

**PEDAGOGICAL IDEAS FOR
REIMAGINING THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION IN NORTH AMERICA**

Author: Kelly Lamon, EdS, MDiv, MEd

Funder: ConvergenceUS Carpenter Grant

Presentation of Draft: May 29-31

Acknowledgements

I thank the following colleagues for their contributions to this white paper:

Amy Zimmerman, School Psychology Faculty, UW-Stout
Barb Flom, School Counseling Faculty, UW-Stout
Mike Starling, Psychology Department, UW-Stout
Rich Berg, Learning Technology Services Consultant, UW-Stout
Katie Brink, Distance Education Specialist and Adjunct OT Professor, UTS
Colleen Cook, Alumni, UTS
Hortense McCloud, Alumni, UTS
Jill Braithwaite, Alumni, UTS
Paul Christensen, High School Teacher, Mahtomedi Public Schools
Pam Shellberg, BTS Center

Bio of Author

As a recent graduate of United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities, Kelly Lamon is pastor of The Vine Church, a United Methodist new ministry start in western Wisconsin. Kelly's calling is to creatively invent new forms of ministry which meet the needs of those currently not connected to faith communities. She is a constructive theologian who cares more about her church participants constructing their own theology than getting them to agree with her.

She is bi-vocational, in her 12th year of teaching in the School of Education at the University of Wisconsin-Stout. In that setting, her areas of interest include disability assessment, behaviorism, academic intervention, play therapy, and action research. She has worked as a school psychologist, school counselor, and mental health consultant for public schools and agencies.

If education matters to you (and it probably does since this is a paper on pedagogy), Kelly has an Ed.S. in Counseling and Psychological Services, a M.S.Ed. in School Psychology, and a M.Div. recently earned. Her B.S. is in Sociology and Communication Studies.

Contents

Personal Reflection from Author and Introduction

[*Personal Reflection*](#)

[*Outline and Organization of the Paper.*](#)

[*Assumptions on the Role of Teacher/Educator, Learner/Learner, and Setting*](#)

Foundational Concept 1: [Theories of Learning](#)

[*Application for Theological Education*](#)

Foundational Concept 2: [Experiential Education and Skill-Theory Praxis](#)

[*Application for Theological Education*](#)

Foundational Concept 3: [Transformative Education \(with Dialogical Education\)](#)

[*Application for Theological Education*](#)

Foundational Concept 4: [Andragogy and Self-Directed Learning](#)

[*Application for Theological Education*](#)

Foundational Concept 6: [Bloom's Taxonomy](#)

[*Application for Theological Education*](#)

Foundational Concept 5: [Course Planning Concepts](#)

[*Application for Theological Education*](#)

Foundational Concept 7: [Instructional Methods and Strategies](#)

[*Application for Theological Education*](#)

Foundation Concept 8: [Effective Teacher Characteristics and Communication](#)

[*Application for Theological Education*](#)

[Online Teaching and Learning](#)

[Suggestion for Teaching Pedagogy](#)

Personal Reflection from Author and Introduction

Personal Reflection. I entered seminary with high expectations. Starting theological education in my mid-thirties, I had an established career in public education. With a background in educational psychology, I intended to take seminary classes part-time and continue to work part-time in the School of Education at the University of Wisconsin-Stout training school psychologists, school counselors, and special education teachers.

As a recent Master of Divinity graduate (April, 2015), I speak highly of United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities (UTS). During my four years there, UTS implemented a major transformation. Unlike any alumni before, my class witnessed first-hand the dramatic reshaping of an institution. The seminary made a significant paradigm shift and adaptations to meet the needs of students and the larger society—opening the Twin Cities School of Theology (TwinSoT), developing a new mission and values, and completely revamping their curriculum to meet the needs of a rapidly changing world.

Even though I am generally happy with my seminary experience and found the institutional reforms refreshing, I still felt significant frustration over the quality of some instruction. I felt an incredible divide between what I experienced as a student in my seminary classes compared to my own workplace where I was focused on training educators in the best practices in teaching and learning. In my seminary classes, I felt caught in a read-and-write-and-read-and-write loop. In my own classes, I was thoughtfully developing learning experiences based on theory and research.

I want to be clear: This is not a critique of my beloved seminary professors, who I have great fondness for. As I talk to seminary students across the country, their experience is—to greater and lesser degrees—the same as mine. Even the most dynamic personalities in the classroom used predictable methods.

The primary mode of teaching is auditory lecture.

The primary mode of learning is listening and reading.

The primary mode of assessment is writing papers.

To a great extent, seminary professors are not totally at fault for their lack of pedagogical technique. They simply are using the techniques their own professors and mentors used. Additionally, seminary professors are typically trained in theology and Biblical studies; few have taken teacher education classes.

At Gathering by the Sea, Pam Shellberg of Bangor Theological Seminary Center (BTS), spoke of the struggle of theological educators. As a previous public school teacher and seminary professor, she has training in both educational pedagogy and theology. She stated, “Pedagogy is its very own field. Requiring theological educators to be trained in both pedagogy and theology is really asking them to have expertise in two fields.”

Pam’s thoughtful assentation begs some questions: How much and what kind of training in pedagogy do theological educators need in order to be effective facilitators of learning? We expect elementary teachers to be more skilled in pedagogy than content. We expect high school teachers to be equally skilled in both pedagogy and their content area. Yet, in adult education,

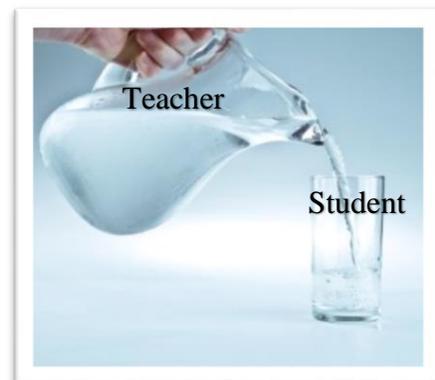
we expect our instructors to be knowledgeable in their content area (in this case, theology) with little to no training in or understanding of pedagogy.

Outline and Organization of the Paper. Best practices in teaching come out of strong pedagogical foundations. Therefore, I've organized the majority of this paper by foundational concepts. I will present eight concepts, organized from the most theoretical to most practical. This deserves repeating: *The sections are organized from most theoretical to most practical, so as you start reading, you will notice an abstraction that slowly moves to concreteness.* From these foundations, I will summarize how the foundational concepts can inform pedagogy in theological education. In other words, for each foundational concept presented, I will have a section describing the *application for theological education*. Some of these concepts are historic, serving as underpinnings for contemporary theories, and other frameworks are newly developed. Additionally, some of the concepts are simplistic but provide organization for common-sense information. Others are very sophisticated and try to make sense of complex ideas. Throughout this paper, I will use examples from my own experience as a recent seminary student and my own teaching at a public university.

