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Tech Teaching: Ideas Surrounding its Impacts

Throughout the last several months, there has been significant commentary on the impact of technology on teaching and communicating with students and others in the higher education community—much of which has been negative. As outlined in a July 2010 *Chronicle of Higher Education* article:

> "Multimedia—dangerous!
> Online research—depthless!
> Classroom screens—dubious!"

All of these opinions and views follow the thought that the Internet is "rewiring our brains and short-circuiting our ability to think[1]." As well as, potentially cortical re-mapping the way individuals learn and process information (even further than it has already). Therefore, an apparent question is surfacing, does too much or certain variations of technology harm student learning and/or the development of important and necessary social skills? For example, could allowing students to respond to classroom discussions with Audience Response Technologies (ART) harm their ability to develop the skills needed to interject ideas during future business meetings? For instance, skills such as taking charge of a meeting, establishing buy-in from colleagues, as well as a volume of similar non-verbal behaviors may be effected by too much ART (or other similar technology) usage. On the other hand, research also suggests that ART systems increase class participation from students who otherwise would not actively interact in such environments (perhaps due to introversion) and may benefit students that are participative learners.

To further explore the discussions surrounding tech teaching, a recent *TIME* article discussed a study from the University of Michigan that reported "college students today have significantly less empathy than students of generations past did." Interesting enough, the article continued by stating that "psychologists speculate this may have something to do with our increasing reliance on digital communications and other forms of new media[2]." With less personal interaction between faculty and students, as well as between students and their classmates, comes a potential decrease in the amount of opportunities available to develop emotional intelligence. At a time when ethics and leadership skills are critical, there should be deep concerns about emerging trends related to lacking empathy—especially with regard to business school graduates.

As far as for the use of laptops in classrooms, research has been relatively positive. In one 2004 study, "students in laptop classrooms reported higher participation rates, more interest in learning, and a greater motivation to perform well[3]." It will be interesting to observe future student reactions to laptop classrooms—especially as computers become a common expectation for college campuses, but also due to the impact of smart phones and other devices that take the place of the laptop. In terms of faculty response, studies have returned mixed feedback. However, most findings continue to report that faculty feel laptops and other devices can be highly distracting as students multi-task in the classroom with instant messaging, Facebook, and video games.

Despite the many emerging issues and debate between professors and students on the use of technology in teaching, it has been determined that it is important to train students on social media platforms—especially with the exponential growth of social business. Students that enter the business world with expertise in social media become critical assets to organizations (large and small). This can be especially true for students who enter organizations that are seeking to advance digital and mobile applications, particularly with regard to online visibility, advertising, and sales. Business schools like Harvard, Columbia, and the London Business School (to name a few) already have integrated courses that explore technology and social applications. At INSEAD, there are courses such as "Exploration in Social Entrepreneurship," "Advertising and Social Media Strategy," and "Managing Media Companies."

All in all, additional research and time will tell the true effects of tech teaching.

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1. Parry, M. (2010, July 4). Linked in with: A Writer Who Questions the Wisdom of Teaching with Technology. Technology. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.

2. Luscombe, B. (2010, June 22). Why E-Mail May be Hurting Off-Line Relationships. Health & Science. *TIME*.

3. Fried. C. B. (2008). In-Class Laptop Use and its Effects on Student Learning. *Computers & Education*. 906–914.

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