Folk Pedagogies for Teacher Educator Transitions: Approaches to Synchronous Online Learning in the Wake of COVID-19

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In the COVID-19 shift to online education, many teacher educators have sought out video conference technologies (such as Zoom) aiming to replicate traditional classrooms online. At face value, synchronous video appears to offer more immediate replicability of existing f2f synchronous teaching. However, moving pedagogically from one medium to another is not always a smooth transition. The COVID-19 situation has forced urgent transitions, and without adequate opportunities to design for a new medium, some instructors have struggled. We propose that Bruner's concept of folk pedagogies is a useful theoretical position for understanding pedagogical change in this new environment. We highlight issues and offer possible approaches and implications for teacher educators who deploy video conferencing technologies, using a rejuvenated view on folk pedagogies.

EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT AND THEORY

The shift to online learning necessitated by COVID-19 has pushed many teacher educators into the unfamiliar space of online teaching. In these circumstances, educators may fall back on replicating familiar face-to-face practices (Dixon et al, 2019). Although synchronous video-conferencing provides surface-level replicability of existing f2f synchronous teaching modalities, moving pedagogy from one medium into another is not a simple translation (Northcote, 2008). Pedagogy is connected to the affordances of the medium, and these affordances require consideration (Dalgarno & Lee, 2010).

Bruner's (1996) concept of 'folk pedagogy' is a useful theoretical frame for critically considering the rapid move to online teaching created by COVID-19. We argue for the need to rejuvenate folk pedagogies to support learning in virtual classrooms with online digital platforms, and share several strategies conceived within the frame of Bruner's taxonomy.

Bruner's Folk Pedagogies

Bruner (1996) proposed folk pedagogies are a taxonomic model for understanding the grounded knowledge of teachers and learners. 'Folk pedagogies' are formed through teacher perceptions of how people learn and beliefs about effective teaching practice. Bruner offered four primary 'folk' pedagogical stances, which Christensen (2020) categorizes as 'Do', 'Know', 'Think', and 'Manage' (as illustrated in Figure 1):

1. *Do.* Considers the student as an imitative learner, and the teacher as demonstrator of skills/knowledge.
2. *Know.* Emphasizes learning through didactic receiving, believing that students should be presented with facts and principles to accept and apply.
3. *Think.* Views learners as thinkers and emphasizes dialogue between teacher and student that involves collaboration and negotiation of meanings.
4. *Manage.* Conceives learners as managers of knowledge. Teaching should help learners distinguish between personally-held and culturally-constructed knowledge.

do	know	think	manage
demo of skills	teacher as authority	reciprocal student/teacher relationship	teacher as consultant
proximity to professional practice	required foundational principles	critical and reflective thinking	multiple perspectives
industry partnership	presentation of examples	discussion and communication	critical reasoning and choice
	clear predetermined objectives	collaboration	one to one consulting relationship
		student-centered	
		emotional intelligence	

Figure 1. Folk Pedagogies. (Adapted with permission from Christensen (2020, p. 256).

Folk pedagogies are inevitably present in teacher practices, as beliefs and orthodoxies based on practical experiences in classrooms. Some are suited to online teaching, while others run counter to digital teaching and learning perspectives. We suggest a rejuvenation of existing folk pedagogies for implementation in online digital platforms.

PROCESS

Shifts into synchronous online video-conferencing systems (such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Hangouts, or FaceTime) can create uncertainty for teacher educators and learners (Knipe & Lee, 2002). Moving from face-to-face contexts, with embodied non-verbal cues and situational familiarities, to online environments, where these cues may be lacking, may disturb our 'taken-for-granted' roles and strategies (Northcote, 2008).

We offer teacher educators and pre-service teachers several possible approaches (based on our recent teaching interventions/strategies as teacher educators, and existing literature) to support this transition to new folk pedagogies for synchronous digital learning environments.

RESULTS AND IMPLICATIONS

Approach One: Conceiving Teachers as Learning Designers

Moving to video conference platforms requires greater reflexivity and intentional (re)design of the learning environment to account for affordances and constraints (Lawson et al., 2010; Mader & Ming, 2015). While teacher educators might automatically move toward *Do* or *Know* roles as didactic default positions when they feel uncertain, we assert that online teaching with the *Think* and *Manage* roles may actually overcome communication barriers and address students' reluctance to engage. This can mean a shift toward viewing oneself in a more complex way as a content creator of asynchronous support materials (*Think*) and information manager/consultant (*Manage*) in synchronous sessions. In an online session, an instructor might seed the discussion by having pre-service teacher/learners engage the didactic (*Do/Know*) part of learning in their outside time; then have them submit questions/concerns/ideas before the class session to then discuss in a more reciprocal way (*Think*) during the session, ensuring more purposeful participation (L. Wolf, personal communication, April 21, 2020).