With rapid technological advances comes the awareness that—for better or worse—education is being delivered online and in hybrid settings more and more. Content delivery in an online setting is vastly different from content delivery in a face-to-face format. Therefore, I've provided an online section, which covers a few best practices for that mode of teaching and learning. However, in order to properly cover elearning, I think hybrid and online learning require another paper. Online pedagogy is a field of its own, and in order to properly analyze its application to theological education, it requires more time than can be spent here.

Assumptions on the Role of Teacher/Educator, Learner/Learner, and Setting. Throughout the paper, I will refer to the teacher, learner, and setting. Instead of offering a typical “definitions of terms” section, I instead offer my assumptions about the roles of teacher/educator, learner, and setting by using analogies for description.

Old models of education put teachers in the role of expert as information giver or provider. As a vessel of information, teachers poured information into their students, the receptacles. While I would like to think this model is dead, experience has told me otherwise.





Newer models of education use different analogies to describe the role of a teacher. The word “co-creator” seems to be a new buzzword to describe the instructor’s role. This image puts the teacher and learner on the same level, recognizing they both bring knowledge to the setting and are active learners. Yet, in order to be effective in practice, seeing the teacher role in this way is complicated and requires significant reflection on power dynamics. I have seen theological professors take students on the *educator’s* own theological journey under the guise of “co-creating.” The result is that the knowledge the student brings is directed towards the teacher’s theological meaning-making, instead of the student’s. Quality teaching of adults absolutely requires breaking down walls between teacher and learners. However, within progressive settings, one needs to recognize the privilege and power the teacher holds. While the teacher’s theological growth is to be valued, it should not serve as the focal point of the discourse. The co-creating model only works if the teacher puts the student’s journey and creative process ahead of his/her own. The educator’s theological growth is only a by-product of student growth.

The middle-ground image is that of nature guide. Comparing a teacher to a nature guide recognizes the authority dynamics at play, yet allows for student-oriented learning. The nature guide image acknowledges that teacher and learners have unique, equally important roles.

The teacher—as guide—sets some boundaries on *scope* and organizes the *sequence* of the course in a way that maximizes the learner’s experience. The guide knows the terrain, has studied the ecology, and has experienced his/her own questioning. The teacher is present to point out what to notice and to ask learners to integrate new ways of understanding the environment into their thinking. As a guide, he/she has designed experiential learning activities that allow the students to deepen the understanding of the truths/experiences they already possess while simultaneously bringing into students’ consciousness a full awareness and appreciation of the vastness of the forest, an awareness of how much more there is to learn. The guide provides a variety of modes of learning, a variety of paths, but keeps the class cohesive by setting waypoints—“explore on your own; we will meet up ahead later.” The guide designs integrated learning activities; selects tools, resources, or media that will allow students to engage in their own learning; and provides feedback. As a guide, he/she pays attention to the unique needs of the learners.



The learners/students possess a willingness to engage on the tour/journey/exploration. They already come to the education setting with knowledge, understanding, and skills. The

guide/teacher will support the learner in discovering new knowledge and skill. Then the student will use both their existing knowledge and new knowledge to engage in and construct meaning. They intentionally make connections, reflect, and play with the content and learning tools provided by the teacher.

Teaching and learning can happen in a variety of settings. I most often use the words “class” or “course” to describe the form or setting of education. For ease of explanation, I will use this traditional language in this paper, but please note the words “class” and “course” have very broad meanings in my mind. The educational setting can also be a workshop, practicum, seminar, online modules, or any other educational form where a teacher and learner are interacting with each other.

And with that, we’ll move to foundational concepts of pedagogy and their applicability to theological education, starting with the more theoretical/abstract concepts, moving to more practical concepts.

Foundational Concept 1: Theories of Learning

Educational psychology provides many different theories of learning. As theory, they are descriptions or understandings how learning happens.¹ Traditional theories include the following.

- **Behaviorism** – Learning comes from the environment through reinforcement, punishments, conditioning, and modeling.
- **Cognitivism** – Learning is an information processing task that involves input of stimulus, interpretation, memory, and recall.
- **Humanism** – Humans are wired for growth; learning is a personal attempt to reach one’s potential through natural exploration and interest.
- **Constructivism** – People learn by actively constructing subjective meaning/representations out of the objective environment.

To greater and lesser degrees, the field of educational psychology is full of nuanced versions of these learning theories. The learning theories morph into education/teaching theories, which provide applicable models of instruction.

Application for Theological Education. For this paper on theological education in a postmodern, progressive setting, the most pertinent theories are constructivism and humanism.² The goals of theological education are transformation and mean-making. Constructivist and humanist learning theories translate into several education/teaching theories:

- Experiential Education
- Self-Directed Learning
- Discovery Learning

¹ For a good website for the overview of learning theory: <http://www.learning-theories.com/>

² Full disclosure: I’m actually a behaviorist and developmental psychologist, so my training is in behaviorism and cognition. However, when I went to seminary, I noticed some major shifts in my thinking towards the worldviews of humanism and constructivism. (Haven’t experienced both fields, I definitely think there are different theoretical perspectives on how people learn.)

- Problem-Based Learning
- Motivational Design
- Cooperative Learning
- Transformative Education
- Dialogical Education

Experiential learning, transformative education, dialogical learning, and self-directed learning will be addressed in the next sections.

Foundational Concept 2: Experiential Education and Skill-Theory Praxis

Thinkers think and doers do. But until the thinkers do and the doers think, progress will be just another word in the already overburdened vocabulary of the talkers who talk. -Anonymous

Because this paper is on theological pedagogy, the concept of praxis is important, as it has significance in education, philosophy, and theology. Praxis is often viewed as the cycle/process of thinking and doing.

In the education field, the concept of praxis was articulated by David Kolb. Kolb theorized “experiential learning”—i.e. learning through doing and doing by learning.

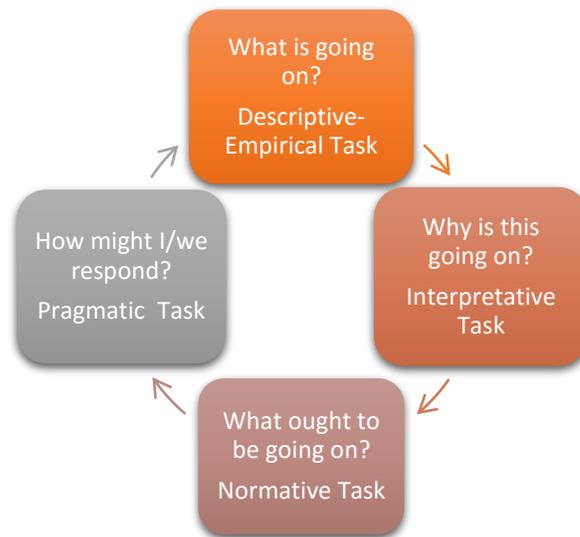


The praxis is the cycle/process of acting and reflecting over and over again. The School Psychology program I teach in uses a skill-theory praxis model as a framework for our teaching and learning. Instead of teaching theory in isolation and then expecting students to pick up the skills by learning theory, my program actually teaches the skills first and then ask students to use their experience to reflect on theory. This model ensures our students have highly refined best practice skills, and the ability to identify underlying theory which is informing their practice. The goal is to assist students in becoming highly reflective practitioners.

