"Pandemic Pedagogy" as a Framework for DIY Professional Development

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This article uses pandemic pedagogy—four professional and pedagogical themes developed by Sheppard (2021)—as a framework to describe the teaching experience and professional development of a non-tenure-track continuing instructor during the pandemic: The four themes include revised workloads, misguided mandates for technology use, personal and professional well-being, and the pedagogies of logistics. Layered within this framework—to suggest how shifting expectations and circumstances affected motivation toward teaching and professional development—is a model used in research on teacher and faculty motivation: The Achievement Goal Approach, developed by Butler (2014) and used by Daumiller et al. (2021) to research faculty motivation during the pandemic. The Achievement Goal Approach model is based on faculty motivation to develop competence, be perceived as competent, avoid appearing incompetent, or get through the day with minimal effort (Butler, 2014; Daumiller et al., 2021). Rather than present one motivator as a single comprehensive identifier for an individual instructor, this article reflects on which motivator was most significant for a particular instructor for each pandemic pedagogy theme. The article concludes with a discussion of pandemic fallout and a summary of the instructor's pandemic pedagogy strategies.

If professional development for contingent online faculty was scarce before 2020, then the pandemic did not suddenly usher in a new era of abundance when all faculty were required to teach online. The environments in which learning would take place were being dictated by administrations, with professional development mostly limited to learning how to use Zoom and test-proctoring software. Institutions were so focused on how to deliver courses to students that they failed to consider how instructional models and policies would affect faculty workloads and the personal safety of faculty (Wooten, Fitzpatrick, Fernandez, Goldenthal, & Matthews, 2022). Non-tenure-track faculty were especially at risk, given their lack of a voice in faculty governance and the tendency for their labor and expertise to be rendered invisible during decision-making about pandemic policies (Wooten, Fitzpatrick, Fernandez, Goldenthal, & Matthews, 2022).

Advocating for contingent professional and technical writing instructors in online environments, Melançon (2017) argued that professional development is about more than learning how to teach online: "It is also an issue of adequately preparing students to enter complex, technologically mediated workplaces, as well" (p. 269). The disruption caused by COVID-19 heightened the complexity—and controversy—of technologically mediated workplaces both inside and outside of higher education. Early on, Skallerup Bessette, Chick, and Friberg (2020) noted myths and misperceptions about online education, resulting from the move to remote instruction in the early days of the pandemic. More than a year later, McClure (2021) argued that the ongoing pandemic had created a crisis of staff and faculty burnout that resisted quick fixes.

Professional development was the least of the worries for contingent faculty. At my institution, more than 150 Visiting Assistant Professor (VAP) positions were eliminated for Fall 2020. Formerly invisible, now they were simply gone, making their labor suddenly visible to every department trying to get courses covered. A long-time VAP, I had just been "converted" to a continuing non-tenure-track line starting with the 2019-20 school year and felt fortunate to still be employed, even though my modest raise was effectively cancelled out when my course load was raised in Fall 2020. My renewed sense of precarity left me feeling that my only choice was to acknowledge that positionality, take charge of my own limited domain, and let the chips fall where they may. Walton, Moore, and Jones (2019) defined positionality as a "way of conceiving subjectivity that simultaneously accounts for the constraints and conditions of context while also allowing for an individual's action and agency. In other words, positionality asserts that the meaning of identity categories (such as race and gender) are not essential but rather are fluid and contextual" (p. 63). In a pandemic context, precarity came to define more than job-insecure non-tenure-track faculty: It came to define all faculty struggling to cope with remote instruction, higher workloads, and constant challenges to physical and mental health.

DIY professional development is digital activism in an era of continually shifting expectations and circumstances, which includes being continually asked to do more. In this article I use *pandemic pedagogy*—four professional and pedagogical themes developed by Sheppard (2021)—as a framework to describe my teaching experience and professional development during the pandemic. First, I examine how revised "workload considerations for faculty and students" (Sheppard, 2021, p. 62) have played out since the pandemic officially began. Next, I describe resisting misguided mandates in favor of "pedagogy-driven instead of technology-driven online teaching" (Sheppard, 2021, p. 64). Following that I discuss "personal and professional well-being

in teaching online" (Sheppard, 2021, p. 67) as a struggle to balance self-care, teaching, and continued professional development. Finally, I describe the "pedagogies of logistics" (Sheppard, 2021, p. 68), the ever-expanding labor required to manage the day-to-day administrative tasks of teaching.

