

ASSESSING READINESS FOR EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION IN CHRISTIAN INSTITUTIONS

Rev. Stephen Porter, DMin, Nazarene Theological Seminary

Overview

This article is an adaptation of my dissertation which looks to foster readiness in institutions seeking to integrate new technologies into their teaching and learning environments and culminates in an assessment tool structured as a playbook. Although this article does not include the playbook, its aim is to prepare the reader to look at the educational, philosophical, and technical structures, foundational for assessing a school's readiness for change when assimilating educational technology into its classrooms and curriculum. This writing delves into the underlying changes occurring in technology, how technology causes change within education, and ways institutions can move forward in a new culture of learning. It then reflects on the theological nature of these changes in dialogue with a Trinitarian understanding of God and personhood and how presence should be understood in a digital culture. Finally, the playbook's structure is described through the paradigm of additional research in the field. The original dissertation with a printed copy of the playbook prototype can be found on the Wesleyan Holiness Digital Library at <https://nts.whdl.org/en/browse/resources/13435>.

Developing Readiness for Educational Technology

The term “readiness” serves as a tricky concept. Many institutions feel enticed to integrate new educational technologies into the classroom, be it smartboards, tablets, video conference equipment, or any number of tools that will “enhance” the student experience and make teaching and learning more efficient and modern. Some are ready and will integrate these new tools into the larger pedagogical strategy of the classroom or program with ease. Others will only find pain, frustration, and disenchantment because they were not as ready as they thought.

Readiness for institutional change is “the extent to which organizational members are psychologically and behaviorally prepared to implement organizational change.”¹ An institution's level of readiness is not a judgement on the adaptability or skills of the educators, students, or institution because readiness is complex. It includes consideration of the culture in which the education occurs, the accreditation standards imposed on the institution, the ease of access to digital technologies, and so on. Assessing readiness is crucial to the long-term viability of the new technologies and the extent to which an institution can integrate across the curriculum.

The digital age is a dynamic time, and the educational landscape is changing around us. Integrating new educational technologies is a consequential decision and the ramifications can ripple throughout the institution. It can appear that an educator or institution is ready, but without

¹ Christopher Shea et al., "Organizational Readiness for Implementing Change: A Psychometric Assessment of a New Measure," *Implementation Science* 9, (2014): 7.

examination, there is risk that new technologies are rejected, the institution moves further away from their strategic goals, and/or learning does not occur. When an educator or institution evaluates how it will integrate emerging technologies or the appropriateness of doing so, assessment helps answer questions of readiness such as:

- Why should new technologies be added?
- Where is my institution currently?
- What will integrating new technologies change in the learning environment and institution?
- Who needs to be on board?
- How does an institution move forward if they are ready?

The following article provides groundwork for answering these questions and suggests a tool, such as a playbook, for assessing readiness within specific contexts. Its primary audience is global theological schools like ones governed by the International Board of Education of the Church of the Nazarene (IBOE) although it is hoped that others may find value in the concepts asserted within. Answering the questions above provides the first step for institutions and their educators as they evaluate readiness for integrating new technologies. This project provides a means for institutions to better prepare for the new technologies of the 21st century and avoid the pain that may come from thinking one is ready when really one is not.

The following section looks at the technological changes of the past centuries and how it shaped modern society. The classroom is not insulated from this shaping, so the effects of digital realities are disrupting the ways that teaching and learning are experienced. Because the role of teacher is changing, the role of student is changing as well. Institutions responsible for educating these students are seeking the best methods even while a new culture of learning is actively developing. Ultimately, each institution and educator will need to find the path that most suits their pedagogical and theological framework, but there is a growing body of literature and practices that offer ways forward which respect the student, nature of personhood, and provide the best pedagogies to integrate the digital world with the classroom. The section will end with a look at current education models and the potential concerns of educators.

The Challenge of the Changing Culture

Technology is Changing the World

The world changed foundationally in the past century. Information prior to the electronic computer served as a commodity, bought and sold through mentorship or time spent in formal education.² Until recently, a voiced curiosity spoken into the air and answered, be it to Siri,

² Computer, as a term, preceded the machines of today and was simply a term for someone who “computes” information.

Alexa, or Google, would be conceived as some form of magic or sorcery, but today that magic costs a few dollars on the internet.

The information age of the late 20th century initiated a season of rapid change across the globe. Information was no longer hoarded and protected by the skilled elite. Data collection transitioned from pen and paper to stored electronic documents connected to a world-wide-web (web) of computers. The web gave instantaneous access to much of the world's data and information which was once housed in offices and the world's libraries.³ Skills and secrets once hidden from the masses became available as YouTube video streams. Language barriers softened and cultural distance shortened as the world shrank (metaphorically, of course) into a neighborhood and now, these neighboring computers connect to the internet to share their information.

For millennia, higher education stood as the gatekeeper for much of the world's collected knowledge. Colleges and universities employed teaching scholars to share their expertise with classrooms of eager students ready to hear the lecture. Lecture, by definition, means, "to read" and originally, lecturers read aloud the collected texts which contained knowledge passed down from previous experts and documentarians.⁴ Classrooms were designed with front-facing rows so students could best hear the reading of the texts and make copies for themselves. For hundreds of years, this pedagogy allowed students to gain knowledge, become lecturers themselves, and pass knowledge to the next generation of students.

Things changed as books became widely available as Gutenberg's printing press sped up production. Students no longer needed to travel across the world to hear ancient works of wisdom and transcribe them.⁵ The role of lecturer shifted from reader to expert orator. Students sat in lecture halls to hear, not the texts, but the wisdom of the lecturer who had studied the original texts and become an expert in a particular field of study. The lecturer became a conduit by which knowledge was obtained and the most informed and influential lecturers became a Doctor of Philosophy for a particular domain. Lectures no longer needed to be "readings" but became presentations of knowledge and informed opinion for the benefit of teaching the student. Generally, this was western education during the past half millennium.⁶

The modes of teaching and learning shifted once again, but instead of incremental change over generations, this shift occurred within one generation of educators. Access to the world's

³ Information is organized data.

⁴ William Bernstein, *Masters of the Word: How Media Shaped History from the Alphabet to the Internet* (New York, NY: Grove Atlantic. 2014), Chapter 4, Kindle.

⁵ John Aukerman, *Discipleship that Transforms: An Introduction to Christian Education from a Wesleyan Holiness Perspective* (Anderson, Ind: Warner Press, 2011), 48.

⁶ Graham Badley and Trevor Habeshaw, "The Changing Role of the Teacher in Higher Education," *Journal of In-Service Education* 17, 3 (1991): 212.

data is now in the pocket of every student who carries a smartphone. The teacher no longer needs to stand in the front of the class and be the conduit of information for students in this new digital world. Modern pedagogy flips the classroom from front facing chairs to circles of students as teachers provide guidance through the glut of data to promote learning.⁷

Bringing electronic computers and the internet into the classroom is not a congruous change with upgrading from a chalkboard to a white board with erasable markers. Digital technologies and their instant internet access fundamentally change the classroom.⁸ Teachers need to teach differently, students must learn differently, and the interaction between the two is built on a new paradigm. Institutions that add new digital technologies may or may not be prepared for all the changes that follow. Ill preparedness can lead to frustration and regression.

In many institutions, some educators recognize the need or desire to change while others are unaware or refuse change due to fear or a sense of the superiority of “traditional” pedagogies. This disconnect is compounded when you have discordance between the administration, staff, and students around technology. Critical questions, such as faculty training, infrastructure preparedness, and student accessibility may never be addressed without intentional reflection. Some constituents may view the changes as merely an information technology or instructional technology project rather than a strategic move for the entire institution. Therefore, pedagogical or institutional impacts are overlooked or ignored, creating future issues for the institution. Without consideration of readiness, an institution can inadvertently set itself up for short term and long-term failure and undermine its own mission.

In 2011, Daniel Aleshire, former president of the Association of Theological Schools (ATS), acknowledged to the entire ATS membership that, “The future has arrived” in education and there is no going back. Education has changed. Technology has changed. The world has changed.⁹ Dr. Aleshire was preparing the ATS body for substantive changes to the accreditation standards due to the disruptive change of technology in education. More broadly, no institution educating in the 21st century will be exempt from the ripple effects of the new digital era and this creates challenges for institutions looking ahead to how they aspire to educate the next generation of students.

⁷ There is literature that argues distinction between pedagogy, the teaching of children, and andragogy, the teaching of adults (as well as heutagogy, and academogogy). For this paper, pedagogy is the term used for the strategic practice of teaching, no matter the age or stage of development.

⁸ Shane Hipps, *The Hidden Power of Electronic Culture: How Media Shapes Faith, the Gospel, and Church* (El Cajon, CA: Youth Specialties, 2006), 30.

⁹ Daniel Aleshire, "The Future has Arrived: Changing Theological Education in a Changed World," *Theological Education* 46, no. 2 (2011): 69-80.

The New, Digital Age

“Culture is in a state of constant flux. And if you don’t know what is happening today, you are outside of it.” – Wired Magazine¹⁰

Culture is changing and it can be difficult to keep pace. Throughout history, there have been four great communication technology eras. The first era is marked by the development of language itself. The second saw the invention of writing. The third era gave the world printing. Finally, the fourth and current era is the age of digital communication.¹¹ The digital age has reshaped the world and fundamentally changed education unlike anything since the printing press of 1440 (see figure 1).

