

Chapter 7

Rethinking Technological Resources in Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices: The Case of Taking and Teaching Online Courses

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I view online education as the intersection of online instruction (the lessons, the selected readings, assignments, and instructional feedback the educator provides throughout the course) and online learning (the experiences and knowledge the student gains throughout the course completion). I have both taught and taken online courses in teacher education programs. My experiences in this domain have been fully online, rather than blended, and that will be the mode I focus on in this chapter. In my experience with online education, as both an educator and student, instruction and communication was not only fully online, but also totally asynchronous. In this format, the students are supposed to be able to access and complete prepared lessons and view instructions at their convenience and irrespective of when and where their classmates are completing their work for the course.

In this chapter, I review research about teacher education in (fully) online contexts in terms of theories about technology as a tool for learning. Then, I describe in greater detail the courses I taught and that I took from which I drew and analyzed data for my study. These courses were taken during the same semester of my first year in my doctoral program in curriculum and teaching. Next I give an account of how technological tools facilitated this, my self-study of teacher education practice. Finally I share the findings of my study with a particular emphasis on the technological elements present in the study.

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Literature Review

There has been an increase in the number of online courses offered in response to population growth, increased tuition costs, teacher shortages, personal and professional time constraints, and travel costs for traditional classroom attendance (Steinweg, Davis, & Thomson, 2005). While educators are instructed in ways to incorporate technology as part of their curriculum and lesson delivery this is intended to be part of their traditional classroom instruction and not in an exclusively virtual learning environment. The quality of online education programs must be questioned as they grow in popularity (Muirhead, 2000).

With the rapid emergence of new technologies it is easy to incorporate the new technology as part of prepackaged online courses rather than focusing on the organizational structures and quality pedagogy that actually create and support quality online education programs and experiences (Moore, 2013). What's more, digital immigrants, with the belief that it will be digital natives the students who understand and maximize technology's potential as a learning tool, are making many of the decisions of what technologies to use. What Kist and Pytash (2015) conclude is that many digital natives, individuals born in the 1990s, are not readily adept at using new technologies and can therefore be considered digital immigrants themselves. The any time any place (Harasim, 1996; Wallace, 2002) guise of online education is attractive to many nontraditional learners. According to Moore (2013), providing students with programs that are not meeting the needs of online students is a product of universities and online institutions creating and practicing in the dark without theory, research, or understanding of ways of connecting quality pedagogy and learning.

Quality instruction is connected to teacher identity (Bullough, 1997). According to Wallace (2002) one's academic identity may be perceived as that of a production worker or as Fletcher and Bullock describe (2014), as an evaluator when assigned to teach in an online education setting rather than as the more capable other (Vygotsky, 1978). The educator then is positioned best to create and maintain relationally educative spaces that influence student engagement and ultimately student learning (Rice, in press).

Through understanding the unique features of the online educational setting relational spaces can be negotiated and identities can be configured and reconfigured in ways that support instruction and learning (Garrison, Cleveland-Innes, & Fung, 2004). This does not absolve students of their part in accessing these relationally educative spaces. According to Rice (2014) such "spaces are co-constructed by the educator and student and by the student and their classmates as peers" (p. 180).

For online learners to experience success Garrison et al. (2004) states, "that a learning community must be established and sustained" (p. 62). This corresponds with Dewey's (2007) declaration that positive learning experiences lead to future positive learning experiences. It is the educator's responsibility then to create and maintain these relationally educative spaces that allow participants, both educator and students, to apply technology toward desired learning outcomes. Glassman

(2001), explaining Vygotsky and Dewey, states that social interactions are part of the human condition. It is through relationally educative spaces that experience helps to define identity.

Green, Wolodko, Stewart, Edwards, Brooks, and Littledyke (2013) reconceptualize online pedagogy as relationally educative spaces where knowledge and “expertise [are] being developed in dialogue with, and between, students, rather than something expert lecturers bring to the table” (p. 173). In this way, students’ experience of engagement leads to the support of relational educative spaces, and learning. The technology used in online education courses should allow students to recognize theory and practice as an integrated process.

