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ON LEARNING TECHNOLOGIES: TO CONTROL OR TO BE CONTROLLED
BY TANS FELIKS

*[1)],Tans Feliks,
*feliks.tans@staff.undana.ac.id
Nusa Cendana University, Kupang-Indonesia

ABSTRACT

In this article, learning is viewed as an activity that has five major elements, namely, total-involvement, self-initiation, self-evaluation, being pervasive, and being meaningful (Rogers, 1983). In their learning activities, students use various learning technologies like books and such Internet applications as *YouTube, Facebook, Google, WhatsApp,* and *TikTok* to facilitate their learning so that they can significantly improve their cognitive, psychomotoric, and affective competences. Yet, it is observed that some students fail to use those learning technologies effectively. This is shown by the fact that they still find it quite difficult to master some basic skills needed to succeed in their lives after schooling. It is, therefore, crucial that the students have to be able to effectively use any learning technologies they have in order to improve their competences. In other words, the students need to be able to control their usages of their learning technologies in such a way that those learning technologies can help the students improve their competences and, therefore, they are not controlled by those learning technologies, that is, they use most of their time using those learning technologies for things which are not conducive for their better and brighter future. The author argues that to be able to control and not to be controlled by those learning technologies, students should have big dreams of their future, work harder and pray wholeheartedly, have steely determination, and have great discipline in doing whatever is necessary to succeed in their lives, in and beyond school.

Keywords: learning, technology, to control, and to controlled

I. INTRODUCTION

As suggested by its title, this discusses some major issues related to learning technologies that are supposed to be effectively used by those involved in education – formal, informal, or nonformal one – in general, by our students in particular. These two words, learning and technology, must, therefore, be well understood so that whatever learners aim at using a particular learning technology in their lives can be achieved.

In the context of this article, they can then be effectively competent to control any learning technology they usually use in learning to achieve their learning aim(s) and not to be controlled by it, that is a condition, in which a learning technology that they use simply wastes their time because they mostly use it for unnecessary, unimportant, idle, unproductive matters that, in turn, could ruin their great future. Within the line of thought as such, it is indeed crucial that we correctly comprehend what we mean by learning and technology as describe below. This is followed by some ways students should go through in order to make sure that they are not controlled by any learning technologies they have; instead, the students are able to totally control the learning technologies they have for their own benefit.

II.   DEFINING LEARNING AND TECHNOLOGY

Learning , Rogers (1983) says, consists of two broad categories. The first is learning to memorize. It involves just a learner's mind, taking place "from the neck up". "It does not involve," he adds, "feelings or personal meanings; it has no relevance for the whole person" (p. 19). This kind of learning, he says, is in contrast to the second kind of learning, that is, a "significant, meaningful, experiential learning" (p. 19).

Describing the second style of learning, Rogers says:

> Let me define a bit more precisely the elements that are involved in such significant or experiential learning. *It has a quality of personal involvement* – the whole person in both feeling and cognitive aspects being *in* the learning event. It is *self-initiated.* Even when the impetus or stimulus comes from the outside, the sense of discovery, of reaching out, of grasping and comprehending, comes from within. *It is pervasive.* It makes a difference in the behaviour, the attitudes, perhaps even the personality of the learner. *It is evaluated by the learner.* She knows whether it is meeting her need, whether it leads toward what she *wants* to know, whether it illuminates the dark area of ignorance she is experiencing. The locus of evaluation, we might say, resides definitely in the learner. *Its essence is meaning.* When such learning takes place, the element of meaning to the learner is built into the whole experience (1983: 20).

Learning in that sense can be related to teaching, although it is not necessarily so because of, among other things, its element of self-initiation. Yet, a good way of teaching should lead our students to having that experiential kind of learning in their lives. This is why the ultimate goal of teaching is to "promote learning" (Rogers, 1983: 18) or to facilitate learning and not to impart knowledge (Neville, 1989: 13).

When this article uses the phrase "learning technologies" in its title, its author means technologies used in such kind of learning. In that sense, it is, therefore, necessary to define that the author means by the word "technology" in this article.

