

Chapter 80

Creating an Early Model of Teaching at The New School

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ABSTRACT

In 1998, the AT&T Foundation awarded a grant to the Teacher Education Graduate Program at The New School, a university in New York City, to implement an Advanced Professional Certificate (APC) in Teaching and Learning with Technology (TELT). The grant was given to train public secondary classroom teachers in urban schools how to integrate technology into their classes. Using a cognitive science and constructivist-based theoretical framework, a twelve-credit four-course curriculum to earn the APC was developed. The intention was to offer it in a blended format in Fall 2000 through DIAL (Distance Instruction for Adult Learners), the New School's innovative online learning program. Because this was occurring during the early days of computer use in the classroom, many faculty and students had no prior experience in teaching and learning with technology, much less with teaching and learning over the internet. Web-based learning was in its infancy. DIAL was one of the first online learning programs in the United States to offer degrees, certificates and courses in the liberal arts through a computer-mediated environment. The Advanced Placement Certificate in Teaching and Learning with Technology was the first of its kind to offer a theoretically-based course curriculum in a blended learning format to urban educators. The historically significant outcomes were as follows: creating a method for teaching instructors how to teach technology online, learning how to integrate technology in the classroom, learning how to teach as well as participate in an online environment, using the DIAL interface which was an early platform built, in part, on a customized Linux platform. The pilot TELT program used both formative and summative assessments for learning outcomes and efficacy. The results were positive and a model for teacher education with technology was created. Nothing of this kind existed previously. The model was for continuing the New School graduate certificate program in the next stage.

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INTRODUCTION

In 1998, the AT&T Foundation awarded a grant to the Teacher Education Graduate Program at The New School, a university in New York City, to implement an Advanced Professional Certificate in Teaching and Learning with Technology (TELT). The grant funded a pilot program to train public secondary classroom teachers in New York City schools to integrate technology into their classroom teaching practice. Using a cognitive science and constructivist-based theoretical framework, a twelve-credit, four-course curriculum to earn the certificate was developed. The intention was to offer it in a blended format in Fall 2000 through DIAL (Distance Instruction for Adult Learners), the New School's innovative online learning program. The New School had run online classes since 1985 through an external vendor. By 1994, the institution had developed its own online platform to offer its degrees and certificates as well as credit and non-credit courses. Because the TELT program was technology-based, offering the pilot online was a logical extension of its goals. The pilot occurred during the early days of online learning and the use of computers in the classroom. Many teachers and students did not own computers and had little prior experience with them. Few teachers could imagine a classroom without four walls, time constraints, or the physical presence of other humans. While variations of education at a distance had a long history, web-based learning was in its infancy.

The objectives of this chapter are to discuss and illuminate the historical beginnings and challenges faced in creating one of the earliest online learning initiatives in a university setting. This chapter will also discuss how this research-based project can still inform teaching practices and learning online in today's media-enriched environment that still has far to go in taking advantage of the full set of technological tools. Presentation of information in this chapter may be unorthodox in format, but nothing of its kind existed previously. Internet was accessed by dial-up, many of our student participants had no prior experience uploading documents, working in an online environment and even responding to e-mail.

HISTORY OF ONLINE LEARNING AT THE NEW SCHOOL, 1985-1998

The New School: Early Involvement in Online Learning

The New School, originally known as The New School for Social Research, was founded in New York City, in 1919, "by a group of progressive American educators as a center for discussion and instruction for mature men and women" ("History," 2014). The New School had an early commitment to progressive principles and educational innovation, based on a "new model of higher education for adults, a school where ordinary citizens could learn from and exchange ideas freely with scholars and artists representing a wide range of intellectual, aesthetic, and political orientations" ("History," 2013). In 1934, The New School for Social Research was authorized by the state of New York to confer academic degrees. Educators such as John Dewey, one of the founders of the New School, Joseph Hart, Edward Lindemann, Margaret Naumburg, and, later, Paolo Freire, came to speak and teach courses on American education practices in a progressive society (The New School, Master of Science in Teaching catalog, 1998).

In keeping with the spirit of The New School's progressive history, its Adult Division began, in 1985, to offer some of the first credit-bearing liberal arts courses online in the United States (Hiltz, 1986). A growing number of adults wanted to earn degrees and certificates, but coming to classes wasn't always a viable option. The opportunity to study from home or the office through some form of online

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