

Chapter 53

Digital Media Literacy Practices for 5th Year Pre–Service Teachers in a PDS Model

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ABSTRACT

To examine digital media literacy practices in a teacher education program, this chapter first elaborates on a broader definition of literacy than reading and writing, suggesting media literacy as a more relevant teacher education curricular focus than technology integration. A five-year, dual-degree teacher education program, which uses a Professional Development School model, provides the context for digital media literacy practices. Three elective courses demonstrate how digital media can be used by pre-service teachers to engage students and model media practices in their public school placement. The courses, which were offered to pre-service teachers in their fifth year in the teacher education program, included Book Writing and Online Publishing, Project-Based Learning, and Teaching with Visuals. The chapter provides recommendations on implementing digital media practices within teacher education courses for pre-service teachers and professional development for teachers in public schools.

INTRODUCTION

Defining Literacy

Two major ideas organize and inform this chapter on the use of digital media in teacher education. The first idea is a prompt to re-examine what is meant by literacy and consider the notion that

literacy is broader than reading and writing. The second idea recommends that “technology” and “technology integration” in public school teaching and teacher education can be more productively viewed as the literate use of digital media across the school curriculum. The use of media provides a more accessible curriculum focus than technology, both for new teachers and the professional development of current teachers. Teachers have historically had issues with technology agendas,

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but have been familiar with media use, ranging from physical manipulative to books. Digital media provides a more relevant focus for teachers, rather than technology integration, which is still seen and practiced as “one more thing to do” in the classroom or as a supplement to current teaching practices, rather than as a teaching decision.

Variations in definitions of literacy have already extended the traditional view of literacy as encompassing primarily reading and writing. Pettersson (2000) identified many literacies, including computer, cultural, diagrammatic, document, economic, environmental, film, information, mathematical, media, music, political, scientific, technical, television, video, and visual. To consider multiple representations of literacy echoes Eisner’s (1994) forms of understanding or the “devices that humans use to make public conceptions that are privately held” (p. 39). Such a stance that sees literacy encompassing a wide range of what it means to be knowledgeable, competent, and ethical draws on a view of curriculum as multi-representations in texts rather than the predominant cognitive, art, communication, or media perspectives (Eilam & Ben-Peretz, 2010).

This chapter defines literacy as “an ongoing development of one’s capabilities to design and enact change,” believing that it is not so much what one knows, what one’s capabilities are, but *what one does* with knowledge and skills that matters most. To be literate means much more than having an ability to read or write, although these capabilities are crucial to make means out of other forms of representation. What counts is *how one uses* literate practices to make a difference in some cultural milieu such as educational settings (Shambaugh, 2000).

Adopting literate practices that are based on a wider definition of literacy offers teachers a broader focus to what is currently described as technology-integration curriculum for teachers. Resonating with Freire (1998), literacy includes personalized and sociocultural ways of reading the world for meaning, a notion that suggests an

orientation to teacher education that is not limited by technology. Such a stance enables technology integration initiatives to become instead organized around media literacy, and not so much how one teaches with media but how teachers get media into the hands of students. Given society’s mass adoption of media from television to movies to video and social media, digital media, as an extension of traditional forms, would not be a foreign notion to teachers. The key idea is to think more broadly about literacy than reading and writing, but rather seeing learning as developing multiple forms of literacy and providing more options for teachers and their students.

TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION IN A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SCHOOL MODEL

This section provides the context for three digital media courses, which have been taught for students in a five year teacher education program. The structure of this dual-degree teacher education program uses a Professional Development School (PDS) model. Here teacher education is a joint activity by faculty in a university teacher education program and the teachers in the partnership public schools. One issue that has faced all models of teacher education is how to address technology needs by new teachers, as well as technology use in the schools. The teacher education program providing the context for digital media addresses the technology challenge, along with diversity and action research, as a strand of focus in the program. The programmatic approach addresses technology across the program rather than in one or more courses. While efficient in terms of staffing and scheduling, a single technology course does not ensure that new teachers develop these skills when they need them, particularly when such skills might be applied in their placement in public schools. Rather, technology integration is addressed through the use of practica seminars

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