If we google the word "technology," the great search engine, Google, will show several meanings of it, one of which is "the use of scientific knowledge for practical purposes or applications, whether in industry or in our everyday lives. It includes everything from the wheel to computers to medicines to zippers and buttons on clothes." In education, we know what we call as EdTech or technology in education that Google defines as something that "encompasses the use of digital tools and resources to enhance teaching and learning processes. This includes everything from online learning platforms and interactive software to virtual reality and artificial intelligence-powered learning systems." In other words, it says that "EdTech is the application of technology to support teaching and learning." In this sense, Google says, it aims at making "learning more engaging, accessible, and personalized, ultimately improving student outcomes and preparing them for the digital world."

AI which I have contacted through my *WhatsApp* adds that technology means "the application of scientific knowledge and principles to create solutions, products, or processes that help solve problems, improve efficiency, and enhance quality of life." It asserts that it can be classified into four major categories, namely: 1. Information technology (computers, software, internet); 2. Communication technology (phones, televisions, radios); 3. Medical technology (medical devices, healthcare systems); 4. Industrial technology (machinery, robotics, automation." Technology, according to AI, offers a lot of benefits, namely: 1. Increasing productivity; 2. Improving communication; 3. Enhancing access to information; and, 4. Increasing efficiency. AI, therefore, concludes that in general "technology plays a significant role in shaping our lives and transforming the way we live, work, and interact with one another."

In the context of this article, the author's main concern is related to information technology in which computers, software, and the internet are included. In addition, his focus is also on communication technology, that is, phones, televisions, and radios. These are technologies that are mainly used by our students in their learning activities. As AI has said, these technologies can transform "the way we live, work, and interact with one another", yet if they are not used wisely, the effects can be negative to those who fail to use them wisely. In this sense, to control those learning technologies wisely so that they can be beneficial for the learners or to be controlled by those learning technologies in such a way that learners use them most of their time without any benefits to them or simply give them negative impacts is crucial and, therefore, it has to be seriously considered by learners when using those learning technologies. They need to be able to answer the question whether they are used for learners' advantages or disadvantages that, in many ways, users of those learning technologies are not always aware of.

Therefore, having defined what the author means by those two keywords of this article, learning and technology, it is now clear that this article is written with a specific audience in mind, that is, our students. They are the ones who use more than ever a lot of great technologies like *YouTube, Facebook, WhatsApp,* and *TikTok* as well as books obtained through the Internet that can, in turn, help them achieve their life goals whatever they are, if they are used effectively and wisely or they could ruin the students if those learning technologies are not positively used that, in the end, can ruin their future.

Within that context, this article then discusses one major issue, namely, how students control themselves in using their learning technologies more effectively so that they can make use of them more effectively as well for their benefits. In that sense, his article does not focus on how students use those learning technologies. It instead focuses on how those learning technologies be used more effectively so that their dreams or ideals or "imagination" (Neville, 1989; Tans, 2015) can be made true.

In other words, this article is not about how students use their learning technologies for their benefits. Instead, it is about what they should do to make sure that they are able to use their learning technologies to improve their knowledge, skills, and good behaviour. In this article, therefore, readers will not learn how to use their learning technologies like handphones and laptops that have access to the Internet, but they will learn what they should do in order to make sure that they can control those learning technologies in such a way that they can use them more effectively for their own benefits.

This is important because in many cases, as the author has observed, there have been a lot of students who spend most of their time to use their learning technologies for things that do not always support them in learning, that is, in improving their knowledge, skills, and wisdom in life. This can be seen, for example, in students who have spent about seven years doing their undergraduate studies but their knowledge and skills related to their field of study have never improved. A good example can be seen, for example, within students majoring in English education.

As a lecturer of the undergraduate English department students of a university in Kupang, East Nusa Tenggara Province, the author finds that his students still find it quite difficult to use English well: their usage of English words, sentences, paragraphs and punctuations is still far from being good – Although it is acknowledged that some can use it very well. The following text is a good example of such a pretty poor text (all names have been fictive).