The Course I Taught as Teacher Educator

The online course I was assigned to teach was a prepackaged curriculum and design course offered to students seeking a teaching English as second language endorsement. I was asked to do this because of my history with working with preservice teachers who were pursuing their English as a second language teaching endorsement and from my personal experience instructing second language learners in the public school setting. I had no experience with teaching an online course prior to this assignment, but was informed that the class “ran itself” and students would simply follow the course schedule, independently completing their readings, watching video lessons, and assignment submissions.

According to the course schedule, students were expected to complete specific readings from the assigned textbook, make and respond to discussion board comments, watch educational videos, view and respond to video lesson through VoiceThread, and complete assignments. Each video lesson was divided into segments. Students were expected to leave comments and reflections to each segment of the video lessons using specific technology that imbedded their comments as part of the video lesson for peers to read and respond to. Actual student assignment submissions came from the readings and required students to make personal connections to the topic discussed. My responsibilities included sharing my own personal teaching experiences, grading assignment submissions, answering questions and providing feedback.

The intent of this course was to provide students with an understanding of multicultural education and ways of creating and supporting a more inclusive classroom. This course fulfilled a requirement towards a certificate in teaching English as a second language. The course examined the effects of such issues as race and ethnicity in the United States, the melting pot theory, separatism, cultural pluralism, the tourist based approach to multicultural responsiveness, and bilingual education upon the curriculum and instruction in today’s classrooms. Field experiences was a part of this course as students were tasked with interviewing an ESL student or parent regarding issues and experiences discussed throughout the semester.

The Course I Took as a Student

The online course I registered for as a student was intended to examine the foundations of curriculum and instruction. I took this course for four reasons. First, this class fulfilled a graduation requirement. Second, I wanted to understand curriculum better, specifically the policies and theories behind its development. I also wanted to examine the tension between curriculum goals, development, classroom application, and its impact on student learning. Third, because I would be participating as a facilitator with a private university at the foot of the Rocky Mountains I knew I would not be able to physically attend a traditional classroom course the entire semester. Fourth, my spouse, for the afore mentioned reason also was enrolled in the course.

This online course consisted of a similar format to the one described above with the exception that no video lessons were included. Although VoiceThread appeared as part of the syllabus, intended to be used during the semester, this never materialized after the first week. The first and only VoiceThread of the course elicited three student responses, including mine, with one asking for clarification if student responses should appear as part of VoiceThread or as a Blackboard discussion thread. Students were expected to follow the course schedule, included as part of the syllabus, completing readings prior to submitting assignments online and participating in discussion threads.

It was expected that throughout the course students would explore and broaden their understandings of contemporary thinking in regards to school curriculum. From the assigned readings, core concepts of the course were drawn from the theories that emerged from the texts. The course activities were intended to engage students in the analysis, learning, and application of curriculum models applicable to both elementary and secondary school contexts.

According to the syllabus students would be provided with a multi-faceted online learning experience. Student engagement would be realized through various media: textbook resources, peer reviewed journal articles, online documentaries, student group presentations, online discussion threads, response papers, and VoiceThread. According to the syllabus more detailed weekly assignment descriptions and schedules would be provided, through Blackboard, the Saturday before the described week, in order to introduce a richer learning experience and tailor activities to meet the emergent needs of the class.

Assignments included alternating discussion threads and reflection papers throughout the semester, a group presentation, and final paper. Discussion threads emerged from the readings and included opinions, insights, questions, and experiences. Students were expected to respond to two peer posts, but were not required to read or respond to comments made to their posts. In essence, a prompt and two responses meant the week's assignment was concluded. Reflection papers were actually responses from provided prompts. These too came from the readings.

Methods for Focusing on Technology in Self-Study

According to Britzman (2012), learning to teach involves a negotiation of conflict with authority, imagination, and aspects of ones' autobiography that seem to return whenever least expected. It is in the negotiation of that conflict that identities emerge for teachers. My study required me to confront similar conflicts. As a student and a teacher, I had to confront issues of authority. I also had to consider the imaginative possibilities of the class, of the pedagogical and technological tools I had for my work. Finally, I had to consider these things as aspects of my autobiography threatened to thwart my experience.

