Applying the Contemplative Technopedagogy Framework: Insights for Teaching Ethics Using TV Series

Justin D. Shanks

Montana State University, USA

Germán Scalzo and María Teresa Nicolás-Gavilán

Universidad Panamericana (Mexico), Mexico

Abstract. Digital media and technology are nearly ubiquitious in contemporary higher education, As such, researchers and educators are keen to identify best practices and understand impacts. Digital media and technology present opportunities to cultivate interactive, creative teaching-learning communities. However, inclusion of digital media and technology in a course does not necessarily cultivate creative engagement or deep reflection among students. This manuscript studies how a contemplative approach to teaching with digital media, specifically TV series, can lead to more effective and engaging in the process of teaching professional ethics. This research explores how the Contemplative Technopedagogy Framework can enrich the use of TV series for teaching professional ethics and positively influence the effective integration of ethical behavior into university students' future professional lives.

Keywords: educational innovation, digital technology, meaningful learning, professional ethics.

1. Introduction

Digital technologies enter and exit higher education teaching-learning environments. Roles and expectations of student, teacher, and university are routinely renegotiated within sociocultural, institutional, and pedagogical contexts. The constantly changing technosocial environment demands that educators think contemplatively about technologies and proactively about pedagogies. Looking to adjust the trajectory of technopedagogy, this manuscript demonstrates how a contemplative approach to digital technology can more effectively and holistically augment teaching and learning in higher education, specifically in professional ethics courses.

Despite the growing recognition of the need for teaching ethics (Ghoshal 2005; Khurana 2007; Friedman & Friedman 2010; Donaldson 2012; Melé 2012), there are different notions about the objectives that a professional ethics course

should pursue (Callahan 1980) and the most effective methodology to develop it (Sims & Brinkmann 2003; Gandz & Hayes 1998; Hartman & Hartman 2005; Evans & Robertson 2003). This research investigates how to transform popular digital media such as television (TV) series into a meaningful educational technology using the Contemplative Technopedagogy Framework. More specifically, this manuscript shows how contemplatively integrating TV series into professional ethics courses can lead to meaningful and rewarding learning for students (Nicolás-Gavilán, Scalzo, & Alemán 2017).

Research herein demonstrates the utility of contemplative technopedagogy, evaluates the effectiveness of TV series for teaching ethics, and develops pedagogical guidelines for effectively using digital media in higher education teaching-learning environments. The manuscript first presents the Contemplative Technopedagogy Framework (Shanks 2020) as an apparatus for the thoughtful integration of digital media into higher education teaching-learning environments. Next, it explores the use of TV series as an engaging and meaningful educational technology and a culturally relevant method for teaching professional ethics. The manuscript concludes with insights regarding the integration of contemplative technopedagogical attributes to aid educators in developing more engaging professional ethics courses with contextual awareness that enhance teaching and learning in contemporary higher education.

2.   The Contemplative Technopedagogy Framework

In proposing a contemplative approach to technopedagogical matters in professional ethics pedagogy, this manuscript builds upon theories and thinkers that advocate for the integration of reflection into the educational sphere. The research engages with concerns and ambitions that recognize how the shaping power of sociocultural norms places the teacher and learner in scenarios where the purpose and utilization of digital technology is negotiated within particular educational settings.

How digital technology is used in higher education is contingent upon the social construction of what technology (both the specific technological item as well as technology as an overarching concept) is expected to do. This manuscript addresses the contemplative integration TV series into professional ethic pedagogy. Whether via network broadcast, DVD, or streaming service, TV series are a digital technology; a wide array of electronic, data-oriented tangible objects and intangible networks (e.g., desktop computers, Internet, laptops, audiovisual recording software, tablets, social networking services). As such, the educational use of TV series is similarly shaped by the discourses and ideologies that influence pedagogical decision involving various other digital technologies.

Contemplation is the practice of being attentive to a topic by thinking thoroughly about it. Contemplative practices are diverse and include mindfulness

exercises, self-reflection, and concentration or focus. When merged with pedagogy, contemplation aims to cultivate outcomes such as: creativity, non-judgment, compassion, commitment, and reflection (Burgraff & Grossenbacher 2007; Shapiro, Brown, & Astin 2008; Zajonc 2006, 2013). With growing recognition of the benefits it brings to teaching and learning, the practice of contemplative pedagogy in higher education has increased in recent years (Levy 2006). However, little research has been published regarding ways in which contemplation can integrate with and benefit technopedagogy. By exploring the applicability of the Contemplative Technopedagogy Framework for making decision about the educational use of TV series, this manuscript demonstrates the importance of understanding the dynamic relationship between digital technology and pedagogy in professional ethics pedagogy.

