Chapter 2
Fact, Fiction, and Disruptive Pedagogies:
Are We Having Fun Yet, Miranda?[1]

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ABSTRACT

This chapter explores potentially disruptive pedagogies. A conceptual frame is developed from characteristic features of disruptive pedagogies, including motivation, engagement, higher-order thinking, sociability, and fun in learning. The frame is applied to review how an undergraduate consumer behaviour learning design is used, preferred, and experienced by learners using data from two face-to-face cohorts in comparison to historic course feedback. Evidence of disruptive pedagogies existed in the context of technology-rich and focused activity and interactive collaborative learning settings. The design engaged and supported learning and its experience, in different ways, for different learners. Results indicate the importance of multiple, varied technologies with deep embedment in the learning design and disruptive pedagogies that confer control to learners. Socio-affective design elements using technologies increased diverse learner participation in voluntary and informal activities, in class and online.

INTRODUCTION

Today, technology is frequently used to support face-to-face learners in higher education settings, yet research indicates a need for an increase in the relevance of technologies to students, as they are selected and used by institutions (Dawson, Heathcote, & Poole, 2010) and teachers (Brew, 2010). More targeted technology and usage in universities addresses changes to student-based factors and the need to equip learners for personal and professional participation in a technology-

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inspired world (OECD, 2008). Most directly, uses of technology respond to socio-cultural affinities among contemporary cohorts (Kenney, 2012; in press) combined with larger class sizes and greater diversity in classrooms (Ellis & Goodyear, 2010). Diversity emerges as a core and related concern to technology given higher numbers of non-English speaking background students (OECD, 2010) and heightened socio-economic and age-based heterogeneity among learners (OECD, 2008a). In response to the changing extent, rather than presence, of technology and diversity at universities, there are variable degrees of engagement with technology at the level of institution and teacher (Cuban, 2001) and varied understandings of diversity at the teacher-student level (Gordon, Reid, & Petocz, 2010). Together, technology and diversity accentuate core differences in contemporary higher education, as some have noted (Barnes & Tynan, 2007).

Research proposes ways that technology meets diverse needs in learning. Technologies are used in undergraduate cohorts to engage learners (Cooner, 2010), offer support to those with diverse disciplinary backgrounds (Conn, Boyer, Hu, & Wilkinson, 2010) and to enable personal attention with limited resources (Auvinen, Hakulinen, & Korhonen, 2010). Such learning designs employ technology to foster a student-centred, constructionist approach to learning. The approach requires higher order thinking skills to deeply engage learners and improve learning quality (Kenney, 2011). The design of technology-supports for quality learning target the student learning experience. The word experience is used over forty times by Boud and Prosser (2002) in discussing learning design and technology. As these authors propose, designs that engage and challenge learners as they practise learning in context improves the student experience of learning and teaching activities. The experience is the way in which a student perceives the overall design, after it has been conceived (intended design), implemented (actual design) and used (experienced design).

Holistic design experiences that challenge learners to achieve understanding (deep learning) are, for Biggs and Tang (2007), a product of a close and consistent relationship between the objectives, activities and assessment of a learning context. While quality designs using technology improve engagement and experience (Coates, 2007), design is significantly affected by context. Context mediates the success of technology in unique application settings (Zemsky & Massy, 2004). In each setting, success occurs incrementally with adjustments to design, including broad and aligned curricular developments to integrate technology (Hedberg, Harper, Brown, & Corderoy, 1994). Surface-level integration of technology with learning and teaching strategies and practices enables superficial benefits, such as student-teacher access to content, whereas deeper integrations enable technology uses that transform learning and teaching.

Porter (2002) conceptualizes three modes of technology use in education in which teaching and learning design is about, with or through technology. The spectrum accentuates integrated application contexts. On one hand, technology is used with increasing levels of integration with context, until it is inseparable from task-technology combinations. On the other, teaching "about" employs technology to complete tasks, such as the use of word processing to present an essay. Strategies "with" technology in learning and teaching utilize integration in a limited way, such that technology could be replaced or removed and activities could continue. For example, increased access for learning in the provision of online resources and communication that could be replaced using other transmission methods. Yet, little benefit to learning and engagement ensues without embedment of technology with task in the learning design. Teaching "through" technology is its integration with activities to the point that removal sabotages task completion. The conceptualization focuses on what the student