My initial study was a self-study of teacher education in professional practice settings (Pinnegar, 1998). Using the guidelines LaBoskey suggested, this is a *self-initiated study* that was grounded in my own concerns as I took up my work as a scholar. The impetus for this self-initiation was a desire to learn about how to be a better teacher educator in online settings by studying my engagement with coursework as both a teacher and a student.

These various sites of inquiry and the nature of what I was doing to study my work made the study *interactive*. The techniques involved were primarily *qualitative* in nature. I collected data about the courses, saved my interactions within them, and conducted interviews with my peers. The medium of the Internet as a site of instruction actually made data collection easy. What was difficult was considering which data were appropriate for the study, which data fit within the parameters of the agreement I had made with the university ethics board, and then, of course, there is always an ethics of interpretation.

This interpretation of the data is reported as *exemplar-based* validity. In particular, I used emblematic narratives (Mishler, 1990) to report my findings. In selecting exemplars I looked for instances where Britzman's (2012) questions of authority, imagination (represented as curriculum, technology, or both), and autobiography intersected. I was also keen to identify stories that I believed would resonate with my colleagues (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001). As my findings emerged, I realized the interconnectivity of the data that I was able to collect and the ways in which I was understanding my findings. The next section of this chapter reports the findings of my initial study. After sharing these findings, I follow up with commentary about how what I learned was both enlarged and limited by data collection strategies rooted in technology or with strong technological components.

Major Findings from My Study

I experienced great difficulty as a teacher and as a student in online courses. Narrative-based exemplars (Mishler, 1990) frame my findings. In this section I present two examples of assignments. In the first case I describe a student enrolled in my online course and how she responded to me and my feedback after she submitted an

incorrectly completed assignment. This is followed by a parallel case when I, as the student, inadvertently did not fulfill all of the assignment requirements and my interactions with the professor. I then show the differing reactions and responses of students and educators to these similar situations and how positive relational space was impacted.

A student contacted me, through email, concerned about the grade she had received for an assignment she had submitted and I had graded and provided feedback in addition to sending an email to her university account 2 weeks earlier. In the feedback to her assignment I indicated which elements in her submission were strong, what areas needed improvement, and a specific item that was missing altogether. I also provided her with the option to redo and submit the assignment for full credit. Either she did not receive the email or used an alternate email as her email was a result of her checking her grade through Blackboard and not, I believe, reading my feedback to the assignment.

The student's initial email to me expressed concern over what she felt was an error on my part. I did not read her email until 3 days after she sent it. I immediately emailed her back and included the original feedback with the option to redo the assignment for full credit. I was surprised when 3 days later I received a second email containing harsh criticism of my ability to grade her work, even going so far as to question whether I had actually read her submission. She concluded her email with a demand for more specific information as to what I believed her assignment submission lacked. I found her email a few days after she sent it and immediately responded by referring her directly to the assignment's rubric and provided a point-by-point analysis of where her submission rated. I concluded this email with yet another invitation to redo the assignment for full credit. Her email response arrived days later. She reiterated that I was incorrect in my assessment of her submission and that she did not merit the assigned grade.

In my frustration I prepared an email that affirmed her conclusion that I was in error.

I appreciate your persistence in correcting this oversight on my part. You are correct. The grade you received for this assignment is not indicative of the grade you actually earned. I was over generous in my evaluation of your work. According to the rubric, which I have referred to in a previous email, you only identified and defined two of the five elements. Additionally, you failed to make any personal connections to the readings. As a result your score should be a 2/10 rather than a 5/10. I apologize for my charitable evaluation of your work and appreciate your diligence in correcting this matter. You have three options moving forward: (1) accept the original grade, (2) accept the lower grade that aligns more closely with the rubric, or (3) complete and resubmit the assignment. Please let me know which option you would prefer.

I did not send this email. I resent my response to her previous email, which included the comparison of her submission to the rubric and the invitation to redo and resubmit the assignment for full credit.

