USING TECHNOLOGY TO ENHANCE INTRANATIONAL STUDIES

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It is time for a new focus in American education, a focus on intranational globalization. Inviting students to explore the multiple perspectives and life experiences of America's multicultural groups has the potential to build empathy and tolerance for the great variety of citizens who inhabit and make up our country—African Americans, Native Americans, Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans, and European Americans, to name a few. Technology provides an excellent means by which to place students in situations to study and conceptualize the diverse perspectives within America. Using the Native American culture as an example, this article describes how a WebQuest can engage students in using the Internet and other resources to gather and use information to make decisions and reach consensus on proposed issues and challenges facing one of America's many intranational communities.

As a North Carolina elementary classroom teacher, I often think about how I can best educate my students to be productive citizens in a world of "global interdependence [which will] require understanding the increasingly important and diverse global connections among world societies."[1] Beyond the notion of international education, however, I believe there is a concept often missed: the idea of understanding diverse communities within the borders of our own country. The idea of intranational globalization involves examining the lives of such groups as Native Americans, African Americans, Hispanic Americans, and European and Asian Americans. These groups represent a vast array of customs and traditions worthy of classroom study and concentration. Their roles in the history of the United States are not only important, but also essential in helping students understand and conceptualize issues of oppression and social injustice. It is quite easy to find classrooms studying the culture of Japan or experiencing Mexico's traditions, but the inclusion in the school curriculum of multiculturalism with*in* the United States finds educators "uncomfortable teaching about what is here and within our own society."[2] Teachers feel that by teaching about other countries, students will develop an understanding of diversity that they can then transfer to the multiculturalism in the United States.[3] However, studying the culture of Mexico is quite different from studying the lives of Mexican Americans living in the United States—their experiences now as well as in the past. I believe we must offer a multicultural curriculum of intranational concentration that will open students to the issues, events, and perspectives of America's vast and diverse citizenry.

In a report by a National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) task force, a major goal of elementary social studies education is for students to "[begin] to understand democratic norms and values (justice, equality, etc.), especially in terms of the smaller social entities of the family, classroom, and community."[4] The report explains how such understanding, if orchestrated by effective classroom instruction, makes application to larger communities significantly easier. As an elementary school social studies teacher, I am obligated to reexamine the idea of globalization to include various nations within our own nation before venturing into the international realm. By educating students to examine "questions about the problems facing their own communities" and addressing contemporary issues concerning the United States and its diversity, they can reflect upon past events and become socially responsible citizens of the future.[5]

For the purpose of this article, I will concentrate on the oldest established nation within our nation, Native Americans. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, over two-and-one-half million Native Americans

live in the United States.[6] With such a significant population and hundreds of tribes represented within America's borders, the importance of studying this intranational culture is crucial to the development of knowledge about and appreciation of diverse groups of citizens. In a recent study, it was found that preschool and kindergarten children tend to hold negative stereotypes of Native Americans and describe them as wearing headdresses and holding tomahawks. This negativity did decrease as students moved through the upper elementary grades. However, their knowledge of how Indians live as well as their knowledge and empathy for past oppression remained limited.[7]

One way to enhance instruction of Native American culture is to eliminate the traditional idea of an Indian unit (usually around Thanksgiving) and to integrate the studies throughout the entire school year—throughout historical periods. Frances Rains and Karen Swisher suggest changing instruction by replacing the generalized approach used in many textbooks and by stressing the importance of three existing sovereigns: federal, states, and tribes.[8] Acknowledging that young children have difficulty conceptualizing and understanding diversity in such a context, starting with discussions and activities on how people, traditions, and customs are similar and different is appropriate and is encouraged to "plant the seeds of tolerance and respect for differences."[9]