This is an anecdotal account of my experience as a non-tenure-line assistant teaching professor at a traditional bricks-and-mortar residential campus, where the undergraduates are almost all between the ages of 18 and 22. To describe my attitude toward shifting expectations and circumstances, I added a second framework used in research on teacher and faculty motivation, the Achievement Goal Approach as defined by Daumiller et al. (2021):

> The most prominent model in this line of research distinguishes between learning approach (e.g., striving to develop competence), performance approach (e.g., striving to be perceived as competent), performance avoidance (e.g., striving to avoid appearing incompetent), and work avoidance (e.g., striving to get through the day with little effort) goals. (p. 2)

Butler (2014) developed the Achievement Goal Approach model, noting that research usually focused on student motivation and arguing that teacher motivation was also worthy of study. Daumiller et al. (2021) used the Achievement Goal Approach model to categorize faculty motivation during the pandemic, based on overall faculty perceptions of the shift to online instruction as a threat or positive challenge. More specifically, they measured what percentage of faculty were motivated to develop competence, be perceived as competent, avoid appearing incompetent, or get through the day with minimal effort (Daumiller et al., 2021).

Rather than present each motivator as a single comprehensive identifier for an instructor, I used the categories to examine my own multiple motivations for responding to pandemic teaching workloads, administrative mandates, isolation, and course administrative tasks.

My first instinct was to claim that I embraced pandemic pedagogy from a Learning Approach, and I still believe that I fit that category overall. I saw the pandemic shift as a challenge, even a noble cause, to takes risks, pursue knowledge, and reinvent myself as a professional; however, that attitude was also moving me toward the Performance Approach, which aligned with my motivation to demonstrate competence, to make clear to my students and administrators that I knew what I was doing and that I was confident in my online teaching expertise. To perform competence sometimes meant I had to resort to Performance Avoidance. After all, who wants to be perceived as incompetent? Then again, I also fit into the Work Avoidance category be-

cause there just was not enough time in the day and professionals do need to prioritize. The following reflection of my experience follows the four pandemic pedagogy themes, along with the most prominent Achievement Goal Approach—the specific motivator—that influenced my response.

Reconsidering Tasks for Myself and My Students: Work Avoidance

In addition to an increased course load, Fall 2020 also brought an unpredictable teaching environment. The VAP layoffs led to my teaching assignment changing at the last minute, leaving me to scramble to set up a different course. The plan for face-to-face instruction changed to online, then back to face-to-face after five weeks, with social distancing and masking mandates in place. Many students had decided to be off campus that semester, with the changes affecting only the 25 percent of my students who were on campus and also willing to meet in a classroom. We ended up back online by the end of the semester as Covid cases rose and dorms went into quarantine.

Pandemic policies on taking courses for credit were expanded to alleviate student stress. Students were allowed to switch to that option well into the semester, which I discovered only when some students suddenly stopped working on the collaborative project, creating additional stress for those left shouldering the work for a grade.

Faculty were expected to accommodate absences, by not penalizing absences and by helping students catch up. I had already anticipated such considerations adding to instructor workload; as a result, my Work Avoidance tactic was to design my course site as an online asynchronous course. The resources were there, the class activities were visible, so students could keep up if they chose.

Not all of the extra feedback—and none of the grading—could be delegated to peer response or covered as whole-class instructor response. This left me rethinking what activities were necessary. I revised activities so that they clearly related to the writing projects, so that students could see the value of them. I removed unnecessary activities to avoid giving off any hint of "busy work," which also helped reduce disagreements. I could no longer afford the time or emotional bandwidth required to engage in negotiations about missing, late, or partially completed assignments.