Approach Two: Positioning Pre-Service Teachers as Co-Constructors

Bruner's *Think* and *Manage* roles suggest that learning is dynamic, and meanings are co-constructed. Promoting pre-service teachers as active interpreters and knowledge constructors online is crucial to developing educators' agency and contributions in virtual spaces (Stewart et al., 2011). Teacher educators might consider how to make the synchronous sessions *active* for students (*Think/Manage roles*), rather than passive (*Do/Know roles*). In Zoom, features like Breakout Rooms enable students to collaboratively create meaning and presence. To illustrate this, we offer an example (Figure 2) that explores the idea of creativity in teaching through online group collaboration, as an approach for teacher educators with pedagogical possibilities for their pre-service teachers.

TEACHING/LEARNING IDEAS	KEY QUESTIONS FOR TEACHER EDUCATORS	SYNCHRONOUS AND ASYNCHRONOUS TECHNOLOGIES	*PRACTICAL PEDAGOGIES & STRATEGIES*	Asynchronous Resources
Fostering creativity in teaching and learning for pre-service teachers Creativity as emerging in group processes and communicated in digital online spaces through multimodal forms. **PRE-SERVICE TEACHER ONLINE TASK:** Working in groups of four in your Breakout Rooms create a learning activity that is designed to foster the creativity of students across your discipline areas. The focus should be on creative solutions to a current significant world problem (so called 'wicked' problems) that requires a transdisciplinary approach. Share your activity with the whole group using YouTube, Prezi, Canva, Focusky or a similar digital presentational platform.	How can creativity be enacted in groups in online spaces? What new roles can students take on in these online spaces? How can technologies support creative processes and agency in groups? What role adaptations do teacher educators need to make in synchronous online environments (such as ZOOM)? How might students work together in transdisciplinary ways?	Breakout rooms (ZOOM) or similar in other platforms, helping to engage the *Think* pedagogy in co-constructive group environments. Other conferencing tools such as Chat and White Board functions, which allow more student-centered action for *Think* pedagogical roles. Teacher educator adopts the *Manage* role, as an information manager of multiple perspectives being offered. Asynchronous supporting platforms and modalities such a YouTube, Focusky, Prezi, Canva support student *Think* roles and provide modalities for creative group processes and presentations. Developing content from asynchronous spaces (such as search engines and web sites). Learners engage *Do/Know* roles within sessions through their own agency. Adoption of *Manager* roles by students in working in teams and presenting their findings using supporting technologies.	1. In groups, pre-service teachers design a discrete online task for students that encourages creativity in a transdisciplinary context *(Think)*. 2. Purposeful collaborative group work in Breakout Rooms. Teacher educator purposefully checking into each virtual room in process to support group work *(Manager)*. 3. Groups report back to the whole group. Share BOTH the task, its design and the group processes (Adoption of the *Know* role where students become the authority). 4. Share tasks using a range of modalities (Students as *Managers*). 5. Critical discussion of possibilities for classroom online teaching. Reciprocal roles as knowledge creators. Strategies built on *Think* pedagogies with synchronous time for collaboration, reciprocal learning, discussion, critical discussion and student-centered action. There is the potential for the teacher educator to engage *Think* (collaboration and reciprocity) and *Manage* (consultant/information manager) roles.	http://www.itdl.org/Journal/Jan_05/article05.htm http://focusky.com/ https://www.canva.com/ https://prezi.com/ https://lx.uts.edu.au/blog/2018/02/15/transdisciplinary-innovation-design/ https://www.studyinternational.com/news/solving-worlds-problems-needs-multi-disciplinary-approach/

Figure 2. Practice example of co-construction in a synchronous online learning environment.

Approach Three: Embracing the Affordances of Video Conferencing Technologies

Video-conferencing is dissimilar from physical classrooms and has distinct communication dynamics and multi-modal characteristics, including changes to sense of presence and immediacy (Weiser et al., 2016; Oe & Schafer, 2019). Therefore, teacher educators might explore the platform-specific affordances available in video-conferencing and learn the platform tools that support these affordances—taking on the *Manage* role. For instance, in Zoom, the Chat function can add effective co-constructive paral-

lel communication. Online links to resources, further ideas and supportive statements about student oral input can be shared, prompting students to reciprocate (Scholl et al., 2006). Zoom also has a white board function, which promotes student collaboration through discussion and note taking (*Think*). The instructor's role, however, in synchronous video, often becomes a kind of information manager. Resources which support the thinking and practices of educators in this *Manage* role can be found in the Appendix.