In succinct terms, pedagogy is the theory of education and practice of teaching (Lusted 1986). Creating assignments, conducting courses, assessing student learning, among other actions of educators are informed by pedagogical theories and strategies. This manuscript is specifically interested in technopedagogy, which is uniquely associated with the integration of digital technology into teaching-learning environments. When considering digital technology, educators should take a thoughtful pause to contemplate *when*, *which*, *to what extent*, *how*, *with* whom, and *for what purpose* to integrate digital technology into the teaching-learning environment (Boisselle, Fliss, Mestre, & Zinn 2004; Cook-Sather 2001; Newson 1999).

It is important to make purposeful decisions about the possible role(s) of digital technology in teaching-learning environments. Non-contemplative technopedagogy leads to uncritical adoption or knee-jerk dismissal of digital technology. Whether adoptive or dismissive, non-contemplative pedagogical decisions have substantial consequences for both educators and learners. Uncritical adoption or dismissal of technological artifacts and practices often leads to dissatisfactory or dysfunctional results. While it is important for contemporary educators to pay close attention to digital technologies, they must incorporate attributes of contemplation into pedagogical decision-making. A contemplative approach to matters of teaching with digital technology is a step toward realizing more reflective and purposeful higher education teaching-learning environments. Digital technologies can create new terrain, foster collaboration, and inspire self-directed learning. However, if not utilized with contemplation, the same digital technologies can retrace well-trod and pre-determined paths, reinforce rigid educational hierarchies, and reduce opportunities for deep engagement.

Contemplative technopedagogy refers to purposeful and engaged approaches to pedagogical practices involving digital technology. Contemplative technopedagogy is applicable in diverse scenarios. Contemplative technopedagogy is iterative and ongoing. Contemplative technopedagogy does not supplant, but rather supplements an educator's pedagogy. Contemplative

technopedagogy provides a framework for making purposeful decisions about *when*, *which*, *to what extent*, *how*, *with* whom, and *for what purpose* to use digital technology in higher education teaching-learning environments. The Contemplative Technopedagogy Framework (Shanks 2020) requires an educator to simultaneously consider both the positive and negative aspects of a digital technology. In-depth case studies in university-level community nutrition and information literacy courses have further validated how the Contemplative Technopedagogy Framework can guide educators through technopedagogical decision-making in ways that facilitate student engagement, community building, and critical thinking (Shanks & Young 2019). The foundational attributes of the Contemplative Technopedagogy Framework are grouped into five areas of focus:

1. *Pedagogy Focused* – pedagogy should guide digital technology decisions, not vice versa.

2. *Learner Focused* – digital technology should foster connections and not create distractions within the teaching-learning environment.

3. *Technology Focused* – commitment from the educator to be both learner and teacher; evolving knowledge about a digital technology and ways it might or might not be applied to the teaching-learning environment.

4. *Attention Focused* – focus less on the polemic rhetorics of disruption and revolution and turn attention to matters of intentionality; think and act intentionally with regard to digital technology and pedagogy.

5. *Context Focused* – probe assumptions and understand preconceived notions about human and technological actors; examine the whys, hows, and consequences of technopedagogical decisions within the larger sociocultural context.

3. TV Series as a Useful Pedagogical Tool to Teach Ethics

Narrative has long been an important part of teaching ethics, as can be seen in the close relationship that existed between the "narration of a myth" and ethical training in the classical *paideia* (Marías 1968: 489). In recent years, there has been an effort to reinfuse the narrative order of life as a means of achieving sapiential knowledge and recovering the unity of knowledge (MacIntyre 1992; 2007). Narrative helps to shift from a logical-scientific discourse (*nomothetic*) to a historical-experiential (*ideographic*) one in which the ethical dimension emerges more naturally.

The narrative nature of human reason (Llano 1992) makes ethical learning "through stories" more effective, and not only because it captures students' attention, but also because it offers a frame of reference that allows for a better interpretation of actions (Hobbs 1998) and the possibility of observing casualties over time (Czarniawska 1998). Thus, it especially facilitates the teaching of ethics, which transcends the analysis of whether or not an action is correct, to order such action in the horizon of an ideal of life, in other words, the kind of