

# Curt Bonk Spotlight Talk Handout: Favorite Quotes from:

Charles A. Wedemeyer (1981). *Learning at the back door: Reflections on non-traditional learning in the lifespan*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.

1. The Platonic model (learners at the feet of the master, interacting voicebox-to-voicebox, earpan-to-earpan, eyeball-to-eyeball) has provided the conventional continuous loop communication for nearly all institutional education. The limitations in Plato's time have thus placed upon educational systems an extraordinary and outmoded constraint still dominant throughout the world. What other human endeavor can boast the retention of so ancient a model for communication? (Charles Wedemeyer, 1981, p. 32).
2. **New Guidelines for Instruction.**
  3. The instructional plan or system should free faculty members from custodial duties so that more of the teacher's and learner's time can be given to truly educational needs.
  4. The instructional system should offer learners wider choices (more opportunities) in subjects, formats, methodologies.
  6. The instructional system should mix and combine media and methods to that each subject or unit within a subject is taught in the most effective way.
  7. The media and technology employed should be "articulated" in design and use; that is, the different media or technologies should reinforce each other and the structure of the subject matter and teaching plan. (Charles Wedemeyer, 1981, p. 36).
3. Plato, disciple of Socrates and teacher of Aristotle, gave such powerful and compelling form to his discourses that for hundreds of years educators have clung to a concept of teaching-learning as a real time-space continuous, and interactive communications loop. It is now recognized that teaching and learning are separate acts vested in different persons, and that neither activity need be constrained to real time-place conditions. (Charles Wedemeyer, 1981, p. 37)
4. Now, if the communication system is a given, either because it is the only system available (think of Plato meeting learners in the Grove of Akademos) or is a cultural artifact acting as an imperative, then there are no options, and the communication must be face-to-face, eyeball-to-eyeball, earpan-to-earpan. (Charles Wedemeyer, 1981, p. 38)
5. Quoting Chief Seattle: "...the earth does not belong to man; man belongs to the earth...all things are connected...Man did not weave the web of life; he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself." (p. 44)
6. Our perceptions of teaching, learning, schooling, and knowledge are all undergoing change. It is possible to delay change, to influence change, even (for those who can control their immediate activities) to deny change momentarily; but trends towards change continue, with important implications for teaching, learning, schooling, and knowledge at all levels and in all methodologies. (Charles Wedemeyer, 1981, p. 44)
7. Five terms are used to include all of the types of programs that are nonclassroom-based: *distance education, non-traditional learning, independent study, out-of-school learning, and external studies* (although in usage the term often includes classes)...what is interesting about this disparity and ambiguity of terminology is that all of the terms cited signal an end to space-time barriers to learning: they signal a separation of and concern for teaching and learning; they signal the use of a medium or media of communication to link teacher and learner; and they signal greater autonomy on the part of the learner as a desirable end. (Charles Wedemeyer, 1981, p. 54)
8. The schooling experience, however, need not emphasize and reinforce only dependence in learners; the new emphasis on learners and learning, contributed by burgeoning non-traditional programs, has the power to renew and invigorate education towards independence in learning and self-development. What is needed throughout the lifespan search for self and independence is a blend of learning experiences, some of which are traditional, and some of which are non-traditional. (Charles Wedemeyer, 1981, p. 59).
9. Each learner ought to have regular episodes throughout learning in which he gets experience in self-direction, self-motivation, and the evaluation of achievement. Distance, open, and independent learning are three kinds of non-traditional learning that could well supplement or even replace certain segments of regular schooling to fill an experiential void in growth towards independence. (Charles Wedemeyer, 1981, p. 59)

