PEDAGOGY: Scaffolding Student Learning

TE 958  Using Literacy to Learn: Curriculum and Pedagogy

The course syllabus for TE 958, Spring, 2007, outlines a range of experiences our students engaged in to explore the major developments and issues related to literacy curriculum and pedagogy and the major challenges and issues related to the preparation of literacy teachers. The concept of metaphor guided much of this exploration. The following is an example of ways my co-instructor and I scaffolded our students’ exploration to help them read from multiple perspectives, consider alternative ideas, and look for trends across texts. These explorations laid the groundwork for conducting their own investigation into a metaphor that interested them. The metaphors students investigated individually are listed on p. 6.

In addition to writing their own paper, students presented their major findings to the group.

We began the course by exploring three historical eras (Sputnik, A Nation at Risk, and No Child Left Behind) and the dominant metaphors that influenced literacy education, teacher education, and literacy research. We explored readings associated with the three eras from multiple perspectives:

Read within the text:
- What is the author saying?

Read upon the text:
- What was this in response to?
- What is the author’s purpose?
- Who is the audience?
- What do you infer about the situation/context from reading the text?

Reading against the text
- What’s included? What’s not?
- How is the text limited in content/scope?

After completing both a group and an individual assignment (see syllabus, p. 3), we designed an in-class synthesis activity to help our students pull together key ideas and take stock of what we had discovered thus far. First, they worked in small groups (organized by era) to investigate the following questions for each text:

- What is the educational problem that this text is addressing?
- What is the solution in terms of curriculum and instruction?
- What is needed in teacher education to address the solution?
- What knowledge informs the solution and where does it come from?

Then as a class, we constructed the following chart that synthesized major ideas (see pp. 2-4) and took notes on key ideas we discussed (pp. 5-6). This activity laid the groundwork for the topics students chose for their own investigation of a metaphor that interests them (see syllabus, p. 3 for a description of the assignment and p. 6 below for a list of topics they investigated).
## TE 958 Synthesis Chart
(Constructed by the Class)

**February 15, 2005**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sputnik Era</th>
<th>Dominant Metaphor(s)</th>
<th>Literacy Education (curriculum, instruction, assessment)</th>
<th>Literacy Teacher Education (curriculum, instruction, assessment)</th>
<th>Dominant Paradigm for Research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bruner</td>
<td>Science and arts</td>
<td>Spiral curriculum Readiness Structure (Piaget) Discovery Inquiry Intuition Structure of the discipline</td>
<td>Structure; spiral curriculum; aids to teaching; teaching devices; methods</td>
<td>Experimental; social psychological paradigm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gage</td>
<td>Continuum—art/science Dynamic, multi-layered Process/product (machine imagery)</td>
<td>Effective teaching Observe and measure effective teaching Classroom ecology Motivation Time on task Measurable results Teaching as a science Mastery of a measurable skill Wait time</td>
<td>Knowledge that vs knowledge how; microteaching; mini courses; scientific model for assessment</td>
<td>Quantitative but also qualitative (e.g. Lortie)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nation at Risk</td>
<td><strong>Dominant Metaphor(s)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Literacy Education (curriculum, instruction, assessment)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Literacy Teacher Education (curriculum, instruction, assessment)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Dominant Paradigm for Research</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Nation at Risk</strong></td>
<td>War and competition Deficit model, fixing it Rising tide of mediocrity Accountability</td>
<td>Focus on high school Content is too easy in textbooks Standardized testing at transition points All students proficient in foreign language</td>
<td>Higher standards for teachers and better pay; core subject s and materials</td>
<td>Quantitative with some interpretative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Holmes Report</strong></td>
<td>Collective efforts Systematic Clinical experience Consensus profession</td>
<td>Role of teacher education profession and teaching profession</td>
<td>Better teacher standards; 5 components of comprehension; look at teacher candidates and their learning</td>
<td>Multiple; clinical; human cognition; social psych; quantitative; research on teacher thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Labaree</strong></td>
<td>Find the illness Hard and soft knowledge Teaching as semi-professionalism</td>
<td>Credentials stressed more than before; social dynamics of the teacher’s status and work</td>
<td>Theory into practice; Reflective practitioner quantitative and qualitative research on teaching</td>
<td>Historiography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shulman</strong></td>
<td>Content knowledge Teacher as leaders Expertise Pedagogy Professionalism</td>
<td>Different types of teacher knowledge; curriculum design; teaching as transformative activity</td>
<td>Continues as above</td>
<td>Interpretive, ethnography; &quot;true experiments&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Child Left Behind</td>
<td>Dominant Metaphor(s)</td>
<td>Literacy Education (curriculum, instruction, assessment)</td>
<td>Literacy Teacher Education (curriculum, instruction, assessment)</td>
<td>Dominant Paradigm for Research</td>
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<tr>
<td>No Child Left Behind</td>
<td>Highly qualified teachers Accountability Rigors Rigid Systematic</td>
<td>Accountability; putting reading first; four pillars</td>
<td>Highly qualified teachers; AYP; application of proven research methods</td>
<td>Ditto Bruner; “hard” science; rigor; control; variables; peer-reviewed; quasi-experimental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Reading Panel</td>
<td>Learning literacy as stages, steps Literacy as power Literacy as adaptation</td>
<td>Discrete skills; the big 5: phonics; fluency; vocabulary; comprehension; how to teach based on rigorous research</td>
<td>Pre/inservice relationships; smaller class size; reading skills</td>
<td>Continues as above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Commission Writing</td>
<td>School improvement as a journey School as the engine of opportunity and economic growth Energy infusion Education as adaptation, state of grace A way of connecting the dots Writing as a way to unify knowledge Journey Engine of opportunity ELA as unifier of content areas, integrated</td>
<td>Writing in genre areas; multiple assessments; technology; &quot;creating a nation of readers;&quot; the Neglected R</td>
<td>Theory &amp; practice; writing infused throughout curriculum; course in writing within teacher education; technology; teacher as activist</td>
<td>Qualitative and quantitative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Notes on the four questions for each era text set