Sheppard (2021) stated, "a critical take-away in thinking about the workload of teaching online is that instructors need to develop intentional, manageable approaches that attend to both student learning and instructor well-being" (p. 64). As an experienced online instructor teaching during

the pandemic, my biggest challenge was coping with a higher workload with the same resources. During the first year of the pandemic, I had a tendency to over-extend myself and stress out from the anxiety of all that had to be done, which led to a blur of days muddled through or lost due to excruciating headaches. My attitude eventually shifted from Learning Approach to Work Avoidance: prioritizing what was worth doing and deciding what could be let go. Christine Miserandino's story "The Spoon Theory" describes rationing spoons as a metaphor for prioritizing the limited resources a disabled person must use to get through the day: "When you are healthy you expect to have a never-ending supply of 'spoons.' But when you have to now plan your day, you need to know exactly how many 'spoons' you are starting with" (Miserandino, 2013). Healthy individuals have more spoons, but not a never-ending supply. Unhealthy workloads can be disabling because they force us to "borrow" from tomorrow's spoons, which is unsustainable.

Resisting Mandates that Get in the Way of Teaching: Performance Approach

My classes are oriented toward small group activities, but I had gone to enough Zoom training sessions over the summer to recognize that Zoom breakout rooms could be anxiety-provoking and unproductive without clear instructions and enough time for discussion. In most sessions, by the time everyone awkwardly introduced themselves, we had usually lost track of the task, running out of time before being whisked back into the main room, where we also lost track of the people we had just met. Instead, I scheduled weekly 30-minute small-group Zoom sessions that both resisted and accommodated the policy requiring synchronous online classes. Even then not all groups meshed and not all students willingly participated. Peck (2021) argued, "Just because a technology affords interaction does not mean interaction will occur, and instructors need to consider ways to actively promote inter-learner dialogue to reduce transactional distance in video environments, especially as this teaching modality becomes more prevalent" (p. 28). A videoconference session is not a classroom and does not allow for impromptu out-of-instructor-earshot conversations to happen and for relationships to develop from regular proximity to the same people. Also, teaching students who are motivated to take an online course is different from teaching students who have no choice but to take the course online.

The "hyflex" approach was encouraged when hybridized and socially distanced on-ground classes returned in Spring 2021. I was opposed to it and not only because the WiFi was unpredictable in the classrooms assigned to

me: As a virtual participant in hyflex professional development workshops, I had noticed that on-site participants seemed to be interacting with each other mostly through their laptops. Obviously, that was the only way they could also interact with the virtual participants, but it just seemed to me that masking and social-distancing policies had somewhat diminished the experience of being "face to face." I also recognized my own discomfort with trying to tackle too many modes at once: If required on-site class meetings were to be successful under these new and unfamiliar conditions, then my focus needed to be on the students in the classroom.

Recording synchronous sessions was also encouraged, which makes sense only if the session is mostly lecture. My classes are activity-based and nothing is added by recording them, except to infringe on the privacy of students who attended the session. I did allow students to Zoom in their team members for collaborative work and team conferences. I did keep Discussion forums available and visible for absent students, so they could participate real time or later. I provided short videos—either created or curated—as I have always done for online classes.

Back to "normal" in Fall 2021 meant that online teaching was taboo again—except for when students could not or did not want to come to class. Instead of adding some online and hybrid versions of courses for students who wanted them, on-ground courses were imposed on students—and faculty—who did not feel safe coming to the classroom. Even more ironic is that such mandates negatively affected students who did come to class, students who had to deal with low participation from some of their peers, along with less attention from distracted instructors, who were accommodating students who could not come to class or chasing down students who had gone missing.

Sheppard (2021) argued, "While Zoom and other synchronous technologies can certainly support specific pedagogical goals,…decisions about whether or not to use them should be based on an instructor's teaching goals and learning outcome" (66). Remote instruction via Zoom seemed reasonable for faculty who had not been using the LMS or had not previously taught online—and for students who had never taken online course. Mandatory synchronous sessions were a fast, convenient solution because, as Reisman (2020) notes, "Zoom doesn't require much curricular redesign. Teachers can essentially keep doing their quasi-Socratic, one-to-many lecture teaching the way they always have" (para. 14). I did not run my classes that way, and I was not going to start simply because synchronous sessions were mandated. My motivation could be categorized as a Performance Approach, a desire to demonstrate my competence in an area where I was more expert than those issuing the mandates.