Text 1

Good morning sir, Sorry to disturb your time, sir. I am Peter R. Johny, semester 14. With your permission sir, may I meet you to sign the my approval sheet sir? Because my second supervisor miss Maria Marre was replaced sir. so I changed my

approval sheet sir. Thank you sir.

As it is seen, the text has some mistakes that need to be edited (see Text 2). Yet, if the student who wrote the text had what Carl Rogers calls experiential/significant learning as stated above, he would revise it himself by, among other things, using necessary learning technologies to improve his writing in addition to reading issues related to writing, editing, and revising (Cf. Feliks, 1994/1999; Feliks et al., 2019; Yulitriana et al., 2020).

Text 2

Good morning, Sir. Sorry to disturb
your time, Sir. I am Peter R. Johny,
semester 14. With your permission,
Sir, may I meet you to sign my
approval sheet, Sir? Because my
second supervisor, Miss Maria Marre,
has been replaced, Sir. So, I have changed my
approval sheet, Sir. Thank you, Sir!.

Text 2 is the author's editing of text 1. As seen there, line one has been changed into two sentences and some mistakes concerning punctuation and spelling have been improved, including the uses of past tenses that have been changed into present perfect tenses from line 6 to line 7.

This is why it is urgent that students should learn how to make sure that their use of their learning technologies can then help them improve their writing. The question is how they can do that. Below is the author's answer to the question, namely, by having great dream, working harder, having steely determination, strong discipline, and believing in God as discussed below.

III.   WAYS OF CONTROLLING LEARNING TECHNOLOGIES

In this session, the author proposes five major ways that hopefully help students effectively control themselves in their usage of their learning technologies in their learning process, namely, having a great dream, working harder, having steely determination, having strong discipline and, last but not least, believing in God. These are describe below.

Firstly, it is by having a great dream of one's much better and much brighter future. This is what Neville (1989) calls imagination of one's future. It can be about seeing one's self as a great teacher in the future or a businessperson or an intellectual or a lecturer or a journalist or a doctor or a priest or a nun or a police or a soldier or else. This is important because it will always motivate you to do your best now in order to make your dream come true later. This is logical because none dreams of becoming a good English teacher, for example, and then he/she sleeps all day long.

This can be a very strong motivation when one also believes that he/she can make it, if he/she keeps doing his/her best. In other words, dreaming of a great future or having a particular imagination of one's greater future is useless, if one does not believe that he/she can make it true someday somehow. He/she has to believe in him/herself that by doing extra effort each and every day, he/she can achieve whatever he/she wants for his/her future. It is, therefore, having imagination and autosuggestion as well that with some great effort as discussed below, one's dream/imagination can be achievable (Cf. Feliks, 2015).

Thus, by having this in mind, one can then say no to any temptation of, for example, using a learning technology, a handphone, for example, without any clear purposes. In other words, one would use his/her learning technology just to support him/her in pursuing his/her dreams for he/she knows that he/she would never be able to make his/her dream come true if he/she uses his/her handphone, for example, for poor or evil purposes.

Secondly, it is by working harder/smarter and praying wholeheartedly. There are, therefore, two aspects here, one of which is working harder/smarter. This is important in making sure that people use their learning technologies wisely. This is logical because to become a good English teacher, for example, there are many things that a student has to do, namely, mastering English structure, mastering English vocabulary, studying to be competent in reading, writing, speaking and listening as well as mastering pedagogical issues concerning language education theory and practices.

To master English structure, vocabulary, language related skills, pedagogical, social , professional and personal/individual competences, students can then rely on their learning technologies like their handphones or laptops with access to the Internet. By using their handphone on this case, for example, they can then learn how to better their mastery of English structure and vocabulary, speaking/pronunciation, reading, writing, and listening in addition to mastering any pedagogical issues. In this sense, having such virtues of the Protestant-Puritan tradition as great commitment, admiring effort and energy, fearing laziness and mediocrity (Dabney, 1982: 12) can be applied to make sure that they can achieve their dreams and that along the process, any temptation to waste time by, among other things, using their learning technologies like handphones can then be solved.

