

# Prof Stephen J Hall – Malaysia – 9<sup>th</sup> September 2021

## Digitally extended as an educator: Reflecting on reaching learners

### Purpose and context of the presentation

The presentation considers how higher education teachers can extend themselves in the digital world to reach their learners. The presentation looks at:

- Perceptions – of teaching, learning and interacting
- Pitfalls
- Promises
- Practices
- Pedagogy – from forced change.

### Perceptions

Many educators still operate according to the transmission mode of passing on knowledge and filling up students from the outside. This comes from cultural tradition and feelings of safety at having a power/authority at the front of the class. It leads to merely paying lip service to group work while focusing on getting students through exams.

This traditional transmission mode particularly disadvantages boys because they cannot be as physical, they may not find the topics posed by the majority female educators to be relevant to their interests, they do not learn just by listening, and they prefer gaming to passive learning. These factors may be contributing to the disproportionate failure rates of boys in higher education. Instead of transmitting information, the Socratic idea of a more knowledgeable person asking questions to stimulate thinking and self-learning in another, is a more valid way to ensure learning occurs.

Zoom fatigue is also a problem when lecturers attempt to transmit too much information at once. Instead, peer-to-peer learning, online discussion groups and model questioning through chat may be more effective.

Prof. Hall surveyed students prior to the pandemic's online learning to identify their perceptions of online learning. They wanted to use their phones in class; they wanted more online materials; they wanted lecturers' roles to change; they wanted to know more about digital literacy.

After online learning was implemented, the same students were surveyed again. They critiqued the online infrastructure compared to phone connectivity and phone apps. They preferred live learning but also valued the replay ability of recordings. They missed face to face learning but often interacted online with their cameras off. And they felt that blended learning was here to stay.

**Presentation Summary - Extracted Key Points from September AAAF Presentations**

## Pitfalls

Lecturers are already digitally extended in terms of their social media use and online profiles and activity. They just need to also extend their education to the digital space. They should consider their digital footprint, digital personas and their digitally extended self more fully and consciously, by carefully curating and controlling them. They can then support students to do the same, to begin to consider what their images and online posts are saying about themselves professionally and socially, and to begin to think critically about what they see and hear online, and what content they are pushed towards.

## Promises

- Digital education is instant.
- Digital education has the potential for mass education.
- There is endless data available.
- Digital education is multimodal.
- Digital education is available anytime, anywhere.

## Practices

Prof Hall surveyed his students on their online practices. The results are shown here:

- Only 17% always checked text or image sources.
- 50% never checked sources.
- 47% rated Facebook security negatively.
- 72% used Google search for most research.
- 30% looked at Facebook more than 25 times daily (22% looked more than 10 times).
- 57% rated Instagram or Twitter more important than Facebook.
- Overall, students only choose their data from top of search lists, using only visible online sources rather than searching deeper; they have few credibility check strategies and they have little awareness of stable authoritative data sources.

## Pedagogy

- To support our students, we need to start with the self. Think consciously about our digital selves, footprints and creations. Position ourselves as facilitators rather than transmitters. Model ourselves as lifelong continual learners. Learn and teach to identify online strategies designed to get and direct our attention, to look critically, to look for accuracy, to look for credible sources and to stimulate questioning.
- In the classroom, we can: stimulate and model questioning, compare and contrast modes and content, check credibility using online tools as part of building digital literacy, credit sources, visualise and use visuals, and use tasks and active learning rather than nothing but Zoom lectures.