

Putting the pedagogic horse in front of the technology cart

Posted: 04 Apr 2019 04:42 PM PDT

By Michael Sankey, Learning Futures, Griffith University

So, I am (allegorically) a lecturer in visual arts, I went to arts college and did well, so well that I was asked to be a tutor, then became a lecturer and now I'm a senior lecturer. Typically, I teach the way I was taught, and all seems fine to me, and most of my students seem to be doing OK. But I'm being asked to move more of my teaching online and I keep hearing from others in my faculty that we need to be considering things like 'constructive alignment' (whatever that means). Then, if I want to apply for promotion at some point in the future I need to be conscious and explicit about my teaching/pedagogical approach (whatever that means) particularly as I move to a more blended mode of delivery.

If we are going to ask our teachers to take a pedagogy first position, we need to help them understand what pedagogy is, and particularly in the light of their context; to help them start to see where they see themselves fitting within the plethora of different approaches, theories and methodologies.

Because we are thinkers and love reason in HE and like to pay honour to what has gone before, we actually have to be very clear about the ontological and epistemological positions we assume in relation to our pedagogy. In other words, understanding what the relationships (to the world) that we are forming between the concepts, categories, subject and the domain of knowledge that we teach are (ontology). But in doing so, bearing in mind that this positioning largely comes about by us assuming a posture in relation to our theories of knowledge, especially as they relate to the methods we knowingly (or not) choose to adopt when facilitating learning; to understand the distinction between justified belief and opinion (epistemology). In simpler terms, we are looking to establish a meta cognitive understanding of what we want to achieve in our teaching, how we will achieve it and why we want to (choose to) do it that way.

Pedagogy, in very general terms, refers to the interactions between teachers, students, and the learning environment and the learning tasks. And broadly it's how teachers and students relate to each other, as well as the instructional approaches we implement.

So, if we say, 'our curriculum shall use a pedagogical approach', really, nowadays, are we still broadly talking constructivism? Yes and No. As it is my contention that pedagogy, today, is having a much broader range of different teaching and learning approaches / theories / methodologies that we can draw on when the needs arise. In reality, we have developed out of necessity a far more eclectic

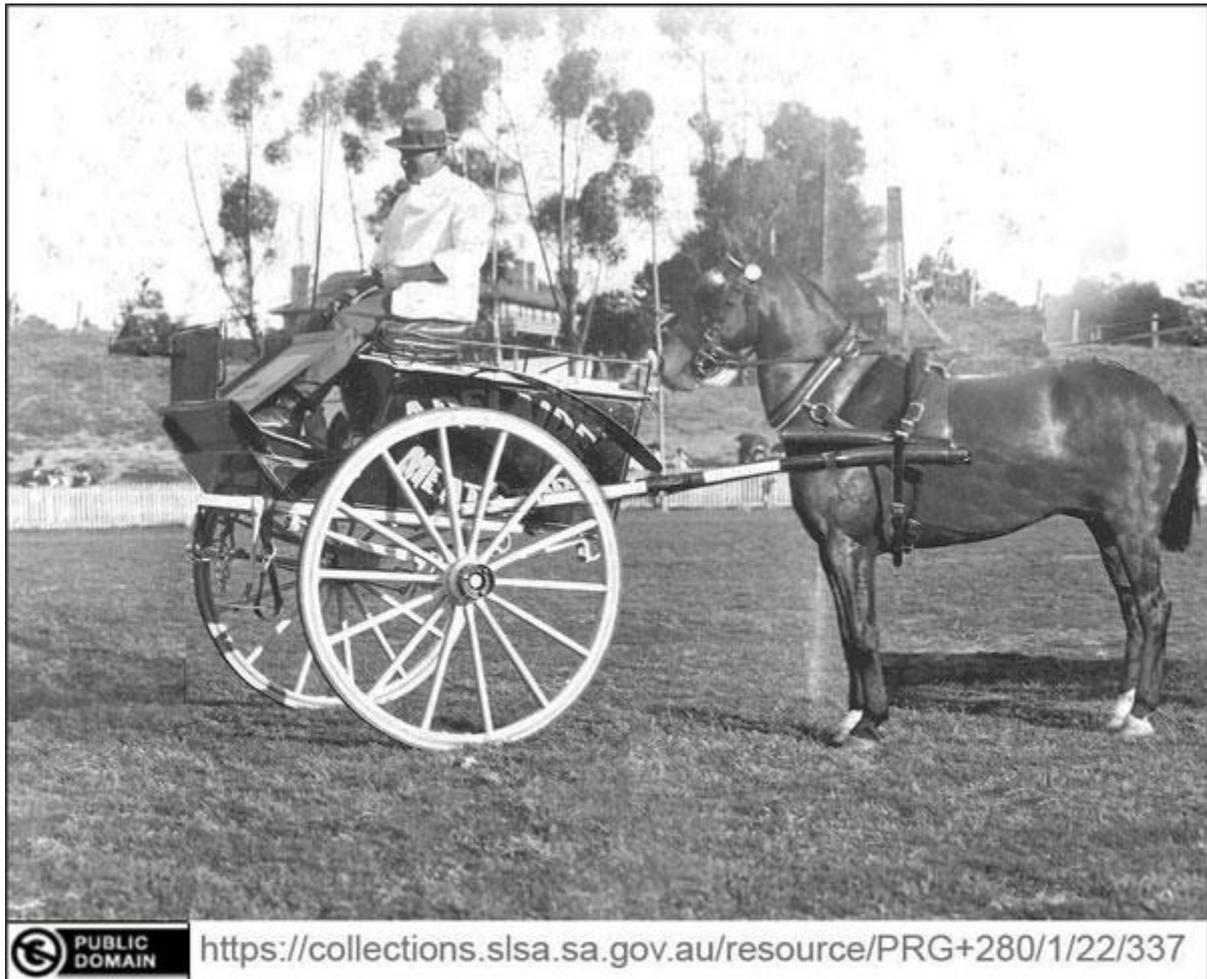
approach to pedagogy (though some purists remain), not dissimilar to the end of postmodern as a formal philosophical construct (though some purists remain).