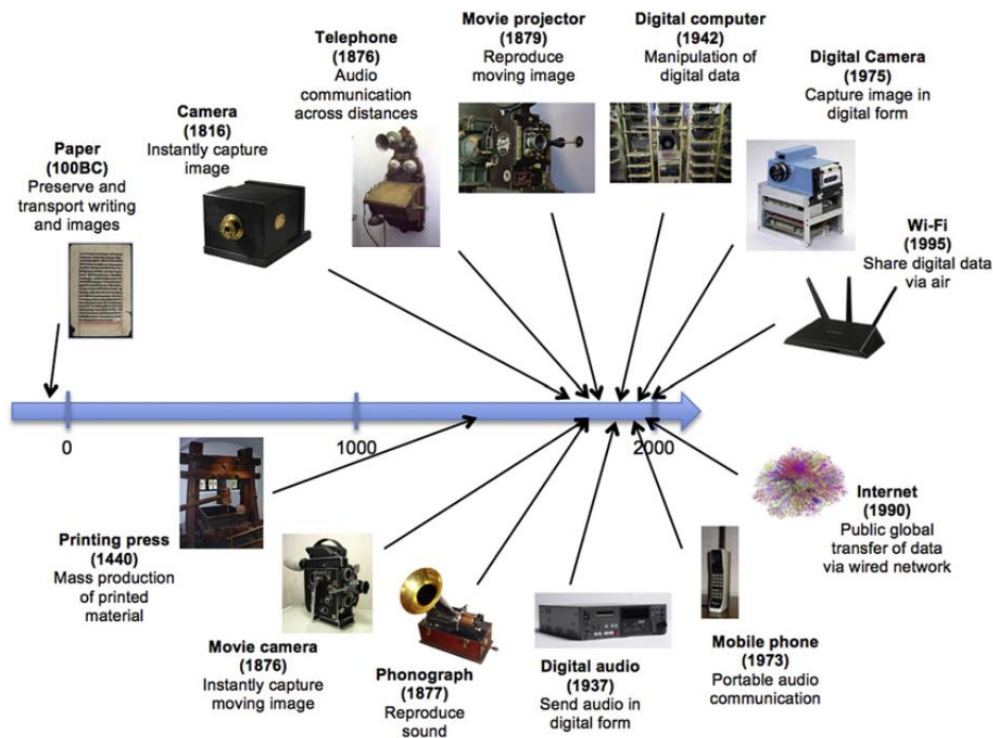


Figure 1. Brief Chronology of Information and Communication Technology Developments in the Previous Two Millennia¹²

¹⁰. "101 Signals: Follow These Authorities on Entertainment, and No One Else," WIRED, August 15, 2013, <https://www.wired.com/2013/08/101signals-culture/>.

¹¹. Bernstein, *Masters*, Location 6253.

¹². Source: Matt Bower, *Design of Technology-Enhanced Learning: Integrating Research and Practice* (Bingley, UK: Emerald Publishing Limited, 2017), 411.

Between 1500 and the mid-1800s, information technology saw very little change. However, the rate of change increased dramatically after the debut of the telegraph in the 1840s.¹³ Now, for the first time in human history, the entire world can be in instant communication and share words, pictures, and video almost instantaneously.¹⁴ Once limited by the ability to sit at the feet of an expert, accessing the world's information does not even require getting out of one's pajamas. Because of this change, educators and institutions are in a new era of education and emerging pedagogies are needed to effectively serve students of the postmodern age.

Arguably, the most influential change of the past 50 years is the rise of the personal computer (PC). There were no electronic computers at the turn of the 20th century but by its end, computers were ubiquitous across the globe. On October 29, 1969, the United States Department of Defense's ARPANet delivered its first message from one electronic computer to another, representing the birth of what would be known as the internet, or interconnected networks.¹⁵ This gave rise to the "worldwide web" (web) which leverages these interconnected computer information systems and allows anyone connected to the internet to browse the information stored therein.¹⁶¹⁷ By the mid-1990s, the familiar sound of a PC's screeching modem connecting to the web became commonplace in many western businesses and homes.

As individuals and companies leveraged the web for work and personal use, the digital age took off at the speed of Moore's law.¹⁸ AOL announced, "You've got mail!" and Netscape provided an escape into a new, digital world. Dial-up modems gave way to cable modems, which

¹³. Bernstein, *Masters*, Location 6249.

¹⁴. Bernstein, *Masters*, Location 6253.

¹⁵. Evan Andrews, "Who Invented the Internet?" History, accessed November 1, 2019, <https://www.history.com/news/who-invented-the-internet>.

¹⁶. Network connections resembling a spider web's interconnected nature. Abbreviated in web browsers as "www."

¹⁷. The worldwide web was proposed on March 12, 1989. "The Internet and the World Wide Web Are Not the Same Thing," NBC News, accessed November 1, 2019, <https://www.nbcnews.com/tech/internet/internet-world-wide-web-are-not-same-thing-n51011>.

¹⁸. Stuart Russell, *Human Compatible: Artificial Intelligence and the Problem of Control* (New York: Penguin Publishing Group, 2020) pp.34-35. Moore's Law is an observation that the computing power doubles approximately every two years. Russell writes: "Moore's law, an empirical observation that the number of electronic components on a chip doubles every two years, is expected to continue until 2025 or so, although at a slightly slower rate. For some years, speeds have been limited by the large amount of heat generated by the fast switching of silicon transistors; moreover, circuit sizes cannot get much smaller because the wires and connectors are (as of 2019) no more than twenty-five atoms wide and five to ten atoms thick. Beyond 2025, we will need to use more exotic physical phenomena—including negative capacitance devices, single-atom transistors, graphene nanotubes, and photonics—to keep Moore's law (or its successor) going. Instead of just speeding up general-purpose computers, another possibility is to build special-purpose devices."

gave way to fiber optics. Wireless technologies removed the need to tether to a wall port and cellular phones moved from simple verbal communication devices to mobile computers. All this change occurred in less than half a century.

The web is barely fifty years old and it is already reinventing itself. As the web is used, it is continually morphing and adapting to new abilities and applications. Already, society has coined a phrase for new uses of the internet, “Web 2.0”.¹⁹ In 1999, user experience engineer Darcy DiNucci coined “Web 2.0” to describe the interactive shift within the web itself.²⁰ The internet evolved from linking observers to one computer’s content to linking them to an interconnected network of machines with users dynamically interacting with the content itself. The rise of interactive digital communications through personal home computers and mobile devices shifted the landscape and created an opportunity for participants across the globe to become co-creators of content as both author and publisher. New skillsets are developing as a new reality emerges, requiring new competencies for which educators should prepare students. Groups such as the European Commission’s Digital Competence Framework for Citizens (DigComp 2.0) set out to assist education by identifying these new skills. DigComp offers five technological competencies for contemporary society: 1. information and data literacy, 2. communication and collaboration skills, 3. digital content creation, 4. safety, and 5. problem solving.²¹ Institutions must be aware of these new requirements if they wish their students to remain relevant in this evolving world and many will look to new educational technologies to help them achieve this goal.

New Pedagogies for a Changing World

The Web 2.0 offers a new medium for information dissemination and creates new roles for those engaged. In the educational realm, the teacher’s role as expert is no longer what it once was. Before the rise of interactive digital media, traditional pedagogy transmitted information from subject/object to teacher/expert and then to learner/amateur. However, with a wealth of information already available online, learning shifts as it becomes increasingly collaborative and constructivist.

In the late 19th century, the field of psychology gained notoriety in Leipzig, Germany, as it was one of the first to bring the recent invention of electric lights into the classroom for educational purposes. Using lights for something other than room illumination was new idea and soon the entire school was equipped with a “magic lantern.” The magic lantern was a content projector prototype and was used to present educational content via lights, screens, and

¹⁹. Some would argue that Web 3.0 may already be upon us as well, but discussion of Web 3.0 is beyond the scope of this article: <https://www.nytimes.com/2006/11/12/business/12web.html>.

²⁰. Darcy DiNucci, "Fragmented Future," *Print* 53, no. 4 (1999): 32.

²¹. "The Digital Competence Framework 2," EU Science Hub - European Commission, 2015, accessed January 27, 2020, <https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/digcomp/digital-competence-framework>.

magnification to the entire room. The classroom transformed from a lecture room to a theater hall where students learned through hearing, not just sight.²² By 1919, film studies became part of American classrooms as the Bureau of Education published its first catalogues for appropriate use of projectors for education. Electronic technology enabled new modes of teaching and learning and soon, this novel classroom technology was approved by educational oversight organizations across the globe.

After World War II, the term “educational technology” entered the education vernacular. Anthony Elia notes an article in the 1947 *Higher Education Quarterly* as the first publication to describe pedagogical use of emerging technologies with this term. In 1969, the concept continued to spread as the *Council for Educational Technology for the United Kingdom* was founded and shortly thereafter, established the *British Journal of Educational Technology* as governing bodies evaluated and reviewed technology’s use in the classroom. Institutions and educators continued adding new technologies to their curriculum as quickly as imagination, costs, and governance would allow. The 1980s and 1990s saw a dramatic rise in “educational technology” conversations as lower cost “personal computers” became commonplace in many western households and schools. Education technology, and its sister description, academic technology, made its place in the language of educational literature across the globe and evolved as its own subdiscipline.²³

The effects of educational technologies have already garnered the attention of researchers as they seek to understand how it can best be leveraged in the classroom. From 2004 to 2018, the MacArthur Foundation provided \$232.5 million dollars in grant money toward investigating “how digital media are changing the way young people learn, play, socialize, and participate civically and how those insights could be used to improve education.”²⁴ These endeavors along with others in the field are providing empirical evidence for a renewed focus on teaching and learning pedagogies.

Educational Technology in Christian Higher Education

Christian higher education integrated the language of educational technology in the last third of the 20th century as it grappled with the new ways in which classroom and distance technology was developing. Since the late 1800s, institutions of higher education offered correspondence courses to remote students through written materials.²⁵ Strategies adapted as the

²² Anthony Elia, “Assessing the Future of Educational Technology in Theological Education: A Techno-History and Its Legacy,” *ATLA Summary of Proceedings* 68 (2014): 40.

²³ Elia, “Assessing,” 40-42.

²⁴ “Digital Media & Learning,” MacArthur Foundation, accessed January 24, 2020, <https://www.macfound.org/programs/learning/>.

²⁵ Katherine Amos, “Report of the Survey of ATS Schools on Educational Technology and Distance Education.” *Theological Education* 36, no. 1 (1999): 125.

rise of audio and video recordings increased the ease and scope of distance programs and entire degrees were earned at a distance in many fields of study. By the end of the 20th century, over 850 US institutions had accredited distance education programs, up from 100 in 1992, as adoption rates of new technologies increased over time.²⁶

The Association of Theological Schools is one of the primary accrediting bodies for theological institutions in the United States of America. In 1996, ATS selected an Educational Technology Advisory Committee to counsel the Association and resource schools in the area of distance education.²⁷ One of the first actions of the committee was to conduct a distance education survey in which 201 of the 237 member schools responded. The survey revealed 32% of reporting schools had an active distance education program²⁸ (see figure 2).

