Adapting to Shifting Literacy Attitudes in Elementary Schools

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ABSTRACT: As definitions of literacy are re-conceptualized, so too are conceptions of the identity of the primary teacher. This research examines the discourses that arose from interviews with a group of Australian primary teachers who were asked about their responses to educational media in their classrooms. Teachers who were enthusiastic about this area of learning had a more forward-looking perspective of their own identities. However, there were still some instructors who held onto a more conventional perspective of their job, including those who believed that using instructional media was an unneeded burden on their students. These opposing views indicate that until the borders that divide traditional literacies from emerging literacies can be addressed, a crisis of identity will continue to exist.

KEYWORD: Elementary School, Literacy, Teachers, Traditional.

1. INTRODUCTION

This article examines how altering conceptions of literacy affect the identity of a primary school teacher, focusing on the difficulties they face as they try to balance continuous educational reform with evolving notions of knowledge in the twenty-first century. It analyses the discourses teachers employ about themselves and others while addressing professional duties, responsibilities and teaching methods, using Gee's discursive concept of identity as its primary subject. Teaching students to read and write has always been a top priority for elementary school teachers. Australian and other governments are encouraging teachers to re-commit to this goal in the face of a perceived literacy "crisis," and to implement evaluation methods to hold them accountable for "the fundamentals," as well [1]. However, the continuous repositioning of disciplinary boundaries has altered the ways in which literacy practices have been constructed at the same time It indicates a shift in the primary curriculum and, possibly, a shift in the definition of the primary teacher's identity when Queensland's arts syllabus defines 'literacy' as transdisciplinary, multimodal literacy activities.

With an emphasis on "new times" and shifting cultural views on reading, this article discusses contextual factors that now influence primary teachers' identities in its first section. If you look at it from this perspective, the study of "media" and new literacies is linked because of how it is presented in the most recent Queensland arts curriculum (Years 1–10). Second, this article examines the concept of "identity" as it pertains to this research. Afterwards, a description of the research strategy is given, and the findings are examined in terms of the discourses that developed through a series of interviews with instructors [2]. This part concludes with recommendations. Research on the changing limits that shape teachers' identities in "new times" uses teachers' reactions to media teaching as a vehicle. Last but not least, a summary of the study's conclusions is provided to help shed light on the evolving role of the primary teacher and to stimulate additional discussion[3].

For a long time, the primary school teacher was seen as a steward of literacy. Literacy is a broad term that is difficult to pin down. Modern definitions of literacy often include the requirement to acquire critical awareness as well as the abilities required to comprehend and create written texts. As a result, just reading calls for a wide range of abilities or 'roles.' Because of its complexity as well as its indisputable importance, teaching literacy has always been a difficult job, particularly in light of dire predictions that literacy levels in Australia and across the globe are on the decline. Adult 'illiteracy' is associated with a variety of issues, including poor health, economic hardship, and social exclusionz [1]. It's also important because of the supposed connections between (conventional) literacy and economic success. Highlights the continuing contradictions in his description of politicians who "speak the cliches of "clever states," "knowledge countries," "intelligent islands," and so on but who find political and popular comfort in defenses of classical print literacy and basic skills training"". Society typically turns on elementary teachers to guarantee that these "fundamental abilities" are sufficiently learned, despite the enormous task[4].

However, as people's perspectives on reading have evolved, the task of teaching literacy has become more difficult, complicated, and even dangerous. To be a good reader or writer these days, you must be able to negotiate a broad variety of complicated electronic and visual texts with which you are constantly interacting. An increasing number of social arenas need people who can operate successfully as literate citizens who can create, write, analyze, and evaluate content in digital settings. Education is embracing the concept of "new literacies,'" which refers to literacy developed in response to technical, economic, social, and global developments. For example, "critical literacy" has emerged along with "digital literacies," "information literacy," "media literacy," "Information Technology (IT) literacy," and "Visual literacy." When it comes to 'media' in the current Queensland arts curriculum (Years 1–10), this study is especially interested in those literacies that connect directly to skills and understandings linked with media education [2].

According to the Queensland Arts Syllabus, new technologies are having an effect on educational methods in Australia. The curriculum uses a multimodal approach to reading, with media, music, theatre, visual arts, and dance all making appearances. Literacy is defined as "reading and writing, speaking and listening, seeing and shaping, frequently in combination in multimodal texts, in a variety of settings" as it pertains to these five strands. Students are encouraged to use methods connected with audio/visual presentation and specific media forms, as well as to understand the "components of media language," but the term "media" is not defined specifically. When we talk about the study of "media," we mean new media competence, which is more specifically the production and analysis of new media texts (also known as multimedia texts)[1].

