Chapter 67

Multimodality in the Preparation of Teachers of the Social Studies

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ABSTRACT

The chapter outlines a project designed to address the challenges in developing and delivering the Social Studies methods course. The knowledge base represents a symbiotic integration of selected philosophical, theoretical, and methodological ideas. Specifically, it reports on two pilot courses that integrate online, traditional face-to-face, and Web-based formats. The project scaffolds the resulting weave with the Case Study process for Problem-Based Learning. This integration advances teacher education practice and facilitates the development of teacher candidates' democratic understanding of the issues surrounding the teaching and learning of Social Studies. It demonstrates the usefulness of multimodality in Education.

INTRODUCTION

Teaching the Social Studies methods course has always been challenging. Teacher educators constantly struggle with the "Plato or Play Dough" dilemma and must walk a fine line between either, developing a course that reflects good pedagogy and teaching philosophy; or simply succumbing to *recipe swapping*. In this chapter, I take up the gauntlet by asking the question: How can we make the Social Studies methods course experience more effective? The chapter argues that the solution lies in constructing a balance between the philosophical *why* with the practical *how*. It also takes up the challenge to identify meaningful ways to integrate the use of Web-Based technology, while in the process of creating such balance.

The described project developed curricula and pedagogy for two secondary Social Studies methods courses, one at the undergraduate and the other at the graduate level. The two separate pilot courses serving these two distinct populations introduced the idea of problem-solving as content and as method, by integrating a Web-Based, online, interactive format into the traditional face-to-face classes. The design of these courses also modeled the use of Case Methodology in the teaching of Social Studies.

The objectives of both courses were to (1) develop reflective Social Studies teachers who can inspire the same disposition in their students; (2) recognize the effectiveness of the interlaced threads of knowledge and various formats in developing teachers' decision-making skills and expertise in planning instruction; and (3) serve as a vehicle to investigate the efficacy of the integration of Web-Based and traditional activities for understanding how to plan for the teaching of problem solving and decision-making in the Social Studies.

BACKGROUND

Theoretical and Knowledge Frameworks

Because this chapter reports on the digital technology component of this specific project, a brief recognition of the theories driving the whole study may be helpful to set the context for the discussion. The study's framework integrated aspects of five bodies of knowledge that would inform inquiry and provided the foundations on which to set method and interpretations of result. These bodies are (1) various conceptions on the nature of knowledge; (2) contemporary research in qualitative theory and methodology; (3) a practical framework for problem solving analysis; (4) the use of Case Study in teacher education; and (5) studies in applied educational technology. The present chapter's main focus is on the third, fourth, and fifth of these bodies of knowledge. A strong intent was to review the earlier literature in these areas in order to locate the research and claims within these areas, on which rests most of the latest work.

Conceptions on the Nature of Knowledge

Teacher education has been dominated by an applied science, technical view—a craft conception of teaching. This leads to a condition in which the classroom performance of the student of teaching is evaluated along pre-specified levels of proficiency. Little time is given to critical reflection on the phases of personal continuity, personal meaning, and consciousness development that the student of teaching experiences (Black & Halliwell, 2002; Hatch, 2002; Rust, 1999). However, thought, feeling, and action are inseparable in the work of the professional and reflective teacher (Bérci, 2006, 2007). Coming to know the world, and therefore, teaching others to come to know it, is predicated on self-knowledge (Collingwood, 1924, 1950, 1994, 1998). Therefore, for an educator, self-knowledge becomes a necessary component of professionalism.

Teachers, without a doubt, need to acquire a general level of technical skill and understanding in order that they may simply survive in the classroom. The applied science view of teaching has concentrated a good part of its research on a thorough understanding of these *craft* skills. To be sure, research in teacher education has made progress in studying complex relationships between teacher knowledge and practice (Sumsion, 1997; Rust, 1999; Ethell & McMeniman, 2000). Focus has also been placed on teachers' meaning making, beliefs, knowledge, and ways of thinking (Ghaith & Shaaban, 1999). However, in doing so, the research has generally failed to give ample recognition to the qualitative aspects of the *art* of teaching and failed to build a codified body of knowledge which would help individual teachers create meaning within the classroom, make

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