THE RAPID RISE IN DISTANCE EDUCATION IN ATS SCHOOLS FROM 1999-2016

1999	2 schools approved to offer MA degrees mostly (up to two-thirds) online
2002	Mostly online MDiv degree approved at a limited number of schools
2007	70 schools begin offering online courses
2012	100 schools now offer online courses ATS Standards revised for Comprehensive Distance Education (CDE) Residency requirements for the academic MA eliminated Residency requirements for the MDiv and professional MA reduced Exceptions to the residency requirements available upon petition
2013	First completely online MDiv and professional MA programs approved
2016	175 schools (two-thirds of total membership) offer online courses 141 schools approved to offer CDE 100+ degrees completely or almost fully online 2 schools offer DMin degrees completely online 6 schools offer doctoral programs completely or almost fully online

Figure 2. Online Learning at ATS Schools.²⁹

²⁶ Amos, "Report," 125-126.

²⁷ Amos, "Report," 126.

²⁸ Defined as: "for-credit courses for individuals engaged in external independent study which includes any form of individualized study where regularly scheduled in person conversations with faculty or other students are unlikely to occur." Amos, "Report," 127.

²⁹ Source: Tom Tanner, "Online Learning at ATS Schools," The Association of Theological Schools. Quoted in Sharon Miller and Christian Batalden Scharen, "(Not) Being There: Online Distance Education in Theological Schools," *Auburn Studies* 23 (2017): 8.

It became obvious to ATS that distance education was growing and the implications for accreditation must be addressed. In the report, Amos quotes Greg Kearsley on the future for education. He states,

The world of education will be very different [in the twenty-first century]: what students and teachers do, when and where learning takes place, the nature of the educational experiences. Schooling, as we know it, will change dramatically;³⁰

ATS recognized that schools offering programs with distance education components “must take seriously the implications of distance education on the curriculum, faculty, students, administration, support services (including library), and institutional resources.”³¹ Many institutions responded to the rise and influence of “internet-based system of education” by creating new director and/or dean positions for technologists. As of 2014, twelve of the approximately 230 ATS schools had created such positions.³²

It seemed clear from the survey that if institutions wish to provide sustainable programs, distant, residential, and/or a hybrid of both, they must provide oversight and clear expectations for how technology will be integrated in its programs and how it will support the strategic plans of the institutions. Technology is now a key aspect of the teaching and learning and should not be an afterthought if institutions wish to be successful and sustainable in this new reality.

A New Culture of Learning

In 2011, Douglas Thomas and John Seely Brown published a book entitled, *A New Culture of Learning*, and summarized their findings concerning the shifts in education resulting from the digital age. They condense these changes into three key elements: 1. a shift to learning-centered pedagogies 2. a focus on the “personal and collective” rather than “public and private” and 3. exploring tacit forms of knowing.³³

30. Greg Kearsley, *Online Education: Learning and Teaching in Cyberspace* (Wadsworth Thompson Learning, Belmont, CA, 2000), quoted in Amos, “Report,” 138.

31. Amos, “Report,” 139.

32. Elia, “Assessing,” 43-44.

33. Thomas Brown and Seely Brown, *A New Culture of Learning*, 37ff, quoted in Mary Hess, “Learning with Digital Technologies: Privileging Persons over Machines,” *Journal of Moral Theology* 4, no.1 (2015): 140.

Researchers Robert Barr and John Tagg identify key aspect of this shift as a movement from traditional pedagogies to this new culture:

From:

- Providing or delivering instruction
- Assessing quality of entering students
- Atomistic: parts prior to the whole
- Covering materials
- Faculty as lecturers
- Knowledge “out there”

To:

- Producing learning
- Assessing quality of exiting students
- Holistic; whole prior to parts
- Specified learning results (outcomes)
- Faculty as designers of environments
- Knowledge “in each person’s mind and shaped by experience”³⁴

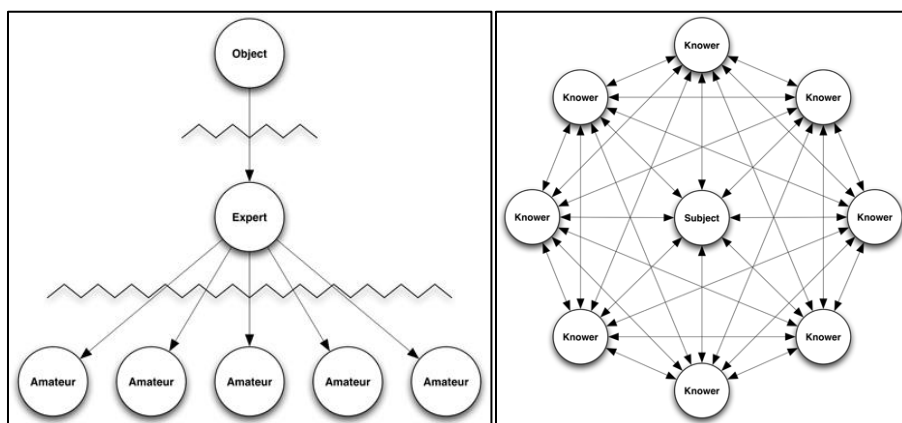
This transition is not yet ubiquitous across the globe, but research indicates that it is becoming apparent in practice.³⁵ These three elements are key for looking at the challenges integrating educational technologies as it created new ways to think about teaching and learning.

Learner Centered

Mary Hess serves as an ambassador for integrating technology into the classroom to enhance the teaching and learning experience. Delving into theorist Parker Palmer, Hess draws attention to the competing paradigms of knowing any subject (see figures 3 and 4).

³⁴. Robert Barr and John Tagg, “From Teaching to Learning--a New Paradigm for Undergraduate Education. (Cover Story).” *Change* 27, no. 6 (1995): 11-12, quoted in Mary Hess, “A New Culture of Learning: Digital Storytelling and Faith Formation.” *Dialog* 53, no. 1 (2014): 12.

³⁵. Hess, “*New Culture*,” 13.



Figures 3 and 4. Two Views of Knowing³⁶

In figure 3, the subject can only be known through the help of the expert and therefore has no direct relationship with the subject. Conversely, figure 4, the knower has a direct relationship with the subject and the other knowers. This understanding does not remove the teacher/expert but allows the teacher to create spaces where learning can occur. This new role reflects the reality that “*all* are teachers in some way, just as *all* are learners—we *all* ‘know as we are known.’”³⁷ Relationality is privileged as the subject maintains its own sense of agency in relationship to the knowers. This learning focus offers new opportunities for both the student and the educator.

Once the focus shifts to the student, educators must look at how the student can best learn. This is not a static answer and good pedagogies will adapt as necessary. The methods of an educator will likely shift as each student progresses through each stage of education, just as a parent will need to instruct a toddler differently than a teenager. In higher education, students enter with a base of learning gained from previous schooling. Cultures and accreditation bodies differ on the prerequisites for acceptance into higher education, but all recognize pedagogical shifts as students move through the different levels. The instructor’s role shifts to mediate between the knowledge of the students, the information readily available, and the context of the classroom.

Personal and Collective Learning

Once the focus is placed on the knower rather than the expert, the second aspect of the new culture of learning looks at the shift to personal and collective learning. Moving away from a transactional understanding of content transfer, the tools for assessment change. Learning

³⁶ Source: Parker Palmer, *The Courage to Teach* (San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, 1998), 103, 105.

³⁷ Mary Hess, "What Difference Does It Make? Digital Technology in the Theological Classroom," *Theological Education* 41, no. 1 (2005): 81.

moves from public stage and individualized to personal and communal. In Palmer's diagram of knowing above (figure 3), the amateur never connects directly with the object and therefore learning is a step removed from the object of knowing. Learning is also individualized through the skill of the expert to relay content and the student's ability to process the content without any horizontal support from others. Knowledge is also private since the only path to knowing the object occurs in the classroom or lecture space from the expert source. In figure 4, the knowers are distinct, but relationally connected to the other knowers and the subject. The knowing becomes personalized to each knower and collectively sourced rather than privatized. The role of the educator shifts to facilitating personal and collective experiences with the subject.³⁸

As pedagogies shift toward the personal and collective, questions of accessibility come to the fore as knowers are intertwined. The community of knowers rely on each other to bring clarity on the subject. Therefore, a shift is made for more open and accessible means of education. Many current educational models find it helpful to rely on Learning Management Systems (LMS). An LMS allows students to access information and each other across time and space. Open online courses are other new ways in which the doors are being opened to any knower, regardless of location or economic status, as they can access some of the top institutions and educators in the world.³⁹ As the learner becomes the focus, time and space fade away as the personal and collective knowers pursue the subject without the burden of private access.

Tacit Knowing

The third aspect of the new culture of learning is the move from explicit to tacit forms of knowing. Moving away from transactional content transfer, knowing a subject becomes a dynamic exploration. New methods of investigation are welcomed as tacit learning contributes to increased subject knowledge and expands the relationship between knowers. This creates opportunities and challenges for the educator to bring this unexpressed knowledge into explicit reflection for assessment and ongoing social learning. New tools and methods are required and therefore institutions and educators are confronted with the issue of additional pedagogy training and technological evaluation. This is a challenge for many still learning the "new culture of learning," but affords new opportunities for increased knowledge.

Unfortunately, assessing success is messy when knowing is divorced from the concept of simple content transfer. In the two views of knowing, figure 3 has a stable object from which knowledge is gained, and successful knowledge transfer can be easily measured. Figure 4 seeks to know a subject relationally and understanding is dynamic for the knowers, which can be more difficult to directly access. Relational knowing is more interactive, fluid, and cross disciplinary

³⁸Much can be noted about the dangers of oversharing and commodification through social media. For a nuanced approach relating to Seely Brown's research, see Hess's two articles, "A New Culture of Learning: Digital Storytelling and Faith Formation," and "Learning with Digital Technologies: Privileging Persons over Machines."