I was delightfully surprised to see this same praxis show up throughout my theological education, particularly when studying practical theology and/or social action. While I’ve heard some theological educators relegate practical theology to preaching, worship, Christian education, etc., the field of practical theology actually relies on theological reflection/interpretation of experiences and social events. Those who describe themselves as practical theologians have described praxis. Laurie Green, in her book *Let’s Do Theology*, describes the “Doing Theology Spiral.”³ She emphasizes that theology is more than thinking; it’s

³ Laurie Green, *Let’s Do Theology: Resources for Contextual Theology*, rev. ed. (London: Mowbray, 2009).

doing. Richard Osmer describes the “core tasks of practical theological interpretation” as the following:⁴



Application for Theological Education. Experiential learning can be applied to theological education. Instead of calling it “skill-theory praxis,” it could be renamed “action-theology praxis.” Teaching theology in isolation of action cannot produce the same type of transformative learning as teaching theology alongside action. Theological education must not simply dump different theologies into students, but theological education must ask students to engage in action and interpret the contexts through a theological lens.

For example, Colleen Cook and Hortense McCloud, two UTS seminary students, asked for an alternative assignment during senior capstone. Instead of writing a final paper encapsulating their theology and ecclesiology, they elicited the help of fellow seminarians and made a mobile justice shack out of an old ice house. [The justice shack](#) is stored at a local church and goes on the road as place of refuge during protests.⁵ Hortense McCloud describes the shack and her experience this way:

The Justice Shack is an intentionally ambiguous space here to witness and manifest wildly varied dreams of increasing justice in our lives, community, and world. The shack is a mobile, all season, on the street space for small groups of people. The creators are artists and theologians interested in finding meaning,



⁴ Richard Robert Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2008).

⁵ <https://www.facebook.com/justiceshack?fref=ts>

community, and connection outside of traditional religion or “church” spaces. We envision the shack as part of the local art community including street theater and other art projects; as a witness and resource at social protests; as a space for anti-racism and other educational workshops; for small groups doing meditation and other spiritual practices; and for experimental spiritual gatherings that create space for conversations between many different beliefs and viewpoints.⁶

In class, Hortense often stated to how the shack was her “church” and representative of her ecclesiology. While Hortense could have studied ecclesiology in traditional ways—through textbooks and other people’s writings—her experience with *creating ecclesiology* in the shack provided significant learning.

Foundational Concept 3: Transformative Education (and a bit on dialogic learning)

Learning is about transformation, it’s about change, it’s about seeing yourself in relation to the world differently. –Judy Apte⁷

Transformative education, or transformative learning, describes a model of adult learning which focuses on bringing about change in the learner. While some adult education is cumulative—adding knowledge and skill upon knowledge and skill—transformative education is meant open the learner’s eyes to new perceptions and understandings, resulting in the learner acting differently in the world. Jack Mezirow first conceptualized transformative learning in the late 1970s and was active in the literature into the 2000s.⁸ Since then, his colleagues and others have furthered the model.

Many have outlined the processes of transformative learning. Charaniya offers a succinct outline—a three-part process which describes how learning occurs.⁹

1. The learner’s cultural or spiritual identity is challenged by some experience or contradiction between beliefs and practice or life situation.
2. The learner’s cultural or spiritual identity is then expanded through engagement with experiences that are intellectual, relational, and reflective.
3. The learner creates a more pronounced understanding of self and of one’s role in the world.

In practice, the teacher creates and learners involve themselves in learning activities which result in identity challenge, expansion, and new understanding. Critical reflection is a necessary component in all of transformation, as the learner analyzes his/her identity and creates a new sense of self and role in the world. Additionally, some have suggested that transformation

⁶ Hortense McCloud, My Seminary Education: Culminating in Artistic Expression i.e. The Justice Shack, Final Paper for Senior Capstone, UTS, Fall 2014.

⁷ Judy Apte, *The Facilitation of Transformative Learning: A Study of the Working Knowledge of Adult Educators*, doctoral thesis, Sydney: Univeristy of Technology, 2003, 92.

⁸ Jack Mezirow and Edward W. Taylor, *Transformative Learning in Practice: Insights from Community, Workplace, and Higher Education* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2009).

⁹ As cited in Sharan B. Merriam and Laura L. Bierema, *Adult Learning: Linking Theory and Practice*, The Jossey-Bass Higher and Adult Education Series (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, a Wiley brand, 2014), 87.

can come from “nonrational” methods such as music, poetry, art, photography, literature, drama, fiction, film, and other story-telling.¹⁰

Dialogue and social interaction are other necessary methods. Transformation results from supportive relationships where learners engage in conversation with each other.¹¹ Dialogical learning—a close relative of transformative education—is a model where learning occurs through dialogue, discourse, and discussion. Working in groups, learners engage in consensus building, debate, reflection, and personal sharing.¹² Transformation happens through the dialogue.

Application for Theological Education. Transformation is by nature spiritual. Dirkx describes transformative learning as “soul work.”¹³ Theological education which prescribes to a deconstructive-reconstructive model is inherently transformative, as students recreate their worldview and theology.

A struggle with transformative education is that transformation is hard to plan for. Based on contextual and life circumstances, some learners might be ready for and seek transformation. Others may not. In this way, I think ethical methods are those which trust the learner to guide the transformative process.

United Theological Seminary offers an Arts Practicum. Colleen Cook experienced the art practicum as transformative education. During her last year of seminary, Colleen was diagnosed with terminal cancer, and with the new diagnosis, she entered her last semester which included the Arts Practicum.

Colleen created a series of five paintings which represented the transformation she experienced during the semester. Colleen describes her first two pictures as dark—she was learning to accept her diagnosis. During this time, Colleen decided that living life fully at this point required too much risk for her. If she stayed contained and closed off, she thought she could protect herself from fear and grief. At the same time Colleen was in the Arts Practicum, she attended a retreat on the Pentacle of the Great Turning.¹⁴ During this retreat she realized that holding back from fully living would not minimize the grief, apathy, and fear that surrounded her illness. She committed to living a whole life. That experience came out in her third and fourth pieces of art.



