Final Assignment 502

Jean Kloppenburg

Implementing Technology with Transformational Leadership in Mind

In keeping with my inquiry question, "How can I create a dynamic online photography course that will provide learning, exploration and a basis for background knowledge in photography for my grade 10-12 students?" , I will be exploring the beginnings of creating an online photography course. Starting second semester, I will be teaching two blocks of photography. Within these two blocks, I will be implementing two new technology pieces: the introduction of a class wiki and student e-portfolios. The class wiki will be a student content-generated resource page. The e-portfolios will be a student record of their learning journey throughout the course. My goal is to create a learning environment that focuses on students' awareness of how they learn, how they reflect on their learning and what contributions they are making to the learning community.

Lack of student engagement in my photography course has been the driving force for change in my teaching. Like Shelley Wright, I used to think "that ranting at students about their lack of engagement and their apathy towards learning might get a positive response. Now I realize that if you're learning about and working on a project that is worthy of your time and attention, you don't have to be cajoled." (**http://shelleywright.wordpress.com/2012/12/12/i-used-to-think/**). My shift to Inquiry-based learning in the last two years has reinforced my belief that student engagement happens effortlessly when students value and have a choice in what and how they learn.   In keeping with my Inquiry-based learning, how can I use technology as an instructional tool to enhance my students' learning in photography? Simply moving my class-based instruction to an online environment will not ensure student engagement or successful learning (LaBonte, *Education for a Digital World, Part 3*). Creighton (2003, as cited in LaBonte 2011) believes that effective integration of educational technologies has more to do with pedagogy than it does technology. LaBonte points out, "Crieghton's views capture the essence of the issue of change, whether through adoption of educational technologies or not; any change involves pedagogy, and a fundamental examination of instructor-held beliefs about instruction."(LaBonte, 2011, p.281)   In essence, if I want to create an environment of interactive learning through the use of technologies, a review of pedagogy and a strong sense of my own beliefs on instruction must be in place. A thoughtful rationale for my online learning model can be found at**http://jeanklearnsonline.weebly.com/2/post/2012/12/jeans-learning-theory.html** .

With my instructor-held beliefs in place, I will be looking at the use of transformational leadership principles to help guide my plan to implement the use of technology within my Photography 10-12 Course.   LaBonte (2011) states: "If leadership is the art of getting things done with others, then it is also a shift from a 'paradigm based on power and control to one based on the ability to empower others' (LaBonte, 2011, p. 279, as cited in Silins &Mulford, 2002, p. 5), and this empowerment occurs within a learning community." My aim is to hand over the power and control of being the "keeper of knowledge" and instead empower my photography students to be competent researchers and contributors to our learning community. LaBonte also states, "Transformational leadership in this context is about deploying technologies to accomplish core organizational goals in attaining a shared vision compelling enough to transform practice." (LaBonte, 2011, p. 279) My hopes are that taking the time and energy to make a detailed instructional plan for the use of technologies in my photography course will result in the students sharing my vision of a student-centered, self-regulating learning community that will, over time, be powerful enough to transform my teaching practise.

James MacGregor Burns first introduced the concept of transformational leadership in his book *Leadership* (1978, as cited in www.transformationalleadership.net). Burns described transformational leadership as an ongoing process by which "leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of morality and motivation" (p.20).   Transformational Leadership is shared leadership, where everyone involved in the organization are leaders. This requires participation, vision, collaboration, and reflection—all of which require a sense of community and a direct link between leading and learning (LaBonte, 2011, as cited in Lambert, 2002). LaBonte (2011, as cited in Leithwood and Duke, 1999) describes seven dimensions of transformational leadership:

• creating a shared vision
• setting goals
• providing intellectual stimulation
• supplying individual support
• modelling effective practice
• meeting high expectations
• developing a positive culture, and creating structures

These seven dimensions of transformational leadership will guide my planning for implementing technologies of e-portfolios and a class wiki within my photography course. Added to these technologies in mid-term will be a class blog intended for critiquing photographs. The photography course is Inquiry-based with a shared class vision stated in the Inquiry question: How can photography transform my thoughts, feelings and beliefs towards myself and others in my world around me? The setting of goals will be achieved by accomplishing the learning outcomes of the course and fulfilling a personal inquiry question in the final term.

The first plan for implementing technology will be the creation of a website for each student. The proper forms and permissions will be signed by parents and administration. A digital citizen lesson will precede the building of personal websites. The class will be using Weebly.com. With the purchase of a Weebly for Education account, I can manage the student accounts and each student can edit their own page. I will be modelling the learning journey along with my students by having a page of my own. The supplying of individual support for the students will be accomplished by student teachers at VIU. The secondary teaching class of student teachers have all created e-portfolios in their programs. They not only have expertise, but they also can validate for my students the importance of tracking and reflecting on their learning. In a wider sense, e-portfolios serve as areas of achievement and a way for life-long learners to demonstrate growth. E-portfolios are also used by educators as performance assessment tools. My students will not be assignment driven; instead, they will supply learning statements that reflect the learning outcomes they feel they have achieved. In relation to Bloom's Taxonomy (which places cognitive achievement on six hierarchical levels--knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation), preparing learning statements of outcomes achieved can be a challenging cognitive exercise. The end result can only be a tremendous record of a learning journey with twists and turns that finally culminate in a showcase of growth and accomplishment.

The second part of my plan for implementing technology is the development of a class wiki to be used as a student-generated resource page for photography. For years, I have chosen the content for my photography class. I would search the internet for the best videos, best photographic examples and the best articles I could find. I learned a lot from doing this process. By controlling all the content for

my course, I truly feel I was doing a disservice to my students. I took away all the active learning and only expected my students to passively watch videos and view examples I provided. I would like my students to meet my high expectations and learn how to be successful researchers. Within my Inquiry-based classroom, groups of six students make up a learning group. Each group will be responsible for posting content each week that will aid in meeting the weekly learning outcomes. As a group they will collaborate and decide the best resource to add to the class content page. This will not only ensure a high quality of resources, but will also limit the number each week. With a class size of thirty, five submissions would be entered per weekly learning outcome.

It is my hope to build a positive atmosphere of collaboration, communication and trust within the photography learning community. Students begin my course by generating a class code of ethics. We create together a community of learners. While building that community, students will have a choice in where their starting point is and where they want their learning to go. Students will self-regulate their learning, but with class structures in place for computer lab schedules, in-class demonstrations, darkroom experimentation and photo shoot days. Students will be able to measure their success by class rubrics set up for the wiki posts and the e-portfolio construction. Within the community of learners, clear expectations of behaviour (with the code of ethics) and learning activities (with rubrics) will ensure students can measure their achievement of the learning outcomes for the course.

With the implementation of technologies that are well designed and pedagogically sound, my goal to create a learning environment that focuses on students' awareness of how they learn, how they reflect on their learning and what contributions they can make to the learning community seem attainable and worth the risk to achieve.
 My vision of a self-regulating class of students who value their learning can eventually be a shared vision with my students, at which point, the transformation of my teaching practice will begin.

References for Implementing Technology with Transformational Leadership in Mind

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