Redefining Personal and Professional Well-being: Learning Approach

I was motivated by a Learning Approach to keep myself sane, fulfilling institutional expectations to stay current in the field in ways that also served me. When I had the chance, I presented and published. When workshops and webinars were offered on campus, I signed up. I completed our institution's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion certificate program, which was abruptly put on hiatus in Spring 2020 and restarted in the fall. All of these virtual activities expanded my knowledge about online instruction, digital composition, social justice, and the state of higher education, as they increased my competence and expanded my network of colleagues on campus and beyond. I also had a lot of stress headaches. Yes, I did overextend myself at times, but I never felt isolated.

During the 2020–2021 academic year, I actively participated in The Leading Change Institute, a year-long project piloted at my institution, which focused on imagining solutions to the problems facing higher education. The program required an application process, a significant investment of time for in-depth reading, and regular virtual meetings with invited speakers. From August 2020 through May 2021, I attended 22 information sessions, webinars, and workshops, learning about every facet of what makes a university work and what role the university plays in the larger society.

GSOLE (Global Society for Online Literacy Educators) became a welcome focus of collegial interactions—all virtual. Having joined executive board in July 2019 as secretary, I began a term as treasurer in July 2020. Not only did GSOLE provide me a year's worth of Zoom experience prior to the pandemic, but it also helped me nurture collaborative working relationships with colleagues beyond my own institution. GSOLE allowed me to stay up to date on effective pedagogy for hybrid and online literacy and also to contribute to those conversations.

Briefly, from a personal standpoint, I am fortunate that having grown children meant that child care did not complicate my day-to-day activities; however, elder care, especially the shutdown of nursing facilities during COVID-19 did prove to be an added source of stress.

Sheppard (2021) stated, "While half of our survey respondents had prior experience teaching some of their courses online, many of them wrote about the sense of disconnection when all of their courses went online" (p. 67). Although I am a more experienced online instructor, I usually teach online in the shorter winter and summer sessions when most students are away from campus—and only rarely during Spring and Fall semester. Yet my concern in Fall 2020 was that I would feel isolated from colleagues, not from students.

Every Tuesday and Thursday during Fall 2020 I spent five hours meeting with students in small-group Zoom sessions—sixteen meetings per week to accommodate students in four sections of technical writing.

Pedagogies of Logistics as a CYA Strategy: Performance Avoidance

Reworking assignment prompts to make them shorter and clearer, reworking presentations to better explain concepts, and reworking LMS pages to meet accessibility guidelines sometimes felt like a form of procrastination to avoid tasks like feedback and grading; however, I did not have much lead time in between semesters for planning. That year I taught a 4:1:4:2 schedule, with no break at all between Winter Session, Spring Semester, and Summer Session.

Although keeping records and continually reworking my course materials was a CYA move that kept me from looking incompetent, those activities also helped me to strategize better, identify problems sooner, and feel less overwhelmed. This non-instructional aspect of pedagogy gave me the confidence to take control of my courses and to cope with the unusual teaching contexts and increasingly unusual student behaviors.

Absences could not be penalized, but I kept track of them anyway, in case those absences affected student performance. If students missed too many synchronous meetings, I contacted them through the LMS platform and gave them a deadline to respond. If they failed repeated attempts to contact them, I dropped them from the course before their grade would affect their GPA. During Spring 2021, when we were back on campus in a hybrid course format, I followed the same policies, with a slight addition: If a student demonstrated concerning behavior or went missing, I dutifully completed the official letter of concern to the dean of students. I wrote more of these letters that semester than I had written in the previous seven years at the institution.

Much of my student email correspondence included the response, "I hope you feel better soon." Monitoring absences was complicated because each course section became two sections to accommodate social-distancing mandates, with each partial section meeting once per week. Masks made it difficult to recognize students, while resistance to masks made for some uncomfortable moments.

