2013

Mark Hopkins at One End of a (B)log and a Student at the Other: Deconstructing Curriculum and Delivery

William Charland
Western Michigan University, william.charland@wmich.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/acad_leadership

Part of the Higher Education Commons

WMU ScholarWorks Citation
Charland, William, "Mark Hopkins at One End of a (B)log and a Student at the Other: Deconstructing Curriculum and Delivery" (2013). Academic Leadership Academy. 43.
https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/acad_leadership/43

This Poster is brought to you for free and open access by the Office of Faculty Development at ScholarWorks at WMU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Academic Leadership Academy by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at WMU. For more information, please contact maira.bundza@wmich.edu.
Smart options: Curriculum and delivery as a creative medium

And, although college education has, of late, been referred to as a business relationship between the institution and the student client, above all else, higher education remains a vehicle for societal benefit. According to Bower and Christensen (1995, p. 96-7), the following characteristics define a catalytic innovation:

1. They create systemic social change through scaling and replication.
2. They meet a need that is either overserved or not served at all.
3. They offer products and services that are simpler and less costly than existing alternatives.
4. They generate resources, such as... grants, volunteer manpower, or intellectual capital, in ways that are initially unattractive to incumbent competitors.

In these ways, catalytic innovation can, among other benefits, 1) help address issues of class size and redundancy, 2) serve students diverse in needs and resources, 3) offer students, educators and institutions more efficient use of time and resources, and 4) attract funders and other players who desire to contribute to, and be associated with, successful solutions to problems in socially responsible ways.

The processes within an organization, the “patterns of interaction, coordination, communication and decision-making” (Christensen, 2005, p. 545), gradually settle into a fixed structure. By definition, a high-structured organization relies on repetition and coordination of processes that contribute to the organizational whole, where a loosely coupled organization allows more autonomy and less structured coordination of processes (Weick, 1979). Developed over time, most processes in higher education gradually tighten in structure, calcifying at some level to produce satisfactory, if not optimal, results. As such, they end up serving primarily those students whose needs fall within the range of services that are structurally allowed.

And although the academic calendar of contemporary student and societal needs.

Teaching and learning in higher education is, for the most part, benefited from a curriculum that emphasizes the work of the art educator, whether conducting creative research in the studio, library, or community, or developing the means by which knowledge is passed from educator to student. There is immense creative potential in the process of composing and arranging the elements of course content, delivery, and coordination. Informed by research, guided by the cumulative wisdom of practice, acknowledging and taking advantage of limitations and restrictions, honing the message, and ultimately revealing the product to an audience, a curriculum should be recognized as a serious, relevant, plastic medium.

Location, temporality and authority

Setting aside course content, not because it is irrelevant to the process, but because it represents goals and values that rightly vary from institution to institution, we attend instead to more generic variables of curriculum and delivery: location, temporality, and authority – where teaching and learning take place, and, by whom. By sorting and coordinating subject-sets of experiences, one may synthesize numerous configurations of curriculum and delivery with a complexity to match that of contemporary student and societal needs.

Teaching and learning in higher education is, for the most part, centered, with faculty, students, and educational resources coming together on the college campus. But, just as cell phones and other digital media have expanded the possibilities of communication while, arguably, diminishing the relevance of location, access to campus facilities may no longer be imperative, and may even prove burdensome for participants who can work most productively in other locales, or whose mobility is challenged, or for whom transportation, childcare, or opportunity costs are prohibitive.

Traditional
- Campus-based classroom
- Studio
- Lecture hall

Non-traditional
- Online learning can best take place
- Private or public spaces
- Internship, apprenticeship, study abroad or other appropriate work/research locations
- Internet / virtual spaces
- MOOC

Temporality

We adhere to a concept of learning that is calendar- and clock-driven (Stover, 1989; Okakri, 1994). The academic year, the semester, the class schedule, the school day all are framed by synchronous teaching and learning. Challenging this model are asynchronous approaches, offered online or through other means, that allow the educator to assign lessons that students can complete, within limits, at their convenience. Rethinking the syllabus-driven, sequential, progressive presentation of lessons that typify the standard course curriculum, we might instead consider an individualized competence-based pace of learning. Or, rather than taking a reductivist, step-by-step approach to the roll out of course information, consider the benefits of an immersive experience that forces students to make meaning from simultaneous, diverse inputs and contextual cues. The coordination and flow from course to course may also be reconsidered, offering students multiple options to exercise agency by crossing from one area of interest to another.

Authority

Although the concept of learning a community has been around since the 1990s (Sergiovanni, 1994), it has yet to supplant the practice of information flow directed from instructor to student. Determining learning objectives, the instructor writes and presents lectures and lessons, assigns readings and out-of-class exercises, and conducts learning assessments. Less common are approaches such as: self-directed, student-to-student, peer education, student-led courses, non-course-specific university resources, community resources, transfer articulations with other institutions (not necessarily educational institutions), independent online resources, and workplace internships and apprenticeships. Our approach is necessarily rooted in the traditional instructional framework.

Traditional authority
- Non-traditional sources of knowledge
- Course instructor
- Support staff
- Textbooks
- Field trips
- Image-based instruction

Non-traditional authority
- Student autonomy
- Non-course-specific resources
- Non-course-specific university resources
- Community resources
- Other institutions (not necessarily educational institutions)
- Online learning
- Workplace

The role of administrative leadership in disruptive curriculum change

To be continued...