³⁹Massive Open Online Courses are commonly known as MOOCs and Small Private Online Courses, SPOCs. These courses are open to the public in large and small scales.

and therefore creates room for new learning spaces and techniques to evolve. Once the web is engaged, knowing in digital environments provides greater access to tacit/implicit forms of knowing. The subject is evaluated from an indeterminable number of angles and therefore, knowing is continuous and rarely straightforward. The benefit of tacit knowing is a more productive assessment of learning than whether information was transferred or not.

Embracing Technologically Enhanced Pedagogies

In the new culture of learning, the lecture model of classroom learning is less needed as the teacher as expert role morphs. The role of educator is shifting from being the “sage on the stage to the guide on the side.”⁴⁰ Digital culture now allows students to transcend physical space and shorten the distance between the subject matter, context, and application. There is opportunity for education to be more collaborative and constructivist which provides educators opportunities to be more relational rather than less. However, this must be cultivated with pedagogy that addresses the changes to the traditional medium and encourages the collaborative spirit present in a networked way of knowing.

Alfred Rovai provides salient research for shaping the learning environment to foster collaboration when education is no longer exclusively face-to-face. He posited seven pedagogical factors that educators can reference when seeking to understand relatedness in digital spaces:

1. transactional distance – reducing the psychological and communication space between learners and teachers through dialogue
2. social presence – showing up online
3. social equality – ensuring equality of voices and opportunities
4. small group activities – enhancing collaboration and creating connections
5. group facilitation – keeping the dialogue between participants moving and on task
6. teaching style and learning stage – varying assignments and activities to engage learners
7. community size – maintaining a manageable size to allow effective facilitation⁴¹

These factors encourage the connectedness of the learners in an online environment. If educators can connect students with each other and the instructor, the collaborative knowing can increase learning.

Technological enhanced pedagogies encourage symbiotic relationship between the participants, the subject, and each other. Nevertheless, the shift creates new domains for educators to discover and discern and new concepts to process, all while threatening the status

⁴⁰. Mark Maddix, James Estep, and Mary Lowe, eds., *Best Practices of Online Education* (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Pub., 2012), 10.

⁴¹. Alfred Rovai, "Building Sense of Community at a Distance" *The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning [Online]* 3, no 1 (April 2002): 6-9.

quo by moving power away from the expert, raising questions about the nature of the learner, and changing the norm for transmitting knowledge.⁴² Legitimate questions are being raised and experts are responding with adapted/adaptive pedagogies to incorporate the new reality in education. However, the future may seem murky for educators and many have questions and concerns that institutions will want to address.

Faculty Concerns with New Modes of Education

As researchers study institutions moving into new digitally enhanced learning spaces, educators are facing uncertainty. Educators desire quality educational and formational experiences for their students and they find themselves “executors” of the shifting pedagogies. Many have or will have concerns and no writing can anticipate all questions from every context. However, since this writing hopes to begin conversation within institutions assessing readiness for new technologies, it is helpful to acknowledge some of the major concerns of faculty.

Matt Bower’s research looks deeply into the design of “Technologically Enhanced Learning” (TEL) and synthesizes the pros and cons of many elements within new learning design. He takes the clusters or domains of concern and provides benefits, potential issues, and considerations for educators (see Table 1).

42. Hoover illustrates this power paradigm shift in the church. Stewart Hoover and Lynn Schofield Clark, *Practicing Religion in the Age of the Media: Explorations in Media, Religion, and Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 14-16.

Table 1. Technology-Enhanced Learning Design Principles, Benefits, and Issues⁴³

Cluster	Benefits	Issues	Principles
Pedagogy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pedagogical flexibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inappropriate design 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish clear pedagogical motivations for using technology • Design for authentic and meaningful learning • Provide students with a clear rationale for using technology • Utilize general pedagogical strategies and principles • Integrate supportive scaffolding • Construct the environment according to intended activity and pedagogy
Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scope the technological context
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate communication 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support effective communication • Select technologies according to pedagogical, technological, content and contextual considerations
Content representation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content representation & sharing • Easy contribution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cognitive load issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider cognitive load and multimedia learning effects
Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance collaboration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply strategies to encourage successful collaboration
Motivation & engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance motivation & engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative student dispositions • Undesirable student behavior (misuse and distraction) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proactively engage in the learning process
Vicarious learning & reflection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate vicarious learning & reflection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plagiarism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enable opportunities for reflective and vicarious learning

⁴³ Source: Matt Bower, *Design of Technology-Enhanced Learning: Integrating Research and Practice* (Bingley, UK: Emerald Publishing Limited, 2017), 399-400.

Cluster	Benefits	Issues	Principles
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor and manage plagiarism
Digital learning capabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop digital capabilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate student digital capabilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explicitly develop students' digital learning capabilities
Assessment & feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technology can enhance assessment and feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment and feedback challenges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt high-quality assessment and feedback practices
Student-centered learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active and student-centered learning 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand and cater to students
Learning communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop learning communities • Identity & presence 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster positive learning communities
Protecting students		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety, privacy, and equity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uphold student safety and privacy
Teacher support		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Underdeveloped teacher digital skills • Negative educator dispositions • Teach support issues (time, professional learning, institutional issues) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leverage professional learning opportunities and support

This table does not provide an exhaustive method for addressing all concerns of faculty but opens the conversation to deeper discussion on how these new modes enhance, retrieve, reverse, or obsolesce previous modes of technological practice and, by extension, teaching and learning.⁴⁴ Finding the concerns of the faculty is one way that institutions can gain additional insight into readiness for new technologies.

Living with educational technologies is the reality for institutions in the 21st century. As with any change, it brings uncertainty and sometimes fear. The best way to drive out fear is through authentic, relational encounters (i.e. loving one-another). Instead of providing an unattainable, exhaustive list of answers, this writing prompts discussions about data, like in the recent charts and graphs above, as a starting point for further conversation. These philosophical and practical discussions are helpful but can occupy a great deal of time, never getting to underlying issues about presence and connection between knowers. A better starting place for Christian institutions is theology, which is where this writing soon turns.

⁴⁴ Hipps, *Hidden Power*, 42.

Living with Educational Technologies

The world has changed and though there are concerns and uncertainties, institutions wishing to educate effectively, must acknowledge and address these changes. Ultimately, education pursues the truth that comes with knowing but truth is best understood as a relational pursuit and not as a static point to achieve. As Parker Palmer writes,

[I]f we regard truth as something handed down from authorities on high, the classroom will look like a dictatorship. If we regard truth as a fiction determined by personal whim, the classroom will look like anarchy. If we regard truth as emerging from a complex process of mutual inquiry, the classroom will look like a resourceful and interdependent community. Our assumptions about knowing can open up, or shut down, the capacity for connectedness on which good teaching depends.⁴⁵

This becomes more poignant in a Christian context. The new culture of learning raises questions not only about the nature of knowing, but also personhood, presence, and formation. Many educators have taken note and are looking for ways to practically and philosophically navigate these changes. This is especially true within ecclesial bodies who affirm a relational understanding of personhood and embodiedness. These are fundamental questions for how each school will fulfill its mission as a Christian institution.

The educational world experienced disruptive change and new ways of learning are presenting themselves as preferred pedagogies in the 21st century. However, as Christian educators and institutions in the Wesleyan tradition, culture and experience are not the only guiding forces in pursuit of truth. God is the source of ultimate truth and true knowing ultimately comes from God. This look at the history and development of new pedagogical theories provides groundwork for understanding where education is today. However, practical theology methodology does not move directly to application. The next section looks to reflect theologically on personhood and formation, critical components of Christian education. It begins by recognizing that the digital age is not something to fear but it is an opportunity to be more Christian in our educating. Focusing on the learner allows education to move ahead with the new culture of learning through embracing the increased relationality that it brings.

Theological Reflection on the New Culture of Learning

A changing world caused disruptive change within education, creating a new culture of learning. These new pedagogies are causing many institutions to reevaluate learning methods for the 21st century. However, as Christian educators and institutions in the Wesleyan tradition, culture and personal experiences are not the only guiding forces in pursuit of faithful action. To be Christian in orientation means God is the ultimate source of truth and therefore, knowing ultimately comes from God.

⁴⁵ Parker Palmer, *The Courage to Teach* (San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, 1998), 51.

The theological evaluative part of a practical theology loop is explored in this chapter. The nature of God is studied. For the Church of the Nazarene to which IBOE institutions belong, this is a Triune God. A faithful understanding of the persons of the Trinity allows one to understand humankind as persons, rather than simply individuals. Personhood, then, raises questions about presence and embodiment, which are key in developing a holistic understanding of teaching and learning. Once a theological grounded anthropology is understood, a strategy for implementing educational change through technology can be explored. This section explores personhood and presence in light of a Trinitarian understanding of God, undergirding the ways in which institutions can think theologically when adding educational technology to the classroom.

Personhood in the Image of God

Communication technologies of this digital age resulted in a new culture of learning. All educational institutions deal with this new reality, but institutions that are distinctly Christian look to their understanding of God as the foundation for knowledge rather than the whims of the culture. Daniella Zsupan-Jerome recognizes this reality when she says,

The flow of digital culture and its fluid, dynamic, and participatory ethos challenges the textbook, the lecture, as well as traditional understandings of authority, presence, authenticity, and truth. Fingers sliding across the screens of our mobile devices, we are challenged to discover a renewed understanding of these crucial terms for the sake of communicating faith.

In the midst of our shifting cultural reality toward the digital, we are called to do more than just keep up with the latest gadget or communicate effectively with our digital natives. We are called to do theology, and more specifically, the theology of the possible. Envisioning the challenge this way shifts the focus from the gadget, platform or trend *du jour* and invites religious educators to a fundamentally creative posture of theological reflection about the work of communicating faith.⁴⁶

Christian education begins with God as the starting point of faith and practice. If anthropology were to come before theology, God is made in the image of humanity rather than the other way around. Once a faithful understanding of the person(s) of God is found, then human personhood can be more faithfully understood and valued. Educators can move to understand what it means to be a person in community, learning together.