Students nowadays have a long of advantages in learning; by simply googling certain words, for example, they will know right away not only meanings of those words, but also their correct pronunciation. The question is whether our students will do just that or not. When they have big dream and they believe that they can make it (having autosuggestion) as stated above, they must be able to make use of their learning technologies for their benefit. If not, they would just use their learning technologies for things that they do not really need for their greater future.

The second aspect of this is praying a lot which is also crucial; it is by believing in God's power that so long as we keep doing our best, He will do the rest for us well. So it is to say what people usually practice along the history of mankind: ora et labora, pray and work. It is acknowledged though that for some who do not believe in God, this could be quite difficult to be understood. Yet, this is indeed very logical because it is God who has created all of us and, therefore, it is Him and Him alone that can help us help ourselves in our own lives along our steps towards Him (Cf. White, 2021). The lives of great people like Pope John Paul II (Kwitny, 1997), Pope Francis (Escobar, 2014), and Mother Theresa (Beding, 1989) show how prayer is so powerful not only to create greatly successful people, but also to make humankind itself full of joy despite the sufferings it gets.

Thirdly, it is by having steely determination to succeed. This is important because life is not always as smooth as we might think. It has indeed a lot challenges that really need steely determination to face them. This is to say that we may fail in some cases, but the basic rule is that any failure may not make us lose hope. We should never give up despite any challenges we face. In this sense, we may learn from great epics of legendary figures like Rama and Sinta on how life must be maintained and fought for despite any hardship (Rajagopalachari, 1971). Along the process though such competences as critical thinking, creativity, communication and collaboration (Cf. Harrari, 2018: 268) need to be nurtured and well-practised.

Fourthly, it is by having strong discipline. To a certain extent, this is closely related to one's steely determination. Yet, this is related more one's ability to use his 60 minutes/hour, 24 hours per day, 1,440 minutes/day or seven days per week that he/she gets like anyone else. Many people succeed in their lives because they are able to use their time effectively, yet others fail because they are not competent in using their time wisely.

It is, therefore, important the students in their learning process need to use their time more effectively. They would fail if they were not able to use their time effectively for learning, for relaxing,

for watching or for using their handphone or laptops for leisure or for serious things like mastering English structure, vocabulary, reading, writing, listening and speaking for those who want to be English teachers as mentioned above.

This is, of course, related to one's noncognitive competences that, in many cases, determines his/her success or failure in the future. In this context, Tough (2012) says, "What matters most in a child's development, they say, is not how much information we can stuff into her brain in the first few years. What matters, instead, is whether we are able to help her develop a very different set of qualities, a list that includes persistence, self-control, curiosity, conscientiousness, grit, and self-confidence" (p. xv).

IV.   CONCLUSSIONS

In this article, learning is seen as an activity that students usually do with its five major elements as stated by Rogers (1983), that is, total-involvement, self-initiated, self-evaluated, pervasive, and meaningful. In such learning, students usually use various learning technologies that can help them facilitate their learning activities in such a way that they can then significantly improve their competences.

Yet, it is observed that some students may have failed to use the available learning technologies effectively. This is shown by the fact that some students still find it quite difficult to master certain basic competences despite the fact that they have been at the university education for around seven years. On the other hand, they have all the necessary learning technologies that they can use to improve their competences. This leads the author to argue that the students have failed to use the available learning technologies to improve their competences; they have used those learning technologies ineffectively.

This is why the author suggests that students possess the following qualities in order to make sure that they can control their own use of the available learning technologies and that those available learning technologies may not control the students, that is, they use most of their time using their learning technologies with damaging purposes and, therefore, they are useless for the students. The qualities that the students should have in order to be able to control their learning technologies are having a dream, working harder/smarter and praying a lot, having steely determination (Cf. Tough, 2012), and having great discipline. By having these characters, he argues, students can then control their learning technologies for the improvement of their competences and, therefore, they cannot be controlled by those learning technologies.

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