After addressing the misconceptions and lack of knowledge elementary students may possess about diverse American cultures, the next task is to plan effective instruction. Creating learning experiences in which students can view the perspective of others leads to the development of the empathy and understanding necessary to become responsible global citizens. For example, the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian's theater project, designed to "protect, support, and enhance the development, maintenance, and perpetuation of Native culture and community," was nothing short of tremendous.[10] Through the production process, this dedicated team of actors, directors, community leaders, and maintenance crews learned lessons which classroom teachers could apply in their own planning and instruction. One of the initial barriers facing the team was the issue of cultural ownership. "Minorities are concerned, as multiculturalism is embraced world-wide, about the loss of control of ownership of their words. They risk the misinterpretation of their values, perspectives, and beliefs, as well as the fear of commercialization of their culture."[11] The Smithsonian group identified and addressed this issue through its work and welcomed various cultural viewpoints and collaboration that made the production a success. As a classroom teacher, I find such deliberate planning and incorporation of multiple viewpoints inspirational. While I am not a professional playwright, and twenty years ago I might have felt incapable of accomplishing such results in an elementary classroom, I am operating in an "information age" that affords me the resources necessary to accomplish such a feat. Using the digital teaching activity known as WebQuest, I can orchestrate a play of my own that will engage my learners (or actors) as they gain new perspectives into the lives of America's Native American citizens.

One would be hard pressed to find a curriculum in this country that does not incorporate goals involving the use of technology. In the words of David Warlick, our children are growing up in a world that is changing daily and within which they must adapt and create meaning in order to be successful. The basic skills needed in classrooms today are interpreted as "being able to work in teams, compellingly promote a position, analyze data, solve problems, and construct valuable information products."[12] Combine these skills with the skill of developing knowledge and perspective about an intranational community, and a WebQuest becomes a viable approach. Developed in 1995 by Bernie Dodge and Tom March, a WebQuest is defined as "an inquiry-oriented activity in which some or all information comes from resources on the Internet and is designed to make the best use of a learner's time."[13]

The Internet contains a vast amount of information affecting how and what students now learn in school and at home. With such a range of information available, allowing students, especially at the elementary level, to arbitrarily search the Web can result in hours of wasted time and high levels of frustration. By using a WebQuest, teachers can provide support and guidance through a structured learning activity that engages learners in higher-level thinking and utilizes precious computer time that later encourages debate and discussion away from the computer.[14] According to Dodge, a WebQuest consists of six essential components: 1) an *introduction* (sets the stage, may provide background information); 2) a *task* (defines what is expected of the students); 3) *information sources* (includes

resources needed to complete the task; can include links to the Web, email addresses for experts, word documents, etc.); 4) a *process* (includes step-by-step directions for completing the task); 5) *guidance* (involves input from teachers which can include suggested timelines, essential questions, and organizational frameworks); 5) a *conclusion* (provides closure for the Quest by returning to the original task in order to evaluate success and suggest additional research or study).[15] Several additional WebQuest components may be applicable. If the purpose, as it was for me, is to develop multiple perspectives on a topic, one of these additional components can be invaluable. Termed "motivational elements," such a WebQuest component assigns students specific roles to play within the WebQuest, thereby encouraging them to gather information from a certain perspective (e.g., child, mother, teacher, president). Working in collaborative groups, the students engage in dialogue in hopes of reaching consensus regarding a targeted problem. Encouraging "the political participation and literacy of students by stimulating inquiry into contrasting perspectives on contemporary issues and nurturing an understanding of social action" might serve to enhance the goals of social education set forth in the NCSS standards.[16]

   The curriculum for my state and grade level calls for the study of how various Native American groups lived in the past and present and the influence they have had on customs and traditions in North Carolina.[17] Desiring to integrate technology in an attempt to expand the information sources and the experts available to my students, I decided to use a WebQuest as an inquiry-based lesson approach in which my students are asked to take on a specific role to develop various perspectives on the lives of Native Americans. We then come together in small groups for collaboration and discussion about a common task. What does such an adventure in learning look like? Let's venture through the WebQuest components I have outlined in the "real world" context of my classroom.

