since evaluation obviously requires that we reflect on the values we espouse in making our selections of objectives, means for obtaining them, and the organization of those means. What is odd is that Tyler, again implicitly, seems to think he has a value neutral method of evaluation. Things are much the same today.

Commenting on Tyler's rationale, Walker and Soltis (1986) conclude,

He makes no commitment to certain ideal aims, specific objectives, a particular program, or one conceptualization of curriculum phenomena over another . . . . His commitment is to a highly rationalized, comprehensive method for arriving at logical and justifiable curricula of many different kinds (p. 58).

Curriculum is method's child, and content's orphan; the methodological form versus subject matter content dualism is untenable. Walker and Soltis also conclude that the Tyler "rationale" is "the paradigm, the dominant model of twentieth-century thought about curriculum design (p. 55). Nothing has changed in the twenty-first century largely because the Tyler rationale has all the ingredients characteristic of modern thinking, including a firm commitment to "rationality," progress, theory (or philosophy) independence of fact, value neutrality, a profound commitment to an external tools as the essence of action, and faith in "method" for arriving at the highest value, the summum bonum, the supposedly value neutral content.

Pragmatist and Postmodernist Pedagogical Sensibilities

Dewey's Democratic Pedagogy

In opposition to these rational humanist and social progressive philosophical blinders, John Dewey remarks in Democracy and Education (1944), education is growth. Living beings must continue to learn in order to sustain life: "life is a self-renewing process" (p. 9). Education occurs naturally through transaction with others and within environments. Human society seeks to control, guide, and discipline this process in order to sustain its viability: "In directing the activities of the young, society determines its own future in determining that of the young" (p. 41). Hence, society's desire to renew itself, to varying degrees, can be seen as a progression from an individual's desire to sustain him or herself. Dewey problematized his earlier distinction between education and schooling in his reconsideration of Democracy and Education (1944), Experience and Education (1997). Growth as education occurs naturally as a state of disequilibrium in which an individual attempts to reestablish equilibrium through inquiry.

Schools, as institutionalized loci for disciplined learning, seek to guide this process so that society can continually be self-sustaining. The problem lurking within this neat summation resides in disharmony. When either extreme, subject-oriented education versus object-oriented education, takes precedence over the other, growth is hindered. The pendulum has swung back and forth between the individual's desires and the society's desire since people have debated curriculum. Currently, this is particularly true in instructional design with its overweening emphasis on goals. Dewey maintained that goals are important, but these are goals in view – ideals of what we want to achieve that occur rarely in exactly the way we had initially envisioned. Goals are, therefore, contingent and emergent by nature because reality intervenes changing our goals to fit circumstances and ever-changing contexts.

Foucault's Discipline and Punish

In modernist pedagogies and systematic instructional design models, we see an example of Foucault's concept of "docile bodies," which manifests itself as the science of behavioral control in a clinical environment. "Docile bodies" relates how "modern disciplinary technology does for the human body and the body politic what Newton had done for physical bodies;" in other words, it has created Man-the-Machine; as Garrison & Burton (1995) claim instructional designers all too often presume students are thinking machines and extensions of their tools (pp. 72-3). Moral accountability can now be quantified as a numerical representation, grades; political control thereby manifests itself as the inexorable controlling agent in this utilitarian rationalization (p. 73). As for correct training, Foucault (1979) delineates a tripartite hierarchy of power: hierarchical observation – the teacher constantly monitors student activity exemplified by traditional classroom organization; normalizing judgment – the culture restructuring itself by enforcing student accordance with a hegemonic episteme; and examination – determining if students meet the standardized criteria that de facto reify socio-political norms. Unfortunately, Foucault's (1979) warning that such a system predicated on an all seeing and centralized eye, a panopticon, can come to fruition in this climate. The reliance on a hierarchy sorts individuals as objects into ability categories depending on how well they score on exams developed from norms taken, in turn, as fixed or natural categorization models. Such models assume that the norms are value neutral, but even a cursory glance at the material constituting standardized tests; one can see that the material is biased towards the hegemonic values of a society's social elites. As Becker (1998) points out, such tests are highly value laden based on the skills that dominant social groups value, and mistakenly taken as raw scores of intellectual ability and gauges for future success – as long the same dominant group defines success.