I kind of liken it to having a full set of golf clubs. I know if the hole is 260 meters down the fairway, that I will start with my 2 wood, then depending how that goes I will either have to use my 5 or 6 iron to get onto the green, then if I'm lucky enough (more luck than good technique) I get to use my putter and get my par 4. The next hole is only 180 meters so I will use a different combination of clubs, but I will always get to use my putter. At the end of the day I have a full set of clubs at my disposal, so all my contingencies are covered. This analogy could be likened to different techniques within one methodology, but that would limit me far too much. So, there may be a few things we need to consider.

First, pedagogic strategies (the ones instructional designers talk about) are based on general learning theoretical concepts: Behaviorism, Instructivism, Cognitivism, Constructionism, Constructivism, Socio-constructivism, Situated learning, etc. There's often an overlap between these theories that explain how people learn and how one could bring people to learn. But I have seen over the years, we often put this under the one catch-all category, or banner of Constructivism, but it's much more than that. It's kind of like saying 'Pedagogy' when it's so much more than that.

Second, design of strategies draws a lot from general pedagogical theory, but also from specialized research, such as understanding Heutagogy, Paragogy, Andragogy, etc. And these help us to understand how we will implement different technologies to meet our learning goals.

Third, educational technology has been a driving force to develop new strategies, with the basic assumption that educational technologies can facilitate pedagogical scenarios, but often we have tried to fit the pedagogy in after the fact, not as the reason for adopting a particular tool. It's been kind of like putting the cart before the horse (please excuse my photoshop skills).



For example (though I haven't got a lot of room here), if we are talking 'active learning' in the online space, first we look at what we mean by active learning, what we hope to achieve through implementing an active learning strategy and then how do we do this, with what tools. We don't start with the tool, though to some degree the tool itself may suggest it would be a good fit, if an active learning strategy were adopted. So, if engaging students in the process of learning and getting them to reflect on this in their context is what we are aiming for as an 'active learning' strategy, then this leads us to think that things like active discussions, live debates, problem solving and case-based learning, simulations and role playing, peer teaching and team projects, may all be strategies to adopt. If that is our starting point, then we look at the tools that could help make this happen. The following is a simplified version of what this then leads us to consider.

Active learning	Active discussions	O365 Teams, discussion and voice boards, Zoom sessions, chat (e.g. Yammer), Instant messaging (e.g. WhatsApp), etc
	Live debates	Zoom, Bb Collaborate, Skype, (or the like), etc.
	Problem solving	Mind mapping tools, Teams, Wikis, Padlet, Answer Garden, etc.
	Case-based learning	Teams, video sharing, social bookmarking, Zoom (or the like), Evernote, etc.
	Simulations	360 Video, AR/VR/MR/XR, Smart Sparrow, H5P, etc
	Role playing	ePortfolio, VoiceThread, video sharing, etc.
	Peer teaching	Teams, LMS, Zoom (or the like), Wiki, etc
	Team projects	Teams, Google Docs, Voice Thread, ePortfolio, etc

In the online space, in practice, if we are wanting to foster more active, authentic and collaborative approaches to help our students learn more effectively in preparation for the future of work, we must first ask what we want to achieve, then look for the right tools to help us do this.