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Concepts of Educational Inquiry

Technology has influenced the way we live, the way we learn, and the way we teach. We are overwhelmed as citizens with knowledge available at your fingertips, and constantly being connected with others. Technology has influenced all elements of education. It is now incorporated into every lesson, in many assessments, in data we derive from our classrooms, and even in state assessments. We are learning to live and work with new information and technology, and if you don't keep up and evolve with it, you will be left behind.

When reflecting at the beginning of Unit 6 on technology in my life, personal and professional, I believed I used technology productively. Overall I have had a positive experience with technology. I grew up with technology. I have watched it develop, and I have evolved with it. I remember practicing my math facts at a young age on a desktop macintosh, watching my parents' cell phones evolve into more complex and advanced devices, and have grown up constantly being connected with my peers. Like all things, there are pros and cons to this technology age. While it is used productively and is a great resource to education, the social media has become a bit overwhelming and addicting. I enjoy connecting with family and friends from far away, however it does seem like a chore to constantly check in with your social media pages. I feel as if I have evolved with technology, but not by choice. Our generation is a bit obsessed with social media, but if you could not navigate through it, you would feel a bit left out professionally and personally.

Technology has allowed me to have the opportunities of taking online courses, such as this one. I am able to take courses at my own time and leisure through this technological innovation. I would have never been able to take classes at the same time as a career if it weren't for technology. That being said, other technological distractions have disrupted my productivity. An article I came across in Unit 6 made me realize that I do have a difficult time reading in depth because of my adaptation to technology, phones, and ipads. I love to read, but I find myself constantly checking my phone or computer and getting fidgety after a few pages. The article also stated that writing equipment or reading equipment changes the way we form our thoughts. One writer who was struggling with arthritis was afraid he would lose his love of writing, until the typewriter came along. Yes, he was able to continue with his passion, but his readers admitted that after the transition from free hand writing to his typewriter, his style changed.

After taking the technology quiz offered in Unit 6, I realized I am more dependent on technology than I'd like to admit. It seems a day doesn't go by where I don't interact with technology. In my educational path I remember my first college course had Iclickers. What a great tool for the professor to receive instant feedback, however courses were becoming more expensive to keep up with this technological advancement. After viewing unit 6, I now realize how hard a professor's job is. You have to use and incorporate these technological advances, such as the iclicker, just to keep your students engaged! The amount of students in the short clip

of a class in a normal lecture hall “multitasking” between facebook and taking notes from the professor was astounding.

As an educator technology in the classroom is vital. Young students need to have opportunities to interact with the technology pieces in the classroom to keep up with this tech-savvy new age. I use technology with my second graders everyday to enhance my lessons. I use it with my higher level students with enrichment activities when they have already mastered the current objective. Resources I would not be able to obtain or afford are now at my fingertips with our class ipads. It’s so convenient to have the ipads ready to place on the desks of the finished students. This is not to keep them busy, these resources found on the ipad guide them to challenge themselves with higher level thinking. I use technology to help my students who have not approached their grade level with reteach practice games and assessments. I have access to every grade level resource and my curriculum in one small device. All of my data comes from state assessments, online practice tests, online practice games. Finally, the technological advances help in helping students who have individualized educational plans or disabilities. It was proven that students with dyslexia had an easier time reading on an ipad rather than text print.

Within Unit 6 we viewed many different opinions and views on technology in education, and in daily life. It was interesting to compare the opinions of Clive Thompson, Steven Johnson, Nicholas Carr and Sherry Turkle. Thompson and Johnson both were strong believers in technology. Johnson called the internet a rainforest, with connectivity growing, information constantly exchanging, and we are able to find deeper and more satisfying types of knowledge. Thompson stated that he believed technology has made people more creative. He admitted that he was skeptical as a journalist when the internet started to become popular, but then was impressed with the humor that came from users with hashtags. Thompson dismisses the opinion of people believing we are becoming too addicted to the internet and our phones, and used historical novels to prove that we will always be connected, just in different ways. Thompson explained that when novels were becoming popular, citizens feared that the novels would take place of the bibles, or that citizens would be spending too much time with the novels rather than studying and reflecting their bibles. Thompson stressed that technology is not making us incompetent, rather making us more creative and connected. I understand what he is saying however I have seen in the classroom first hand technology harming the students’ creativity. They can create intricate designs and powerpoints on the computer, however when it is time to illustrate something by hand, write a poem, or even have a free write in their journal, they struggle. It has become a challenge to be creative for some students without the technology. This is why I feel technology should be used everyday, however in moderation.

Sherry Turkle and Nicholas Carr shared the negatives of technology. Turkle showed a powerful image of her daughter and her teenage friends together. She had several friends over, and although they were in the same room, they were not spending time together. They were simply sitting next to each other, engrossed in their own phone screens. Turkle discussed that

texting has become a norm. It used to be rude being on the phone in front of someone, however now you see people texting at funerals. Families are not spending enough time together, as they are constantly being distracted by technology. Carr believed that google is making people incompetent. As he agrees with Turkle that technology has made us more alone, even when surrounded and constantly connected by people, he pointed out that we use google for everything. We are getting information too fast and not trying or reflecting on it. Any information that we need is on google and we no longer need to use deep thoughts or reflections.

Although I am able to understand all four of these philosophers views, in regards to education, I side with Turkle and Carr. I do believe that technology is vital and important, but it should be used in moderation. I worked for a district that thought technology was the answer in a turnaround school. They gave every student, ages kindergarten to seniors in high school their very own laptop. Teaching as I knew it was entirely different. Whole group instruction was frowned upon, they simply wanted small, mini-lessons, and then for the students to spend the rest of the time on their laptops. There was no curriculum, no writing, no reading from textbooks, no instruction, no hands on activities, no discussions. Students sat on a computer all day and followed their “technology platform.” Initially it sounded like a good idea, young toddlers are able to navigate through an ipad before they can talk, maybe technology will be the answer to closing the achievement gap in this high poverty area. It was not. If technology was used to enhance lessons and reach learners, I believe the district would have been more successful, however they used the laptops majority of the day, and teachers were told not to use the traditional ways of teaching. Technology was not used in moderation. It failed the students and did a disservice to them and their families.

After reflecting on the uses and limits of autobiographical inquiry, there are always benefits and negative aspects. It is always good to reflect on your own teaching. As Paley did, writing about your experiences helps you to reflect, and you are able to share your experiences with others in detail. It is beneficial to observe your own teaching. Thinking in depth on what practices you have used that were productive, what practices were not, and many different aspects you can improve. Education is always changing, and to make sure you can adapt and keep up, you need to be able to use autobiographical inquiry to evolve along with it. Autobiographical inquiry is not enough, there are limits. You need to collaborate with others. All of the great educational philosophers we viewed built off of one another. They read each others’ work, they discussed topics, they worked together on projects. Autobiographical inquiry does not allow you to do that. Although it is an excellent way to independently evolve your practice, it is not enough. Make sure you are having discussions about your practices, going to professional developments, reading educational articles, and working with your colleagues. An excellent educator is always using educational inquiry to enhance their practice and master their art. Constantly gain knowledge, and evolve with technology to implement into your craft.