

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 421 382

SO 028 452

AUTHOR Slekar, Timothy D.
TITLE Technology's Impact on One Teacher's Philosophy of Teaching U.S. History.
PUB DATE 1997-03-00
NOTE 7p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Chicago, IL, March 24-28, 1997).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Change; *Computer Uses in Education; Computers; Educational Technology; Grade 8; *History Instruction; Information Sources; *Internet; Junior High Schools; Middle Schools; Primary Sources; Social Studies; *United States History

ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the relationship between an eighth-grade U.S. history teacher's philosophy of teaching history and his selections of Internet-based, instructional materials to help with curriculum and instruction decisions. The objective of the research is an investigation of two reciprocal influences: (1) the teacher's philosophy of teaching history on choosing resources from the Internet; and (2) the influence that the Internet has on this teacher's philosophy of teaching history. The teacher in the study was interviewed once a week during the first year of the study. Classroom observations were conducted once every two weeks to record teacher-student interaction with the Internet during instruction. The teacher's Internet log books also were analyzed. A shift in the teaching philosophy was noted as more resources were available for classroom use and that was followed by greater experimentation with curricular and instructional decisions. (EH)

* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *

Technology's Impact on One Teacher's Philosophy of Teaching U. S. History

Timothy D. Slekar

University of Maryland College Park

March 25th, 1997

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND
DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS
BEEN GRANTED BY

Timothy D.
Slekar

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as
received from the person or organization
originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to
improve reproduction quality.

☐ Points of view or opinions stated in this
document do not necessarily represent
official OERI position or policy.

SO 028 452

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to describe the relationship between a U. S. History teacher's philosophy of teaching history and a large data bank of resources (the internet). The research I conducted, focused particularly on a history teacher's choice of instructional materials from the internet when making curriculum and instruction decisions. The objective of the research is an investigation of two reciprocal influences: (a) the teacher's philosophy of teaching history on choosing resources from the internet, and (b) the influence that the internet has on this teacher's philosophy of teaching history.

Perspectives/Theoretical Framework

U. S. History teachers have been described as teaching history via an objectivist, "parade-of-facts" approach (Wilson, 1991). During the past two decades however, a shift in the philosophical importance of historical interpretation questions the possibility of an objective fact-based history (Novick, 1988). According to Novick, historians can be broadly classified as objectivists or relativists in their interpretation of history. An objectivist interpretation centers around a position of objectivity. This position of objectivity will in turn lead to a fact-oriented interpretation of an historical event. Conversely, relativism acknowledges the influence of a range of different perspectives has on the interpretation of a historical event. Recently historians have tended to move to a more relativistic position.

History teachers also make choices about historical content that reflect their philosophical viewpoint. Although a philosophical stance is often not explicitly articulated by teachers, its influence on the curriculum and instruction of history teachers has been documented by VanSledright (1996) and Evans (1989). As teachers face an increasingly diverse student population, the need for a diverse history curriculum becomes important. A relativistic position on history may allow for diversity in American history curricula. Seixas (1994)

noted the importance that history teachers remain abreast of influential changes in their discipline. Although the change from an objective to a relative interpretation of history is present in the discipline, teachers of U. S. History have not embraced this change with any rapidity. One reason may be the lack of resources some U. S. history teachers have at their disposal.

A history teacher's choice of resources is also influenced by their philosophical stance regarding history's role. A crucial factor that may contribute to a teacher's philosophical development of history teaching is the availability of resources when the teacher is making curriculum decisions (Loewen, 1995). Slekar (1996) interviewed two preservice teachers of elementary history and found that although past experience contributes to pedagogical philosophy, the resources available often dictated the format and content of a teacher's instruction. If a teacher exhibits a relative or objective interpretation of history, can a large resource bank influence change in their philosophy? And conversely, how does the teacher's current philosophy influence the choice of resources?

Importance of Study

Understanding a teacher's philosophy of history teaching and the affect the internet's resource bank of teaching materials has on this pedagogy, begins to map the effectiveness of implementing technology into the classroom. Knowing that the internet and technology are becoming large influences on classroom instruction, the documented choices a teacher makes when using this technology will provide for a greater understanding of the assets and pitfalls technology will play when teachers make curriculum and teaching decisions.

Population/Site of Research

The history teacher involved in this research project has at his finger tips a large resource bank (the internet). Using the above framework, one teacher was identified as a subject to

be used in this study. The participant in the study has been teaching in the city district for three years as an 8th grade U. S. history teacher. His student population is 95% African-American and 5% Latino- American. His philosophy of teaching history was determined through 3 personal interviews in which he expressed his fact-based, slightly objectivist interpretation of history, and his need for his students to value historical knowledge.