Piece #1



Piece #3

¹⁰ Merriam and Bierema, *Adult Education*, 95.

¹¹ Merriam and Bierema, *Adult Education*, 96.

¹² Robin Alexander, *Dialogical Teaching and the Study of Classroom Talk*, a Developmental Bibliography. Accessed 5/9/15. www.robinalexander.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Dialogic-teaching-bibliography1.pdf.

¹³ J. Dirkx, *Self-Formation and Transformative Learning*, *Adult Education Quarterly*, 2012, 62(4), 399-405

¹⁴ <http://www.reclaimingquarterly.org/100/RQ100-16-PentTurn.pdf>

A fifth piece of art sat unfinished in her house for a long time. Just an outline, it represented surrender. Originally dark and full of pain, Colleen finished this painting with bright colors, representing how surrender actually allowed her to release fear of living fully. She reached the last step of transformative education—her perspective on her life and her role in the world were transformed surrender, just as the fifth painting was transformed.



Piece #5

Foundational Concept 4: Andragogy and Self-Directed Learning

The term “andragogy” is used in a variety of ways. In North America, the term is mostly used to differentiate adult teaching/learning from child teaching/learning (pedagogy).¹⁵ However, the word pedagogy is also used in reference to the teaching/learning of *both* children *and* adults. For this paper, realizing this is about adult learning, the word pedagogy is used to describe *all* teaching/learning. The term andragogy is used to describe the adult education conceptualization of Malcolm Knowles.¹⁶ Knowles used the word to describe the motivational effects in adulthood and their application to adult education. His work has been carried on by colleagues (the 8th edition of his classic book came out this year).¹⁷

As a model of motivational effects in adulthood, Knowles and colleagues described six assumptions of adult learning.

1. Self-concept moves towards self-direction. As such, adults need to direct their own learning.
2. Adult learners have a growing reservoir experience, which acts as a rich resource for learning. They bring these experiences to educational experience and need to use them in their new learning.
3. Adults’ readiness to learn is related to their social role.
4. Adult learners are problem-centered, desiring to deal with an issue or problem related to their role (as described in #3).
5. Adults are more likely to be driven by intrinsic motivation, as compared to extrinsic motivation.
6. Adults need to know why they are learning, the concept others have called relevancy.

Knowing these motivational factors affects how the teacher sets up the learning environment and activities.

¹⁵ Merriam and Bierema, *Adult Learning*, 56.

¹⁶ Malcolm S. Knowles, *The Modern Practice of Adult Education: From Pedagogy to Andragogy*, rev. and updated. ed. (Wilton, Conn.: Association Press, 1980).

¹⁷ Malcolm S. Knowles, Elwood F. Holton, and Richard A. Swanson, *The Adult Learner: The Definitive Classic in Adult Education and Human Resource Development*, eighth ed. (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2015).

Knowles recommends several elements in his “process design.”¹⁸

Preparing Learners	Teacher provides information, prepares the students for their participation, sets expectations, readies students to think about content
Climate	Mutually respectful, trusting, collaborative, supportive, relaxed
Planning	Planning of objectives and learning activities determined collaboratively by teacher and learners, according the interests and backgrounds of the learner.
Diagnosis of Needs	Mutual assessment between teacher and learner.
Setting of Objectives	Mutual negotiation between teacher and learner.
Designing Learning Plans	Sequenced by readiness, problem units
Learning Activities	Inquiry projects, independent studies, self-directed learning, experiential learning, problem-based learning, dialogical teaching.
Evaluation	Learners and teacher mutually evaluate their own learning outcomes.

These elements are very student-focused, relying on the student to chart his/her path. A kin to this framework is Self-Directed Learning (SDL).¹⁹ Instruction is organized according to the students’ needs. The teacher and students plan the objectives and learning activities together and mutually evaluate learning.

Application for Theological Education. Knowles et. al. developed a learning contract as a framework to implement of SDL.²⁰ The first part of the class is spent identifying needs, setting objectives, and planning. The second part of the class involves implementing learning plans. And the last part of the class involves mutual evaluation.

Learning Contract for: Activity:			
Learning Objectives	Learning Resources and Strategies	Evidence of Accomplishment of Objectives	Criteria and Means for Validating Evidence

¹⁸ Malcolm S. Knowles, Richard A. Swanson, Elwood F. Holton. *The Adult Learner: The Definitive Classic in Adult Education and Human Resource Development*, seventh ed. (St. Louis, MO: Routledge, 2011), 114-116.

¹⁹ Merriam and Bierema, *Adult Learning*, 63.

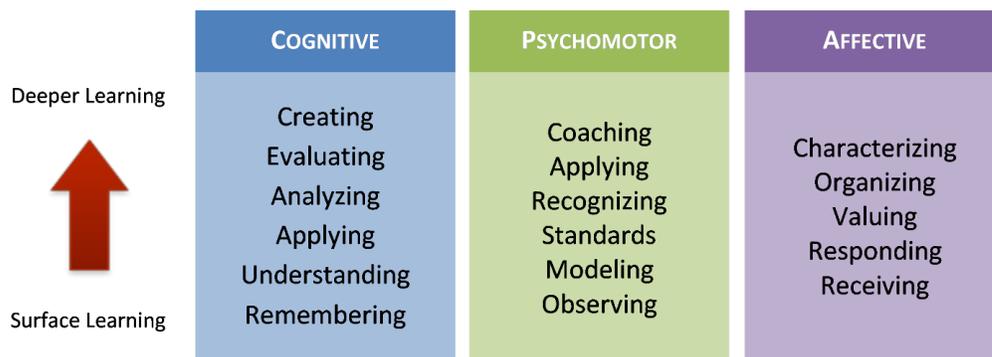
²⁰ Malcolm et. al., *The Adult Learning*, 7th Ed, 288.

The most common SDL practice is an independent study, and this is used often in theological settings. Theological education has mechanisms to make this happen, so I won't provide an example, since most of us know what this looks like.

Whether SDL can be brought into a whole classroom setting, depends on the content, skills, and students. Not all courses are best suited to SDL—sometimes the teacher needs to direct the scope and sequence. Additionally, some students will buck SDL because they want to rely on the teacher for direct instruction and process. This need should be taken seriously. But when a class is suited to it, SDL is a strong model that can produce great outcomes.