The inclusion of media in an arts curriculum may seem strange at first, but it is in keeping with the document's "futures" approach, which emphasizes cross-disciplinary connections. Instead than just emphasizing creative and technical elements of building, the critical components of understanding media texts are highlighted as well. For example, the necessity to "develop critical literacy through challenging cultural, social, and political practices" is mentioned. It is stated in the curriculum that learning in the arts (including media) "makes a special contribution to the development of English literacy," although no justification is given for these assertions. For students, creating and evaluating multimedia texts represents important literacy activities in terms of supporting conventional literacy as well as building new media-related literacies that are implicit in these references.

There is little question that the development of skills in digital technologies is required to guarantee that the workers of future are adequately equipped, even if the integration of new technology in teaching and learning is not necessarily regarded as teaching "literacy" or "literacies." Government policies in Australia and overseas use various meanings of the terms "new technologies" and "information communications technology," respectively. Teachers' use of new technology in administration, planning, cooperation, and as classroom teaching aids are all factors to consider. Learning to word-process an assignment or make a PowerPoint presentation, as well as having access to the Internet in the classroom, are all examples of student usage of modern technology. In spite of this, a study of such rules may help instructors better grasp the vast variety of demands put on them in this context, including more than just creating and analyzing new media texts. Also, it's logical to suppose that instructors who are proactive in their use of new technologies are more likely to include the study of new media texts into their lesson plans[2].

"Multi-literacies and communications media" are named as one of the "new basics" in Queensland State Education 2010, an initiative of the state government. The Literate Futures document defines literacy as "the flexible and sustainable mastery of a repertoire of practices with the texts of traditional and new communications technologies via spoken language, print, and multimedia. According to the Ministerial Council for Education Employment and Training, new technologies are linked to enhancing the quality of the nation's workforce and designate "information and communications technology literacy abilities" as a pre-requisite for the future economy in a wide sense [1]. Investing in new technologies is becoming more important in light of the Australian government's recent announcement that every senior secondary student in public and private schools would have access to a laptop computer. Educators in Australia seem to believe that the introduction of new technology into classrooms equals social development and "a better future for everyone," as studies have noted[5].

Outside of Australia, there is a comparable drive for innovative educational technology. Developing a highly competent workforce necessitates having employees with a working knowledge of new technology. Through the use of modern technologies in teaching and learning, the British Educational Communications and Technology Agency (BECTA) hopes to increase students' grades while also increasing motivation, self-esteem, and

behaviour. As an example, the US Department of Education established the Technology Literacy Challenge in 1996 and the Enhancing Education Through Technology (ED Tech) Initiative in 2001 as top educational priorities, both of which express the hope that the ability to use new technologies will improve learning quality and student performance [6].

The research indicates, despite these worldwide efforts, that the adoption of new technology has had little effect on teaching methods. Despite widespread belief, many educators in Australia believe they need specialized knowledge in this field. Furthermore, it is unclear to what extent government investment for new computers will change teaching. There are a number of factors holding back the "so-called computer revolution" in Australian schools, including the fact that teachers' attitudes and practices are fundamentally conservative. Furthermore, a research conducted in Australia showed that teacher confidence is a significant predictor of students' and teachers' willingness to use new technology. It was found that despite continuing systems efforts, most instructors have a traditional perspective of pedagogy and are unwilling to incorporate new technology into the curriculum. This research included over 900 teachers from 38 Queensland schools. One thing is to have computers in the classrooms; another is to use them in a meaningful manner for teaching [2][7].

Research done in Europe shows that the hype around the integration of new technology in the classroom is still far from reality. Few, if any, new technology-related literacy skills have made their way into American school curriculums according to University of Connecticut's New Literacies Research Lab. Some believe that the focus on accountability measures, such as those established under the US government's No Child Left Behind programme, has resulted in a narrower rather than wider interpretation of the curriculum. Between the information and skills actually taught in American schools and the demands of a globally and technologically oriented workforce, a growing gap has been noticed [8].

2. DISCUSSION

BECTA, the British Educational Communications and Technology Agency, reports that teacher confidence and competency have increased significantly since 2002 in the United Kingdom. It finds that despite improvements, the quality of students' ICT experience remains unequal, and speculates that there may be a "hard core of instructors [who] cannot be reached" even now. According to a more recent BECTA study, there are worries about "the areas of extremely limited uptake" in universities and "a long tail of elementary schools" where there is no evidence of integrating new technologies into teaching and learning. Unexpectedly, the report found a strong correlation between years of teaching experience and teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of new technologies in the classroom, a finding that contradicts the widespread belief that teachers' reluctance to adopt new technologies is a passing phase as younger, more technically adept teachers enter the workforce [8].

