

Chapter 59

Learning to Teach the Media: Pre-Service Teachers Articulate the Value of Media Literacy Education

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ABSTRACT

Media literacy education (MLE) has been recognized as an important 21st century skill that promotes critical inquiry. Many educative organizations have disseminated papers calling for MLE in PK-12 schooling. Yet, it is unclear how MLE is being incorporated in teacher education programs. This chapter reports research from a qualitative study that aims to examine how pre-service teachers (PSTs) articulate the value of MLE for 21st century teaching and learning while enrolled in a core education course that encompasses media literacy. The author employed a constant-comparative analysis of student data collected from different course sections over three semesters. The results indicate that PSTs value MLE as a pedagogy that promotes effective media integration, fosters critical thinking, and develops curriculum connections. Further, the results suggest that MLE may be useful in cultivating PSTs' technological pedagogical content knowledge (TPCK), in turn developing their skills in technology and media integration.

INTRODUCTION

Media literacy in the United States has been established as an essential 21st Century Skill (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, n.d.) that cultivates critical and creative thinking and global competencies needed for a complete education (Thoman & Jolls, 2004; Hobbs, 2010; Stoddard, 2014). Many scholars have developed frameworks and described strategies for teaching media literacy education (MLE) at PK-12 levels (Considine & Haley, 1999; Hobbs, 2011; Scheibe & Rogow, 2011). Yet, while demand for teachers who embody the knowledge, skills, and expertise to teach media literacy is clear, it is unclear how media literacy is actually being incorporated in teacher education programs. In order to effectively advance media literacy education in PK-12 schools, advocates and policy makers need firsthand investigations into the complex purposes, values, and pedagogical practices involved in teaching pre-service teach-

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ers (PSTs) media literacy and how to enact it in their future classrooms, in conjunction with studies that describe pre-service teachers' reactions, discoveries, and experiences with MLE.

The purpose of this chapter is to share empirical research that examines media literacy education (MLE) in a core, pre-service teacher preparation course at a southern university with historical roots in MLE. The specific research question addressed in this study was: "how do pre-service teachers (PSTs) articulate the value of media literacy education (MLE) for 21st century teaching and learning?" The research reported in this chapter is of particular relevance for teacher educators working with pre-service and in-service teachers, in addition to administrators of teacher education programs. The findings have implications for scholars and practitioners seeking to promote critical literacies, effective technology integration, and 21st century skills across PK-20 contexts.

BACKGROUND

The following sections encapsulate the complex history of MLE, beginning with an examination of the research related to the purposes of MLE and continuing in a comprehensive examination of presence, placement, and practice across PK-20 contexts, including a specific focus its inclusion and value within teacher education.

The Purpose of Media Literacy

In today's digital world, information and ideas are created, communicated, and consumed through a range of multi-sensory message forms including words, images, sounds, and interactive multimedia. Given the extensive variety of formats through which we access information, it is no longer sufficient for literacy practices to focus on reading and writing alphabetic text. In order to keep pace with emerging and converging media, our conceptions of literacy must be developed to address all media forms. To be literate in the 21st century, people must be *media literate*. Media literacy encompasses "a series of communication competencies, including the abilities to access, analyze, evaluate, and communicate information in a variety of forms, including print and non-print messages" (National Association for Media Literacy Education, n.d.). Scholars have documented the myriad of ways that media literacy may be aptly integrated across traditional subject areas (Considine & Haley, 1999; Schwarz, 2001; Swaim, 2001; Scheibe & Rogow, 2011) and many states—including Massachusetts, New York, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Maryland, Texas, and Washington State—have legislation pending that would encourage state Departments of Education to advocate that local Boards of Education offer media literacy instruction at PK-12 levels (Media Literacy Now, n.d.). Further, many professional education organizations have called for the inclusion of media literacy as a necessary strategy for developing educative practice in the 21st century.

The National Art Education Association (NAEA) issued a Position Statement calling for the integration of 21st century skills encompassing media literacy within the visual arts curriculum in order to prepare students with the skills and expertise needed to succeed in the digital world (2010). Connections between environmental literacy and media literacy have been well-documented among the position papers of the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA), specifically when they described the essential importance of students learning "*how* to think through an issue using critical thinking skills,

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