In a rational world, scientists (social and physical) discover the essential meaning of things, the monad. Latour (1987) remarks how in typical scientific processes, real things are abstracted into laboratory symbols cleansed of interference from the outside world; such abstractions have little to do, however, with the initial thing that actually exists in its environment. In a less rational world, one that is not reduced to the world as a controlled laboratory, essential meaning is a chimera, so why should we base our pedagogies on a worldview that purposefully ignores the richness, diversity, and complexities of what it is to be human caught up in the nebulous sweep of existence? Foucault in The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences (1971) provides an answer: because people in power, who claim to discover truth, actually construct it. Foucault writes, "the problem is not changing people's consciousness – or what's in their heads – but the political, economic, institutional regime of production of truth" (p. 133). When we acknowledge that truth is not fixed in an ultimate origin (arche), is not predestined to a specific end (tools), nor has an essential value (monad), we can see that reality (ousia) is contingent on context and one's perspective within a given locus. When this emancipatory vision occurs, we can pull down the edifices that sustain hierarchies, rules, and categories as givens and rebuild pedagogy around concepts of relevance.

Friere's Pedagogy of the Oppressed

Instructional design methods typically rely on specious pedagogical strategies of "facilitat[ing] knowledge transfer," which Friere (1973) critiques as the banking concept of learning. In Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Freire stipulates that humans exist to change the world through dialogue: "To exist, humanely, is to name the world, to change it" (p. 150). Naming the world occurs in transacting with the world. Transaction is a process within a functioning democracy; domination of dialogue, becoming a monologue of the dominator transferred onto the dominated, manifests itself as pedagogical sadism. Tragically, this sadism is the typical instructional design mentality in which the content and content specialist, master the student and correct the student behavior though grades dictated upon how well students retrieve information placed in their long-term storage. Freire claims in the banking concept of education that the teacher deposits knowledge, much like a capitalist would, in order to retrieve his or her funds at a later date, in this case from the student/bank, with interest. The accrued interest, on top of the

correct response to the answer, is the student's mindset that he or she is essentially powerless in this exchange. The dividend for the capitalist is proletariat passivity.

Eisner's Three Curricula

Using Eisner's (1994) three curricula – explicit, implicit, and null, – we can deconstruct what Tech intends to promote: explicit, the agenda illustrates desire for responsible, self-sufficient, active learners, who proactively contribute much to their own learning goals and methods; implicit, the methods are designed to make students react to external stimuli in a proscribed manner (e.g. fill-in-the-blanks and multiple-choice), creating passive students given precious little room for critique and analysis, two keys for active learning; null, the content is predetermined and predominate, so little freeplay exists for student discovery—the assumption here is that knowledge is finite, fixed, and ultimately determinable to an absolute value. Tech has pronounced a knowledge-in-action agenda, yet has promulgated a knowledge-out-of-context methodology. The strength of this instructional design is that students tend to do better on conduit model testing, yet their critical analytical skills suffer: "Such a curriculum of knowledge-out-of context may enable students to do well on multiple-choice items. It does not enable them to enter on their own into our vital academic traditions of knowing and doing. They lack the skills to develop interpretation, to analyze a new situation, or to muster evidence in support of new arguments and unexpected opinions" (Applebee, 1996, p.33). The underlying problem resides in the privileged status of the content as the origin, ends, and fixed meaning of knowledge. We are carrying the baggage from Plato's "myth of the cave" where knowledge, episteme, is ultimately and permanently definable to a fixed point—a monad. This, in turn, leads to suspect pedagogical methodologies that emphasize knowledge-out-of-context. Applebee (1996) describes how this mindset affects methods:

> Educators have relied on classroom practices that focus almost exclusively on memory, allowing goals of active reasoning and participation to fall by the wayside. Instead of the knowledge-in-action that both allows and develops through participation in culturally significant traditions of discourse, we have emphasized the knowledge-out-of-context that comes from studying its characteristics (p. 26).

This reliance on a contextualized knowledge may well enable students to do well on multiple-choice and fill-in-the-blank tests, but does precious little to prepare them for a world that does not function in such a reductive manner. Subsequently, this method instills a dichotomous world-view in which students learn that real world decisions can be distilled to either/or solutions that reduce complexity at the expense of creativity.