Not all students who needed them had official accommodations, which meant that ensuring accessibility was complicated without knowing how to help. Accessibility for everyone in terms of making classroom and learning-platform environments accessible to everyone is a big theme today and one I agree with; however, it takes a lot of time to implement, a lot of time to

learn about, and a lot of getting it wrong before getting it right. Wood (2017) notes that the burden for requesting accommodation is on the individual, but that accommodation also creates "pedagogical fallout" (p. 269), which challenges our "assumption of normativity" (p. 269). For example, most accommodation requests I receive are for extended time for testing, but I do not give timed tests or require timed writing—and that decision is partly due to logistics: How would I provide accommodation without revealing who falls outside the "norm"? Wood (2017) has argued, "one way (not *the* way) to increase accessibility in composition classrooms is to rethink our conceptions of time" (p. 267), especially in ways that are more suited to the tasks we ask students to complete. Rethinking our conceptions of space is another way to increase accessibility, to consider how we use physical and digital spaces in synchronous and asynchronous time.

Sheppard (2021) defined "pedagogies of logistics" (p. 68), as the necessary but ever-expanding labor required to manage the day-to-day administrative tasks of teaching, especially "logistical planning and student correspondence" (p. 68). My attitude toward administrative tasks that required following procedures and keeping records could be characterized as Performance Avoidance, a desire to avoid looking incompetent. Sending out reminders, responding to emails, and keeping track of absences and missing assignments felt like Performance Avoidance because these tasks were not directly related to teaching.

Conclusion

During the 2021–2022 school year, when most classes were back on ground, there was no back to normal. Some students had no clear concept of what an on-ground college class used to look like because they started college during the pandemic. Delivery platforms have changed and also what counts as necessary knowledge about writing. For example, virtual collaboration and presentation used to be what happened simply because the course was taught online; now even web-enhanced on-ground courses focus on those skills. The expectation that students would be writing and accessing the LMS from a computer has shifted to the expectation that students are often working via their smartphones. I have to think about messaging in terms of push notifications because I can no longer count on students to log into the LMS to find out what's due or to actively check their email. My course materials are expected to be accessible, so I have to think differently about creating them, in ways I never had to before. I can no longer expect that students will come regularly to an on-ground class, so web-enhanced on-ground courses must be designed to allow students to keep up, even if their absences multiply beyond what used to get them dropped from the course.

In this article I have responded to the call from Sheppard (2021) "to document this [pandemic] experience and the significant impact it has had on composition instructors and their pedagogies" (p. 60). That response used the Achievement Goal Approach (Butler, 2014) as a way to examine my attitudes toward pandemic pedagogy as threats or positive challenges.

I have been through times of crisis in work contexts before, and I know that the promised end point of a crisis can be a vanishing horizon. Sometimes the promise of rewards for persistence vanish as soon as the crisis passes or the unprecedented becomes the new normal. McClure (2021) suggested the latter may already be happening: "There's a pervasive frustration that leaders didn't learn any lessons from last year. It's almost as if last year didn't happen at all, or leaders are exercising a sort of selective amnesia about the trauma of the last 18 months" (p. 6). The pandemic is just the latest round of challenges to higher education, although the most significant in recent years, more significant than the Great Recession, declining birthrates, and student loan defaults. Despite these challenges, crisis mode cannot be sustained long term or become the new normal. The pushback is coming—it may already be here. There are no spoons left to give.

If I could summarize my pandemic pedagogy right now, it might look something like this:

- **Define**: the parameters of the course, the assignments, the agenda for meetings, the expectations of students and faculty
- **Drop**: busywork assignments, unreasonable attendance and deadline policies, unrealistic expectations for individual feedback
- **Design**: course sites to be simple and redundant and accessible, messages to include links to assignments, assignments to include links back to the module, structure that helps students be responsible for their learning
- **Delegate**: feedback to peers, scheduled reminders to the LMS, instruction to curated and student-produced resources
- **Discuss**: feedback in real time as much as possible
- **Defend**: against impositions on personal time and perceived incompetence by keeping good records, maintaining composure, waiting to respond

This tidy list might look different going forward, depending on how higher education evolves or devolves because pandemic pedagogy is digital activism in an era of continually shifting expectations and circumstances that include conflicting messages about accommodation and resilience. Pandemic pedagogy is realizing that nobody else knows what they are doing either, and nobody else is coming to the rescue, so the only option is to take charge and figure it out.

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