Chapter 4

The Integration of Web2Quest Technology into Multicultural Curriculum in Teacher Education: A Potential for Globalization

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ABSTRACT

The study examines the attitudes and past experiences of pre-service teachers and teacher educators in Taiwan and the U.S. regarding the use of Web2Quests to promote multicultural education. The demographics in many countries are increasingly changing, especially regarding the growth of students from diverse backgrounds. In all classrooms, teachers need to have high levels of multicultural competency to create welcoming and equitable learning environments. However, multicultural education in the curriculum of many teacher education programs is still limited. Technology is an extremely useful tool that can enhance learning experiences for both teachers and students. Technology can be implemented to foster multicultural education in interesting and engaging ways. The study shows that the majority (about 93%) of the pre-service teachers and teacher educators who responded to the survey both in Taiwan and the United States enjoyed the Web2Quest strategy and viewed it to be effective in promoting higher-level thinking and social constructivist activities. Participants suggested that professional development is needed to help teachers design effective WebQuests, especially using the new version of WebQuests which utilizes Web 2.0 technologies. This professional development may have a significant impact when preparing teachers and, ultimately, students to be productive global citizens.

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INTRODUCTION

The increase in diversity of cultural, religious, and linguistic influences in many countries has had a significant impact on K-12 education. Teachers in these increasingly diverse classrooms need to have high levels of multicultural competence to create welcoming and equitable learning environments. In Taiwan, for example, the educational system as it is currently constructed does not distribute resources equitably. With increasing diversity among students, immigrant children from families of low socioeconomic backgrounds often encounter financial and social class inequities; therefore, educational leaders must transform the educational system to offer equal opportunities for all. The primary goal of multicultural education is to eliminate education inequity and provide the best possible education for all students. However, in many countries, multicultural education in the curriculum of teacher education programs is still limited.

Regarding educational inequity, Gorski (2007) argued that the “achievement gap” was not as important as the “opportunity gap” (p. 16). The problem of educational inequity includes practice and consciousness. Recognizing educational inequity in one’s conscious thoughts is critical as Hooks (1994) discussed that implementing a multicultural education system would be impossible, “If one does not think and see multiculturally” (p. 187). This means that even with an excellent curriculum, we cannot teach against racism if we are racists. To gaining a multicultural perspective, teachers need to break free from traditional models of teaching and learning and ask “To whose benefit is the curriculum?” At the very least, teachers can make sure they are not replicating inequities in their own pedagogies and curricula.

Teacher education programs need to respond quickly to the increased need for designing appropriate and effective multicultural education curriculum. Fostering teacher candidates and in-service teachers in their development of a deeper understanding of multicultural education will enable them to recognize and, consequently, eliminate their own prejudices and biases. In turn, teachers can educate their students to be culturally responsive citizens. Many educator leaders have addressed issues related to the potential intersection of the Internet within a multicultural education framework. Muffoletto and Horton (2007) argued that educators need to seek to identify issues and visions, leading to new relationships centering on democratic practices, equity, and social construction of knowledge and justice. Using the Internet can assist teachers in broadening their horizons and understanding of self and others within broader historical and social contexts.

The Internet serves as a resource-based learning tool and has brought new trends for teaching and learning. A WebQuest has been defined by Dodge (1995) as an inquiry-oriented activity in which some or all of the information that learners interact with comes from resources on the Internet. Research indicates that WebQuests can promote learners’ higher-level thinking, knowledge application, and interpersonal as well as collaborative skills (Dodge, 1995; Schmitt, Dayanim, & Matthis, 2008). March (2003) reconceptualized and elaborately defined the WebQuest as a scaffolding learning structure that uses links to essential resources on the Internet as an authentic task to motivate students’ investigation of a central, open-ended question. The goal of this investigation is to help students develop a more sophisticated understanding of their research topics.

WebQuest provides teachers with an instructional framework to create meaningful online learning activities. For example, social linkage and human networks are critical in Web 2.0 learning environments. According to a Pew Internet Survey (2008), more than 55% of all American teenagers between the ages of 12-17 use online social network sites such as Facebook. In Taiwan, a recent report from the Ministry of Education (2009) stated that 85% of students ages 13-24 use a Blog, Wiki, or Facebook to keep in touch with