Approach Four: Intentionally Communicating Empathetically Online

Change, especially when sudden and externally-driven, can make educators apprehensive. Video-conferencing can be used intentionally to connect and engage with pre-service teachers empathetically to strengthen rapport, enhance emotional engagement, overcome ambiguity and foster motivation (Slagter van Tryon & Bishop, 2009). Bruner's *Think* role explicitly refers to emotional intelligence and student needs. Pre-service teachers must feel cared for, and video conferencing can support empathetic engagement. Short online meditations, emotional check-ins, and positive affirmations are measures that can support emotional wellbeing (Shankardass et al., 2019).

IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

The COVID-19 pandemic upended many teacher educators' well-honed pedagogical/classroom approaches. However, it also provides opportunities to critically consider new strategies and re-evaluate how pedagogies might shift, flex and translate across spaces. Our work implies the need to rejuvenate folk pedagogies to (re)design teaching for the medium. We have offered four strategies that may help to model this use of folk pedagogies for teacher educators. We suggest that:

1. Teacher educators should consider what their existing folk pedagogies and preferences are. Only by building an awareness of our existing pedagogical styles and preferences can we make informed decisions about if and how those preferences/styles fit with the medium or what might need to shift.
2. Teacher educators (and teachers in general) are designers, and thus should aim to think like a designer would to consider what the desired goal/purpose or outcome is for any synchronous/asynchronous lesson, what tools are at their disposal, and how

they can craft or design the learning experience to best make use of the available tools and context to attain the goal. If you are working toward a certain learning goal, and working with Zoom or other tools, consider what folk pedagogies make the most sense to expand engagement. How might one engage that pedagogical style given the ideas and tools available and what might that look like? There is no single answer, but these are critical questions to consider in designing for a new medium.

3. More empirical research is needed to understand the challenges and how they might be ameliorated. Pedagogies are personal, and shifting from an engrained or preferred approach to a new style/ medium can be difficult. As teacher educators, we may need to do this in our own teaching, and also help our students learn to do so. Learning how to navigate change in new spaces has no single solution. Engaging more action research to reveal a variety of useful practices offers hope for understanding how to work with (and perhaps shift) our folk pedagogies. Through this, new folk pedagogies for digital spaces might emerge, ones that reimagine the existing frame of *Do*, *Know, Think* and *Manage*.

CONCLUSION

Teaching is a personal act and environments that challenges teacher educators' existing approaches can feel tumultuous. In using this folk pedagogy frame in digital spaces, teacher educators might come to better navigate the medium and design learning, learning to nimbly use tools (both tangible, technological, and theory tools) to support their future teachers. Through this rejuvenation, a new set of teacher educator orthodoxies, designed for digital learning, might appear out of these uncertain times.

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APPENDIX

Online resources to support the *Manage* role for teacher educators.

Description and use	Online resource
An *Edutopia* practice-oriented article that discusses building a sense of community online, which is important for managing classes online.	https://www.edutopia.org/article/extending-classroom-management-online
An Australian based policy document in the context of schooling that discusses strategies for online learning in COVID-19 times.	https://www.aitsl.edu.au/research/spotlight/what-works-in-online-distance-teaching-and-learning
A professional practice article in *Inside Higher Ed* that presents a critical discussion about the effects of current online learning practices on the future reception of online learning in higher education.	https://www.insidehighered.com/digital-learning/article/2020/03/18/most-teaching-going-remote-will-help-or-hurt-online-learning
An academic article in *Frontiers in Education* which examines research about best practice in intensive online education environments.	https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/feduc.2017.00059/full
An academic article in *The Australian Journal of Teacher Education* that reports research about the reception of the online learning environment, Blackboard.	https://ro.ecu.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1603&context=ajte
A highly practical set of tips and ideas for using ZOOM in the teacher-oriented online magazine, *Common Sense Education.*	https://www.commonsense.org/education/articles/teachers-essential-guide-to-zoom
A 2017Australian report by ACODE that details threshold standards for online course design and implementation. Useful for managing asynchronous and synchronous online learning environments for delivery and content .	https://www.acode.edu.au/pluginfile.php/1530/mod_resource/content/1/ACODE_TSFOLE_draft_1.2.pdf