The understanding of Trinity as relational concept is helpful when determining how people should be and act in the world. God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit exists as one God in

⁴⁶ Daniella Zsupan-Jerome, "Practicing the Theology of the Possible in Digital Contexts," *Religious Education* 110, no. 3 (2015): 269-272.

a mysterious perichoretic union which birthed the world into existence.⁴⁷ ⁴⁸ This creative Godhead dances together in a glorious display of mutual divine love, overflowing into creation.⁴⁹ The person of Jesus Christ reveals God's mode of being—loving communion of persons—and to provide a means of salvation through which humans can again become partakers in the divine life.⁵⁰ The church (which birthed Christian education) is brought into being by the Spirit, constituted in the very being of God, and *is* the body of Christ.⁵¹ Therefore, the church exists as the communion of the *many* and the *one*.⁵²

Personhood does not begin with individuality; it is not constitutive of the Cartesian self: “I think, therefore I am.” Authentic personhood reflects the being of God, persons in relationship, a reflection of the perichoresis of God. In this communion, with God and with others, the people of God find *themselves* (their self) as image bearers. Since the Church is the gathered body of Christ, the individual persons, gathered as the church, are only separate in their togetherness and together in their separateness, the *many* and the *one*.

Christian educators are called to draw persons to one another and to God through authentic relationships. The essence of being human is relational and therefore personhood is promoted through relationship in all aspects of life, including education. Humanity *is* connected. This is an ontological reality and when the ability of digital technologies to increase connection across space and time is recognized, educators find new opportunities to reflect the nature of God and the essence of humanity. The new culture of learning, reflected in Dulles' second view of knowing, figure 4, more faithfully illustrated the movement toward personal and collective. Therefore, *Christian* education can embrace the new culture of learning as it more closely fits with a relational ontology reflected in the Trinity.⁵³

Digital technologies provide novel ways for people to participate in the communion of persons, personally and collectively. This technologically mediated communion provides opportunities to transcend gender, ethnicity, physical characteristics, political boundaries, and

⁴⁷. Perichoresis is from the Greek and literally means to “dance around.” This term describes the inner life of God, three distinct persons in relationship as One.

⁴⁸. Genesis 1:1.

⁴⁹. Corneliu Boingeanu, “Personhood in its Protological and Eschatological Patterns: An Eastern Orthodox View of the Ontology of Personality,” *The Evangelical Quarterly* 78, no. 1 (2006): 3-19.

⁵⁰. Jonathan Cole, “Personhood in the Digital Age: The Ethical Use of New Information Technologies,” *St Mark's Review* 233 (October 2015): 64.

⁵¹. John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2004), 132.

⁵². Zizioulas, *Being*, 137.

⁵³. Cole, “Personhood,” 63.

personality traits that often-hinder communion in face-to-face mediated interactions.⁵⁴ Although the invisible influence of technology can become problematic, once the nature of God and person is relationally understood, educators can evaluate how practices form the knowers regardless of the medium and maintain a faithful ecclesiology.⁵⁵

What does it mean to know?

What does it mean to be a knower? Theologically, a person can be known because they are first “known” by God; this is a relational understanding of being as its most basic.⁵⁶ This ontology is a physiological reality as well as a psychological/sociological reality.^{57 58} Our physical bodies operate from within a culturally and relationally shaped reality; people cannot define themselves except in relationship to others and the narrative that makes up their “selves.”⁵⁹ Therefore, construction of personhood is best understood relationally rather than individualistically. As *Christian* education integrates new technologies into its pedagogy, it looks to respect the personhood of its members and promote the authentic relationality and presence while recognizing the influence of the medium.⁶⁰

It is helpful to understand that all communication is mediated and therefore, derives relationality with each other in mediated ways.⁶¹ In educational terms, it can be construed that all learning is distance learning and should be evaluated on its effectiveness rather than the mode of mediation.⁶² For much of human history, communication with closely connected relationships were mediated by physical bodies in close geographic proximity. Eyes sent messages to the brain and those messages were translated into mental pictorial representations of the object which was seen. Ears allowed sound waves to vibrate eardrums as brains translated the waves into intelligible speech. This type of communicating and relating acts almost invisibly...that is, unless

⁵⁴. Meredith Underwood, "Lost in Cyberspace?: Gender, Difference, and the Internet 'Utopia'," *Religion and Popular Culture in America* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press 2000): 276-291.

⁵⁵. Richard Gaillardetz, *Transforming Our Days: Finding God Amid the Noise of Modern Life* (Liguori, MO: Liguori, 2007), 108.

⁵⁶. Zizioulas, *Being*, 46-47.

⁵⁷. Steven Sandage and Jeannine Brown, "Relational Integration, Part I: Differentiated Relationality Between Psychology and Theology," *Journal of Psychology & Theology* 43, no. 3 (2015): 171.

⁵⁸. Dean Blevins, "The Practicing Self: A Theory of Personhood," *Asbury Theological Journal* 60 (2005): 29-30.

⁵⁹. Blevins, "Practicing Self," 27-29.

⁶⁰. Hipps, *Hidden Power*, 30.

⁶¹. Bret Stephenson, "Nature, Technology and the Imago Dei: Mediating the Nonhuman through the Practice of Science," *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 57, no. 1 (2005): 7-8.

⁶². Steve Delamarter et al., "Technology, Pedagogy, and Transformation in Theological Education: Five Case Studies," *Teaching Theology and Religion* 10 (April 2007): 72-75.

one was blind or deaf. Then, the presence of the medium, or lack thereof, becomes obvious. All communication is mediated, and the new digital tools provide an added layer, but many questions remain about the nature(s) of the individual, embodiedness, and presence in digital mediation.

The Nature of the “Individual”

Platonic and Neo-Platonic dualism has not been helpful in developing a holistic understanding of the individual person. Many conceptualizations of personhood have reduced a person into distinct parts, mind and body. An anthropology that moves past dualism gives a more faithful understanding for what it means to be a person. When Phineas Gage’s brain was hit with an iron rod in 1848 and his personality changed, another hole was shot into the current anthropological understanding of body and mind duality.^{63 64} With the help of other disciplines, theological inquiries into personhood can gain a fuller understanding of what it means to be a person, specifically a person in relationship. Current scientific and humanities studies also provide a context for a holistic understanding of personhood that can then give a way to move forward in use and understanding of technology in Christian education.

Human bodies are formed by systems which are ultimately made up of subatomic particles and the space between them. The study of these subatomic particles gives rise to what is known as quantum physics, or the theoretical understanding of the extremely small. It seems the more science looks at the small, the less is understood about the basic building blocks of atomic structure. These particles can be observed breaking the classical laws of physics and have given rise to what is known as quantum entanglement.⁶⁵ Science is discovering that even at the most basic levels, humans are energy in relationship.⁶⁶ Our physiology is integrated with the experiences or practices within the world. Neurobiology has shown that even conceptions of God and religious practices are relational. The phrase “God is compassionate” construes “emotion-laden images at pre-verbal levels of information processing in the limbic brain related to relational experiences of compassion.”⁶⁷ Again, here is where the mind/body dualism breaks

⁶³. Phineas Gage is famous for surviving an accident that sent a rod through his brain allowing science to further study brain and personality connections.

⁶⁴. LeRon Shults, *Reforming Theological Anthropology: After the Philosophical Turn to Relationality* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub., 2003), 179.

⁶⁵. Valerio Scarani, *Quantum Physics: A First Encounter: Interference, Entanglement, and Reality* (Oxford: OUP Oxford, 2006), X, Electronic Format.

⁶⁶. At this point, all that is asserted is that even science is discovering more and more that we are relational beings and less an individualistic being. For an interesting metaphor relating quantum physics and trinity, see: Ernest Simmons, "Quantum perichoresis: Quantum field theory and the Trinity," *Theology & Science* 4, no. 2 (2006): 137-150.

⁶⁷. Sandage and Brown, "Relational Integration," 171.

down at the physiological level. The mind/spirit/soul is fully interconnected with the chemical processes making one whole being rather than a separate body and a separate soul.

Psychology is also helpful when looking at relationality, particularly the psychosocial perspective of Erik Erickson. Erickson's eight stages of psychosocial development are contingent on the relationships around the person.⁶⁸ The self of a person can only be understood in conversation with the world around it personally, historically, and socially.⁶⁹ Persons cannot conceive of themselves except in relationship to others or things. If one references a married woman with children, she is understood in relationship to her spouse and her children. This woman is also the child of parents, a student of mentors (formal or otherwise), an acquaintance to others, and so on. She could also be a Master of Chemistry, an amateur photographer, and an accomplished Greek student. The woman is not the woman without the implicit or explicit relationships in which she is a part and she "practices" her self only embedded in this social matrix.⁷⁰ In light of Erickson's contribution, a dualistic separation of embodied relationship and individuality seems problematic.

Dualism and the Bible

Unfortunately, the Bible has language that contributes and perpetuates the understanding of a person as a spirit/soul, and body. One of the most problematic ways the New Testament translators caused confusion is the treatment of the Greek term *sarx* or "flesh."⁷¹ It can be inferred that when *sarx* is translated as sinful nature instead of simply flesh, Christian thinking would want to separate the sinful parts from the part that can be holy. Therefore, if the sinful nature equals the flesh, there must something ontologically different that can be saved; often this something else is labeled the soul or spirit. This dualistic understanding has many implications and has led to theological debates on the nature of personhood, the nature of salvation, the salvation of the physical realm, and the resurrection of the body.⁷² One recent update to a popular Bible translation even changed its previous translation of *sarx* as sinful nature and opted for a more precise flesh in most instances to remove some of the dualistic confusion.⁷³

⁶⁸. Don Hamachek, "Evaluating Self-Concept and Ego Development Within Erikson's Psychosocial Framework: A Formulation," *Journal of Counseling & Development* 66, no. 8 (1988): 355.

⁶⁹. Blevins, "Practicing Self," 32.

⁷⁰. Blevins, "Practicing Self," 33.

⁷¹. For a discussion of *sarx* in a NT context, see: Wilber Dayton, "The New Testament Conception of Flesh," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 2, no. 1 (1967): 7-17.

⁷². For a specific illustration on the hermeneutical implications, see: Andy Johnson, "On Removing a Trump Card: Flesh and Blood and the Reign of God," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 13, no. 2 (2003): 175-192.