10. The trend towards open forms of learning, in the United States and elsewhere, cannot be separated from the extraordinary efforts in our times to create better learning situations out of which an improved human condition may in time evolve. But the open learning trend is also related to a number of other phenomena—social, economic, political, technological, demographic, and educational. **(Charles Wedemeyer, 1981, p. 61)**
11. Learning is the act or process of acquiring knowledge or skill. When the adjective “open” is used to qualify “learning” we have put a name to the process of learning that is not enclosed or encumbered by barriers, that is accessible and available, not confined or concealed, and that implies a continuum of access and opportunity. **(Charles Wedemeyer, 1981, p. 61)**
12. Many of these new learners are distance learners with independent learning styles. Such learners are gradually being accorded more equal status with full-time conventional learners. More mature, they demand the right to determine their own goals, to participate in the development of curricular and course plans, and to be involved in the evaluation of their achievement. (Charles Wedemeyer, 1981, p. 78)
13. The learners at the back door have been waiting a long time for improved opportunity and access, better counseling and guidance, teaching that welcomes a diversity of learning styles, courses and resources that let learners proceed at their own pace, recognition of the importance of relevance in learning to their lives and needs of learners. They now demand and expect equitable recognition in their achievement, knowledge, and skills—however, whenever, wherever learned. That these things may come to pass is one of the implications of non-traditional learning. **(Charles Wedemeyer, 1981, p. 78)**
14. When learners cannot find humane and practical elements in the education offered by schools, they proceed to learn largely on their own. If non-traditional learning systems can free learners to pursue learning as a natural activity, lifelong as needed, the potential of non-traditional learning will be realized. (Charles Wedemeyer, 1981, p. 78)
15. For most learners, learning via technology is not a new experience. Clay tablets, papyrus, paper-pen-and-ink, the hornbook, chalkboards, books, pictures, newspapers and magazines, the postal service, films, and records have been in use for generations. Most learners are familiar with some of these early technologies used to improve learning. Fewer have direct experience with radio, television, electronic sound and visuals on tape, the telephone, computer, and the communications satellite, although these, too, have had wide use in learning in today’s world. **(Charles Wedemeyer, 1981, p. 111).**
16. Learning via technology is not merely a matter of substituting technology for the classroom. As Moore pointed out, learning apart (physically separated) from a teacher by means of communication through print, mechanical or electronic devices, implies a quite different concept of learning from that acquired in schools. (Charles Wedemeyer, 1981, p. 111)
17. Technology, per se, is not the determiner of learner autonomy. Technology, however, opens up the doors to greater learner independence by permitting physical distance between teacher and learner. Learners not under the constant control and direction of teachers, in a different learning environment from the classroom, begin to exercise greater autonomy as a natural and maturing condition. **(Charles Wedemeyer, 1981, p. 112)**
18. Lynn White, Professor of History at UCLA, once remarked, “technology opens new doors, it does not compel man to enter.”...In the same way, technological tools cannot be used effectively in education unless educators and humanists are willing to learn the technology of use that teaching with technology requires. The technology of use that must be learned includes the special processes by which the tools of technology are adapted to educational use, in accordance with the humanistic principles that underlie all education that have special relevance to non-traditional education. Technology is only a tool. The technology of use, therefore, ought to come from humanists as they learn how to use technology for teaching and learning. (Charles Wedemeyer, 1981, p. 114)
19. Non-traditional learning counteracts the effect of traditional learning, which tends to make learners passive. It is harder, more rigorous, more natural, intrinsically more joyous and more productive. Traditional schools should not be abolished or replaced, but improved. “What is needed is schools which have the effect of producing people who are capable of learning after [leaving] school.” **(Charles Wedemeyer, 1981, p. 207)**
20. It should be immaterial whether one has learned at the front door or the back door of the Palace of Learning. What one has learned—not where, or how, in what sequence, at what institution, or in what period of time—is the only criterion of supreme importance. **(Charles Wedemeyer, 1981, p. 216)**
21. If America is on the threshold of becoming a Learning Society, non-traditional learning may be its most genuine ingredient. **(Charles Wedemeyer, 1981, p. 219)**