


## Chapter-7

# UNLEASHING THE POWER OF UDL AND CRT WITHIN THE ACADEMY: AN UNFOLDING STORY

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### ABSTRACT

*This chapter is a discussion on how universal design for learning and culturally responsive teaching can not only enhance but also transform post-secondary students' learning experiences. It includes lessons learned through research, field work, and activities to bring colleagues accustomed to working in face-to-face classrooms into digital learning spaces that maintain alignment with effective learning pedagogy and UDL principles. The storying of these lessons is made through the lens of adult education, instructional design, and lived experiences. Woven throughout are acknowledgements of how pressures from the neoliberal academy bump up against educators' efforts to create pedagogical spaces from which deep understanding and transformational learning can emerge.*

**Keywords:** Universal Design for Learning (UDL), Culturally Responsive Teaching, Post-Secondary Education, Digital Learning Spaces, Transformational Learning, Instructional Design, Neoliberalism in Higher Education

### POSITIONALITY MEETS PRACTICE (PRAXIS)

Coleman-Fountain and McLaughlin (2013) specifically noted that when stories are embedded within institutional procedures, they gain validity. Here, I tell my story of my own journey on the path of universal design for learning (UDL) and culturally responsive teaching (CRT). This story is set within adult learning contexts that span community learning organizations and post-secondary institutions. How the plot unfolded often was linked to the context of the setting. Actions were both constrained and bolstered by institutional policies, practices, and spoken or unspoken expectations and norms.

Here, I acknowledge my stance as an adult educator and as a life-long learner; moreover, my researcher stance is rooted in terms of being part of a community of practice concerned with the development of theoretical and practical models of teaching and learning online. It is also important to note my philosophical beliefs about teaching and learning and my own lived experience have impacted the presentation of this chapter. In this chapter, I use the term educator to refer to an educator/ instructor / teacher / professor at the post-secondary level. I do not distinguish academic rank within this categorization. Avoiding the term *instructor* is purposeful because of its connotation as a provider of learning to students, a position that detracts from the educative give-and-take within collaborative and facilitated learning contexts. I have endeavoured to use a writing style that adheres to conventions of plain language by writing

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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.46679/9789349926912ch07>

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This chapter is a part of the book, *'Implementing Transformative Student-Centered Pedagogies in the Neoliberal Academy: Constraints and Opportunities'* edited by Frederic Fovet.

ISBN: 978-93-49926-91-2 (ebk); ISBN: 978-93-49926-11-0 (hbk); ISBN: 978-93-49926-31-8 (pbk)

The ebook and print version of this book are available at:  
<https://dx.doi.org/10.46679/9789349926912>

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