⁷³. "Translator's notes," Biblegateway.Com, accessed February 18, 2017, www.biblegateway.com/niv/translators-notes.pdf.

A Hebraic understanding may help move past dualism to a holistic understanding of personhood, ontology, and salvation.⁷⁴ The opening poem of Genesis reveals that humans were created when the breath of God “spoke” them into existence. Consequently, it is when the breath leaves the body that a person is considered dead. There cannot be a person without a body because personhood is embodied. The Hebrew language does not even have a word for soul from which one could infer a dualistic concept. It is the spirit/breath of God, the *ruach*, that animates bodies as a whole creation.⁷⁵ When the body is holistically understood, knowers can convey presence no matter their mode of mediation.

A relational ontology reinforces this truth and reminds Christians that they are the body of Christ, connected through baptism and mystically representing Christ to the world. The incarnation of God demonstrated that presence is personal, and the church continues to mediate Christ’s presence, even in his absence.⁷⁶ Additionally, the letters of the New Testament represent presence in absence. Just as Paul was connected to the churches of the epistles while not physically present in space and time,⁷⁷ Christians are connected to brothers and sisters when they join each other through a digital medium. A formation ecosystem⁷⁸ establishes presence that extends outside geolocation and connects school, home life, church participation, personal and corporate history, language, culture, etc. across time and space. Christian education seeks to foster greater presence across all modalities as a reflection of a present God.

Real Presence

When Christian education regards the new culture of learning through a Trinitarian lens privileging personhood and presence, it asks how technology is shaping relationality. As argued in the section above, technology is not a substance that one can take or leave but part of the fabric of the current reality. The language of “virtual” versus “real” is not a helpful category because digitally mediated communication is also real. “Virtual” relationships are “real” relationships mediated in a novel way. The persons using technology to facilitate knowing and relatedness remain ontologically the same. The technology adds an additional layer and socializes the interaction, but that does not negate the fact that a real relationship exists.⁷⁹

⁷⁴ Dennis Bratcher, "Body and Soul: Greek and Hebraic Tensions in Scripture," Crivoice.Org, accessed February 18, 2017, <http://www.crivoice.org/bodysoul.html>.

⁷⁵ Also see Bratcher for an argument about Hebrew poetry in relationship to “heart, soul, and strength.”

⁷⁶ Daniella Zsupan-Jerome, *Connected Toward Communion: The Church and Social Communication in the Digital Age* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2014), 61, Kindle.

⁷⁷ Stephen Lowe and Mary Lowe, "Spiritual Formation in Theological Distance Education: An Ecosystems Model," *Christian Education Journal* (Spring 2010): 95-96.

⁷⁸ For an explanation about spiritual formation using an ecosystem model, see: Lowe and Lowe, "Spiritual formation," 85-102.

⁷⁹ For an explanation of the socialization of non-humans/technology, see: Stephenson, “Nature.”

New digital realities allow educational methods to move between modes of synchronous and asynchronous, as well as, online and offline. When education goes “online,” it participates in a multisite reality and extends itself into the concept of “networked” education.⁸⁰ Online and offline presence now blend in such a way that the two cannot be mutually exclusive. A person’s offline presence cannot be dismembered from their online presence and dismemberment language introduces a new sense of problematic dualisms. Persons *are* their true selves when they are offline and when they are online. Elaine Graham says it this way,

There is a tendency here, still, to bifurcate identity into ‘real’ self (bodily) and ‘cyber’ self (virtual) in an inversion of Platonic or Cartesian dualism, and to fall back upon a rather romantic vision of the unmediated encounter between humans who are assumed in no way to be constituted by technologies of any kind.”⁸¹

Our current reality is fully mediated and much of that mediation is becoming digitally influenced. Thus, everyday life becomes embedded with online practices, including our educational spheres.⁸²

Formation in a Digital World

Wesleyans affirm that the *Missio Dei* is conveniently active anywhere a person goes and therefore, God is already present no matter the geolocation.⁸³ When serving its truest mission, *Christian* education shapes students in the ongoing work of transforming internally, societally and globally. Therefore, it takes student formation seriously and looks to evaluate it faithfully. Many Christian educators balk when it comes to formation in distance and online education.⁸⁴ It seems difficult for some to conceptualize how formation can occur when interactions are distance and/or asynchronous. This is an important concept to consider especially within Christian education as it is grounded in practices of formation.

Educational accreditation bodies are aware of the need to address formation in education. In 1972, the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) created a task force to study formation in its schools.⁸⁵ Following that study and subsequent research, a 1987 ATS conference focused

⁸⁰ Heidi Campbell, "Understanding the Relationship Between Religion Online and Offline in a Networked Society," *Journal of The American Academy of Religion* 80, no. 1 (2012): 64.

⁸¹ Elaine Graham, *Representations of the Post/human: Monsters, Aliens, and Others in Popular Culture* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 189.

⁸² Heidi Campbell, "Making Space for Religion in Internet Studies." *Information Society* 21, no. 4 (2005): 309-315.

⁸³ The *Missio Dei* is the “mission of God.”

⁸⁴ Mary Hess, “Attending to embodiedness in online, theologically focused learning” (Paper presented at Luther Seminary, October 2000), 2.

⁸⁵ R.W. Steubing, “Training for Godliness in African Theological Education,” (*ACTEA Monographs*, 1998): 24.

solely on spiritual formation and expressed the need to focus on formation for ministry.⁸⁶ Recently, ATS has incorporated language in its Standards for Accreditation to ensure formation is not neglected:

A.2.4 Personal and spiritual formation: The program shall provide opportunities through which the student may grow in personal faith, emotional maturity, moral integrity, and public witness. Ministerial preparation includes concern with the development of capacities—intellectual and affective, individual and corporate, ecclesial and public—that are requisite to a life of pastoral leadership.⁸⁷

Although ATS does not define formation for each school, its standards require that each define what it will do to ensure it happens intentionally.⁸⁸

Many distance education critics have been silenced by positive statistical evidence and research has validated the efficacy of learning through this medium in many disciplines.⁸⁹ However, some educators do make nuanced objections to formation in a digital culture since formation is naturally relational and distance can strain relationships. Broadly, the heart of most critiques is the “disembodied” nature of digital interaction verses its physically present counterpart of campus-based education. There are a variety of underlying assumptions behind this objection, and how it is resolved will weigh heavily on the viability of formation in a digital culture.

Disembodied Presence?

The “disembodiedness” objection to distance or online education infers that spatial distance is directly related to educational effectiveness. This assumes the ability to gather students into a classroom is inherently better than the gathering of persons digitally. Anecdotally, most teachers can attest that even students physically present can be mentally absent from the learning environment. This does not negate the objection but rather turns the question to the success of student engagement in any modality of education. Educators should take this challenge seriously and develop sound methods of pedagogy to ensure student engagement regardless of the medium.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Steubing, “Training,” 24.

⁸⁷ Association of Theological Schools, *General Accreditation Standards*, 2012, accessed July 22, 2017, <https://www.ats.edu/uploads/accrediting/documents/standards-of-accreditation.pdf>.

⁸⁸ Lowe and Lowe, “Spiritual formation,” 86.

⁸⁹ Mark Maddix and James Estep, “Spiritual Formation in Online Higher Education Communities: Nurturing Spirituality in Christian Higher Education Online Degree Programs,” *Christian Education Journal* 7, no. 2 (2010): 424.

⁹⁰ Mary Hess, *Engaging Technology in Theological Education: All That We Can’t Leave Behind* (Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005), 3-5.

The question of relationality in distance education is philosophically more challenging. Some educators may ask if traditional classroom environments are inherently more relational than environments utilizing digital technology. The answer relies on the pedagogy applied in the learning environment. Refuting the assumption that the traditional classroom is more relational and embodied than the online classroom, Hess argues,

The primary educational technologies in use included not only chalk boards and overhead projectors, but the even more insidious technology of “hours,” whereby classes met for a specified number of hours at certain times each week, and teachers and students had to fit their learning into that framework, rather than the framework evolving out of the necessary needs of the learning process.⁹¹

For some types of learning, the classroom may be more appropriate, but this is not true for all instances of learning and formation. A reverse critique against the superiority of the traditional classroom are questions like: “How effective is learning about care in a classroom rather than participating in a hospital visit?” or, “Is the classroom always the best place to learn about worship practices?”⁹² Since a classroom is not a simple guarantee of the best learning environment, it is possible that digital spaces could be equal or even better for community building and spiritual formation.

All Learning is Distance Learning

Dr. Russel Haitch provides a compelling case study as he espouses that “*all* learning is distance learning” and therefore, all forms of education should be scrutinized through the lens of distance traversed, be it cultural, gender-based, historical, or existential.⁹³ Paul, in his letter to Corinth, says that he is absent in body but present in spirit.⁹⁴ In essence, much of the New Testament was written by an educator at a distance. For some to posit that proper Christian education cannot cross space and time argues with the Apostle Paul and the Bible itself. Most Christians believe the Bible is authoritative and instructive in their current life, yet it is a book whose most recent writings were penned nearly two-thousand years ago. If distance learning cannot take place, then the Bible is worthless to anyone after 100 A.D.

Responsible educators in the new culture of learning seek to find the best ways to reduce the distance between the knower the subject. The best methods may call for a continuation of approaches within tradition education, fully embrace new approaches, or create hybrids of the two. The digital age provides new opportunities for educations to learn from traditional approaches and create new “normed norms” that allow for greater presence within learning

⁹¹. Hess, *Engaging Technology*, 6-7.

⁹². Hess provides a fuller argument about embodiedness and relationality than will be provided here. Hess. “Attending to embodiedness.”

⁹³. Delamarter et al., “Technology,” 64-79.

⁹⁴. 1 Corinthians 5:3.

spaces. Just as John Wesley reimagined discipleship while gaining practical wisdom from Christian tradition, the best of contemporary education leverages all the tools at its disposal, digital or not, to bring knowers closer together for the sake of learning.⁹⁵

A holistic Trinitarian anthropology allows one to view human interaction as innately relational. Theologically, Christianity understands that the Holy Trinity transcended(s) space and time through the incarnation as well as with all human connection with the Divine. People are created as an overflow of the Divine perichoresis but the current nature of humanity struggles with relationality to each other and to the world. There is a struggle to overcome the distance between the subject of knowing and the knower. Educationally, it should be acknowledged that distance must be crossed whenever someone attempts to teach or learn. This distance is sometimes mediated through technological means such as a computer screen, but it also may traverse barriers such as culture, gender, social status, education, and generation. Users of any technology in education must wrestle with how it can enable greater presence rather than reducing it.