This email exchange appeared to have little effect in either helping the student fully complete the assignment or for me, as the instructor, to acquiesce to her wishes and award her credit for a less than acceptable effort. I did not send the above email,

because I did not believe it would support the relationally educative environment I wished to create. Sending such an email would affect any positive relationship that could be created during our experiences in this online course and future ones as well.

As an educator my intent is to be helpful and supportive. Agreeing with Cochran-Smith (2008) a positive educative environment can promote students' learning and the enhancement of their life opportunities and success. This after all is my goal as an educator. Responding in frustration through the email I composed would not have supported that objective.

This email experience with my online student is different from the exchange I had as the student in my online course. The syllabus for the course indicated that a reflection from the readings was to be submitted each week. I received an email from the instructor early in the semester indicating that I had not responded to the specific questions as part of the assigned readings. I returned to the syllabus and found the explanation that the online course included weekly reflections on the readings, but I also found the question prompt under the assigned readings later in the syllabus. The confusion arose from the use of reflection earlier in the syllabus to describe the assignment instead of response. What the instructor wanted was a response to a question that may relate to the readings and not a reflection of the readings themselves.

At the end of the instructor's email, similar to my email to my student, was an offer to redo the assignment for full credit. I attended to the instructor's feedback and responded via email, but not until the next week of his having sent it. I was not looking for an email from the instructor and thus did not find it or attend to it within the timeline he had given me.

My reaction to the poor grade and offer of the instructor was different than my student's was toward me. I felt a sense of embarrassment that my submission was not what the instructor intended and that I had received a poor grade. Yet, I was grateful for the invitation to redo and submit the assignment for full credit. In my email response to the instructor I sought to reduce any tension the reflection-response confusion may have created and attached a submission more in line with instructor's expectation for the assignment.

Applying VoiceThread The use of VoiceThread, a web-based application intended to facilitate lesson instruction through the use and creation of video threads, was a challenging experience. Students could view the video lessons segments and contribute comments, in either video or text form, to the video lesson segments themselves or to peer responses. I was unfamiliar with how to navigate VoiceThread and prior to being assigned to teach this online course had never heard of the application. This became an issue when students, who were also unfamiliar with VoiceThread, looked to me to help them complete these assignments. I felt inadequate as I, a digital immigrant (Kist & Pytash, 2015), quickly attempted to learn how to use this web-based application, through trial and error and without university supported training and to then teach my students how to navigate their way through the assignments.

Some of the problems experienced in our attempts to use VoiceThread included the time dilemma of having to communicate through email, students' access to a digital video camera as well as their knowledge of how to use it, and students' unfamiliarity with video threads. All these factors contributed to difficulties in successfully implementing technologies in an online course. The time dilemma with email was discussed earlier. Rather than send individual emails containing instructions on how to access and navigate VoiceThread instructions were posted on Blackboard and a mass email was sent to students using the digital email list the university provided. This email list consisted of university-created email addresses and did not necessarily reflect the email addresses students favored or consistently used. In essence, I believed I had addressed the VoiceThread issues by sending out an email that many students needed, however the emails were sent to an email address students were not expecting to receive it in and as such they did they find it. Students who had sent personal inquiries to me were expecting one in return.

Once students were able to access the VoiceThread many still experienced difficulty responding to the lesson segments and peer threads. Problems included students not knowing how to use their digital video camera or not owning one altogether. Because I lacked the ability to train students how to use their individual digital cameras with their computers, to use their computer's built in camera, and could not require that students purchase a video camera I deemed it appropriate that these students be allowed to post text responses.

Students' unfamiliarity with VoiceThread was evident in many ways. One example included the lack of responses after the first video segment in early lessons. It was as if students were unaware that the lesson consisted of multiple video segments and they were required to view and respond to each video segment. Again I sent a mass email, but to limited success.

Reading and Responding to Feedback I also questioned whether students attended to comments made by their peers or even to my feedback to their responses. As an online student, I gave little thought to my assignment after its submission other than the grade received and admittedly did not read the feedback the instructor provided after a few weeks into the term. If my grade was acceptable that was the end of it. I feel my experience as an online student is not unique and that many of my online students behaved similarly and did not read the feedback or comments of their peers or even my own after they had clicked "submit" having successfully completing the week's appointed tasks.

