



Research Perspectives and Best Practices in Educational Technology Integration

Keengwe, Jared
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Book Review

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The integration of technology into classroom instruction is an oft-mentioned topic in modern pedagogical discussions. This collection of essays enters into the fray very broadly, by postulating productive ways of integrating various technologies into a wide variety of educational settings, covering an incredibly diverse set of subjects. Despite the dizzying variety inherent to this collection, there are two primary areas in which this volume is helpful to those interested in teaching theology or religion: First, for individual instructors intent on enhancing student learning, this volume offers an overview of technologies instructors are using successfully, as well as effective summaries of educational theory justifying their approach to technology integration. Second, for departments or department chairs interested in broadening the use of technology within their course offerings, this volume includes many essays discussing methods with which teachers can recognize relevant technologies and their usefulness in the classroom.

Several important and foundational principles about the integration of technology into classroom instruction undergird each chapter. Most foundationally, integrating technology into the classroom for the sake of integrating technology is over and over again shown to be ineffective (see esp. 45-46). There is a pernicious assumption in many sectors that classrooms need technology to be effective. Several chapters in this volume offer a very important caution: Technology is a tool, which when used well can serve to help students engage in classroom content more readily and thereby to learn more effectively, but the mere use of any technology does not ensure student engagement or learning.

Two other theoretical sections are of note: A helpful overview of several learning theories is

provided (informal and incidental learning, relational mentoring, and situated learning) which provides a helpful framework for the integration of technology into a classroom (233-236). Chapter 15 also offers an interesting survey of TPACK (technological, pedagogical, and content knowledge) research-based course design. Though this particular chapter relates this theoretical model to math education, the model has many important implications for theological and religious education.

In addition to theoretical contributions, several specific technological tools are discussed with a view to their productive use in the classroom. A few technologies deserve specific mention here: Anonymous student polling either through clickers or *Poll Everywhere* is offered as an effective tool to enhance student discussion (46-51). Productive use of social media in a classroom setting is discussed (8-11 and 217-228), and its implications for privacy are covered in chapter 16. The role of games in learning is also considered (11-14 and 178-191). The specific games discussed in this volume are not really relevant to theological education; however, readers may be able to draw connections between the book and the Reacting to the Past (RTTP) group. RTTP has a few games dealing with theological or religious material (see *RTTP*).

Several articles are focused on training instructors to use technology effectively while engaged with teaching. The authors contend that successful integration of technology into educational institutions requires first, the establishment of a culture of innovation, then the modeling of effective technological use by administrators and supervisors, and finally continuing support for instructors seeking to integrate technology into their classroom through both ongoing technological education and mentoring.

In sum, Keengwe's *Research Perspectives* is an all too broad entry into this complicated but important topic. It offers a good, but brief, survey of the theoretical foundation for technological integration, but the specific technologies mentioned, and the training models presented, seem like a preliminary attempt at integration rather than a proscriptive model to be adapted immediately in any classroom.

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