The task at hand is to find ways to salvage the goals of the academic agenda from the myopic and ill-conceived methods adopted from information technology. In this decade scholars from various disciplines have offered warnings about assumptions inculcated within this transformation (I use this term generously for now because pedagogical praxis has undergone precious little change while the medium has) and propositions for offering students to become more participatory and active learners in the environment. If we give heed to and adopt humanist, post-structuralist, and pragmatic misgivings and sensibilities respectively, we may actually take some meaningful steps towards skilling active participants in a multivocal and participatory democracy – a much more preferable locus in a public university than jumping so readily into bed with market place positivistic assumptions. Specifically, I intend to look at Garrison and Burton's (1995) warnings voiced in "Power, Knowledge, and Hypermedia" and George Landow's (1994) call to move hypertext towards post-modernism delineated in Hypertext: The Convergence of Contemporary Critical Theory and Technology.

Garrison and Burton's Skepticism

Garrison and Burton (1995), in "Knowledge, Power, and Hypermedia" cite Nelson's critiques of scientific learning theories harking back to Taylor and Bobbitt's scientific management models that have resurfaced in current conduct and accountability centered educational models demanding that education emulate the market place. Nelson balks at the oppressive nature of bureaucratic scienticism that often fails to take learner relevance and educational context into consideration. In contrast, Nelson offers his Xanadu concept focusing on open hypertext as opposed to universal hypertext. Open hypertext, simply put, allows users to create their own links and add information to a naturally evolving matrix, whereas a universal hypertext, much like Vannevar Bush outlined in "As we may think," is constructed by specialists bound by fixed hierarchies and standardized rules. In the former case, we have "computer-text-system people" who value everyone's contribution; in the latter case, we have "information Lords" controlling content and access by "information Peons" (p. 71).

Landow and Hypertextuality

Landow holds forth hope that hypertext, hypermedia, and on-line learning environments may accomplish some of the post structuralism goals: "we must abandon conceptual systems founded upon ideas of center, margin, hierarchy, and linearity and replace them with ones of multilinearity, nodes, links, and networks" (p. 752). Landow emphasizes that electronic links create more easily accessible "lexias" to external links increasing the viability for intertextuality. This intertextuality, in turn, helps reduce the status of the author at the expense of the reader: "hypertext blurs the boundaries between reader and writer" (p. 755). Barthes' "readerly text" comes to the fore seeking to create a text for active readership and disestablish the "pitiless divorce" between producer/user, owner/customer, and author/reader to which one may readily add teacher/pupil (p. 755). The non-linear links in a hypertext and the reader's ability to add to the text, involving feedback from other writers, offers a more active role for the traditionally passive reader. The reader/student becomes an active participant in making meaning thereby increasing the relevance and the links to the reality of the transactional, lived experience.

Derrida's Deconstructing of the Transcendent Signified

With respect to Derrida (2000), hypertext offers a text more closely aligned to our lived experiences in which context as the center of meaning takes the place of a contextualized truths or structural centers. A living hypertext is constantly restructured and recentered as the context shifts creating an infinity of new contexts. Hyperpedagogy uses a similar paradigm in which the class – here defined as participants, content, and context in a transactional environment – becomes an assemblage or a constantly mediated montage of meanings. Derrida quotes, "I believe that the center is a function, not a being—a reality, but a function. And this function is absolutely indispensable" (p. 495). By moving the locus of significance from essence to function, Derrida effectively deconstructs the viability of fixed meaning that examination standardization strategies, conduit-teaching models, and panoptic pedagogies that rely heavily on prerequisites and like-minded philosophical assumptions.

