

# **Statement of Learning Philosophy**

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## **Introduction**

The development of my statement of learning philosophy has given me the opportunity to reflect upon what it is I strive to do as an ICT teacher and to express my personal values and beliefs. It should be noted that, just as I continue to along the road of lifelong learning, this is a 'work in progress' that will continue to evolve. Through its development, I have come to understand my beliefs and values relating to teaching and learning, my thoughts on the role of teacher and learner and the importance of open and constructive interaction/collaboration with my students and colleagues. Additionally, I have come to better understand my beliefs relating to information and communication technologies (ICT) as they relate to educational environments, individuals and society as a whole.

## **Lifelong Learning**

I believe that I represent a good example of being a lifelong learner and try to be a role model for my students. I am often asked 'So what do you plan to do during the holiday sir?', invariably my response is 'Well, I expect that I will undertake some research or continue with an MA assignment'. 'But WHY sir??' in disbelief is the usual response! After having initially left school at the age of 16 with 4 GCE passes I returned to evening classes at college the following year succeeding where I had failed at school in English, Physics, and Chemistry. I then went on to embark on a 'career' as an Industrial Chemist, gaining both TEC and HTC certificates in Physical Science. I have subsequently undertaken an 'honours' degree in Computer Science, graduating at the age of 33, just a few days before the birth of my son. Since joining BIS I have completed all of the requirements for and graduated with an MA in International Education from Bath University, which I attained just before my 50<sup>th</sup> birthday!

Now that's LIFELONG LEARNING! It certainly gives most of the pupils that I teach 'food for thought' and encourages them to take a more reflective perspective of their own learning. I believe that most of pupils that I currently teach will not have a lifelong career therefore the significance and importance of engendering an ethos of lifelong learning is even greater. Indeed, in this fast changing world many of them may well embark on careers that simply don't exist at this point in time.

## **Philosophy of Learning**

Although labeled a 'teacher' and someone who teaches I feel that, particularly when 'teaching' ICT, this label or definition requires further refinement. Berge and Collins encapsulate the traditional 'behaviourist' teaching model by observing that "traditionally, students have been told what to learn, how to learn it, when to learn it, and how to show how they know what they have learned", Berge and Collins (1995). This approach to teaching perceives the students as 'empty containers' that the teacher 'fills' with knowledge and the level of knowledge within the container is periodically determined by the 'dipstick' of assessment. However, I firmly believe that my role as an ICT 'teacher' is more that of a 'facilitator', igniting that spark of curiosity and guiding my students through the learning experience. As Owston comments, "instructors have shifted their roles from 'deliverer of instruction' to being the 'creator of learning experiences' for students and academic guide", Owston (1997). Each time I step into my ICT room I seek to captivate the imagination of my students and empower and enrich students with relevant skills and knowledge as to allow them to take initiative and control of their own learning.

It is the norm for teachers to be asked to express their 'philosophy of teaching'. However, as I try to guide my students towards greater learning independence and to take more responsibility for, and ownership of, their whole learning experience I feel that I should be expressing my own 'philosophy of learning' rather a stereotype 'philosophy of teaching'. It is also important to recognise that I, like other educators in my field, see teaching as a 'work in progress', that is something I seek to perfect, but may never master. Pedagogical 'Best practice' is something that we should all strive for, but we must also accept that as a moving target 'best practice' can be transient and contextual.

An observation from my last performance appraisal was that "students benefit from his enthusiasm for the subject and his empathetic approach". Whilst I freely admit to having an insatiable appetite for my subject I also believe that one of my greatest attributes is the empathy that I show towards my students. ICT classes should be fun! - Relaxed and contented students are more receptive and eager to explore and strategies to achieve these goals should be positively encouraged.

I am also aware that I am extremely privileged to be 'teaching' in a wonderful multicultural environment where there is great diversity of race and culture. I am also fortunate enough that my role as a faculty head is in a school that strongly advocates the ideals of social justice and ethical teaching. I strive to become an ethical teacher by accepting the responsibility for treating students with respect and being mindful of their differences, their difficulties and their abilities. An ethical classroom should also foster an environment that is opposed to intimidation, racism, sexism, homophobia and other forms of exclusion. Furthermore, as my current subject area is limited to the 'teaching' of and about ICT, I try to take the responsibility to discover strategies that examine moral and ethical issues as they relate to the content of the courses that I teach.

During my time as a teacher the 'C' has now become firmly entrenched within ICT – Communication is key. It's difficult for the new generation to imagine a life without the Internet, E-Mail, Instant Messengers, and mobile phone technology. Indeed, as I write this, many of my students await in eager anticipation the arrival of the new iPhone. I see significant potential in the power of social networks of innovation but believe that the greater potential of emerging networking technologies (e.g., Internet) lies not just with connecting people with content, but also with connecting people with people. Emerging social networking technologies give educators, such as myself, the opportunity to take advantage of promising developments such as collaborative learning object repositories, virtual interpersonal exchanges and virtual learning environments. I have seized upon this opportunity to develop on-line courses for my students (see [www.eschool.ac/](http://www.eschool.ac/) and [www.my-myp.com/](http://www.my-myp.com/)) that are rich in content, available 24/7, and allow the opportunity for instant feedback. This allows my teaching style to focus on removing the teacher as 'expert' in the classroom while equitably distributing 'expertise' to and throughout my learning community.

I also believe that the integration of ICT throughout the whole learning experience is paramount. There is little use in developing ICT skills without learning how to apply them effectively. I believe that:

- Technology is **not** just a tool. We have to be cautious and realize that all technology is value-laden.
- Technology alone is **not** the solution for the ills of education. It is dangerous to assume that technology is a panacea for today's educational challenges. However, I firmly believe that the appropriate adoption of ICT will improve learning.
- Careful ICT planning must be curriculum driven. Technologies should not be adopted for the sake of technological adoption, but to improve or enhance current methods of teaching and learning.
- Careful ICT planning involves all stakeholders as its introduction can have far-reaching and sometimes unknown effects. Consideration of the needs of administration, teachers, students and parents are important.
- Learning new ICT skills is often difficult and a major obstacle when integrating ICT into the classroom is often the complexity of learning.

Whilst this is essentially a 'first draft' of my learning philosophy I will conclude with a more personal philosophy that I apply to my own teaching, and to my interactions with my colleagues, students, family and friends. As French Novelist Anatole France reflects 'The whole art of teaching is only the art of awakening the natural curiosity of young minds for the purpose of satisfying it afterwards.' Lifelong learning holds the promise of a better life, and a better world, and we need to do our utmost, individually and collaboratively, to share this promise with our students. Teaching is about "opening hearts and minds..." and changing lives for all those involved in the process.

## References

Berge, Z., Collins, M., 1995, 'Computer-mediated communication and the online classroom in distance learning', Computer-Mediated Communication Magazine, Vol. 2, No. 4.

Owston, R., 1997, 'The World Wide Web: a technology to enhance teaching and learning?', Educational Researcher, Vol. 26, No. 2.