Session Title: Philosophy and Practice: Why Getting to Know your Teaching and Technology Philosophical Orientations Matters

Presenter: Heather Kanuka, PhD
Professor, Educational Policy Studies
Faculty of Education, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada

Time: September 11th, from 13.00 - 16.00 pm.

Format: Three hour interactive session,

Objectives: At the end of this interactive session participants will be able to (or better able):
– Describe the benefits of knowing our philosophical orientations of teaching and technology
– Classify the major philosophical orientations of teaching and technology
– Identify personal philosophical orientations of teaching and technology
– Write a philosophy of teaching and technology for a teaching dossier/portfolio

Abstract: Theory without practice leads to an empty idealism, and action without philosophical reflection leads to mindless activism (Elias & Merriam, 1980, p. 4)

There are a number of reasons why everyone who teaches should develop a philosophy of teaching, as well as a philosophy of technology. Perhaps the most important reason is that the power of knowing our philosophical orientations lies in the ability to enable us to be reflective practitioners and to better understand the choices we make in our everyday classrooms – including the ways we choose to use (or not) technologies. Reflective practice is more than understanding the impact we are making when we teach; it is also knowing the impact we want to make when we teach. The interrelationship between philosophy and action is what underpins and inspires our activities in our everyday classrooms, and gives direction to our practice. Knowing our philosophical orientations of teaching and technology provides us with the ability to articulate not only what we are doing in our everyday classroom, but what we want to do and why.

Using the case study method, this interactive session will be guided by the teaching philosophical framework developed by John L. Elias and Sharan B. Merriam (Philosophical Foundations of Adult Education, 3rd ed, 2005) and the technological philosophical framework developed by Lincoln Dahlberg (Internet Research Tracings: Towards Non-Reductionist Methodology, 2004). At the end of the case study, session participants will identify their own philosophical orientations of teaching and technology.

This session will conclude with an overview of the results of a research project that examined the philosophical orientations that educators within the higher education sector hold of educational technology. In this study, seventy-five participants were selected for the closed interviews. All participants were working
in institutions of higher education whose discipline is teaching with technology. Participants were purposefully selected from Australia, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Canada, United States, and the United Kingdom.

Selected recent articles by Heather Kanuka:


