Technology in the middle and secondary social studies classroom, by Scott K. Scheuerell, New York, Routledge, 2015, 200 pp., US$49.95 (paperback), ISBN-13: 978-0415749817

Technology in the Middle and Secondary Social Studies Classroom by Scott K. Scheuerell aims to provide readers with research-based strategies to effectively integrate technology in middle and secondary social studies classrooms. The book provides numerous frameworks for readers to consider with ample classroom examples and resources that can be used by social studies teachers. The book is organized around topics of interest to social studies teachers, such as authentic intellectual work, cooperative learning, problem-based learning, facilitating discussion, historical thinking, authentic assessment, differentiated instruction, and reading strategies.

Early on, Scheuerell highlights a core challenge many teachers face as they design social studies lessons centered on the use of technology in their classrooms: utilizing the right technology tools combined with effective teaching and learning strategies to enable students to learn social studies content. For Scheuerell, this is a matter of selecting the right framework to guide decisions about technology and the ways technology can be leveraged to promote powerful learning in social studies. As a result, Scheuerell offers several frameworks to help teachers think about using technology to support learning in social studies classrooms. In the first chapter, he highlights the Technological Pedagogical and Content Knowledge framework (Mishra & Koehler, 2006), Jonassen's (1995) model of constructivism and the use of technology as a Mindtool, the Rigor/Relevance Framework (Dagget, 2005), the Giving, Prompting, and Making Model (Hammond & Manfra, 2009), and the C3 (College, Career, and Civil Life) Framework for Social Studies State Standards (NCSS, 2013). Subsequent chapters highlight other frameworks and models that have proven useful for social studies educators. These include authentic intellectual work (Newman, King, & Carmichael, 2007) in Chapter 2, Kagan's (1999) Positive interdependence; Individual accountability; Equal participation; Simultaneous interaction (P.I.E.S) model for cooperative learning in Chapter 3, Drake and Nelson's (2009) model of historical thinking in Chapter 6, and Kaplan's framework of questioning (Conklin & Sorrell, 2010) in Chapter 9.

The number of frameworks and models offered is both a strength and a weakness of the book. These frameworks and models are certainly all worthy of consideration and social studies educators should have some familiarity with them. Scheuerell would have made a significant contribution to the field if he had developed his own framework – perhaps one based on his own classroom practice and research – or demonstrated how and why educators might select particular frameworks depending on their aims and objectives. Nevertheless, research literature highlights that a guiding rationale and pedagogical orientation are key factors supporting the meaningful use of technology in classrooms (Saye & Brush, 2006; Swan & Hicks, 2007; Windschitl, 2002) and Scheuerell certainly provides an abundance of frameworks to choose from. Scheuerell addresses this plethora of frameworks by suggesting that, "Readers should pick one or two of the frameworks presented … and use them as a guide" (p. 16).

One other framework that Scheuerell employs in his book is Bloom's Taxonomy. For example, he uses it in the chapter on differentiated instruction to suggest that lower levels of Bloom's Taxonomy (knowledge and comprehension) would be appropriate for "below-target students" while "above target" students "can be challenged to explore questions and build products that mainly involve the evaluation and synthesis levels of Bloom's taxonomy" (pp. 123–124). This suggests a fairly rigid notion of learners and what they are capable of doing. Bloom's Taxonomy and the hierarchical sequencing of thinking skills fail to recognize how thinking processes are interdependent and often influenced by other factors, such as student motivation or interest, the design of learning activities, and classroom contexts, in complex ways (e.g. see Walters, 1994). Especially in a digital age when Web-based texts require different kinds of reading and thinking (nonlinear, across different modalities, etc.), it may be time to rethink Bloom's Taxonomy in technology-rich social studies classrooms.

This raises another issue with the book: there is no mention of critical literacy, digital literacy, or media literacy, which must be given some consideration if teachers are expected to have students use the Internet as a primary resource for learning. If students are expected to do research online for authentic intellectual work or problem-based learning, for example, they must learn to strategically search for information, evaluate information for its credibility, be able to assess claims and evidence communicated in a range of information sources (websites, YouTube videos, social media, etc.), and then develop and effectively communicate their own evidence-based claims through the range of technology-generated products that Scheuerell recommends (e.g. podcasts, videos, blogs, wikis, etc.). The use of technology in middle and secondary social studies classrooms increasingly requires more attention to the fact that students will encounter information overload, competing perspectives and claims, and even malinformation (e.g. violent images, hate speech, recruitment/grooming for terror groups), disinformation (e.g. Internet hoaxes and scams, doctored photos and videos), and misinformation (e.g. inaccurate information spread by the Web) (Burbules & Callister, 2000). Middle and high school students need to develop critical analysis skills to help them sift through, critically analyze, and use online information in their research. These are important skills that must be introduced and regularly practiced to help students conduct individual research on their own or in groups. These issues deserve more attention to help social studies educators think about how to manage this complex landscape.