As I simultaneously experienced online courses as educator and student I wondered as to the effectiveness of the feedback provided by the online course instructor. As the educator I consistently made comments and shared experiences that supported and built from students' submissions and personal experiences. I have no sense that students actually read or attended to my feedback. From my position as the student, other than the initial email exchange I did not attend to instructor feedback, mainly because, according to my grade for my assignment submissions, reading the feedback was not warranted and would not have improved my grade much if at all. The online experience was in many ways solitary. In fact I learned, after the

conclusion of the online courses, that a couple of my friends were enrolled in the same online course. The opportunity to collaborate together existed, but the relational component of knowing was missed.

Technology's Role in Stifling Online Relationships

Both of the above online courses contained similar elements. Both required blog posts through Blackboard, responses to assigned readings, and collaborative projects. The online course I taught had the added elements of students having to use VoiceThread and redesign a unit plan that incorporated course teachings. The technology choices for each online course were intended to support learning. The question then becomes, in examining this self-study, is in what ways did the use of technology support or constrain the creation and maintenance of relationally educative spaces so that learning was the result.

Although VoiceThread placed a face on the screen there is an assumption that users would be digital natives (Kist & Pytash, 2015), able to use and adapt to new technology with ease. While it would appear some online students were digital natives, as they were able to access and leave threads, many students, including myself as the instructor, had difficulty accessing VoiceThread, creating a video, and then posting said video. With the isolated nature of the online course students had little recourse other than to appeal to my abilities through email pleas. So when the time came to act as the more capable other (Vygotsky, 1978) I found myself unable to provide needed support and only responded a few days later with tentative suggestions.

Blog Posts and Their Unfulfilled Spaces Beginning with the blog posts, the goal was to create a conversational space where each student had a voice, where their understandings, beliefs, and experience could be shared. Having the educator and students make commentaries was to share insights, make connections, and support relationally educative spaces. For both of the above online courses, students were expected to write about their understandings and connections to course readings rather than produce summaries. Students were also expected to then read and comment on at least one peer's blog posting.

Early blog contributors were limited as to their ability to comment on a peer's blog because a majority of blog posts were submitted just before the due date. Early bloggers had to frequently check back in order to find blogs they felt inclined to contribute to or simply picked from the only available options. Additionally, because so many submissions were made prior to the deadline there was often a rush to read and submit a peer response. This often did not provide students with enough time to reflect on peer submissions and form a carefully thought-out response. But it did comply with the parameters of the assignment. This is similar to what Bullock and Christou (2009) describe in their study, where not all students engaged in rich dialogue.

The blog posts from my study often felt like an attempt at minimal compliance. A quick hero story (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001) to demonstrate one's instructional prowess was the norm. Additionally, there was neither a rubric nor instructions for myself as a student to generate blog posts or as the instructor, with which to assess them. Where blogs can be used as a means to develop and extend relationships (Ragoonaden & Bullock, 2014) this was not my experience with either of the two online courses mentioned above. Blogs were more of an attempt to keep students honest about completing assigned weekly readings rather than as a relationally educative experience where problems and challenges with teaching could be shared and examined. When positive experience is the foundation of a quality education then relationally educative experiences can be viewed as a social process (Dewey, 2007). In such a paradigm the teacher forgoes the position of power and takes up the position of more capable other (Vygotsky, 1980).

The power (Foucault & Deleuze, 1977) then should emerge from engaged interactions of all participants. The educator's maturity and power is manifest in their influence to create relationally educative spaces (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001). Power is not about being in control or having authority over students, something I do not feel I was able to communicate with my disgruntled student. I worried that she saw me as wielding power over her where I was simply attempting to act as the more capable other, helping, and encouraging my online student to successfully complete the assignment, precisely what my online instructor did with me. According to Bullock and Christou (2009) the interrogation of traditional practices and "our own assumptions about theory and practice in teacher education" (p. 87) can lead to a disruption of the prevailing culture creating space for a study on one's teaching practice.