A Way Forward

In light of the challenges facing institutions in a world of both changing technology and pedagogical practice, a trinitarian informed practical theology can still help institutional leadership answer the basic questions concerning adopting digital technology without leaving the personhood of our students behind. Christian institutions, such as the ones overseen by the IBOE, most closely reflect their Christian mission when they adopt pedagogies that bring students and educators together in a personal and formational way.

Global changes in communication technologies have fundamentally reshaped the world and reshaped the ways that learning can be achieved. The internet brought the world's information into the classroom and provided an opportunity to know and be known as never before. Christian education can endorse this new culture of learning because, when done faithfully and strategically, this type of education allows students to be *more present* and *more closely connected* than ever before. As in the days of Paul, physical distance is not a true barrier for learning. All communication must overcome some form of mediation, so the digital age itself is not a stumbling block. It is a new opportunity to take the good news of the Gospel throughout the world through quality Christian education.

Assessing Readiness

Institutions of higher education now live with the reality of a new culture of learning, but they do not need to enter this new world alone. Institutions can learn from each other and allow information, experience, and resources to be shared for the benefit of all sister institutions. However, the desire to add technology and the use of the proven models of other institutions

⁹⁵ Randy Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Nashville, Tenn: Kingswood Books, 1994), 42-44.

does not guarantee adoption and success. The question remains for each institution, “Are they ready?”

This writing built a case for embracing digital technologies and encourages the adoption of collaborative pedagogies and now the methodology turns toward experimentation. The new culture of learning in the 21st century is congruent with a solid understanding of personhood, grounded in a Trinitarian worldview, and can be a preferred strategy for any institution. This understanding culminates with a recommended concrete practice of a practical theology methodology: a playbook readiness assessment tool.

The Need for Education Focused Technologists

Most institutions possess many resources for educating its students. All have a faculty and staff to oversee the educational structures and promote learning. Most have an informational technology department staffed with expertise in networks, databases, and systems. However, only a few global institutions have the means to designate a person to bridge the gap between the academic resources and the information technology resources such as an instructional/educational technologist who can focus on the integration of technological theory and its practice (see figure 5).

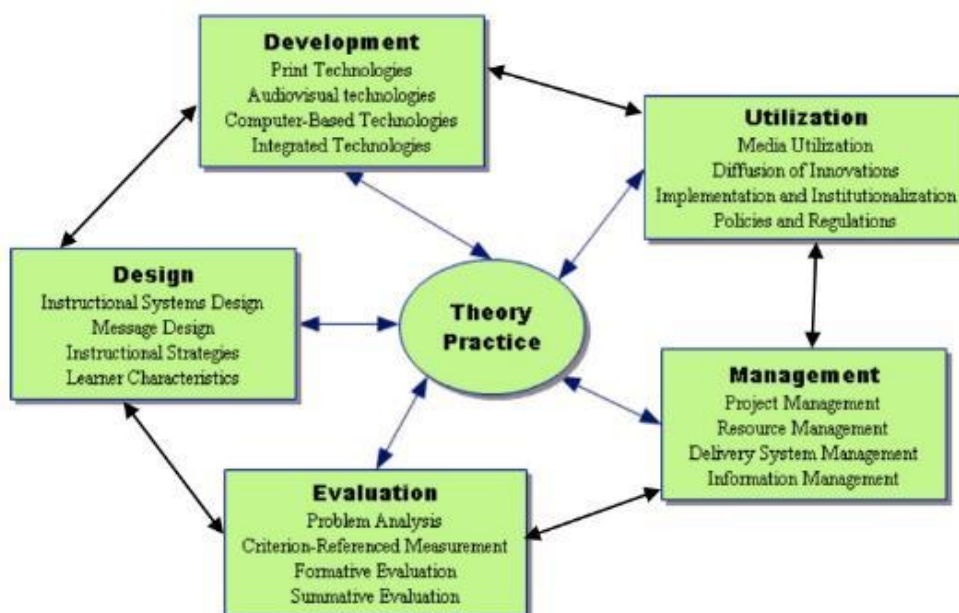


Figure 5. Definition of Instructional Technology ⁹⁶

⁹⁶. Source: Barbara Seels and Rita Richey, *Instructional Technology: The Definition and Domains of the Field* (Washington, D.C: Association for Educational Communications and Technology, 1994).

Not every institution has the means or will to staff a technologist to focus on technology within their educational environment. In order to help institutions who cannot or do not have an instructional technologist available to them, an assessment tool, such as the proposed playbook, may serve to strengthen its preparation for the challenges in adopting new technologies, understanding of current educational theory, maintaining a relational understanding of personhood, and actualizing practices gained from experiential learning. A strategic assessment allows each institution to analyze its strategic goals, recognize its cultural situation, and begin a conversation with partners, such as the Nazarene Global Education Department, to identify next steps for integrating new technologies into the learning environment.

Building on Prior Research

Dr. Steve Delamarter, from George Fox Evangelical Seminary, received a research grant from the Wabash Center to study the rise in technology use within theological education.^{97 98} His research provides insight into Christian higher education and offers a framework for assessing readiness for educational technology integration for institutions. Although many institutions do not fall under ATS's jurisdiction, the underlying ethos of theological institutions and the concerns of the faculty should be applicable when contextualized.

Dr. Delamarter gathered data from 43 seminaries in North America to gain insight into the attitude of faculty toward technologically enhanced learning in the seminary environment. Many of Delamarter's findings are not unique to ATS schools but extend to Christian higher education in general. First, these are Christian seminaries and therefore operate with an underlying Christian ethic and appreciation for higher education. Second, these schools employ trained faculty engaged in a classical forms of classroom education and although their subject matter is specific to Christian professions or service, the underlying educational assumptions are like most western-trained educators. Third, these schools must navigate the intricacies of an organization with staff, faculty, administration, presidents, trustees, and accreditation. Therefore, the research of Dr. Delamarter is transferable to most Christian higher education institutions.

Eighty-five interviews were conducted, representing 43 ATS seminaries.⁹⁹ The interviewees were asked a series of questions focusing on attitudes toward integrating technology into the classroom. The questions probed how technological tools were integrated into the pedagogy of the classroom and whether faculty viewed technology as enhancing or distracting in the learning environment. Many questions were specific to seminaries as it relates to ministerial preparation so faculty views may differ between disciplines. However, even within seminary

⁹⁷. George Fox Evangelical Seminary is now Portland Seminary in Portland, Oregon, USA.

⁹⁸. "About," Wabash Center, accessed November 1, 2019, <https://www.wabashcenter.wabash.edu/about/>.

⁹⁹. Steve Delamarter, "A Typology of the Use of Technology in Theological Education," *Teaching Theology & Religion* 7, no. 3 (2004): 135. See article for a greater description of methodology.

disciplines, faculty views differed. Therefore, regardless of discipline, contextualization will be key when evaluating educational technology integration in light of strategies and goals.

Typology of Educational Technology Integration in ATS

The results of Dr. Delamarter's research revealed three typologies of educational technology integration that influence the modes in which institutions tend to operate. These typologies provide a framework from which institutions can self-identify and provide a baseline for internal and external agencies, such as an Instruction Technology Department or the Global Education Office, to build a roadmap for increased integration and adoption. These stages are important for this writing because it offers common language to assess readiness and offers areas of movement for any institution who wishes to strategically shift typologies.

The research acknowledges that most theological institutions operate explicitly and implicitly with a "classical paradigm of education." This paradigm believes the most effective methods for (theological) education students are,

(1) *full immersion* for at least three years in a (2) *residential program* in which senior members of the community instruct, inspire and form junior members primarily through (3) *lecture-based pedagogies* and where students learn the art of theological reflection through (4) *face-to-face community discourse*, (5) *library research* and (6) *writing*.”¹⁰⁰

This model is rooted in a western model of education, which has shaped much of the world's educational systems for centuries. Delamarter sees this mindset as commonplace in many fields of study but speculates that theological (or maybe just Christian) education holds strongly to this position as historical and theologically authoritative. Therefore, these type institutions are more resistant to change.¹⁰¹ The push and pull through the three stages of progressions often hinge on the steadfastness of this educational paradigm.

Stage I

Stage I is where many institutions operate because they naturally resist change from the classical paradigm. When technologies are introduced that disrupt the way classrooms are traditionally structured, resistance to the technology is often strong. However, in some cases, digital enhancements are accepted because they help with perceived efficiencies and accessibility to resources required for the classical paradigm to work. These are small enhancements like a digital library database or computer projection of lecture materials. Statistically, 75% of instructors interviewed use presentation technologies to enhance lectures and "accommodate learning styles." However, if the general lecture structure is disrupted, it may be viewed as challenging the established pedagogy and an attempt to make the classroom into an

¹⁰⁰. Delamarter, "Typology," 135-136.

¹⁰¹. Delamarter, "Typology," 136.

entertainment venue rather than a place of learning. This is especially acute when the disruption involves time (synchronicity) and space (physical location.)

Stage II

Actively supporting distance education, whether online or some hybrid form, seems to be the tipping point for institutions who transition from stage one to stage two. Many institutions see the appeal of reaching students that do not/cannot relocate to a campus location. The reason for considering a distance education program varies, with some institutions looking to increase enrollment numbers or profit, accommodate working professionals, or reach students who have physical or cultural barriers that challenge participation in traditional classrooms. A key indicator that an institution is entering stage two is the adoption of a learning management system (LMS) such as Moodle or Canvas.¹⁰² It is here that institutions diverge into subgroups of stage II, which is what Delamarter calls stage IIA and stage IIB.¹⁰³

Stage II-A involves the conversion of materials taught in the classroom into an electronically mediated form. Lecture notes are digitized into online documents, audio/video recordings are made available to students, and/or electronic assignments are exchanged to assess competency over the electronically written or watched materials. Ultimately, stage IIA is an attempt is made to replicate a transactional classroom environment digitally for students at a distance, but the teaching methodology remains the same. Student success is measured by demonstrating content acquisition in a method as similar as possible to the students seated in the classroom.

