Using Technology to Scaffold the Development of Reflective Practitioners:  
A Model of Pre-service Teacher Education

The use of technology as an instructional tool for delivery of subject matter provides an entry level of engagement with technology in the teaching process. The U.S. Department of Education (1999) illustrated that less than 20% of teachers have the skills to integrate technology into the classroom. Barry Kanpol (1998) states, “…an education in public schools as well as in the higher academy involves the passion for one’s subject matter, the ability to get students to think critically, being creative about subject matter content, creating a classroom of an active community revolved around the learning of material, and the strong desire to teach and to learn” (p. 4) We propose that through the active and integrated utilization of technology through a video case approach in a pre-service teacher education program technology will serve as a transformative tool.

This roundtable discussion is centered on the examination of teaching practices through a video case approach. This practice is initiated at the entry level of the teacher education program. In a small university environment with limited diversity, ethnic, SES or otherwise, the use of video case studies allows for the critical examination of schooling in multiple contexts. The intent is two-fold in that university faculty are modeling the active use of technology in curricular practices and pre-service teachers are gaining exposure to learning environments in which they would otherwise not have access. John Dewey defined reflective thinking as “active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions which it tends [that] includes a conscious and voluntary effort to establish belief upon a firm basis of evidence and rationality.” (1993, p. 9). To ensure that pre-service teachers are adequately prepared to serve all students who arrive on the doorstep of their classrooms, opportunities to observe in culturally rich environments via the use of technology will facilitate a greater understanding of the diverse backgrounds students bring with them.

Dewey’s perspective requires the reflective teacher to be aware of the assumptions and knowledge base considered in educational planning and policy, as well as in curriculum, instruction and assessment. To be an effective teacher, one must have an understanding of the content material and pedagogical knowledge to ensure that student learning occurs. However, to be a reflective practitioner, we would argue that at least three other attributes are required:

✓ an understanding of the societal context in which education takes place,
✓ the ability to observe and reflect on the interactions between school-based and societal-based factors in education, and
✓ the disposition to reflect and consider the results of that reflection in the decision-making process.
We propose that steps in developing Reflective Practitioners include:

- facilitated reflection on the actions of others
- self-directed reflection on the actions of others
- facilitated reflection on one’s own actions
- self-directed reflection on one’s own actions, and
- reflection for transformation.

The use of technology in a video case approach allows for structured engagement in examining classroom practices. Through this structure, the university faculty has the opportunity to advance the critical examination of what is observed. The historically traditional practice of pre-service teachers participating in observations in school sites has had mixed results. Supportive of a constructivist model of learning wherein learners are actively engage in the construction of meaning, the video case approach promotes the possibilities for individual and small and large group engagement. We believe this engagement will support the transformation of teachers as depositors of knowledge to teachers as cultural workers (McLaren, P. 1994).

This roundtable discussion will provide an overview of video case materials being utilized, along with accompanying materials to facilitate critical dialogue, and response data from pre-service teachers on the value of the experience. The goal of this roundtable discussion is to identify strengths in the described practice and to dialogue on further possibilities.

References:
