



EDITOR'S REMARKS

Ann D. Thompson

The YouTube Presidential Debates: Hints of the Power of Web 2.0 Technologies

I had an interesting experience this summer when I sat down to watch the Democratic presidential debates on CNN where the questions were to come from YouTube presentations from people around the United States and around the world. I didn't plan to be totally occupied by the debates, but I did want to see how the YouTube format would work. Frankly, I usually find political debates somewhat tedious, with predictable questions from press people and predictable, canned answers from candidates. To my surprise, I was quite captivated by the event and found myself eagerly awaiting each new question and enjoying the sincerity and intensesness of the questioners. As I sat glued to the television for the hour, and then reflected upon the experience, I concluded that much of what made this new debate format so effective is related to the types of uses of technology that we are working to develop for teachers and students. From my reflections, I would like to analyze why the YouTube format was effective and then relate these points to our work in teacher education.

Each of the questioners was a person who had a direct and personal connection to the issue he/she was asking the candidates to examine. From the lesbian couple asking about gay marriage to the father who had lost a son in Iraq to the cancer patient asking about healthy care, the YouTube questioners put a face and a meaning around each political issue. We are accustomed to having the press ask the questions in a debate and most of the questions are relatively predictable as are most of the responses. The personal and pointed questions in this debate emphasized the immense significance of each question.

Many of the questions in the YouTube videos were straightforward and almost demanded straight answers. For example, Jordan Williams, a student at the University of Kansas, focused upon issues of gender and race when he asked Clinton and Obama how they would address critics who charge that "either one is not authentically black enough, or the other is not satisfactorily feminine." Each replied in an equally direct manner:

"Well, I couldn't run as anything other than a woman," Clinton replied, drawing laughs. "But, obviously, I'm not running because I'm a woman."

Obama said, "You know, when I'm catching a cab in Manhattan—in the past, I think I've given my credentials."

In many cases, however, there was a contrast between the intensity of the questions asked and the somewhat vague and political responses of the candidates. Granted this format was new for the candidates and thus they tended to respond, as they would have to more traditional, less pointed, questions. The sincere style of the questioners tended to raise my expectations for sincere, direct responses from the candidates. Perhaps, in the future, this type of format will serve to improve the specificity and sincerity of the candidates' responses.

For me, the YouTube debates marked a starting point that might continue to alter the format and content of political debates in this

country. This relatively new, Web 2.0 technology provides a format that allows other politicians and observers to better connect to the real lives and concerns of citizens. One commentator called the experience a "win" for democracy and pointed out that this format seemed especially effective for engaging young people in the political arena. Another suggested that this format may ultimately discourage some of the canned political responses to debate questions and help move toward more sincere, specific and authentic responses from candidates.

As most of you know, there is currently rich debate on the definition (or the existence) of Web 2.0. All seem to agree, however, that Web 2.0 is not a specific technology or set of technologies, and that it attempts to describe the relatively new, active role of the user on the Web. In contrast to earlier Web uses that tended to be somewhat static instances for delivering information, Web 2.0 applications are characterized by the power of the user to contribute and communicate in the Web community. I believe that most would agree that movement from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 environments has been a gradual change over time and some have even suggested that for Web 2.0 to make sense, we need to talk about 1.5.

In any case, the YouTube debates did demonstrate the potential for Web 2.0 technologies (or whatever you would like to call this user-empowered generation of Web use) to improve communications and help build bridges among communities. The emergence of exciting new possibilities for using Web 2.0 technologies to create communities, relate curricula to authentic student experience, and provide motivation for young learners only reinforces our responsibility as educators to design, implement and evaluate learning experiences with technology. This issue of JCTE offers four articles that directly address these challenges.

In, "The Role of Teacher Inquiry in Helping Prospective Teachers Untangle the Complexities of Technology Use in Classrooms," Kara Dawson demonstrates the potential of a teacher inquiry approach to assist teachers in examining their uses of technology and connecting these uses to student learning. Dawson argues that teacher inquiry may be a valuable method for helping new technology-using teachers to bridge the gap between teacher education experiences and the realities of the K-12 environment. Her work will be useful for researchers examining the connection between technology use and student learning.

Addressing the need for studying connections between technology use and student learning in a different manner, Hancock et al. provide results from a national study that cross validated several well-known instruments designed to measure level of technology integration by teachers. Results suggest that the CBAM Level of Use, Stages of Adoption and ACOT stages of instructional evolution instruments together provide a reliable, valid measure of the construct of technology integration that is stable across geographic location and time. Results from this award winning

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in the Association of Teacher Educators and currently serves on the Commission on the Assessment of the Teacher Educator Standards.

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Dr. Robert L. Fisher is Professor Emeritus at Illinois State University. He has been a member of the Association of Teacher Educators' Commissions that worked on development of the Teacher Educator Standards and is currently chairperson of that commission. His most recent interests are the support of beginning teachers, particularly as they are prepared to work in the urban environment.

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Appendix

TESC focus group questions

1. Name, current position
2. If you were at the ATE mixer and someone asked you about TESC, how would you characterize the program?
3. How do the standards apply to you?
4. How did you select the artifacts in your portfolio and what did you hope to convey with the selection? In your answer, please give an example.
5. What did you learn through this process? Were there things that you hoped you would gain from this process but did not?
6. How are you going to use this portfolio after the completion of TESC?
7. If you were talking to the Commission, what suggestions/comments would you make in the revision of the standards?
8. How would you characterize the teacher educator that should use these standards?
9. Would you recommend to other teacher educators to engage in TESC? Why or why not?

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work, provide an important link to ultimately studying the connection of teacher technology use to student learning outcomes.

In, "Using Digital Video to Re-Think Teaching Practices," Girod et al. present a well-designed study that describes the implementation and effects of teachers' experiences designing digital video instruction. In their work, Girod et al. point out both the affordances and constraints of this experience for teachers.

Using an innovative design, Klecka describes a study of teacher educators who spent one year designing and constructing their own electronic portfolios. In "In Their Shoes: Teacher Educators' Reframing Portfolio

Development from the Students' Perspective," the reflections of the teacher educators reveal the power of this authentic experience on the future plans of these teacher educators.

The use of Web 2.0 to enhance the student learning experience provides new opportunities for instructional design and implementation for educators. Ultimately, the value of Web 2.0 and other technology experiences for students must be measured through examining student learning outcomes. Each of the articles in this issue provides knowledge related to this challenge.

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site.) Special thanks to Melissa Pierson for chairing the SIGTE Forum, Karen Grove for chairing the Scholarship Awards Committee, Colleen Swain for chairing the Research Award Committee, Christy Keeler for collecting/tabulating a SIGTE survey at NECC, Craig Cunningham for leading the SIGTE Book Discussion in Spring 2007, and Mike Charles for hosting the May 2007 SIGTE Webinar with Dave Edyburn as presenter.

We welcome Mike Charles' continuing leadership as SIGTE President-Elect and newcomer to the board Teresa Foulger who will serve as Communications Officer from 2007–2010. We will be soliciting your participation throughout the coming year as we continue our NECC, book discussion, and webinar activities; move forward with our SIGTE

resolution on assessment tools for the 21st Century; solidify our efforts to develop and implement a model for distributed research (see <http://distr-collab-teacher-ed-research.wikispaces.com/>); and as we participate in additional leadership opportunities that will enable us to influence policies and practices in the field of educational technology!

References

Hancock, R., Knezek, G., Christensen, R. (2007, June). *Cross-validating measures of technology integration: A first step toward examining potential relationships between technology integration and student achievement*. Paper presented at the National Educational Computing Conference, Atlanta.

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