Still, the book provides a range of classroom strategies that social studies teachers can employ in their classrooms. These include tried and tested strategies such as think-pair-share, jigsaw, primary source heuristics, learning stations, concept maps and graphic organizers, and a range of reading strategies. Unfortunately, some of the strategies and lesson activities suggested in the book are offered as stand-alone strategies not clearly integrated with technology. Some strategies can be used without technology while there are technology tools not mentioned that can be leveraged to support particular strategies. For example, pre-assessment strategies using know, want to know, and learned (KWL) charts or a "graffiti wall" can be carried out using Padlet. The Yes/No cards strategy can be supported using online polling tools. Similarly, instead of a separate chapter on Web 2.0 tools (such as Voki, Popplet, Prezi, and Bubbl), Scheuerell might have demonstrated how these could be used to support instructional strategies that are suggested in the other chapters of the book.

The book also provides a range of online resources that teachers can refer to. These include several sites that provide primary sources that students can access, such as the Yale University Law School's Avalon Project, the PBS American Experience website, and the University of Houston's Digital History Internet website. Other sites that provide teaching resources include the SCIM-C site (Doolittle, Hicks & Ewing, 2005) that guides students to summarize, contextualize, infer, monitor, and corroborate as central aspects of historical thinking, the Stanford History Education Group's (Retrieved March 22, 2016, from http://sheg.stanford.edu/) website to guide students in historical interpretation and the use of evidence, and the Historical Scene Investigations website (Swan & Hofer, 2014) that guides students through a four-stage historical inquiry process. Scheuerell goes into quite a bit of detail highlighting the content provided by these resources and also provides examples of several classrooms, including his own secondary classroom, using these resources for specific learning activities.

The frameworks, strategies, classroom examples, and resources offered in the book can provide social studies educators a useful road map for using technology to promote powerful social studies education. It is important for social studies educators to be aware of these different frameworks, and reading about these different frameworks might encourage teachers to either find one or two that best meets their needs. Scheuerell describes lessons and classroom activities from his research on the integration of technology in the social studies classroom to provide concrete examples of classroom practice. For beginning and veteran teachers experimenting with new technologies and ideas, these should be useful for envisioning the ways technology might effectively mediate social studies instruction.

References

Burbules, N. C., & Callister, T. A., Jr. (2000). Watch IT: The promises and risks of new information technologies for education. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Conklin, C., & Sorrell, C. (2010). Applying differentiation strategies (2nd ed.). Huntington Beach, CA: Shell Education.

Dagget, W. R. (2005). Achieving academic excellence through rigor and relevance. Rexford, NY: International Center for Leadership in Education.

Doolittle, P., Hicks, D., & Ewing, T. (2005). Historical inquiry: Scaffolding wise practices in the history classroom. Retrieved January 12, 2016, from www.historicalinquiry.com/scim/

Drake, F. D., & Nelson, L. R. (2009). Engagement in teaching history: Theory and practice for middle and secondary teachers (2nd ed.). Columbus, OH: Pearson.

Hammond, T. C., & Manfra, M. (2009). Giving, prompting, making: Aligning technology and pedagogy within TPACK for social studies instruction. Contemporary Issues in Technology and Teacher Education, 9, 160–185.

Jonassen, D. H. (1995). Computers as cognitive tools: Learning with technology, not from technology. Journal of Computing in Higher Education, 6, 40–73. doi:10.1007/BF02941038

Kagan, S. (1999). Positive interdependence. Kagan Online Magazine. Retrieved January 12, 2016, from http://www.kaganonline.com/free_articles/dr_spencer_kagan/286/Positive-Interdependence

Mishra, P., & Koehler, M. J. (2006). Technological pedagogical content knowledge: A framework for teacher knowledge. Teachers College Record, 108, 1017–1054. doi:10.1111/tcre.2006.108.issue-6

National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS). (2013). The college, career, and civic life (C3) framework for social studies state standards: Guiding for enhancing the rigor of K-12 civics, economics, geography and history. Silver Spring, MD: NCSS.

Newman, F. M., King, B. M., & Carmichael, D. L. (2007). Authentic instruction and assessment. Des Moines, IA: Iowa Department of Education.

Saye, J. W., & Brush, T. (2006). Comparing teachers' strategies for supporting student inquiry in a problembased multimedia-enhanced history unit. Theory & Research in Social Education, 34(2), 183–212. doi:10.1080/00933104.2006.10473304

Swan, K. O., & Hicks, D. (2007). Through the democratic lens: The role of purpose in leveraging technology to support historical inquiry in the social studies classroom. International Journal of Social Education, 21(2), 142–168.

Swan, K. O., & Hofer, M. (2014). H.S.I. Historical scene investigations. Retrieved January 12, 2016, from http://www.hsionline.org/

Walters, K. S. (Ed.). (1994). Re-thinking reason: New perspectives in critical thinking. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Windschitl, M. (2002). Framing constructivism in practice as the negotiation of dilemmas: An analysis of the conceptual, pedagogical, cultural, and political challenges facing teachers. Review of Educational Research, 72(2), 131–175. doi:10.3102/00346543072002131

Mark Baildon
Humanities and Social Studies Education, National Institute of Education, Singapore
mark.baildon@nie.edu.sg
Brady Baildon
Chehalis Middle School, Chehalis, Washington, USA
bradybaildon@gmail.com