Foundational Concept 5: Bloom's Taxonomy

Course objectives set the scope of the course and can also help with guiding sequence. In education, Bloom's taxonomy is the most widely used framework for developing learner objectives. Developed by Benjamin Bloom, the taxonomy provides a description of the hierarchy of learning, starting at the simplest level, moving to the most complicated levels in three domains: cognitive (thinking), affective (feeling), and psychomotor (doing). The cognitive domain was revised in 2001 by Anderson and Krathwohl, and is the most often used domain. Bloom/Anderson/Krathwohl's taxonomy is best understood in a [table](#).²¹



While one might expect that surface learning is more often done by children and deeper learning by adults, all types of learning are done at all levels—the complexity of the content is what differs at various educational levels.

Application for theological education. As stated, the taxonomy is most often used to develop learner/course objectives. Most syllabi have a section that starts with, “By the end of the course, the learner will be able to...” and then lists behavioral objectives expected from the student. Many illustrations and charts have been developed which list action verbs that are useful for writing the objectives. Iowa State's teaching resource's page offers a comprehensive, [interactive resource for using the taxonomy](#).²²

²¹ <http://carleton.ca/viceprovost/assessment-of-learning/what-are-learning-outcomes/blooms-taxonomy/>

²² <http://www.celt.iastate.edu/teaching-resources/effective-practice/revised-blooms-taxonomy/>

The following is a list of example objectives for how taxonomy can be applied to theological education within the cognitive domain. (Hint: if you read from the bottom up, you can see the progression of thinking.)

Cognitive Domain	Task/objective expected of student
Creating	The student will construct their own theology using Biblical sources and themes.
Evaluating	The student will assess whether a contemporary, contextual theology is consistent with Biblical themes.
Analyzing	The student will investigate various contemporary theologies to determine which Scriptures are relied upon to develop the system.
Applying	The student will apply the Newer Testament themes to contemporary issues.
Understanding	The student will summarize the authors' main themes in the Newer Testament books.
Remembering	The student will recall the books of the Newer Testament.

A question arises: If one is using humanism and constructivism as the foundational learning theory and if one understands adult learners to direct their own learning, how important are course objectives developed by the professor? Should the students not develop their own objectives?

Yes, no, and maybe. Some courses will require that the teacher writes objectives—the content will demand it. Particularly if the skills and knowledge for successful church leadership have already been defined (either by a denomination, institution, or organization), then the objectives should absolutely be centered on these defined skills/knowledge. When choosing course objectives and scope (see below) it is imperative the demands of the field are considered. The expectations should come from real life, not the educational setting.

However, sometimes courses can be developed with objectives at the higher levels of the taxonomy and leave room for the students to direct their own thinking at these levels. And in other classes, the teacher might ask learners to write their own objectives. I provide the following examples of how objectives were creatively used from my own seminary experience:

Katie Brink, UTS Distance Education Specialist and Adjunct Older Testament professor, developed a new course on the Bible and social justice. As a popular adjunct professor, students were eager for her class. On opening day, she sought to understand the backgrounds, interests, and passions of the students. After the first class period, she realized that most students had met several of the objectives related to economic justice, but that some of us had curiosity in other areas, such as disability justice. The following week, she came back with new objectives and schedule to address the interests and learning desires of the learners. In addition, she asked a student with a disability to co-present material on the added topic.

My CPE experience, like most, required the learners to develop both personal and professional objectives. I found this activity extremely beneficial. At the start of the experience, I was able to identify where I wanted to spend my activity and reflection. By the end of the course, I was able to evaluate whether I had successfully completed my objectives.

As stated, this taxonomy most often is used for developing learner objectives. However, I find the taxonomy is even more helpful when developing learning activities (i.e. requirements and/or assignments). When developing assignments/learning activities, I ask myself what level of thinking I'm requiring out of my students while they engage in the assignment: Am I asking for evaluation with this assignment? Creation? Analysis? Application? Can I ask for more than one type of thinking in any given assignment to maximize learning? My goal is not to just have students engage at the higher level thinking, but to actually ensure I am asking them to engage at all levels of thinking. Developing learning activities with Bloom's taxonomy in mind assures one is engaging students' minds at all levels.

Foundational Concept 6: Course Planning Concepts

Selecting the appropriate teaching model (from those above or others) involves analyzing scope, sequence, and differences. Even though these are simply terms, they still require short elaboration.

Scope refers to the content covered. Including both breadth and depth, the scope sets the limits on the material. For example, one might set the scope as the whole Old Testament or one might set the scope as the prophets. Scope is usually informed by the course's learning objectives and demands of the field.

Sequence refers to the order in which the course material is covered, along with the sequence of learning activities and experiences. An effective sequence is one that allows the learner to most readily grasp the content and skills.²³ In addition, sequence involves an appropriate pacing. In my opinion, proper sequence is an essential element to an effective class. Sequencing questions include the following: Are students building skill on skill? Are they relating topic A to topic B? Do they need content knowledge before they can apply a skill?

Differences are variables that change from course to course and impact the model of teaching/education one chooses. The following are differences:

- Most related to scope, **subject-matter differences** have to do with the type of course. Some classes are **knowledge-based** classes (content heavy). Other classes are **skill-based** classes (practice heavy). Some classes are a mix of both.
- **Situational differences** refer to contexts in which the course will be delivered. At the basic level, this has to do with course delivery models (hybrid, online, face-to-face). But it also has to do with the socio-cultural environment.
- **Individual differences** refer to the differences that occur in learners. Second-career learners have different needs than more traditional students. Students have unique learning styles which should be considered when deciding the model of teaching.

Application for Theological Education. Because we are reimagining theological education, it would be tempting to jump onto a bandwagon and pick a new teaching model because it is novel. I fully support innovation in the classroom, and I think we need to be moving into new models that are more experiential, transformative, dialogical, and student-directed. At the same

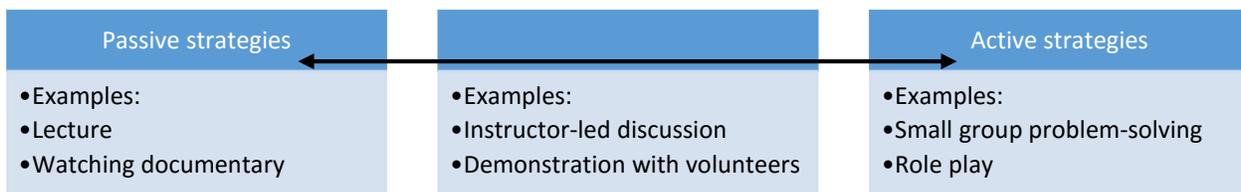
²³ Malcolm et. al., *The Adult Learning*, 7th Ed, 288.

time, picking a teaching model should be done thoughtfully. Considering the concepts above will help an educator choose the right model for any given course.

