Chapter 14
Using Educational Technology to Guide Literacy Teaching Candidates in the Delivery of Adjusted Practices for Speakers of Urban AAVE

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ABSTRACT
The chapter discusses ways in which educational technology facilitated a strengthening of literacy leadership candidates’ awareness of adjusted practices suitable for application in culturally complex classrooms. It shows how the instructor in a specific course was able to infuse critical content and tasks into what would have otherwise been a generic course in literacy theories and instruction, and ensure that candidates were trained in customizing literacy practices for culturally and linguistically diverse students. Multiple online readings, lecture captures using Camtasia, WIKIs, blogs, and Elluminate virtual classroom sessions allowed for an enrichment of course content and for communication of content in powerful ways. Additionally, the tools facilitated engagement of candidates in guided reflection and case-based problem solving that facilitated a transfer of information on adjusted practices to a specific situation. Through the use of tools, the instructor was also able to monitor candidates’ uptake of practices. The difference in quality and level of candidate exposure, given use of the tools, is demonstrated primarily through content analysis of their online postings. The chapter and the research it describes qualifies as what Robleyer (2005) refers to as research “address[ing] a significant educational problem” while spotlighting “a proposed technology solution” (p. 19).

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INTRODUCTION

Technology-oriented research in education must focus on both content and medium if it is to truly demonstrate the power of technology over other delivery modes (Kadzera, 2006; Robleyer, 2005). While there has been a tendency in the educational technology research to focus on the tools of the trade, teacher educators recognize that the content of learning is at least as vital as the tool used, and that tools that prove more effective in conveying and immersing teaching candidates in critical content are more likely to be procured by higher education administration (Baylor & Ritchie, 2002; Beggs, 2000). Kozma (1991) had suggested decades ago that future research should focus on technology-enhanced instructional designs, rather than on the technologies themselves. Still, Robleyer (2005) asserts, “this kind of research has not happened to any great degree” (p. 197). Robleyer underscores the need for “more organized and persuasive body of evidence on technology’s benefits to classroom practice” (p. 192). While this work does not propose to fulfill all those requirements, it does demonstrate the benefit of technology in instructional design.

This research, undertaken with the support of the Center for Citizenship, Race, and Ethnicity Studies (CREST) and the Touhey Urban Teacher Training resources, both at The College of Saint Rose, explores the training of candidates in the Old Delivery (OD) and New Delivery (ND) versions of an online graduate-level literacy course. It sought to determine candidates’ level of uptake of “adjusted practices” in literacy and the extent to which tools of technology facilitated such uptake. Linking from Blackboard to vital texts and multimedia content in Ebrary and other online sources and delivery of a visually supported series of six lecture captures entitled “Lessons in Diversity,” allowed the instructor (also the course designer) to integrate vital diversity content into what would have been a course in theory-supported generic literacy practices. The instructor anticipated that enhanced use of educational technology would likely allow for enhancement of candidate awareness of powerful techniques for implementing adjusted practices and would likely engage candidates in more thoughtful and reflective interchanges surrounding discussions surrounding practices.

In the context of this study “adjusted practices” refer to conscious efforts on the part of teachers to amend their attitudes, work styles and values so as to facilitate greater literacy acquisition by culturally and linguistically diverse learners (See Powell & Rightmyer, 2011; Walker, 2008).

The researcher argues that technology would facilitate a more streamlined, a more user-friendly, and a far more motivating process as candidates gather and record information on theories and adjusted practices. Tools of technology would also allow for greater consistency in uptake of the various adjusted practices.

Additionally, by using tools of technology to bring together teaching candidates from diverse specializations (speech and language sciences, special education, literacy, early childhood education and curriculum and instruction)—students who would likely not have studied and problem-solved together if the course had been delivered in a face-to-face format—the instructor hoped to offset traditional “silo learning” often noted in schools of education. The course in its online format reached a variety of candidates from different fields of study. If the learning environment were designed to capitalize on this variety in specializations, the course could provide the literacy candidates, for whom the course was a key program requirement, with practice working in teams featuring practitioners from diverse fields. In addition, in a course where emphasis was on drawing from various schools of thought in flexible ways, and where open-mindedness was encouraged, allowing candidates to work in diversity-rich teams was a bonus. It would help prepare candidates for diversity complex schools in which practitioners from different field must work together to identify and address the needs of