The WebQuest

   First, I need an *introduction*. Since this marks the opening of the project, it must be captivating. Like all good stories, I need to hook the students into believing that the quest on which they are about to embark will be exciting, engaging, and worthy of their time and commitment. I may set the stage by explaining to students that they have been chosen by the governor to design a new museum dedicated to the lives, both past and present, of Native Americans. Another option for an introduction could be the following, "You and your class are on a field trip to a local Indian reservation. As you walk by a model of one of the housing structures, you and four of your friends decide to venture inside. When the door closes behind you, you find yourselves in an environment the likes of which you have only seen in history books. You have traveled back in time!" The approach to an introduction of a WebQuest must stem from the interests of the learners. The second example might not be appropriate for a group of high school students, but would appeal to third and fourth graders whose active imaginations are the perfect gardens in which to cultivate learning.

   The next step is to create the *task*. Dodge states, "The key element of a great WebQuest is a great task. It's all about what we ask learners to *do* with information."[18] Students must be expected to go beyond simply writing a paper about what they learned or recalling information for a quiz or test. This is one a problem in some of today's classrooms; student assignments do not fit current resources, talents, and technology that "beg for different kinds of tasks."[19] Therefore, great attention must be given to designing the task of the WebQuest. Yoder suggests thinking about the task as falling into one of five categories: contemporary world problems, evaluation of history, product creation, dealing with everyday life, and stirring the imagination.[20] As I design a Quest, I often find myself creating a task that is a combination of these strands.

   Consistent with the first "hook" example offered, I might combine evaluating history with creating a project (of course, with a great deal of imagination included). For example, "Your mission for this quest requires three tasks. First, each member of your group will chose one of the people listed below to study daily work, play, religion, family, beliefs, and interactions with others. Then, as a group you will need to decide the kind of museum you would like to showcase your information (i.e., a wax museum where models of the people speak or possibly a technology museum where the presentations are done by

PowerPoint). Finally, using what you learned about your chosen person, your group must produce an opening film which describes the life of Native Americans past and present and the influences these groups have had on our state." For the second introduction in which the students travel back in time, I would make the task a matter of necessity: "In order for you to return to the present, you must shadow one of the people listed below and make a presentation to the chief explaining how this person's life has impacted North Carolina customs and traditions in the present. The presentation can be done in various formats since you were fortunate enough to have your laptop, video equipment, and art supplies with you on your travel through time!" In either case, the gauntlet has been cast and the students are challenged to build knowledge, and then create something meaningful with the information gleaned from their Web research.

The next two components, *information sources* and *guidance* are often integrated into the *process* for accomplishing the task. It is extremely important that the steps in a WebQuest be clear, logical, and that they provide students with all of the necessary resources. As I stated earlier, through using WebQuests, teachers can provide students with guidance and structure as they use the Internet while still allowing them the opportunity to become self-directed learners. If directions are not clear or Web links do not work properly, frustration can result. For my WebQuest, one of the primary goals was that students would take on a specific role in order to develop multiple perspectives of the lives of Native Americans. This took a bit of organization. If I divided my class into five groups, I could designate each as a certain North Carolina tribe. When the whole class shared their information, there would be greater diversity in learning. Within each group, I would offer specific roles. For example, one group would be assigned the Cherokee tribe and would chose between roles such as a Cherokee child, a Cherokee chief, a Cherokee woman, President Andrew Jackson, and a plantation owner. In order to represent multiple perspectives, I needed to include viewpoints such as those of President Jackson. What was the life of a colonist like in relation to the Native Americans? How would President Jackson view the impact of Native American life on traditions and customs today? These viewpoints might be more challenging to conceptualize; hence, I needed to differentiate the WebQuest for students with varying ability levels.

