

Ah, the joy and the pain of the fire hose. For most of this course, I have felt the pain. The volume and diversity of the material has left me feeling bombarded with too much information and not enough time to sift through it all. There were times of stress and the feeling of drowning in too much to process. Nevertheless, this blog needed to get done so I set aside some time to get started. After visiting the suggested sites and then linking to several different sites after that, I found myself becoming less stressed as I became more and more engaged in the topic. I traveled from site to site investigating the plethora of new information. The pain was subsiding and for a moment, the fire hose was under control. I am always amazed at the amount of time that passes when I sit down to my computer and start surfing.

I first looked at the Kahn Academy sites because just recently, I find myself turning to these tutorial videos in my face to face Biology 12 class. I often use them as review and preview of material. The video by Kahn on his philosophy and the creation of the Kahn Academy came across as one long commercial and seemed to be just a self-promotion of his product. I took it with a grain of salt and then moved onto Will Richardson's site and his discussion on the 'Kahnification of Education'. His short post hit a nerve with me. I agree with Richardson's sentiment that teachers need to be more assertive in their role as teachers. Videos and tutorials should not replace the vital role that teachers play in the classroom. Just because you can create a video and post it, does not make you a teacher. It's interesting to note that Sal Kahn himself is not a teacher and we, as teachers, should follow Richardson's advice and take pride in what can't be 'Kahnified'.

I then moved on to look at the article in the New York Times about Andrew Ng and his new interactive online education program. Part of me can see the financial benefits to the higher education institutes wanting to switch to more online courses. However, for me, education will always be about the quality of education that I can provide and not the quantity of students that I can reach. Both Ng and Kahn seem to see education as a numbers game and a contest to see who can have the greatest number of individuals enrolled in their programs. I don't think that I would ever want to teach 100,000 students in my entire career let alone in just one semester. Technology is rapidly changing how education looks, however, just because something can be done, doesn't necessarily mean that we should. I understand that this model takes place in post-secondary institutions, but I fear, in time, it will creep down into the high schools. With such mass intake of students, I wonder how lessons are being customized to the individual's needs and where is the student-teacher interaction that is so necessary for student success. Education is changing but shouldn't it be for the better?

In time, I hope to be more in control of the fire hose instead of letting it control me. I still feel like a rookie as I move from course to course in this program. I am hoping that with the expertise of my colleagues and my instructors, I will take the best of all the little pieces along the way. The amount of information out there can be daunting. My suggestion is to take one little step at a time.