Era One Text Set (Sputnik)

How do we train scientific thinkers? How do we increase output of scientists? Cold War competition; framing research more scientifically in the field of education; balancing the art and the science of teaching; scientific approach to many things, not just preparation in the sciences themselves; learn to do science not just learn about science; discovery and inquiry learning; experiences rather than just knowing the facts; curricula from the scientists and mathematicians; Bruner does not talk about teaching methods but Gage focuses what a teacher is doing rather than what teachers know. Research on teaching by Gage’s design involves training of teachers to produce scientific outcomes—in experimental design, the teacher is the dependent variable—work on the teacher to improve education; in Bruner, teacher judgment is applied to assessing readiness of the child to learn the curriculum at a particular point and in a particular way; teacher training, child study, and subject matter know how; focus on secondary education curriculum

Era Two Text Set (A Nation at Risk)

We blew it; we did not achieve the science and math goals of the previous era and now we are still behind, now in technology for an era of global competition and manufacturing; in many ways this is an outcome of some of the strategies and tactics of the previous era in educational methods, curriculum, and teacher education; threat to our power in the world economy; teachers in this era are viewed as problem solvers in the classroom; studies of experienced teachers and study effectiveness; focus on teacher thought not exclusively on teacher behaviors; practice as constructed out of knowledge of kids, subject matter, activities, etc. You need a teacher who is prepared differently—strengthen teachers’ subject matter knowledge, subject matter major for K-12; credentialism and a career ladder; solving some of the problems Labaree flags; like Nation at Risk, raise the issue of higher quality of those recruited into teaching and give them credit for this and learn from them; standards movement (Math in 1986; others followed over the next decade); standards were going to guide classroom practice and teacher preparation; based on research on teaching; research methods widening because of the nature of the problems to be addressed; teacher education also becomes a focus as a profession and an aera of research and scholarship

Era Three Text Set (No Child Left Behind)

Problem of lack of focus on literacy after many years of science and math as foci; Reading needs to come first; gap widening between high and low performing readers; widening gap in the country between rich and poor; consequences if we leave it that way are economic and social; in a generation, the majority will be the minority and as these are correlated with literacy achievement and employment/wages, this becomes a threat; outsourcing low-paying basic skills jobs; we need knowledge workers as we enter the “information age”; economic picture is more complex and interwoven; we are operating now as a global economy, not as a competitor; weakens the fiber of our society as well as the place of our society in the global economy; we are starting at the elementary level rather than focusing on high school; addresses complex social problems in terms of relatively simple; scientific knowledge about literacy; we do not have voices of teachers, families or students in the discussion by the exclusion of information and knowledge not scientific; reading is considered the core and starting place for all the rest of learning to happen and that the elements of print and sound are the basis and core of all learning to read; the “what works” phenomenon
Students investigated the following metaphors individually for *The Metaphor Assignment*, and presented their findings to the class:

- Teaching as mothering
- Language is power
- Modeling vs. transmitting
- Orthodoxy as metaphor for grammar instruction
- Gold standard as metaphor for research methodology
- Metaphor of critical dialogue
- Literacy as a state of grace
- Language as a tool
- Writing instruction as a liberatory practice
- Literacy as power