For example, because of my certification, I teach a wide variety of courses that cut across different disciplines. Most of my classes are experiential in nature. I require students to be in an experience, practicing skill, and reflecting on theory. However, that model would not work for all my classes, particularly those which are knowledge-based and content-heavy. Those classes require more traditional models, and I infuse dialogue, experience, and self-direction in smaller doses. If a professor takes pedagogy seriously, in any given semester, he/she could be teaching with three or four different models depending on the scope, sequence, subject-matter, context, and individual differences of students.

Foundational Concept 7: Instructional Methods and Strategies

Instructional methods and strategies can be placed on a continuum from passive to active. Conceptualized by Charles Bonwell and James Eison, passive methods are those where material is presented to students; active methods are those where students engage with material, the teacher, and/or each other.²⁴

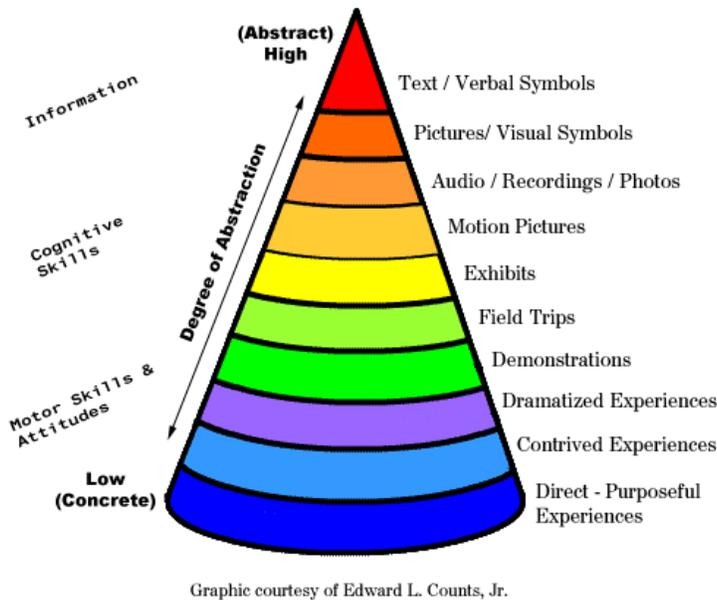


Some models discuss the different types of instructional methods as “media.” A contemporary model by Richard Mayer researches how different media (words, pictures) are processed.²⁵ While empirically based, his research is rooted in cognitive processing theory, so not quite appropriate for this paper.

An older model, developed in the 1960s by Edgar Dale, also reviewed different instructional strategies in a cone form, also describing various mediums. Dale’s “cone of experience” has been revised by many and often misinterpreted. The cone is not overly sophisticated (rather common sensical), but it does provide an organizational guide for varying content delivery methods. I have provided Dale’s cone below, and added a box to illustrate examples of methods used in my own theological education. You will notice that some of Cone’s language is dated, but the model still provides clarity.

²⁴ Charles C. Bonwell and James A. Eison, *Ashe-Eric Higher Education Report*, vol. 1, 1991, *Active Learning: Creating Excitement in the Classroom* (Washington, D.C.: School of Education and Human Development, George Washington University, 1991), 1.

²⁵ Richard E. Mayer, *Applying the Science of Learning: Evidence-Based Principles for the Design of Multimedia Instruction*, *American Psychologist*, November, 2009, 760-769.



- Verbal Symbols:
Lecture
- Visual Symbols:
White board, text slides, illustration slides
- Recording, still pictures:
Pictures on slides
- Motion pictures, video, television:
Documentaries and movies
- Exhibits:
Examples of Dead Sea scrolls
- Study/field trips:
Visits to other worship experiences/faith traditions
- Demonstrations:
Modeling of preaching, teaching, pastoral care, social action by professors
- Dramatized experiences:
Sermons or education lessons to a class setting
- Contrived experiences:
Role plays of pastoral care
- Purposeful experiences:
CPE, contextual study/internship

In addition to the methods discussed above, some other methods are worth mentioning: case studies, concept mapping, research projects, games, interviews, debates, dyad discussions, small group discussions, large group instructions, and self-study.

Application for Theological Education. The discussion in communications and theology regarding the connection between method and message has been going on since at least 1950. In 1979, the evangelical James F. Engel argued, “the church is both the medium and the message.”²⁶ This concept that the method *is* the message is also true in education. How we communicate is intricately intertwined with what we communicate. We cannot separate them because the message is completely interpreted through the medium.

If method is message, the challenge for theological teachers is to design classes which utilize many different instructional methods. As someone who teaches in higher education, I can testify that providing diverse content delivery is time intensive for the teacher, but rewarding for the learners. The following examples illustrate some creative methods:

Katie Brink, mentioned earlier, uses a wide variety of instructional methods. Class preparation not only includes reading, but also short videos or internet searches. During class, she pairs all lecture material with hands-on activities or small group problem-solving tasks. As an example of a hands-on activity, to show us the process of reconstructing the Dead Sea scrolls, she wrote Scripture on fallen leaves, crumbled them to pieces and then asked us to put them together in small groups. As an example of small group problem-solving, she once lectured on rhetoric



²⁶ James F. Engel, *Contemporary Christian Communications, Its Theory and Practice* (Nashville: T. Nelson, 1979), 30.

language tools, and then asked us to work in groups to skim an argument to identify various tools used.

The topic of relevancy was discussed in the andragogy section above, but is also an important issue to address here. Particularly in adult education, the teaching strategies we employ need to be relevant to the students' current position or social role.

Resources on instructional strategies are vast through various teaching and learning resource offices. I offer the following sampling from higher education institutions. Please note that several of these links have accompanying pages that go with them.

TEACHING STRATEGIES FROM LEARNING RESOURCE OFFICES
University of Central Florida: http://www.fctl.ucf.edu/TeachingAndLearningResources/SelectedPedagogies/TeachingMethods/
University of North Carolina: http://teaching.uncc.edu/learning-resources/articles-books/best-practice/instructional-methods/best-practices-summary
Iowa State University: http://www.celt.iastate.edu/teaching-resources/classroom-practice/teaching-techniques-strategies/
Berkley: https://teaching.berkeley.edu/teaching-your-course
University of Michigan: http://www.crlt.umich.edu/resources/teaching-strategies
University of MN: http://www1.umn.edu/ohr/teachlearn/tutorials/active/strategies/

Foundation Concept 8: Effective Teacher Characteristics and Communication

The topic of effective teacher characteristics can be uncomfortable; the issue is personal in nature. Sometimes this topic is referred to as the art—as opposed to science—of teaching. Because the subject is so personal, it sometimes becomes the elephant in the room. Instructors tend to avoid the subject of personality, presence, and communication in the classroom because it could create hurt feelings amongst colleagues. Some people seem to have it; some people don't. Anyone who has ever been a student knows the difference between a dynamic, energetic, and positive teacher and.... well, one who just doesn't have the temperament or communication skills for teaching.