A project involving a large East-coast university, an urban school district, Apple Computer, the National Archives and the Discovery Channel Inc., has begun to address this issue. Providing teachers with the technology needed to harness the educational potential of instant access to a large resource bank (the internet), the project plans to empower teachers when making curriculum and instruction decisions. Prior to participating in this project, teachers implemented instruction with limited resources and outdated textbooks. The project includes 3 middle schools from the city district. Each of the schools' science and social studies teachers have been provided with 5 classroom computers wired directly to the internet. Teachers have freedom to use the internet when planning and implementing instruction

Methods/Data Sources

The teacher who participated in the study was interviewed once a week during the first year. The interviews consisted of questions regarding curriculum choices from the internet and their implementation into classroom instruction. These interviews were recorded on audio tape and then transcribed verbatim for future analysis. Classroom observations were conducted once every two weeks to record teacher student interaction with the internet during instruction. The teacher's internet log books (sites visited and used during instruction) were used to provide an interpretive map and to critique the content provided by the web. The data collected was then triangulated to establish patterns across the data sources. Also, using the member-checking technique, the findings were presented to the

teacher for his analysis and assessment. Using the above techniques helped in establishing the validity of the research findings.

Although this study presents its findings through the use of a single teacher, the results present the importance of individual analysis when interpreting affects on teaching pedagogy. Pedagogy in and of itself is an individual trait that is affected in unique outcomes. Using the findings of this study to relate similar circumstances may help develop an understanding of a similar situation. This study demonstrates the complexity of history teaching pedagogy. A study with an $N=1$ allows one to explore this change close-up and in all its subtlety and nuance.

Results

Upon the completion of the data analysis, the participant teacher demonstrated changes in relation to content choices. A relationship between his philosophy of teaching history and a large resource data bank (the internet) was established. Although the teacher in this study identified himself as slightly objectivist in his interpretations of history, the exposure to additional resources on the internet, created a curiosity which led to experimentation with his curricular and instructional decisions. The teacher began to demonstrate a shift in philosophy of teaching history. Although, slightly firm in his position regarding the teaching a fact-based objectivist history, the teacher came to express the idea that he had neglected the importance of the interpretive nature of history. A possible contributing factor, as indicated by the teacher, was the availability of new resources on the internet with their variety of points of view and differing interpretations of events.

References

Evans R. (1989). Teacher conceptions of history. *Theory and Research in Social Education*, (17),210-240.

Loewen, J. W. (1995). *Lies my teacher told me*. New York, NY: The New Press.

Novick, P. (1988). That noble dream: The "objectivity question" and the American historical profession. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Seixas (1994). Students understanding of historical significance. *Theory and Research in Social Education*, (22), 281-304.

Slekar, T. D. (1996). The apprenticeship of observation and its affect on instructional choices of preservice elementary social studies teachers. Manuscript in preparation.

VanSledright, B. A. (in press). Closing the gap between school and disciplinary history? Historian as high school history teacher. In J. Brophy (Ed.), *Advances in Research on Teaching* (Vol. 6).

Wilson, S. (1991). Parades of facts, stories of the past: What do novice history teachers need to know? In M. Kennedy (ED.), Teaching academic subjects to diverse learners (pp. 273-289). New York: Macmillan.



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)



REPRODUCTION RELEASE

(Specific Document)

I. DOCUMENT IDENTIFICATION:

Title: <i>Technology's Impact on One Teacher's Philosophy of Teaching U.S. History</i>	
Author(s): <i>Timothy D. Slekar</i>	
Corporate Source: <i>University of Maryland</i>	Publication Date: <i>March 25th, 1997</i>

II. REPRODUCTION RELEASE:

In order to disseminate as widely as possible timely and significant materials of interest to the educational community, documents announced in the monthly abstract journal of the ERIC system, *Resources in Education* (RIE), are usually made available to users in microfiche, reproduced paper copy, and electronic/optical media, and sold through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS) or other ERIC vendors. Credit is given to the source of each document, and, if reproduction release is granted, one of the following notices is affixed to the document.

If permission is granted to reproduce the identified document, please CHECK ONE of the following options and sign the release below.



Sample sticker to be affixed to document

Sample sticker to be affixed to document



Check here

Permitting
microfiche
(4"x 6" film),
paper copy,
electronic,
and optical media
reproduction

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Level 1

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
MATERIAL IN OTHER THAN PAPER
COPY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Level 2

or here

Permitting
reproduction
in other than
paper copy.

Sign Here, Please

Timothy D. Slekar

Documents will be processed as indicated provided reproduction quality permits. If permission to reproduce is granted, but neither box is checked, documents will be processed at Level 1.

"I hereby grant to the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) nonexclusive permission to reproduce this document as indicated above. Reproduction from the ERIC microfiche or electronic/optical media by persons other than ERIC employees and its system contractors requires permission from the copyright holder. Exception is made for non-profit reproduction by libraries and other service agencies to satisfy information needs of educators in response to discrete inquiries."	
Signature: <i>Timothy D. Slekar</i>	Position: <i>Research Asst.</i>
Printed Name: <i>Timothy D. Slekar</i>	Organization: <i>Univ. of Maryland</i>
Address: <i>1826 Chesley Rd. York, PA 17403</i>	Telephone Number: <i>(717) 854-5480</i>
	Date: <i>4/18/97</i>