In reference to the "step-by-step process," I provided students with a guide for note taking and recording information for their final project. This strategy, combined with learning tips (how to examine a photograph or how to manage time), served as scaffolding techniques that gave support to students engaged in an inquiry-based lesson. Each role or character was then given various Web sites to visit and documents to examine. Choosing suitable Web sites that are accurate and up-to-date is imperative to a successful WebQuest.[21] I often use other WebQuests and educationally-based search engines to narrow my search and carefully pick sites that are reliable and contain information that is grade-appropriate. Supplementing information that is found on the Internet with documents, videos, and literature, allows students to use different media for research and accommodates classrooms with a limited number of computers.

Incorporating a component of expert advice or real-world feedback into a WebQuest can enhance student communication skills. Having students collaborate with others outside of the school may lead to comfort with this type of communication in the future. Additionally, being able to make contact with others electronically opens students to various opinions and resources that are not available inside the school walls. For this WebQuest, I had students collaborate with various tribal members active in North Carolina communities or possibly a history professor from a local university who specializes in U.S. presidents. I suggest contacting the individuals first to explain the project and describe the class (grade level, school, etc.) along with questions they may receive should they agree to participate.

The final part of the *process* involves coming together as a group to share information and discuss any decisions that need to be made as a group. For the first project, the group would need to determine the kind of museum they would like to create. They would also need to reach consensus regarding how the introduction to the exhibit would be written to represent various viewpoints. As you can see, they would get very different information and opinions from a student who chose to be a Cherokee chief in comparison to a student representing President Jackson. Again, taking in multiple perspectives and

making informed decisions regarding what to display and what to present would enable students to develop their collaboration skills.

The final component of a WebQuest is the *conclusion*. Similar to the closure of a lesson plan, a good conclusion reviews what has been learned, suggests topics for further study, and shares the group's successful accomplishments. Imagine each group of students sharing their new knowledge with the rest of the class, school, and even (through the Internet) showing the finished projects to the experts who helped them along the way.

Some Final Thoughts

When we think about studying other cultures, international places such as Mexico or Japan often become the focus of our lessons. However, with the diverse cultures existing within the United States itself, the idea of our country as a melting pot is perhaps more fitting today than when the term was coined in the early 1900s. Students need to develop a greater appreciation for and understanding of multiculturalism by studying historical events, traditions, and customs on an intranational level. We should not expect students to be exposed to international globalization until we have addressed the impact diversity has had in the United States. By using forms of technology such as WebQuests, teachers can provide guidance and structure for students to participate in inquiry-based learning adventures with meaningful, intriguing tasks related to multiculturalism. Students can engage in active simulations that require examining perspectives far different from their own. Through developing an ability to listen, compromise, and celebrate multiple viewpoints, students will flourish as citizens who are cognizant of their social responsibility at home and abroad. As Confucius once said, "I read and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand."

NOTES

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3. Ibid.

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10. Dorothy Schindel and Karen Oughtred, "Museum Theatre as a Catalyst for Inclusivity," *Stage of the Art* 14, no. 1 (2001): 7.

11. Ibid., 8.

12. David Warlick, *Raw Materials for the Mind*, 3rd ed. (Raleigh, N.C.: The Landmark Project, 2002), 17.

13. Bernie Dodge, "Some Thoughts About WebQuests," http://edweb.sdsu.edu/courses/edtec596/about_webquests .html.

14. Bernie Dodge, "FOCUS: Five Rules for Writing a Great Webquest," *Learning and Leading With Technology* 28, no. 8 (2001): 6-9.

15. Bernie Dodge, "Some Thoughts About WebQuests."

16. David Hicks, et al., "Global Connections: Using the Internet to Support Citizenship Education," *International Journal of Social Education* 17, no. 1 (2002): 96.

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19. David Warlick, *Raw Materials for the Mind*, 110.
20. Maureen B. Yoder, "The Student Webquest," *Learning and Leading with Technology* 26, no. 7 (1999): 6-9.
21. Bernie Dodge, "FOCUS: Five Rules for Writing a Great Webquest."