Teaching is communication. As such, effective communication techniques are absolutely required—body language, gestures, variable tone and inflection, facial expressions, questioning, dialogue, personal space, and flexibility.²⁷

²⁷ www.ets.org/praxis, study guides

Additionally, effective teachers know the benefit of having positive relationships with their students. A succinct list of higher education faculty characteristics is provided by Magna Publications.²⁸ I have added my own elaborations to 2, 3, and 5.

1. A great teacher respects students.
2. A great teacher creates a sense of community and belonging in the classroom. An effective teacher gets to know his/her students. In order to know what the individual students bring to the environment, a teacher designs activities at the beginning of the term to foster the relationship and personal sharing.
3. A great teacher is warm, accessible, enthusiastic and caring. And an effective teacher has a sense of humor and uses it.
4. A great teacher sets high expectations for all students.
5. A great teacher has his own love of learning and inspires students with his passion for education and for the course material. An effective teacher shows his/her excitement for the material and learning happening.
6. A great teacher is a skilled leader.
7. A great teacher can “shift-gears” and is flexible when a lesson isn’t working.
8. A great teacher collaborates with colleagues on an ongoing basis.
9. A great teacher maintains professionalism in all areas—from personal appearance to organizational skills and preparedness for each day.

In addition to the items discussed above, I would like to add a tenth.

10. An effective teacher provides continuous and timely feedback. They dialogue with their students about the students’ work.²⁹ (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development provides a [description of effective feedback](#).)³⁰

Application for Theological Education. Effective instructors have an equal mix of both the science and art of teaching. Having content knowledge does not make one a teacher. Knowing pedagogy alone does not make one a teacher. Simply having a dynamic personality and using quality communication skills does not make one a teacher. It is the *combination of all* these elements that create effective instructors.

Those making hiring decisions in theological settings should be actively seeking those who know both the art and science of teaching. Hiring decisions are sometimes made based on denominational affiliation, degree, publications, or area of narrow expertise. But if one is going to be teaching, he/she should be dynamic, understand their content (or be willing to learn), *and* be familiar with pedagogy.

²⁸ Maria Orlando. “Nine Characteristics of a Great Teacher.” *Faculty Focus: Higher Education Teaching Strategies from Magna Publications* [January, 2013]. <http://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/philosophy-of-teaching/nine-characteristics-of-a-great-teacher/> [accessed 5/9/15].

²⁹ John Hattie. *Visible learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement*. 9New York: Routledge, 2008).

³⁰ Grant Wiggins. “Seven Keys to Effective Feedback.” *Educational Leadership* [September, 2012, **70**: **1**]. <http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/sept12/vol70/num01/Seven-Keys-to-Effective-Feedback.aspx> [assessed 5/9/15].

Online Teaching and Learning

While learning once took place in a classroom setting, technological evolution has provided options for how a course is designed and delivered. The following table reviews various modes, the benefits, and the drawbacks of them.

Mode	Description	Benefits	Drawbacks
In-Person Face-to-Face F2F	Delivered through face-to-face interactions between the teacher and learner.	Ability to build relationship to enhance learning. Most efficient learning for large groups of learners and large amounts of content.	Requires teacher and learners to be in same geographical location.
Web Enhanced Web Facilitated	Delivered in a face-to-face mode, but also has web tools that enhance the course (such as dropboxes, videos, discussion boards, etc.)	Ability to build relationship. Can utilize web tools which create organization and creativity.	Sometimes some confusion with the web component for learners lacking tech skills
Blended Hybrid	A few in-person sessions are held and then the other content is delivered in an online format.	Combines the best of online and in-person. Some flexibility but can still cover significant content efficiently.	Requires students to make shifts in expectations. Requires tech skills on part of learner.
Online E-Learning	The course content and interactions are all online through electronic media.	Flexibility. Students can take from anywhere.	Lack of relationship. Less efficient with high student to teacher ratio and courses requiring lots feedback.

Online pedagogy is a field of its own. While most of foundational concepts above apply to all types of settings, online learning has its own particular challenges and rewards. For this paper, I would like to offer the following practices and resources from my experience teaching online. These concepts could be expanded for another paper, along with adding additional material.

Online teaching requires a time commitment. Online instructors have realized that teaching online requires a significant amount of time and effort, even more than a face-to-face class. Sixty-four percent of online instructors indicate that online courses are “somewhat more” or “a lot more” effort than face-to-face courses.³¹

Most of the effort is on the frontend—organizing the course, writing clear instructions, preparing videos, and uploading material. If one is organized and has prepared the class before the students access it, then the instructor is in a much better position to engage with students once the class starts, offering feedback and adding to discussion boards. Trying to create content and engage with students can be overwhelming. Emails come in the middle of the night and

³¹ Anderson, Mary Alice. "What's It Like to Teach an Online Class?." *Multimedia & Internet@Schools* [2010, 17, no. 6: 20-23]. *Professional Development Collection*, EBSCOhost (accessed May 5, 2015).

usually need to be answered within 24 hours. Unlike a face-to-face class, you cannot wait until the next class session to address questions.

Online teaching requires organization, clear instructions, and expectations. Often students enter an online class with little experience in how to take an online class. They don't understand the norms around discussion boards, whether the class is self-paced or on a schedule, how the content in modules is delivered, how due dates differ, or the expectations on the amount of time they should spend on the course per week. Usually all of this needs to be explained in the syllabi in detail, which results in very long syllabi.

I have found that my online classes run smoother when my first module is "How to Take This Online Class." In this module, I tell them how to approach the material, manage their time, and interact online. I always quiz them on material in the syllabus to assure they have read it in detail.

Assignments and requirements can be clarified to the whole class during a face-to-face class, but in an online setting, details about assignments need to be written out in detail. I create a project sheet (1 page) for each lengthy assignment, which reviews the objectives, expectations, steps to completion, and evaluation criteria.

Online learning requires the teacher works to make his/her presence known. Building relationships in an online setting requires different technique than the items under Foundational Concept 9 above. Known as *instructor presence*, teachers have to be intentional about their interactions and persona.

Creating an introductory video is a helpful way to personify who is on the other side of the computer. Students then will have this image in their mind as they move through the course. Here are example videos: [SOE](#), [BIO](#).

Being involved in discussion boards is necessary to let students know you are part of their dialogue. When interacting on discussion boards though, the instructor needs to be careful not to evaluate, but instead looks for ways to deepen dialogue and thinking.

Research shows that talking-head video lectures are unsuccessful.³² Instead lecturettes with images, illustrations, and word slides are better. Voice-over technology allows the professor's demeanor and intonation to enter the lecture. If students watched the introductory video, they will relate that image with the voice over.

