Chapter 8
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

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-4666-4797-8.ch008
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.

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 sense of what it means to be a teacher and locate those processes that lead to understanding the ways an educator’s self-knowledge is constructed and reconstructed. This is a problem for both the person who teaches, and the person who teaches about teaching.
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