Derrida (2000), in "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of Human Sciences," questions the function of structuralism by deconstructing certain Platonic and Cartesian assumptions regarding the privileged status of structural centers. After Derrida concludes his argument, the validity of the "myth of the cave" from Plato's Republic (1985) and the cogito ergo sum from Descartes' Meditating on First Philosophy (1993) lay in shards. He stipulates that Western philosophy's foundational assumptions, so deeply intertwined within the structure of episteme, need to be seriously revaluated. The center of traditional philosophical structures, at once part of the structure and simultaneously existing transcendently beyond its grasp, are not centers at all. Transcendence is a central tenet in the metaphysics of presence, what Derrida labels the transcendent signified. When we remove the concept of transcendent signified and allow for freeplay, we extend the domain and interplay of signification infinitely (p. 496). As he stipulates, "Freeplay is the disruption of presence" (p. 508). Recognizing that structures are flexible and adaptive to the demands of place and time, ruptures the eschatological belief in epistemology inexorably linked to the ideologies of ultimate knowledge (episteme), origins (arche), and ends (tools). Reality is no longer a discovered monad or essence confined by the alpha of arche and the omega of tools. By admitting freeplay room in our concepts of reality, we can deny the dualities inculcated within the metaphysics of presence: physis/nomos and physis/techne. As Derrida writes, "the whole historical chain which opposes 'nature' to the law, to education, to art, to techniques—and also to liberty, to the arbitrary, to history, to society, to the mind" deconstructs the limitations placed on pedagogues to reconstruct reality and teaching models (p. 499). Derrida, furthermore, writes how deconstruction of utilitarian empiricism will expose the limitations of ideologies invested in fixed, timeless, a contextual truths; seen as tools, however, we can reconstruct reality as a function. By breaking down these dualistic barriers – the supposedly inherent tensions between culture and nature, mind and body, education and nature – fade into irrelevancy.

Regarding the prevalence of dualisms/binaries, Bowker and Star (1999) argue that tensions often arise from globalization of categories. Local categories, meaningful segmentation of the overwhelming myriad of reality, upon becoming universal standards, codified and global, lose relevance to immediate tasks at hand and act as barriers to understanding. Moreover, those who codify global standards take on the mantle of authority and usurp the power away from the recipients of their seemingly arbitrary categories, much like the relationship described by Nelson between information lords and peons.

When we accept that knowledge is neither teleological nor eschatological, we can question the privileged status of the text and teacher, the quintessential classroom authorities. In order to questions the myths surrounding the author, we need to investigate textual possessions. Simply put, textual possessions refers to the fact that most effective (and the most affective) on-line collaboration and instruction occurs as on-line textual communication not as multimedia lectures that emphasize the privileged status of the content and the content specialist. Therefore, poststructuralist theories concerning text, particularly those promulgated by Derrida, Foucault, and Barthes, are

especially relevant. Moreover, collaborative work in digital culture should more closely resemble renaissance coteries than the authorial work models predominate in print culture. In coteries the primary method for sharing knowledge was not conduit model – the textbook and professor as the source of static knowledge to be recited much like a litany – but a dialogic one in which the contributors engaged in dialectic disputation (Downs-Gamble, 1995). The renaissance manuscript chapbook was mutable, emergent, and co-produced text neither definable to a fixed value nor attributed to a single author. The latter term itself is problematic because its etymology resides in the Latin root auctores, meaning the authority on a subject typically referring to a religious subject (Pask, 1996).

Foucault, Barthes, and Authority

Foucault (1997) and Barthes (1998a) deconstruct the concept of author in respectively, "What is an Author" and "Death of the Author." For Foucault the modern conception of author "constitutes the privileged moment of individualization" (p. 890). He writes that writing is a jeu (game/freeplay) of a writer as part of a matrix: "it is a question of creating a space into which the writing subject constantly disappears" (p. 890). This claim denies the privileged place of author/professor/content specialist/instructional designer as the authority on a particular, set subject or method of teaching. He pits the historical function of author against the modern ideal of author. He writes that historically the author-function exists as four primary characteristics: (1) the author-function is linked to the juridical and institutional system that encompasses, determines, and articulates the universe of discourses; (2) it does not affect all discourses in the same way at all times and in all types of civilization; (3) it is not defined by the spontaneous attribution of a discourse to its producer, but rather a series of specific and complex operations; and (4), it does not refer purely and simply to a real individual, since it can give rise simultaneously to several selves, to several subjects—positions that can be occupied by different classes of individuals (p. 896).

