



Developing a Reflective Practice in the Return to Campus: Blogging to Process Out Our Teaching Artistry

As teachers, entering last fall, many of you might have worked on a “20/20” vision of what our remote teaching should and could be, perhaps this was because we knew that our emergency teaching in spring 2020 was adequate but inadequate for the next phase of pandemic instruction ([Lederman, 2020](#)).

But for this coming fall, the return to campus appears to have significant “problematic settings,” ambiguous or ill-defined educational settings that will affect not only our vision but also our ability to teach. That is, due to the dynamic nature of COVID-19 challenges, many of our universities have had and will continue to (re)define guidelines and expectations for those who teach in-person classes, remote classes, or HyFlex classes ([Bowman, 2021](#)). Consequently, our return is heightened with problematic scenarios that could overwhelm us, including situations where we initially teach in-person but must pivot to remote instruction or suddenly take up HyFlex teaching.

In approaching problematic policy issues, Donald Schön ([1979](#)) argues that bottom-up problem setting matters because we can set “the kind of purposes and values we seek to realize, and the directions in which we seek solutions.” Thus, I think it might be valuable for teachers to consider approaching problems related to today’s pandemic teaching as problem setters. This is to say that we should work to set the problems in pandemic instruction so that they can be known, and design teaching moves so the solutions are worth discovering, as well as meaningful to solve. In such an approach, we will need our “artistry” to name and frame the mindsets, knowledge-sets, skillsets, and

toolsets in order to be purposefully flexible in designing learning objectives and outcomes during the fall semester (Eisner, 2004).

In contrast to top-down problem solving, the problem setting approach can effectively foreground our reflective practice as one that grows and thrives in uncertain settings (Schön, 1991). Ideally, when problem setting is done well, students will encounter us as “both teachers and students,” which invites students to deliberately develop their “artistry” through wicked problems (Le, 2017). In turn, the explicit invitation for students to be reflective learners and doers could make the pandemic classroom into an effective collaborative learning community (Le, 2017).

Notwithstanding, how do we actually “talk the walk” and “walk the talk” in practicing problem setting for the coming fall semester? In the following, I will share how I problem-set, in which my teaching can be transformed by the pandemic, and how blogging can be aligned with our professional identity development. At the end of this blog article, I will have a number of questions for us to think about and learn together in order to grow our teaching artistry for the coming fall semester.

Blogging as a powerful toolset for reflective practice in the digital age

Prior to the pandemic, I saw blogging as an educational toolset to work through and process out my personal and professional development in the digital age (Le, 2019). That is, the blogging process is my “gym” that gets me to reflect and act on who I am in ways that promote care of student learning and care for the classroom subject. In fact, blogging is considered a potential game-changer in education. This is because blogging can effectively and efficiently intertwine one’s personal experiences, professional knowledge, and community of practice all at once (Weller, 2012). However, its utility depends on how educators determine the extent of benefits they can derive from blogging (Hall, 2018). While some studies find that educators who blog are not directly motivated by teaching practices and purposes, I find blogging to be a platform that helps me be deliberate in developing my teaching artistry, both privately and publicly.

For example, one of my blog articles from last fall had the expectation that I would utilize and write down the before-action, in-action, and on-action for each Zoom class. The intentionality of that blog was for me to find the creative

spirit in innovating new teaching moves during the pandemic ([Le, 2020](#)). In spring 2021, I volunteered to teach two undergraduate HyFlex courses, even though I had no prior experience or training. In part, this decision was based on how I named and framed pandemic teaching during the previous semester. In brief, I set the pandemic teaching as “chaordic” in which teaching at the “edge of chaos” can make us innovative and resourceful on our feet: our thinking in-action. However, “chaordic” requires an “orderly” inner teacher that can “talk the walk” when the “walk the talk” goes awry.

Thus, in my HyFlex courses, I became a student in learning how to deliver “true” benefits in blending three modalities—the in-classroom, online synchronous, and online asynchronous. Additionally, I provided an option for students to do a comprehensive project with a medical supply company and its president of global outsourcing, Medline. About half of the students did this project rather than doing case studies. The president and his top managers encouraged the students to problem set how the company would recover and thrive from the competing demands as a result of the pandemic crisis ([Levy, 2020](#)).

From my Zoom reflective notes, I realized how I was not equipped to deliver some of the “true” benefits of HyFlex teaching, but I felt that my agility (i.e. being responsive to and learning from shortcomings) significantly increased. In regards to students becoming problem setters, I recognized the need to take responsibility of shortcomings that they might have had. But I also needed to give reassurance to students that such an experience would improve their know-how in approaching wicked problems ([Tubbs, 2000](#)).

Perhaps a key distinguished feature of blogging is that it disseminates knowledge for action in a timely way. And if you’re reading this blog article, you have the opportunity to review and respond. One of the main goals of bloggers, including myself, is to generate meaningful comments that foster a community of practice, which can then be valuable to readers.

Thus below, I put together an end-of-article questionnaire that is designed for us to think and learn together as we prepare for the coming fall semester:

- Do you think there is enough distinction between problem setting and problem solving? And do you think the problem setting approach is worth exploring in your pandemic teaching?
- Do you think the concept of “chaordic” or teaching at the “edge of chaos” is relevant to your experience of pandemic teaching?

- How would you name and frame today's pandemic teaching and/or your teaching artistry for this coming fall?
- If your university gave you an incentive to write a blog article (privately or publicly) about your teaching practices and experiences for this coming fall, would you?
- Would you like me to share my template for the before-action, in-action, and on-action that I used for each pandemic class?
- Do you have other teaching resources and materials that you think are relevant for this coming fall?

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