Whatever the reason, it's obvious that some educators aren't ready to embrace new technology and the literacy that goes along with them. Teachers undoubtedly get "mixed signals" about literacy goals from a governmental perspective. Curriculum papers in Australia and elsewhere argue for wider ideas of literacy requirements in the twenty-first century, but educational discussions in larger political and media arenas still center on the need of returning to "the fundamentals." Because of this, governments throughout the Western world have supported the creation of reading and numeracy standards as a means of increasing teacher accountability. When it comes to meeting Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) goals in the United States, teachers struggle. In Queensland, teachers work to guarantee that their children do well in reading and numeracy exams for the second, third, fifth, and sixth grades. Additionally, the current Australian government is considering measures similar to the New York system, in which schools that do well on standardized exams are rewarded financially. Since evaluation processes are so important, elementary teachers are under a lot of pressure to make sure their children are doing well on politically sanctioned criteria [9].

This is hardly unexpected, say experts, given the wider social and cultural viewpoints that influence institutions' views on the issues at hand. This author highlights cultural preferences for various forms of communication, which are in turn linked to distinct literacy practices in different countries. A focus on the visual elements of communication is implied by the study of 'media'. Research shows that visual learning is low on the learning hierarchy since it's seen as an art form rather than an important way to communicate with others. Image-over-word dominance has therefore "given birth to considerable sorrow, soul-searching and profoundly gloomy forecasts about the future health of society," as one scholar put it. In light of the fact that reading and writing are definitely recognized as the major means of communication in Western society, researchers agree that

elementary teachers have responsibility for one of the most valued elements of education. To him, cultural biases imply that visual (like 'media' studies) learning will continue to battle for recognition over verbal literacy [10].

In the context of navigating the "new times" we live in, such fluctuating expectations may be seen as indicative of "the coupled phenomena of globalization, new and continuously changing technology, and a feeling of uncertainty about the future.". Traditional boundaries are changing and, in some instances, collapsing as a result of the "new times," and schools and instructors are seen as trying to reinvent themselves to remain relevant. It's difficult to maintain curricular goals and instructional methods when knowledge is re-conceptualized as more collaborative and interconnected forms of expression. The function of the instructor will unavoidably change with people's views of what constitutes good 'knowledge.' Some people criticize schools (and instructors) for being too sluggish to adopt new ideas, while others reprimand them for ignoring the basics of education in favor of trendy ideologies. Teachers have to deal with contradictions since that's the way the job is [11].

As a result, instructors find themselves in the difficult situation of having to preserve ancient cultural traditions while still being expected to embrace 'change' in order to prepare pupils for life in the twenty-first century. The requirement for students to have learning experiences in which they learn the fundamentals of English grammar must compete with the need for students to have learning experiences in which they learn about the 'visual' grammar of web sites. It is impossible to disregard the emotional needs of change and the difficulty of balancing such conflicting demands. These postmodern conundrums have the potential to have far-reaching consequences for the identity of the elementary school teacher [12].

3. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate the shifting nature of the teacher's identity. It includes as its central idea the discursive viewpoint on identity developed by academics, with a special emphasis on the manner in which specific groups of people, as well as individuals, are recognized. New and wider forms of the teacher's identity have developed in reaction to the climate of change and fluidity that now characterizes the educational arena in Australia, as well as in other countries across the globe. The reinterpretation of the term "literacy" is an excellent illustration of the shifts that have shaped the teacher's professional identity. Media, both in terms of the creation of new media texts and the analysis of existing media texts, is included in the current arts curriculum in the Queensland state, as one of five major areas of learning. The idea that new forms of literacy are not only desirable in terms of providing students with the required abilities and understandings for a digitally mediated world, but that they may actually help in the development of more conventional literacies is implicit in this paper. Educational policies in Australia, as well as in many other nations, seem to support the assumption that new media are an essential part of the educational future and, as a result, constitute a crucial mandate for teachers today. Uncertainty exists, however, regarding the long-term implications of forsaking print-based literacy skills in the face of governmental pressure to promote new media literacy skills.

In this research, the fact that some instructors were already regarded by other teachers and themselves as being dedicated to the study of 'media' as a learning area and were able to speak about the motivating benefits for their students demonstrates that identity transformation is a possibility. A dedication to a transdisciplinary approach to learning seemed to be a necessary component of this acceptance; some instructors were already defining their identities in terms of their ability to integrate media experiences in a meaningful manner throughout the curriculum. Although the idea that students' skills to read and write may be improved via participation in the construction of media texts is endorsed not just by policy papers but also by some practical instructors, it is still subject to further study. Another potential topic of investigation is the advantages of providing students with chances to critically evaluate literature from different genres. A wide range of implications for the teacher's role in promoting new forms of literacy in primary schools may be derived from the possible synergies that can be discovered in these settings, especially if support can be obtained from other important stakeholders. It is possible that discovering these links may help elementary teachers in the twenty-first century to overcome (what seems to be) a crisis in their professional identity.

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