Online learning requires active strategies. Motivation in online courses can be a challenge because of the lack of personal interaction. For this reason, the instructor must use active teaching/learning strategies (as described in Foundational Concept 8) to keep students engaged. Additionally, [the University of Illinois provides a resources of online strategies](#).³³ A [guide by Thormann and Zimmerman](#) provides design and teaching strategies.³⁴ Kate Brink,

32

³³ <http://www.ion.uillinois.edu/resources/tutorials/pedagogy/instructionalstrategies.asp>

³⁴ Thormann, J., & Kaftal Zimmerman, I. (2012). *The complete step-by-step guide to designing and teaching online courses*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

mentioned earlier, has a “gameified” online course which increases student motivation and engagement.

Utilizing a wide variety of tech tools also increases engagement:

ONLINE TECH TOOLS

Beck, D. (2009). Sensible tools of engagement: Three channels for online education, and why you should use them. *eLearn magazine*, Retrieved from <http://elearnmag.acm.org/archive.cfm?aid=1662736>

Centre for Learning & Performance Technologies. (2012). *A Practical Guide to the Top 100 Tools for Learning 2013*. Retrieved from <http://c4lpt.co.uk/top100tools/guide/edtechteacher>.

Tech Tools by Subject and Skills. Retrieved from <http://edtechteacher.org/tools/>

Leising Brown , B. (2012). The four tech tools you should be using in your classroom but aren't. *eLearn magazine*, Retrieved from <http://elearnmag.acm.org/featured.cfm?aid=2139175>

Morrison, D. (2012). *5 [very good] ed-tech tools for online instruction*. Retrieved from <http://onlinelearninginsights.wordpress.com/2012/07/23/5-very-good-ed-tech-tools-for-online-instruction/>

New York Times. (2008). Technology tools: *Web 2.0 tools in the classroom*. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/learning/issues_in_depth/techtools.html

Online learning requires proper grouping. Because any given student cannot interact with the whole class, students have to be split into smaller groups for discussion and group projects. I offer the following resource list for online group work:

ONLINE GROUPS

Bart, M. (2010, September 20). *How to design effective online group work activities*. Retrieved from <http://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/online-education/how-to-design-effective-online-group-work-activities/>

Magna. (2012, July 6). *Group work, discussion strategies to manage online instructor workload*. Retrieved from <http://www.magnapubs.com/blog/teaching-and-learning/group-work-discussion-strategies-to-manage-online-instructor-workload/>

Penn State. (2012). *Online group collaboration*. Retrieved from <http://student.worldcampus.psu.edu/academic-support-resources/online-group-collaboration>

Rochester Institute of Technology. (2012). *Collaborative Online Learning*. Retrieved from <https://www.rit.edu/academicaffairs/tls/course-design/online-courses/collaborative-online-learning>

Thormann, J., & Kaftal Zimmerman, I. (2012). *The complete step-by-step guide to designing and teaching online courses*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

WISE. (2010). *Tips for facilitating online group work*. Retrieved from <http://www.wisepedagogy.org/groupwork.shtml>

Worcester Polytechnic Institute. (2006). *Group work in distance learning courses*. Retrieved from <http://www.wpi.edu/Academics/ATC/Collaboratory/Teaching/groupwork.html>

Consider whether the teacher, students, and content are best suited for online. Not all classes are best suited to be online. A teacher cannot simply take the content and learning activities from a face-to-face class and force them into an online setting—the conversion requires a complete reanalysis of the class. Tools are being developed to determine whether a course is suitable for online design.³⁵

Additionally, not all students are suited for online learning, and not all instructors are suited for teaching online. Teaching in online settings requires a special skill set, a certain type of lifestyle, and a high interest in written text. Self-assessments are being developed to determine whether an instructor has the pre-requisite skills to teach online and to determine whether students are appropriate for online learning.

ONLINE EXPERIENCES AND SELF-ASSESSMENT

Anderson, M. A. (2010). What's it like to teach an online class? *Multimedia & internet@schools*, 17(6), 20-23.

Blake, D. A. (2009). What I learned from teaching adult learners online. *eLearn magazine*, Retrieved from <http://elearnmag.acm.org/archive.cfm?aid=1692866>

Everson, M. (2009). 10 things i've learned about teaching online. *eLearn magazine*, Retrieved from <http://elearnmag.acm.org/featured.cfm?aid=1609990>

Penn State. (2008). Faculty self-assessment: preparing for online teaching. Retrieved from <https://weblearning.psu.edu/FacultySelfAssessment/>

Technapex. (2012, October 19). Lectern perspective: One teacher's view on tech in the classroom. Retrieved from <http://www.technapex.com/2012/10/lectern-perspective-one-teachers-view-on-tech-in-the-classroom>

For a list of student readiness self-assessments:
<http://www.merlot.org/merlot/viewPortfolio.htm?id=731796>

Suggestions for Teaching Pedagogy

As I end this white paper, I would like to go back the comments of Pam Shellberg at Gathering by the Sea: “Pedagogy is its very own field. Requiring theological educators to be trained in both pedagogy and theology is asking them to have expertise in two fields.” In order to obtain this new expertise, theological educators need to move from an endgame paradigm to a lifelong-learner paradigm.

How do we teach teachers? What avenues can be used to provide this expertise? Many universities have offices of teaching and learning which provide faculty development programs.³⁶ To close, I would like to offer three suggestions on faculty development.

³⁵ Thomas M. Brinthaup, Maria A. Clayton, Barbara J. Draude, Paula T. Calahan, “How Should I Offer This Course?,” *Journal of Online Learning and Teaching*, June, 2014, 326-336.

³⁶ Lee Bash, “What Serving Adult Learners Can Teach Us,” *Change*, Jan/Feb., 2003, 32-37.

Workshops/Conferences- This has been the traditional model to provide professional development. It continues to be effective because one can devote a significant amount of attention to subject matter in a short amount of time. It's a concentrated form of education.

Online Courses- Many universities provide short-courses, certificates, and even credit to instructors who engage in classes that improve pedagogy. For example, I'm enrolled in a short-course in online learning, which is helping me learn new models and apply them to my teaching. I have seen self-directed models work well with these.

Handbooks/Guides/Toolkits- Some organizations provide materials to those who will be instructing. An example of such is a [toolkit](#) by Northwest Center for Public Health Practice at the University of Washington.³⁷

Whatever the delivery method, one who teaches needs to love teaching. They should value and be energized by this new area of expertise. As an instructor, they are in an honored position—engaging with students who are eager to learn and experience the world in a new way.

There is an order to loves: Effective teachers love their content. But they love teaching more than their content. And they love people most of all. –Paul Christensen, High School Teacher

³⁷ https://www.nwcphp.org/documents/training/Adult_Education_Toolkit.pdf