Barthes (1998a) proclaims the death of the monolithic author occurs in the act of writing (poesis). Modern concepts of author hinge upon beliefs of univocality and singularity of purpose and knowledge, yet Barthes writes "as soon as a fact is narrated no longer with a view to acting directly on reality but intransitively, that is to say finally outside of any function other than that of the very practice of the symbol itself, this disconnection occurs, the voice loses its origin, the author enters into his own death, writing begins" (p. 253). In one fell swoop, Barthes tears down the monolithic structure of autonomous author to reveal the character of writer as practicing a craft within a broad social milieu. The author for Barthes is a production of modern capitalist notions of liability and ownership and a positivist tyranny. The scripter and the text do not exist timelessly but in the here and now during and within the acts (praxis) of production and reading. The performance occurs in the moment of production and meaning takes shape in the process of reading, never decipherable to an exact essence of the text. Texts have no ultimate meaning tied to "God and his hypostases—reason, science, law" (p. 256). He claims that "Classic criticism has never paid any attention to the reader, for it, the writer is the only person in literature" (p. 257). The death of the modern concept of univocal and authoritative instructor/author gives birth to the active student/reader as both recipient and interpreter. The modern authorial, hierarchical stance also predicates discourse surrounding gender and space.

Boler, Massey, and Power Geometries

At an AERA symposium last spring, Boler (2001) spoke on "Real and Virtual Gendered Identities in Educational Landscapes." She writes, "The apparent 'disembodiment' created in cyber culture poses a genuine dilemma for feminist and socially-progressive educators" (p. 1). She declares that the phallocentric conception that the body is central to the production of knowledge and the Platonic/Cartesian stipulation that the body needs to be transcended as an unclean and feminine entity corrupting knowledge and truth dominates discourses surrounding hypertextuality. She juxtaposes her skepticism of cyber culture's claim to be a non-gendered, non-racial, anti-chauvinistic space with Massey's (1993) critique of space anxiety and power geometries.

Massey (1993) in her "Power Geometry and a Progressive Sense of Place" refers to how localities are not as homogenous and local as they appear but are affected by power geometries of local heterogeneous values and global (extra-local) agencies:

> The uniqueness of a place, or a locality, in other words is constructed out of particular interactions and mutual articulations of social relations, social processes, experiences and understandings, in a situation of co-presence, but where a large proportion of those relations, experiences and understandings are actually constructed on a far larger scale than what we happen to define for that moment as the place itself, whether that be a street, a region or a continent. Instead then, of thinking of places as areas with boundaries around, they can be imagined as articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings (p. 66).

The preponderance of nostalgic spatial language is an aspect of power geometries in which hegemonic influences attempt to contain and limit the chaos supposedly non-spatial and extemporal cyber culture represents. Hegemonic groups use the time/space compression of cyber culture to further entrench the digital divide – women, non-whites, and poor people rarely find access to social and economic power-geometries that white, middle to upper class males do. Internet access alone does not guarantee access to power manifested within cyber culture space. While more women are accessing online spaces, they are often corralled into places that define them as feminine and marginalized from power. The most popular sites, such as girl chat rooms, traditionally gendered spaces like seventeen and cosmo-girl, and online shopping in gendered specified places, reify stereotypical feminine roles. Boler (2001) concludes that "the nostalgia for place, authenticity, and stable identity which Massey recognizes as a masculine nostalgic reaction in relation to time-space compression accurately explains the reinscription of space in digital culture" (p. 4).

Traditional instructional design models tend to see classrooms (localities) as isolated places that exist somehow beyond the confines of a larger reality. Moreover, they regulate the social relationships among participants into strict hierarchies of power and limit networks to homogenous and hierarchical panopticons of power through knowledge transfer from information lords to information peons.

Systematic Instructional Design

Often instructional designers and instructional technologists trained in the use of various modernist learning models, particularly Smith and Ragan (1993), Mager (1997), and Dick and Carey (1996), engineer course transformations from proximal to online. During these transformations, designers often imbrue the course with modernist pedagogical assumptions by implementing one of the popular instructional design models. Traditional instructional design's reliance on the privileged position of goals creates superordinate structures that circumscribe student activity and reinforce fixed domains of knowledge. Smith and Ragan (1993) write that

> Instruction is the delivery of information and activities that facilitate learners' attainment of intended, specific goals. In other words, instruction in the conduct of activities that are focused on learners learning specific things. . . . Every learning experience that is developed is focused toward a particular goal. (p. 2-3)

The student is passive and secondary to attainment of a goal he or she has no voice in choosing or manipulating to meet his or her needs and desires. The learner described in this quotation is a presumptive automaton ready for normalization that leads inexorably to a standardized product ready for the economic machine. We can easily see Bobbitt and Tyler's philosophical assumptions playing in this statement. Moreover, teleological structures that emphasize regulation and particularization of fixed goals reify the power geometry of the designer's privileged status at the expense of both the professor (denigrated to a content specialist) and the student (now little more than content assimilator). This dissemination into fixed roles, additionally, dehumanizes and regulates the process of learning.

