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EDU800
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The process of educational inquiry requires a "search for knowledge," and a "search," by definition, requires one to "look into or over carefully or thoroughly in an effort to find or discover something" (Merriam Webster). It is interesting to note how this word, "search," has evolved throughout history. Eighty thousand years ago, to "search" could have applied to the hunter-gatherers finding where their next meal would come from. Fast-forwarding many thousands of years, I just used Google to "search" how many years ago the hunter-gatherers lived (*80,000!*). Inquiry requires drawing on the past to create new ideas for the future. Throughout the EDU800 course, we have explored educational inquiry through several lenses, including philosophical minds like John Dewey, teachers like Vivian Paley, ethnographic participant observation like in the viewing of *Whale Rider*, biographical perspective like in the work of Philip Cusick, curriculum inquiry like the book by Howard Gardner, and the many views of technology as seen through the PBS film, *Digital Nation*. All forms of inquiry required individuals to examine the old, or traditional, ways and attempt to appropriately balance the old with proposed new ideas. In an exercise of autobiographical inquiry, making an introspective "search" into my own story of learning, my experience has undoubtedly been shaped by technology. I do consider myself a "digital native" as I have had access to technology and Internet for the majority of my life. In my own educational career, there have been several key events that have guided my journey of learning. As my journey progressed, technology allowed me to build my "web" of knowledge and connections. As I reflect on the past, I can see the benefits of technology moving forward in my own classroom.

Starting an introspective "search" into my own story of learning, I would begin in my Fourth Grade classroom with the "Alpha-Smart" word processor. This pseudo-computer was a "hot item" in the classroom. The Shakespeare quote mentioned in *Digital Nation*, "we are consumed by that we are nourished by," was true about the Alpha Smarts in Mr. Lambe's class. Everyone would rush through their writing piece so that they could get the opportunity to type it on the Alpha-Smart. This piece of technology was simply a substitute for using neat handwriting on a final draft of an essay. Looking back now it seems quite simple and lacking innovation, but the Alpha-Smart was the first tool that I had to practice my typing skills, which are something that I now use on a daily basis.

While the Alpha-Smart did not provide any "interconnectivity" or "interaction," it did provide the foundation of typing skills that were needed to move on to my middle school years. In middle school, technology was starting to be introduced more into the classroom. A few teachers had "Smart Boards," which now allowed for some interaction with the technology. With the Internet being more accessible, for a research paper on *Nigeria*, we had to include both print and online sources, and our final draft was typed on the computer. My middle school years saw technology starting to creep into the picture, and my

"web" was beginning to expand. Instead of just having print resources and the teacher writing on a chalkboard, the online world was becoming more interactive, and even my communication and connection with friends was eased by AOL instant messaging.

High school saw the introduction of more Smart Boards and teachers beginning to use the Smart Boards more effectively, perhaps including links in their presentations, using them to show videos, and saving the digitally written notes so that absent students could have a copy. Laptops and computers were more available and most essays and papers were typed. Email communication with teachers and students was more prominent. Internet searches and online instant messaging were more frequent "distractions," and technology was becoming a more integral part of my educational experience. Though primarily still teacher-centered learning, I was beginning to have a bit more choice with what to search on the internet, and I was becoming more connected with friends and teachers.

By college, technology (and the distractions that come with it) was key in my educational experience. I usually took notes in class on my laptop (with "gchat" opened in another tab), assignments were submitted and class discussion boards were used via "Blackboard," and my laptop and cell phone were constantly available. For my senior thesis exploring a particular gene in the species, *C. elegans* (a microscopic worm), I used a microscope with a camera to create images for my digital poster, presentation, and final paper. All research papers and readings were from scientific articles online, and I never once checked out a book from the library. My educational experience had rapidly changed from primarily print and lack of technology to one where technology dominated.

Now, as I'm in my online Masters Program, almost everything is on the computer. With the EDU800 hypermedia format, I can choose which topics I want to explore further, and reading on the screen has become second nature. I can make the connections that I choose, and my "web" has become much greater. Looking back on my educational journey, technology has enabled my learning to become more student-centered. It has enabled my "web" of learning to make more connections.

Reflecting on my own teaching practice in my middle school science classroom today, technology is integral and enhances my instruction. The students are currently learning to program EV3 Lego Robots, they often use the Google Apps to collaborate on writing pieces and presentations, they use Google Sheets to collect data and make graphs, and we use many online "games" like *Kahoot* and *Quizlet Live* to review material in a fun way. My students are definitely "connected," and I can't imagine teaching without technology.

While autobiographical educational inquiry has "bias" involved, it does provide a primary source lens to view a journey shaped by technology. While some may argue that an ethnographic participant observation or biographical perspective might be more effective with less partiality, an autobiographical inquiry provides the author to know the thoughts and feelings from an introspective standpoint. While my own life does not represent all stories of how technology has shaped education, it does provide another piece of the puzzle to

see the big picture of how new ideas have influenced traditional ones. After my autobiographical "search" into my educational journey, I can see the influence of technology and how rapidly its integration has spread.

Some people, like Mark Baurlein, argue that technology "is an imperial force, and it should meet more antagonists" (Baurlein, 2008). Others believe that it has ruined students' ability to focus and stay on task, and their capability to "slow read" has been diminished. After a "search," or "inquiry," into my own educational experience, drawing on the past to see how it influences the future, technology has made education more connected and student centered. In my younger years, teachers would feed me information to be memorized and regurgitated on an assessment. Yes, we did have access to technology, like the Alpha-Smart, but it was merely a substitute for handwriting. The curriculum was primarily teacher driven. As I moved into my college years, the technology augmented my learning by using the microscope camera to see my *C. elegans* and allowing me to create a digital poster/presentation with those images. Now, in my own middle school science classroom, technology is transforming the learning. The students are given a real world situation and create and analyze graphs on the computer. The students are given a challenge for their robotics projects and need to build a program to solve the challenge. Though some may argue that they are losing some traditional habits of education (ex. attention), they are getting the tools and approaches that they will need in the future. While in the past students might need to have known how to write in cursive or recite a Shakespearean sonnet, students now will have access to computers, and memorizing is not as necessary as the answers are simply a click away. Everything that they will need to know is online, and as said in *Digital Nation*, these students will need to "create and build," not memorize and recite.

It is difficult to grasp the impact of technology and where it will go from here. It is a rapidly changing phenomenon and, like said in the *Digital Nation* film, it is difficult for the research to keep up. Throughout this journey of the EDU800 course, we learned through philosophical inquiry that "learning—like evolution—is a changing, developing process that requires an ongoing reconstruction of experience" (Sperling, 1999), through ethnographical inquiry, that "societies without change aren't authentic; they're just dead. (Appiah, 2006), and through curriculum inquiry from Howard Gardner, "Where anything goes nothing will endure" (Gardner, p. 99). Educational inquiry is about "searching" through the traditions and making some sort of positive change for the future. This change is inevitable. Though some argue that technology is ruining our education, through this autobiographical inquiry, it has been discovered that technology has lead to a more student-centered and connected world. What makes educational inquiry so difficult is that the world is constantly changing. The trouble with finding the balance with technology can be summarized by the quote from *Digital Nation*, "Technology isn't good or bad. It's powerful…and it's complicated."