

Should we be the “Sage on the stage” or the “Guide on the side?”: The changing pressures of technology on education

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When considering topics for this year's invited commentary, the issue of technology in teaching was the overwhelming choice by the Editorial Board. All of us have been experiencing the continued controversies concerning new technological teaching techniques, expanding knowledge bases, and the often times challenging (and yes, frustrating) mechanics of acquiring and learning about the latest technological wizardry. We have each wrestled with increasingly difficult questions... Should we get email? Can we figure out how to use it if we get it? What about establishing a list to serve as an electronic discussion site for a class? Are internet sites trustworthy? Can we create a virtual classroom? Do we even want to?

These types of questions have lead to the focus on technology and teaching addressed by our three invited writers. Dr. Carol Love from North Carolina State University has written her commentary entitled “Computers in the classroom: Clarifying communication, increasing comprehension” on the advantages to using technology when teaching. Dr. Karen Fox from the University of Manitoba has taken the opposing viewpoint in her article, “Maintaining a leisure fugue: An ecofeminist voice about leisure and technology.” In this article, Dr. Fox raises interesting philosophical questions about the nature of teaching and the influence of technology on the interaction of student and teacher. In the third commentary, Dr. Jeff Hill from the University of North Carolina-Wilmington approaches the issue from a neutral standpoint. In his article entitled “Considerations in the use of computer technology as an educational tool”, Dr. Hill raises several interesting points around the use of technological advances where they are perceived along the same line any other educational tool.

I believe that these commentaries will cause each of us to re-examine our current position on our use of technology in teaching. We will all need to weigh the pros and cons relevant to our own teaching styles, philosophies, and learning environments. As I overheard at a conference recently, we will all likely be asking ourselves, “Do I want to be the ‘Sage on the stage’ or the ‘Guide on the side?’” It is a question that has serious ramifications for each one of us. The answer could radically change the way in which we think about the meaning of the educational process, intellectual development, and our expectations and responsibilities as teachers.