

Chapter 13

Integrating Blogs in Teacher Education

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ABSTRACT

This chapter demonstrates some of the educational merits of blogs; including how blogs can be integrated in teacher education and proposing a methodology for evaluating blogs to meet the goals of reflection and technology literacy in teacher education. An undergraduate-level course was integrated with blog technology to help readers better understand the inquiry-oriented nature of the blog medium. This exemplar course modeled Web 2.0 technology to teacher educators and pre-service teachers who intend to integrate the technology into their future teaching. Surveys and interviews were used to investigate participant attitude toward blogs. The researcher proposes Zeichner and Liston's (1987) Reflective Index as a potential framework for evaluating the quality of reflection in blogs. It is expected that this instructional model of blogs will help educators, in particular teacher educators and instructional designers, to design courses to more effectively meet the goals of higher-order thinking required in 21st century teacher education.

INTRODUCTION

Some people do not regard teaching as a profession and think that teaching requires little training. According to this belief, anyone who has the content knowledge would be able to teach. These are misconceptions. As Darling-Hammond (2006) indicated, teachers have a list of things they should

know and should be able to do, including knowing how people learn, teaching effectively, meeting individual learner's needs, communicating and managing their classrooms well, and the like. One of the competencies, teaching effectively, often contributes to students' learning (Darling-Hammond, 2006). Especially in the digital era, teaching effectively requires more than content knowledge. To teach effectively, one needs knowledge of content, pedagogy, and technology integration, and the in-

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terplay of these three bodies of knowledge known as technological pedagogical content knowledge (TPCK) (Mishra & Koehler, 2006).

Mishra and Koehler (2006) defined technological pedagogical content knowledge:

This knowledge is different from knowledge of a disciplinary or technology expert and also from the general pedagogical knowledge shared by teachers across disciplines. TPCK is the basis of good teaching with technology and requires an understanding of the representation of concepts using technologies; pedagogical techniques that use technologies in constructive ways to teach content; knowledge of what makes concepts difficult or easy to learn and how technology can help redress some of the problems that students face; knowledge of students' prior knowledge and theories of epistemology; and knowledge of how technologies can be used to build on existing knowledge and to develop new epistemologies or strengthen old ones. (Mishra & Koehler, 2006, p. 1028-1029).

Teacher education programs usually provide pre-service teachers with separate courses in which content, pedagogy, and technology literacy skills are introduced to learners. The interplay between the three components tends to be neglected. This chapter is not about developing technology nor content knowledge, but rather about solidifying technological pedagogical content knowledge by using blogs to meet the tremendous academic needs of teacher education in ways that have never before been available. The final goal of this chapter is to identify the importance of blog technology for pre-service teacher education.

BACKGROUND

The use of Internet technologies has been changing human interaction, communication, and relationships. By including Internet technologies in education, the technology revolution makes the learning environment diverse and complicated, and the role

of teachers in students' learning is transformed into facilitating. Can teacher education keep updated with these changes and meet pre-service teachers' needs for their future teaching careers? The answer is far from certain, because the new skill sets required by the new century classrooms differ from skills developed by current teacher educators. The 21st century students are growing up in the time when Internet access has become widespread. Youngsters send/receive e-mails, use instant messaging, search for information online, play online games, and make online friends. Widespread access to information and resources is bringing young people the pros and cons of the digital age. To deal with the complexity of this environment, students need up-to-date skills to compete in the 21st century working environment. According to the report *enGauge 21st Century Skills: Literacy in the Digital Age* (2003) by the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL), four groups of skills analyzed through literature reviews, surveys and interviews, represent the 21st century skills needed by students, citizens, and workers in the Digital Age. The skills are 1). Digital-age literacy: including basic, scientific, economic, and technological literacy, visual and information literacy, and multicultural literacy and global awareness, 2). Inventive thinking: including adaptability and managing complexity, self-direction, curiosity, creativity, and risk taking, and higher-order thinking and sound reasoning, 3). Effective communication: teamwork, collaboration, and interpersonal skills, personal, social, and civic responsibility, and interactive communication, and 4). High productivity: prioritizing, planning, and managing for results, effective use of real-world tools, and ability to produce relevant, high-quality products. In the 21st century, we will need to go beyond textbooks and define literacy to include the ability to exercise thinking skills and to utilize Internet technologies.

While standards for learning and demands on teachers have been increasing, there are changed expectations for teachers and growing concerns

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