Mager (1997) in his Preparing Instructional Objectives also designates objectives superordinate to the learner and methods as beyond the learner's reach:

> you must clearly specify outcomes or objectives you intend your instruction to accomplish. You must then select and arrange learning experiences for your students in accordance with the principles of learning and must evaluate student performance according to the objectives originally selected (p. 1).

The outcomes and methods belong to the instructional designer; Mager assumes student as recipient of content he or she has no choice and by methods in which he or she has no voice. Furthermore, only one set of learning principles seems to exist – in this case a form of reductive behaviorism. One can also note the frequent use of the imperative of his own instructional design. No room is given for any emergence, transaction, or adaptation to change that frequently happens in the emerging reality of the classroom: "instruction is only successful to the degree that it succeeds in changing students in desired ways" (p. 13). The presumption of student as automaton is naked here; moreover, the instructional designer defines success for the learner.

Arguably, the most popular instructional design model, often unquestioned as the instructional design model, is Dick and Carey's (1996) The Systematic Design of Instruction. With its emphasis on being systematic, such hierarchical statements should not surprise one: "The first step in the model is to determine what it is that you want learners to be able to do when they have completed your instruction" (p. 5). While their belief in pedagogical ownership is not nearly as blatant as Mager's (notably one of the theorists informing the design), the next quotation is telling in how little pedagogical freedom they afford the learner: "you will determine step-by-step what people are doing" (p. 5). Here the modern, mechanistic nature of systematic design is laid bare. Traditional instructional design clearly follows in the footsteps of Bobbitt and Tyler.

Conclusion

To return to the plea for finding a means between extremes, we should consult Garrison's (1997) Dewey and Eros. Garrison, harking back to both classical Greek and Deweyian concepts of education, argues that modern education lacks eros, defined here as the passionate desire to achieve an ends. Clearly, the emphasis resides in relevance, but whose is a seemingly unsolvable conundrum in most modern, bureaucratic educational theorizing. Often we rely on dichotomies such as who comes first in choosing the curriculum: the student or the teacher? Do we pass off one person's desires as the only appropriate ones, which are typically cloaked as objective, value-neutral standards, or do we pander to students' desire without teacher guidance, much less supervision? If we, however, look for the common good, what we often call the teachable moment that is emergent and co-constructed, we can avoid this false dichotomy, this destructive either . . . or logic. In doing this, we must pay more than lip service to this noble goal.

In Curriculum as Conversation, Applebee (1996) states that often a discrepancy between "grand goals of exploration and discovery" unfolds and how the class is administered (p.21). If the teachable moment becomes a didactic game of "guess what I'm thinking" in which the teacher's knowledge or answer is more valuable than the student's, then we are lamentably back to a pedagogy of the oppressed cloaked by constructivist buzzwords. We are practicing pure reasoning, a deductive and self-enclosed quest for certainty, as opposed to practical reasoning that seeks ends we desire to obtain. The means, a constantly negotiated center within a fluid structure, exists somewhere between these extremes. The most appropriate way to accomplish this shift away from pedantic pedagogy is to accept students' voices as relevant within their educational trajectories. Regarding curriculum as conversation, Applebee writes,

> Schooling should be organized to help students enter into culturally significant domains for conversation, themselves representative of broader cultural traditions of knowing and doing. By placing the emphasis on entry into such conversations, I seek to ensure that students will emerge with knowledge-in-action rather than knowledge-out-of-context (p. 49)

To do this we need to accept that knowledge is dynamic rather than static and that a means between student and teacher desires discerned through an emergent and mediated transaction will yield fluid and adaptive hyper-pedagogies.

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