OPPOSITE THE EDITORIAL: DISTANCE LEARNING SUCKS

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Ethics and Social Responsibility in Technology

Why does distance learning suck so bad?

Ethics and social responsibility with educational technology is particularly important to me. We are in the midst of a pandemic and our schools have decided to turn to distance learning as a creative solution. During other pandemics, school was halted totally. Solutions were created, tested, implemented, continue to be evaluated and regulated. With these known facts, why are parents reporting that distance learning sucks and their children need to be in school regardless of the harm that could be caused by illness. The quote that I recall reading from a parent in a local school's social media parent's group was how this parent (and others in the group) are upset because, "My children deserve a better education than this." My response was that I appreciate everything the school is doing for my children. I followed up with my opinion that as a parent, I selected this school to assist in educating my children, but that it is STILL my responsibility as a parent to make sure my children learn.

The implications of a technology worldview for professional application to the overall field of education is not new. We began with pencils being a new piece of technology, then mass producing schoolbooks, then translating from Latin to languages of the students. There seem to be arguments from parents with every change in education. We built schools for all ages outside of the homes and added teachers, defined grades, diverse nationalities. Why do parents fight the school systems each time they decide to implement change? Teachers can no longer invite children to worship, yet they can teach of religions in certain curriculum which is mandated by the state. Some parents still argue for no religion saying its state vs. God. Adding the verse "Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it" (King James Bible, Proverbs 22:6) to show a child how to learn will get a teacher fired, but to add it to a writing, grammar, historical writing lesson is acceptable. How can we fight about this when there is also a fight about the Pledge of Allegiance? The push for differentiated for each student

has become huge. With all this fighting and regulations in the past to promote learning in a new way, why has distance learning not become a savior in our current circumstance instead of the demise?

The way I see it, each instructor can flip the classroom and give the lecture and workbook materials to the students prior to "time with the teacher" and then discuss materials during the class time. This also gives the student time to investigate and do their own research. As I suggested in this particular group chat the Instructional-Design Theories and Models volumes could help parents find ways that they could help their children. Parents could use this time finding best practices and their own paradigm of education for their families. These materials are the known instructional design theories and models' teachers learn from in the past and also updated for today. No matter if the students are in the classroom or using distance learning technology, teachers look to these books for reference. The response was that I was missing the point. I had no answer.

I followed up with asking what the direct challenges are. Parents wrote back that their children are not able to take a welding class or music classes and are having challenges with algebra and CAD. For each parent's statement, I contacted the school and came up with a contact for them to resolve their fear. The final complaint was that their child is failing. I di not have the heart to respond with anything other than to talk to their teacher or that their child may need and independent educational plan during this time or maybe even a tutor. The response was again that I am missing the point.

I then took to my personal social media page and asked the question about distance learning. Half of the parents said they were happy with it. The other half said it was not their child's preference and feel their children are becoming lazy. My next post stated, "It is our responsibility to teach our children, not the schools!" I had a few hateful responses, was blocked,

and deleted as friends with peers that I have known for over 25 years. The surprising part was that the people who responded so bitter were teachers. One of these teachers was a new teacher of only a year or two who wrote and said, "STAY IN YOUR LANE!" The Handbook of Research on Educational Communications and Technology (2014) recorded there are "various types of stimulus materials that instructional technology researchers have used to study different phenomena." Knowing this and knowing that some people think there is only one way to study phenomena. The way they believe instructional technology is failing in their own homes is their perception of their own reality. Is it that these parents just need to feel heard?

Other teachers wrote about their concerns with students who have IEP's or are younger. These teachers do have their work cut out for them and are very appreciated. Their points were taken very strongly on my part. I do not have the answers for them.

With the number of comments, I have read, I believe this is a very debated topic. Ethical use of technology for students the best way we can try versus putting teachers, families, and children in harm's way. I have seen teachers who have gotten ill, children placed in the hospital and elderly who died from contracting COVID 19 from their adult children who are working in schools. I have read comments that this is the new way of life and we need to get back to normal and enjoy the ones who are here with us and not live in fear any longer.

While we use this new model, we should not fall prey to our old beliefs of how we went to school and get distracted. Our children are on technology every day all day long. They know how to use this technology better than we do. Even with using this newer technology, the teachers are teaching the same content. The way I see this debate would be two sides. The first side stating that we need to look at the messages being given by the teachers, not the method in which our children are receiving the instruction (Schuurman, 2015). The second side where

"McLuhan summarized this in his famous aphorism "The medium is the message." This phrase suggests that media carry more than just content, they bring with them new ways of thinking, working, and communicating. Culkin (1967), summarized McLuhan's saying with the phrase "we shape our tools, and thereafter our tools shape us." I'm curious which belief fits you?

With the two sides of this debate continuing, the schools and teachers continue to find the best practices. I would like to find a balance and calm down the transitions for the students so they can do their best learning in whichever learning model is chosen. Who gets to decide which is more important, containing the spread of the virus or educating our children the way we used to do it before our greatest technologies were able to be used? Are there any other ways to educate our children? Are there any other technologies we could use? Where can we go from here? In the current distance learning models, the students are participating in the in-class model they are used to, but their seats are at home. Some parents prefer the distance learning model with face-to-face time with a teacher compared to online class with no instructor. With so many options at this time, what could satisfy the parents who are unhappy yet keep the parents happy who want to continue to isolate?

I would like to begin the discussion on a much larger scale with parents. I would like to collect statements to consider and needs to conquer. I believe we could come up with some great direct questions for the schools to advance education into the future. We could move ahead to satisfy if we knew what the direct needs are. Some of these needs may already be satisfied with current practices that all parents are not aware of. Many of the needs may require research and new creations. Sifting through the comments on social media may not provide the information needed for best results. I request parents to participate in helping our local schools do better if you think distance learning sucks. I do not have the answers. I do see the concern to challenge ethical

beliefs in our modern use of technology. Possibly our community could head up a larger group of parents and organize the uniqueness of these differences. All I know is we are at a stalemate and it is not helping our children. Bernard et al., (2004) shared that "achievement outcomes have been divided into synchronous and asynchronous forms of DE produced a somewhat different impression. In general, mean achievement effect sizes for synchronous applications favored classroom instruction, while effect sizes for asynchronous applications favored DE." Do parents even know what that means or even why there is a debate? I feel as if we (the community) are in a bitter custody battle and fighting over what is in the best interest for our children and do not even know why. I would love to hear from parents on both sides of this debate.

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