According to Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) "to study a practice is simultaneously to study self: a study of self-in-relation to other" (p. 14). In reflecting upon my experiences with simultaneously teaching and taking online courses I found little space in which to build relationships with others. My online experiences as an instructor and student were ones of isolation. Apart from the lone challenge to my credibility by the one student there were only a few early semester queries regarding how to navigate the technology and one prolonged exchange with a student who had great difficulty understanding how to take an existing unit he had created and remake it using the principles from the course which occurred at the conclusion of the semester. In the role of student, exchanges with the instructor occurred the one time early in the semester. I read the feedback he provided on my assignment submissions, but only for the first few weeks. It quickly became apparent to me that the instructor had a different philosophical approach to teaching. I saw no benefit in reading his comments and discontinued the practice.

The majority of students, regardless of the online course, submitted their blog posts just before the submission deadline. What ensued was akin to a mad dash to find a peer's blog entry from which to quickly form and submit a response as the blog posts and responses had identical deadlines for submission. Students' focus was on completion and submission of the assignments rather than on the formation of relationships. Any teacher comments added to student submission likely went

unnoticed as students were now focused on the next week's readings and assignments. There was no system in place that would notify students that the instructor or peer had contributed a comment thread. To find if any threads to their blog entries were created students would have to return to the previous assignment link. There was no incentive to do this as the grading for the assignment had closed. Because of this teacher feedback was all too often unrecognized if not unread. Echoing Bullock and Christou (2009), my attempts to model through connecting readings with personal experiences was ineffective because students failed to recognize the attempts of the instructor to model how to create and respond to a blog, successfully complete an assignment, or remake a unit plan through directly applying course learnings.

Attempts to establish an identity as a more capable other (Vygotsky, 1978) through the role of the online instructor were hampered by the structure of the pre-packaged online course. Students did not know who the instructor was apart from their name. The common introductions that occur in a traditional face-to-face setting never occurred. There was no face, voice, or history from which to establish identity. Dewey (1985) advocates for space where both students and educators share in the experiences that support the development of identity. Educators, in developing online courses, must consider how readings, lessons, activities, and assignments allow students to engage socially within a digital space.

Thinking About My Findings

I found that it was incredibly difficult to establish a rapport between myself and my students and between myself and my instructor through these online courses. I attributed this to the lack of contact. It became apparent that after students submitted their assignments, which were then graded with occasional feedback added, that student interest was in the grade received and not the instructor's comments. There was little exchange outside of these parameters unless the student had a question or the teacher recognized an issue with a student's performance. In my study, I also found that communication from the educator occurred in two ways: first the educator could leave feedback remarks as part of and in addition to the grading process and second, they could send an email, which was slightly more detailed in its content. The student had the option to email the educator when they wished to communicate a question, concern, or grievance as well.

Training and Communication It was a problem for me as a teacher and as a student that no training was provided on how to use or navigate Blackboard, my university's designated electronic learning management system. It is my belief that there exists an underlying assumption, by the university, that, regardless of being an educator or a student, ability and knowledge of how to navigate the online educational system was inherent or easy to learn. This assumption however, is invalid as the experiences in both administering and taking online courses demonstrated. Of

course, then, my lack of familiarity with the technological tools has implications for my learning, my position as a teacher educator, and my self-study research. None of these roles could be executed optimally as I was struggling to figure out how to use the tools. However, since I was studying my practice and wanted to look at what was being produced as data, I had additional incentive to learn more about how to use the tools quickly. If I ran this self-study again, in similar circumstances, I doubt I would uncover the same results of acrimony and mistrust. Hopefully I would be able to use the tools at my disposal to do what I really prefer to do as both a student and teacher: meet people, learn about people, and love people.

The course syllabi, for both my online courses, could be accessed by students through Blackboard in addition to the electronic pathway for assignment submissions, and reviewing of grades. Assignment submission was the first issue that arose, as many students did not know how to submit assignments. Instructions on how to submit assignments were posted on Blackboard and a mass email was sent to each student using the university's email address list for the course.

