Chapter 15
The Online Teacher:
Second Responder

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ABSTRACT

Education (especially higher education) which helps maintain freedom in a democratic society is becoming increasingly difficult for many people. The explosion of online universities seems to make getting a degree much easier. Unfortunately, the increased numbers of ways to achieve an education do not ameliorate the trepidations—and resignation from getting that education—that occurs for many people once they begin the online education: it seems a daunting task to complete. As this study shows through historical reminders that help inform current situations, making sure people attend—and graduate— from the valid online learning institutions has become more feasible. We are reminded of the reason we became educators, to help advance education, and this reason further undergirds to prompt educators that ours is the line that we must "hold"—of being second-responders—in order to prepare our students to become part of the educated citizenry to which Plato referred.

INTRODUCTION

The education (especially higher education) about which Plato alluded is becoming an increasingly difficult undertaking for many people; however, the new environment offered through use of getting an online education is making getting degrees in learning more available. Unfortunately, the increased numbers of ways to achieve an education does not ameliorate the student's comments that follow Plato's words (above) due to that fact that for many students, being able to access online education seems daunting.

The ways to overcome obstacles that students envision is possible through utilization of a lot of common sense, patience, and a focus on making a few areas more accessible to students by the faculty and administration. That is, the methods a professor uses to keep the students engaged enough in the process of acquiring higher education are relatively simple to list, but require a bit of time to do,

The first – and most important way – an educator can help students is to be the new "second responder" for our students. We all know what the first responders have been doing in order to try to save many of

us during this pandemic. After the pandemic is over, having an educated citizenry who will pass along democratic ideas to others on how to maintain the democracy that we now have comes through education. That is, we, as second responders, need to be ready to offer the education needed to maintain a free democracy for those who follow us.

HOW TO BEGIN TO BE SECOND RESPONDER

A lot of times teachers forget that we were once students, too. That is, we had to make sure and do all the things required to pass a class, and then move to the next obstacle: so, too, are our students facing difficulties that (many times) are unprecedented (Wolf, Loker, Ertie, Justus & Kelly, 6-7). For many, they have to keep reminding themselves not only is "[t]he transition from secondary to tertiary education . . . particularly challenging for students as they navigate a new learning environment," writes Ainscough, Stewart, Colthorpe, Zimbardi (2018), but this next step in getting an education is also begun with a great sense of trepidation (Nazemetz, 10). This segue truly is addressed at more length in Kantanis 2000; van der Meer 2012; van der Meer, Jansen, and Torenbeek 2010.

By addressing challenges (several of which are discussed below), the offering – and attainment - of an online education can allow students to acquire the education necessary that a degree confers.

Meeting these needs should always be accompanied by maintaining that student's innate human need: to be treated with dignity. That is, to follow Kant's categorical imperative of "Act[ing] so that you treat human beings always as ends and never only as means" (Kant), and this, in turn, helps our students know they deserve dignity (Anderson 13) and respect (Coppola, B16; Rosen, 2012). Treating our students with respect and preserving their innate dignity, we can help bring about positive results.

The way to counter these fears is to treat students with a sense of dignity and respect which reinforces their sense of self-esteem. We all know that learning how to teach someone, while respecting their sense of integrity and dignity, is oftentimes the most difficult and challenging thing one human being can offer another. Therefore, defining the word *dignity* becomes important so it can be integrated into all dealings with students online (as Arendt sates in Isaac, 2996, p. 106) and refining the definition further to note it clarifies, further as "an appealing foundation for human rights because it moves away from the problematic idea of natural or inalienable rights and focuses on the right to membership in the political community with a basis in the concept of human dignity" (Helis, p. 73).

Therefore, by treating our students respectfully, we undermine the underlying reason that inhibits most people from pursuing an education (any type of education) because they are fearful (Mattera, Pagani, & Baldasarre, 14). That is, students, in general, are fearful of "seeming stupid" (Nazemetz, 10-11) or "of not being able to maintain a sense of self-worth or of being made fun of" (Hignite, Marshall & Nauman, 120) by their peers or family. The student loses a sense of self-worth: dignity.

Maintaining the online classroom becomes the community of scholars who have the right to have their dignity upheld: both as the student and the professor. The next step is to offer meeting students' needs in three basic ways:

1. by helping to make courses more easily accessible to them
2. by allowing knowledge that the responses from the faculty and administration will reliability be delivered to them, and by promoting the knowledge that the completion of the degree is do-able

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