

# “Technology in the Classroom: Teaching Business Marketing in the 21st Century”: A Reply to Carlos M. Rodriguez

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Professor Rodriguez makes an excellent point in reminding us of the importance of the “identification of student learning styles” in designing successful educational strategies. Educators are concerned about how students learn and we need to be flexible in accommodating different learning styles. Novak and Gowin (1984) in their book, *Learning How to Learn* state, “We are concerned with helping people learn to educate themselves. We want to help people get better control over the meanings that shape their lives. Educating is powerfully liberating: failures in educating are powerfully oppressive.” As academics we all share their concern about helping our students to educate themselves and it is likely that we are quite competent in using traditional teaching methods to help our students educate themselves. The new technologies discussed in the paper present an opportunity to liberate the student learning process. However, we may have to adjust our role in the educating process if the learning is to be liberating for the student. The educational experience has four distinct elements: teacher, learner, curriculum and climate (Schwab 1973, in Novak and Gowin 1984). Teachers set the educational agenda and decide what

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knowledge is present and how it will be presented. Learners may participate in agenda planning as in mastery learning where learners set their own goals in terms of knowledge acquisition (Bloom 1968, 1976). "Learners must choose to learn; learning is a responsibility that cannot be shared" (Novak and Gowin 1984). Teachers cannot force students to learn; we can only punish them for not learning what we teach. The knowledge, skills and values that comprise the educational experience define the curriculum. The educational climate defines how students and teachers define meaning in the curriculum. Forces such as enrollment policies that set class size, AACSB requirements, attitudes towards the importance of teaching and College and Department policies are examples of climate factors.

While we are probably comfortable with these elements in a traditional educational environment we must adjust to the new demands and freedom created by the new technologies. We have an opportunity to increase meaningful learning over rote learning. David Ausubel (1968; Ausubel, Novak and Hanesian 1978) defines meaningful learning as "individuals must choose to relate new knowledge to relevant concepts and propositions they already know. In rote learning, on the other hand, new knowledge may be acquired simply by verbatim memorization and arbitrarily incorporated into a person's knowledge structure without interacting with what is already there." Table 1 shows that learning can vary from being very meaningful to rote learning, and from reception learning where information is provided directly to the learner to individual discovery learning where the learner manages their own learning process by choosing the information to be learned.

Technology has arrived, but are we prepared to take advantage of the opportunity to redefine the educational process? Based upon a limited sample, the answer is no. Many faculties teach undergraduate and MBA courses using a combination of lectures and case material. Sometimes in a capstone course a simulation such as Markstrat is used. These technologies place us in the middle range on the meaningful to rote learning dimension of Table 1 and in the reception learning mode. On a good day we may hit meaningful learning level as we integrate the concepts for the students. Simulations likely fall into the mid-range of discovery learning. Unfortunately, too many of our colleagues, present readers excepted, spend most of their time in the reception area somewhere in the middle between rote and meaningful

learning. Our challenge is to help the student move from rote learning to autonomous discovery learning and be accommodating to their preferred learning style.

### ***THE FUTURE***

Examining how educational technology impacts the four elements helps define the changes required to fully utilize these technologies. Teachers set the agenda and selected the knowledge and its order of presentation because it was assumed that they had greater competence than the learner did. This assumption holds for the substantive aspects of the course but in courses using Internet and web technology it is likely that many of the students have equal or better knowledge than the teacher about Internet and web operation. The learner who is able to reach out on the Internet and web is no longer dependent upon the teacher for all of the knowledge provided in the course. We teachers may have to share more of the agenda setting with the learner as the web opens access to information equally for both the learner and the teacher.

New 21st century curriculums may be products of interaction between learners and teachers. They may be less well defined in content, as one does not always know what the web will yield over the semester. The process of how the course will proceed may place a heavier burden upon learner to engage in more autonomous discovery learning. The climate is a major influence in the rate of integration of technology into curriculums. The cost of providing computers, networks and access determines the rate of adoption of technology. Even with positive supportive environment, constrained resources make it very difficult to integrate technology into the learning process.

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