

Chapter VI

Teaching and Technology: Issues, Caution and Concerns

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ABSTRACT

In this chapter technology is viewed as a tool and an enterprise that can be used to educate, change and empower people in schools and society. However, we need to remember that teaching is still a personal human journey that is influenced by many forces related to technologic change which are infused with human relations. We are duty-bound to become self-aware through the clarification of values, reflection and action research. We need to remind ourselves to look at the messages we send, and most importantly, become aware of the behaviors, modeling and leadership we provide at all levels to ensure that we drive the vision for technology and not let technology mute nor drive the humanness from either the classroom or the education system.

INTRODUCTION

The following illuminates several intersecting issues connecting technology and teaching. Technology is something that is used daily within a teacher's life yet what is technology? Globally we may define technology as "... the know-how and creative process that may utilize tools, resources and systems to solve problems, to enhance control over the nature and man-made environment in an endeavor to improve the human condition" (UNESCO, 1985). However, within a local context this definition will be truncated to suit the immediate culture or cultures. Caution need be exercised

as the impact of technology in classrooms can be discrete and incremental leading to an erosion of the human element in teaching and education. This is the first of many cautions offered to teachers who must decide how to use technology while educating; yet what is teaching?

Teaching is "the use of preplanned behaviours, founded in learning principles and child development theory and directed toward both instructional delivery and classroom management that increase the probability of affecting a positive change in student behaviour" (Levin & Nolan, 2004, p. 16). We need to be aware and reminded of the human traits expected by students, peers and the

community. Teachers need to employ a sense of humor, enthusiasm, a desire for learning, health and wellness, nonverbal qualities and be a role model (Kirchner & Fishburne, 1998). As well, the Ontario College of Teachers adds,

Teachers share their enthusiasm for learning. They exude a passion for their subject matter that is infectious. They delight in the demands of a career that continually exposes them to new learning, new situations, new people, and new opportunities for personal and professional growth and leadership. They draw energy and satisfaction from sparking the achievement of others. Exceptional qualifications, curious by nature, dedicated to helping children grow and thrive – these are the hallmarks of good teachers. Good teachers build society one student at a time. Good teachers are organized, flexible, thoughtful, caring and nurturing. They are drawn to the profession because it's demanding, exciting, and rewarding. It attracts people who are committed to lifelong learning for themselves and others. It inspires people to learn as they teach and teach what they love. (Ontario College of Teachers, 2004)

We need to ensure that humanness of teaching is not muted nor replaced by technology. Hence a cautionary tone is used henceforth via a Canadian perspective put forward to provide a view of teaching and technology that may be unique to Canada. The inherent issues and cautions detailed have been included to alert the reader to a North American stance. Hereafter, education and technology have been addressed in a gentle and narrow manner to raise concerns that teachers, who are the users of technology, may need to heed. Overall the message delivered is that behind all technology is human nature and it is this human nature that drives teaching and the use of technology and not technology that drives education in Canada.

EDUCATION AND TECHNOLOGY

Educational technology is much more than computers and calculators; it is all of the inventions that enable teachers to reach their goals, outcomes and expectations via the utilization of such tools as the chalkboard, overhead projector, digital videodisc and satellite communications. As with most technologic innovations, each must be employed in strategic and carefully planned programs. Technology within a program shall be employed by qualified professionals and not just a well-meaning individual (Okojie & Olinzock, 2006). For instance, the special educator who is using technology to aid learning-disabled students needs to be both trained and informed in order to implement technology in an ethical and prudent manner. Furthermore,

as we educate our students for the computer-dominated future, we must address the growing opportunities for dishonest use of technology . . . Educators unaware of the possibilities and resources available to computer-age students are at the mercy of these technologically hip kids. (Renard, 2000, p. 38)

This observation is not a new reality, just a prominent and on-going concern for educators and students who may be ethically challenged users. Educators have choices, look at the concerns or look away. However,

according to futurists, students will continue to use more and more technology in the coming years. Is this good news or bad news? Many say that it is great news! They claim that failing to use such technologic advances will shortchange children and prevent them from fully participating in the global village of the future. Others disagree and direct educators to ask why, to what end, and what regarding the uses of technology, not just how and how soon. They believe that educators are unthinkingly accepting technology without

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