Lack of structural pedagogy changes often creates stress within the learning structures which may force an IIA institution to move back to stage I or continue to stage IIB. Many institutions who remain at this stage without quickly progressing become disillusioned by the incongruity of the classical model and electronic mediation and view distance learning as an unsound approach to education. Institutions that embrace the change as part of the new expectations or internal strategy will find themselves at stage IIB.

In stage II-B, institutions recognize the incongruity of the classical model and the new digital culture of learning but instead of turning back to stage one, these institutions start to ask questions about best pedagogies for student learning across time and space.¹⁰⁴ Investigations and experimentation with constructivist learning theory and student-centered learning are conducted. Training is needed to help shift pedagogies from a classical understanding. Questions about simply adding technological tools move to broader questions about pedagogy and once again, a decision point is found where an institution can transition to new modes of teaching and learning or a retreat to classical forms.

¹⁰². These are just two examples of popular LMS options.

¹⁰³. Delamarter, "Typology," 136.

¹⁰⁴. Delamarter, "Typology," 137.

Stage II-C is marked by a move from specific thinking about a particular classroom or course to a broader discussion about delivering an entire curriculum enhanced by digital technologies.^{105 106} Institutions at this phase of thinking begin integrating the best elements of the face-to-face classroom with the best elements of online and distance learning. Hybrid models of education often emerge and blend residential experiences with online components and synchronous video conference sessions. The driving question for the Stage IIC institution is determining which mode of delivery is best suited for course outcomes as well as the program overall.

Stage III

Institutions that fully transition to stage III move past the curricular questions of stage II.¹⁰⁷ Instead, stage III institutions adapt the entire education strategy of the institution or program to incorporate digital technologies. The model is infused with renewed approaches to effective teaching and learning. Digital technologies are mainstreamed and integral to the structure of the learning environment(s) and the success of the institution. Technology is integrated based on the pedagogical principles of the assignment(s) or outcomes rather than blanket tool adoption for perceived relevancy. Ultimately, stage III allows for greater contextualization of learning and affords the student with opportunity to integrate life and learning through contemporary methodologies of teaching and learning. The arrival at stage III is not an easy one and the only institutions to arrive at this stage in the research do so through action at the institutional level rather than the faculty level.¹⁰⁸

Conclusion to Delamarter Research

The ATS research by Dr. Delamarter provides a credible structure to evaluate institutions, which also integrates into the playbook. When an institution can self-identify its current stage and goals, more holistic assistance can be offered. This provides guidance for technological integration of tools and strategies and in institutional readiness. If an institution wants to embrace distance education as core to its values and strategy but is currently at an early stage, instructors will need training, students will need to be informed and prepared for the changes, and structures will need to be adjusted to accommodate the move to stage three. Ultimately, it is the institution's decision and if those assisting with educational technology integration can understand the goal, everyone improves.

¹⁰⁵. Delamarter, "Typology," 138.

¹⁰⁶. It is good to note here that at the time of Delamarter's research, no fully online curriculum was accredited by ATS. This has since changed but many schools still blend online and offline elements as their strategic educational model.

¹⁰⁷. Delamarter, "Typology," 138.

¹⁰⁸. Delamarter, "Typology," 140.

Proposing a Readiness Assessment Prototype

In order to actualize this research, a readiness assessment tool is proposed. This “playbook” is designed to lead an institution through a quick journey into self-reflection for assessing readiness when adopting new technologies into its pedagogy and provides talking/thinking points for the organization. The playbook presumes an institution is interested in integrating new technologies and desires to take the groundwork provided and put into practice. It is interactive, provides just a brief introduction to the research undergirding it, and provides means for answering the readiness questions:

- Why should new technologies be added?
- Where is my institution currently?
- What will integrating new technologies change in learning environment and institution?
- Who needs to be on board?
- How does an institution move forward if they are ready?

Structurally, each section begins with one of these foundational questions for the institution and offers guidance for answering the question directly or solicits feedback from within the institution for further inquiry.

One of the playbook’s primary goals is identifying where each institution finds itself on a scale of readiness. The playbook uses a modified version of Steve Delamarter’s three-point scale: I, IIa, IIb, IIc, and III, and expands it into a five-point scale. The change allows each level to have its own identifiers rather than a subset of one number to provide clarity. The distinguishing marks of the categories are similar, but each level provides a more concrete description in order to better self-identify. The language descriptors for each number attempts to be neutral in judgement so institutions can find themselves on the scale without undue shame. The scale also provides concrete areas of change so an institution can measure advancement through the scale as it progresses to its desired outcomes.

The prototype is designed for interactivity and adaptation as cultural influence and technological needs and availability should be contextual. The tool can be distributed in printed form but the primary electronic form allows the tool to be interactive and adaptive, with immediate feedback. The primary electronic version serves the ongoing nature of the playbook and allows web forms, student surveys, hyperlinks, embedded videos, and Quick Response (QR) codes for additional engagement and feedback. Ultimately, the electronic playbook becomes a living document that adapts and improves with each use.

The playbook design begins a conversation within an institution that will lead to follow-up discussion internally and with partners assisting in technology integration. The next step for an institution is to analyze the surveys and feedback for insights into moving the institution through the desired stages of development in integration of technologies. Institutions are encouraged to learn more about the new culture of learning and delve into supporting materials and resources for strategic planning. The end goal of the tool is that the institution becomes more self-aware of its readiness for technological integration and begin steps for moving their

institution forward for better teaching and learning through a relational understanding of persons and systems.

Conclusion: Relational Theology, Relational Technology, Relational Education

Christianity is essentially a social religion; and that to turn it into a solitary one is to destroy it. – John Wesley¹⁰⁹

The online and offline worlds collided and formed a new reality for everyone. It is foolish for educational institutions to preserve an “analog” only view of teaching and learning as digital technologies permeate the culture. However, integrating new technologies into the classroom in *Christian* institutions should be done with respect to the personhood of the participants, privileging relationality and presence to promote learning. After all, a Christian worldview is a social one.

This writing has focused on the educational challenges that this new communications era of digital technologies ushered into the present. Following the methodology of experiential learning and practical theology, the experiential, historical, and theological research leads to a playbook designed to help assess institutional readiness. It provides this assessment by taking an institution through the basic questions of:

- Why should new technologies be added?
- Where is my institution currently?
- What will integrating new technologies change in learning environment and institution?
- Who needs to be on board?
- How does an institution move forward if they are ready?

Although the playbook itself does not provide full rationale undergirding its use, it is built on the principles ascribed throughout this writing and provides a concrete tool for testing and re-evaluation.

As Daniel Aleshire said, “The future has arrived.”¹¹⁰ Many institutions are moving forward with new technologies which will shape the pedagogy of the classroom and the trajectory of the institution. Assessing readiness for integrating new technologies provides an opportunity for these institutions to thrive in the new culture of learning and Christian institutions should want to be at the forefront of any new ways of drawing people closer to each other and closer to God. This conclusion looks back at the education and theological rationales

¹⁰⁹. John Wesley, "The Wesley Center Online: Sermon 24 - Upon Our Lord's Sermon on The Mount: Discourse Four," NNU.EDU, 1999, accessed February 20, 2017, <http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/the-sermons-of-john-wesley-1872-edition/sermon-24-upon-our-lords-sermon-on-the-mount-discourse-four/>.

¹¹⁰. Aleshire, "The Future," 69-80.

for integrating digital technologies to the classroom and proposes how this research can be utilized now and into the future.

Digital technologies provide new ways in which institutions can participate in the life of the world together and offer opportunities to transcend the physical and social categories that divide in face-to-face mediated interactions. The new culture of learning comes out of a period of rapid change following the rise of the digital age. This age brought about disruptive change to the world in general and education in particular. The tools of the digital age complement the pedagogical shift from content transfer to networked/collaborative learning. The power center in the new culture of learning is not with the expert because the knowledge of the internet is available to the world. The center is now rightly placed on the learners, allowing for a more personal learning experience which promotes wonder and exploration through shared experiences and collaboration.

Education in Christian centered schools have every reason to celebrate this shift in learning. *Christian* institutions in the Wesleyan tradition recognize that all creation is the result of the overflow of God’s perichoretic love and humanity reflects God through its relationships. Educators in the digital age have a great opportunity to offer communion to students and educators in new and richer ways than before. As has been true since the garden of Eden, selfishness and a pull toward individualization and isolation resists the doxological reality of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. However, today’s networked culture provides an opportunity to draw each other together for learning without the restrictive boundaries of neighborhoods and physical proximity. Once education moves beyond the question of physical location and moves to promoting faithful practices through a variety of mediated ways, it can fulfill its part within the *missio dei*.

This world is networked reality and leveraging the relationality built within a networked culture through relational pedagogies and digital technologies provides a more faithfully way to navigate the world. If education stops limiting its understanding of community by using terms like “virtual” to represent artificial, “out of body” experiences and instead, focuses on fostering authentic community and communion across different mediums (digital and analog), it may even find itself fostering closer union with God, the author of relationality. Once the focus shifts, education can concentrate on promoting learning in the best possible ways and not bias its methods against the digital reality.

Great benefits await an institution that is ready to enhance its learning environments. Done well, integrating technology into the classroom can:

1. provide a richer, more multiply intelligent environment within which to learn
2. provide more opportunities for real collaboration
3. give educators a better angle of vision on the challenges their students are facing and the specific assumptions with which they enter courses
4. provide better access to primary source materials
5. overcome constraints of geography and time

6. attend to the meaning-making contexts of students and communities of faith¹¹¹

However, it takes time and (ongoing) effort to do this well. This writing provides a tool to help institutions achieving these benefits, the rest is up to them.

Ultimately, education is a relational endeavor as teachers and students work together to better know the world and each other. Digital technologies provide new opportunities for increased collaboration and relatedness within education. Theologically, Christianity is about seeking to love one another through proper relationship to God and each other. Together, these three aspects of the current reality allow better teaching, learning, and living together in God's created world.

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¹¹¹. Hess, "What Difference," 83-84.

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