Communication from online students came in the form of emails when there was confusion, as in how to submit assignments, clarification was required, as in how to complete the week's assignment, or to communicate concern and disapproval over a grade received for a submitted assignment. My many attempts to successfully email students resulted in limited success as many students preferred using an alternate email address to what the university had listed, email responses by students were non-existent, which left me unsure if students actually received the email messages. Communication from myself, as the online instructor, or my online instructor to me came through grades, feedback on assignments, and emails. This is still a sad aspect of online learning to me: that for some students, I will only have contact with them when they want information about their grade or to contest it. This is actually an issue worth looking at in a future self-study.

Personal Subjectivities Can Negatively Impact Relational Spaces I was distraught that my experience as an online educator did not seem to afford the same opportunities to learn about students' interests and lives in ways that built and support relationally educative spaces. Having taught students with disabilities at a public junior high for over a decade, I considered myself adept at building quality student-teacher relationships (Frelin & Grannäs, 2010). When I tried to think about my findings, I determined that educators in brick and mortar schools had multiple opportunities to physically interact with students as well as observe student interactions. Such face-to-face interactions to me, were naturally more supportive of the development of relational spaces that are conducive to both teaching and learning (Wubbels, denBrok, Tartwijk, & Levy, 2012). Creating positive teacher-student as well as student-peer interactions is, after all, what leads to educative experiences (Dewey, 2007). In this sense, I allowed my autobiography to interfere with my learning about how to be a teacher educator and how to be educated online. It was not until I had my findings laying in front of me that I was fully forced to confront my subjectivities on this issue.

The result of my inability to respond to the needs of my students contributed to my feelings of non-personhood as a teacher educator (Rice, Newberry, Cutri, Pinnegar, & Whiting, 2014). Through the asynchronous component of each of these online courses a difficulty in establishing relationships consistently emerged (Fletcher & Bullock, 2014). While my attempts as the instructor to provide feedback that would established my identity as a more capable other (Vygotsky, 1978) without the students' reading the feedback or, if they did without their recognizing its form as a model, its purpose to support relational space became muted.

Relational experiences are a connection between personal learning processes and the learning environment influenced by the other stakeholders present (Barak, Tuval, Gidron, & Turniansky, 2012). When the learning environment is one of isolation there exists little space for others to negotiate their identities as part of the collective in ways that influence both group and individual identity formation. What remains are interactions that see online participants as "entit[ies] that represent...a particular category of being" (Rice et al., 2014, p. 183). When students resisted, I became more isolated and so it was likely that they took their cues of limited engagement from me. What Rice and her colleagues make clear is that teacher educator identities are built from experiences where they (as teacher educators) kept going back to the students to try to get them to engage relationally. If this is important in the offline spaces they were writing about, surely that applies to me as an online teacher educator.

In terms of new ways to consider authority, imaginings, and autobiography, I have wonderings about what types of spaces would have been more supportive of my learning in these virtual spaces that would also not be too difficult to implement. It would have been beneficial for both online courses if a space existed where instructor and students could participate in an open discussion thread at their convenience throughout the week or implement what Fletcher and Bullock (2014) suggest, a chat room where virtual conversations could occur in real time. In this way experiences and outcomes can be shared, guiding students to avoid negative outcomes, such as difficulty in accessing technology and completing assignments or guiding them toward more positive outcomes where participants can teach and learn ways to more easily access technologies which can serve to support relationally educative space.

Final Thoughts

Preservice and in-service teacher education programs must consider ways to prepare educators to instruct students in a digital space where asynchronous lessons and communication may be the norm. Teacher educators must also be aware of the potentially isolating aspects of technologies that were designed to promote sociality. Online educators and teacher educators must actively consider ways to create relationally educative spaces student engagement is supported, identity is manifest, and learning occurs. It is imperative that both online educators and teacher

educators become familiar and adept at identifying and incorporating new technologies as part of their online curriculum. Additionally, online educators must not lose sight of which and in what ways elements of a traditional classroom instruction, such as positive experiences (Dewey, 2007), and relationally educative spaces can exist in cyberspace and ways to establish identity for both the educators and students in the course.

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