MJE Knowledge Mobilization Snapshots

The Best of Both Worlds: A Proposal for Hybrid Teacher Education

Hayley Vininsky and Amanda Saxe, 2016

What is the UDL (Universal Design for Learning) Framework?

UDL is an educational framework that is flexible to meet the needs of different learners (CAST, 2011). More specifically, the instructional goals, classroom materials, and assessment measures are made accessible for all students from the outset (CAST, 2011).

More opportunities are present for students to engage in online learning, however, such learning has mixed reviews. Critics have suggested that a disadvantage is the little to no interaction or connection between teachers and students (as cited in Vininsky & Saxe, 2016). Nevertheless, there are also advantages and to online learning, particularly if blended with classroom-based educational opportunities.

Using the **Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework,** Vininsky and Saxe (2016) proposed that a teacher education program combine classroom-based learning AND online-based learning.

Notes from the Field: The Traditional Classroom

Amanda Saxe's perspective was based on experience teaching undergraduate university level courses as a course lecturer.

There are **advantages** to a traditional classroom:
- In-person interaction (promotes feelings of community)
- Collaborative learning through authentic scenarios, group work, etc.
- Opportunities for immediate error correction/clarifications

There are **disadvantages** to a traditional classroom:
- Concern of judgment from peers limits students' participation
- Restricted amount of time to complete individual classroom activities

Notes from the Field: The Online Classroom

Hayley Vininsky's perspective was based on experience of having completed an online graduate degree.

There are **advantages** to an online classroom:

- More engagement with material
- Self-directed according to learner's own pace and learning style
- Students feel more comfortable participating in discussions
- Schedule allowed for students to work and study simultaneously
- Use of multimedia for different learners (Castle & McGuire, 2010; Dykman & Davis, 2008)

There is a **disadvantage** to an online classroom:

- Lack of in-person interactions made collaboration, discussion, and connection more challenging than in traditional classrooms

The Blended Classroom and Principles of the UDL Framework

This classroom format would combine in-person and online learning. Vininsky and Saxe (2016) supported the use of the UDL framework in promoting a blended design.

There are three main UDL principles:

1) Many ways to present the material: Digital materials make learning more accessible to students (e.g. changing font size)
2) Many ways to interact with and understand the material: Assistive technology (e.g., speech-to-text); Choice of how to take part in discussions
3) Many ways to engage with the classroom material: UDL emphasizes the importance of feedback, choices, etc. (CAST, 2011; Rose & Gravel, 2010); Alternative classroom activities lessen student stress

The Blended Classroom and Teacher Education Programs

Students reported higher satisfaction scores in blended classrooms than other classroom formats (Castle & McGuire, 2010).

It is important for teachers to be mindful of technology, and selective when choosing the software and devices to bring into the classroom.

Teacher candidates gaining skills in blended classrooms will have a better understanding of how to use technology in their future classrooms (Vininsky & Saxe, 2016).

References

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