Chapter 22

Bringing the Village to the University Classroom:
Uncertainty and Confusion in Teaching School Library Media Students in the Design of Technology Enhanced Instruction

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ABSTRACT

This chapter highlights critical lessons learned during the past six years during the development of a capstone graduate educational technology course, teaching School Library Media (SLMS) pre-service students how to develop learner centered, knowledge centered and assessment centered Web-based learning tools; in short, to enable them to become change agents in their educational communities. A large northeastern University has cultivated educational partnerships that bring together University students with their professional, in-service, PreK-12 counterparts to explore issues of technology in education, pedagogy, theory, curriculum, information literacy, assessment, and evaluation. Unlike traditional courses with prepackaged academic assignments, this course engages school library media specialists with real-world teaching and learning situations that are frequently ill-structured, often chaotic, and collaboratively defined by the learning needs of all participants (PreK-12 through university; in-service and pre-service). The strengths and weaknesses of the course are candidly discussed with recommendations for improvement.

INTRODUCTION

The Challenge of Designing Technology Enhanced Instruction

In this chapter, we discuss two aspects of the collaborative design of technology enhanced PreK-12 instruction. First, students at university—both undergraduate and graduate—find it challenging to design appropriate instructional tools using computing technologies that will meet the needs of PreK-12 students, given the dynamic and uncertain learning needs of the intended audience. Second, students at university find it challenging, themselves, to use computing technologies to support their own learning and collaboration processes, sometimes devolving instead into a type of *grin and bear it* cooperative process.

These issues have importance for the design of teacher training programs and, in particular, for the use of technology in education. One of the few absolutes in education is our awareness that "teachers teach the way they were taught to teach" (Sarason, 2004, p. 72). If we are to expect our future educators to integrate technology tools effectively into the curricula both as an object of study and as a learning tool to support their charges in years to come, then we must work to do the same for our own learning and teaching efforts.

School Library Media Specialists as Change Agents

"Change agentry" is acclaimed to be "an essential role for Library Media Specialists" (Hughes-Hassell & Harada, 2007, p. 3), therefore it benefits us, as university faculty responsible for the professional educational training of school library media specialists (SLMS), to develop curricula that promote leadership by focusing on the "organic relationship between schooling and the community" (Macedo, 2006, p. 140). Schools are affected by the socio-cultural and political landscape of the society within which

they exist (Hughes-Hassell & Harada, 2007; Macedo, 2006). "Successful change requires every person working in a school to be committed to change and to strive for individual and collective improvement" (Hughes-Hassell & Harada, 2007, p. 3). But how do we structure learning experiences at the graduate level to encourage SLMS to develop moral purpose and make a difference in the life-choices of all students and contribute toward "education's societal development and democracy" (Fullan, 1999)?

Schools of education[1] cannot succeed in preparing future teachers for leadership positions and for being agents of change if they continue to advocate the use of neatly packaged instructional programs that are presented as the panacea for difficulties students face in the acquisition of prepackaged knowledge (Macedo, 2006, p. 152).

The reality that we, as educators need to confront, understand and proactively address is that the instrumental approach to literacy, whether in its lowest form of "a competency-based skills-banking approach" or its highest form "acquired through the university in the form of professional specialization" share a common characteristic: "They both prevent the development of the critical thinking that enables one to 'read the world' critically and to understand the reasons and linkages behind the facts" (Macedo, 2006, p. 16).

There is no such thing as a neutral education process. Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate the integration of generations into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, or it becomes the 'practice' of freedom', the means by which men and women deal critically with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world (Paulo Freire, speech at Northeastern University, March 16, 1994 as cited by Herbert, 1998, p. 57).

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