

## Impasses to innovation in the development and design of new media curriculum

Kimberly Richards, University of Illinois at Chicago, 1007 W. Harrison Ave. Chicago, IL 60607,  
kricha4@uic.edu

Kimberley Gomez, Ph.D, University of Pittsburgh, 5105 Wesley W. Posvar Hall, Pittsburgh, PA,  
kgomez@pitt.edu

**Abstract:** The purpose of this study is to examine discourse as a way to identify evidence of impasses to innovation in the development and design of new media curriculum within an in-school/ out of school digital arts program. Using data collected in a 3-year ethnographic study, we use qualitative coding and conversational analysis methods to provide examples of diverse discourses competing in the development of a new media curriculum.

### Major Issues Addressed:

- What happens when informal new media knowledge and experiences are brought into the schooling context through curriculum design and implementation in an in school and after school digital arts program?
- How does the positioning of knowledge affect innovations to the curriculum?

Schooling contexts now must compete with new media contexts for youth engagement and learning (Ito et al, 2008). New media technologies and communications have created “new digital divides” between informal, out of school learning, and formal, in-school learning. This post-industrial society requires that individuals are able to communicate, make meaning and construct knowledge within diverse social situations and settings (Gee, 2008). However, if educational institutions are to adapt to emergent social / cultural demands of new media literacies that are inquiry, project-based, collaborative and production orientated, educational institutions must provide spaces for students to learn to be literate with new media tools and within new media environments. However, integrating new media education into the schools will require schools to undergo “a paradigm shift in understanding how people learn and what people need to learn to be literate members of society (Buckingham, 2007, p.7).” However, this shift can be difficult to implement within institutionalized settings such as schools that are built around very specific norms and practices that are not necessarily preparing youth for a post industrial age. Consequently, opportunities to learn and develop knowledge and practices related to the digital arts and new media literacies have traditionally been implemented as informal, after school programs (Collins and Halverson, 2009).

### Potential Significance of the Work

The purpose of this study is to examine discourse as a way to identify evidence of impasses to innovation in the development and design of new media curriculum within an in-school/ out of school digital arts program. In this paper, we examine the discourses that emerge within one year of a professional development program that was designed to teach seven digital artists pedagogical knowledge through the development of a new media literacies curriculum and instructional framework. This program design was part of an out of school / in school digital arts program where one facilitator, a former high school English teacher and literacy coach was in charge of leading and directing the professional development meetings and one on one coaching sessions with seven individual digital artist-mentors. The task was to develop a new media education curriculum and learn to apply and adapt pedagogical practices to this emerging new media curriculum. The artistmentors were positioned as experts within their subject areas and the facilitator was positioned as expert in pedagogical practices.

Using qualitative coding and discourse analysis methods, we will provide examples of diverse discourses competing in the development of a new media curriculum. We will examine schooling, pedagogical discourses and how these discourses created impasses to innovation and learning through the silencing of competing non-schooling, artist discourses. We believe that understanding the nature of schooling discourses can offer ways of using D/discourses as a tool to create safe and equitable conditions that promote innovations in new media curriculum development.

### Theoretical & Methodological Approaches:

Discourse analyses within K-12 schools in the United States reveal how schooling cultures, contexts and systems are supported and reinforced through the discourse of schooling (Gee, 2004). Studies have shown that this schooling discourse tends to support monolingual, mono cultural and conflict avoidant ways of learning as a way to “silence” other discourses (Smith, 2005). Thus, a monologic rather than dialogic stance when making meaning and constructing knowledge can hinder innovation to take place (Gutierrez, 1999; Wells, 2006). Further, this tendency of schooling Discourses to silence “other” discourses can be problematic as schools look

to collaborate with experts from outside the school setting when building and designing new media curriculum.

In order to understand the culture and practices of a professional development program, one researcher was positioned as a participant observer within a larger ethnographic study of the digital arts program. The participant observer attended the whole group meetings and occasionally participated when asked by the facilitator. Twelve whole group meetings were documented. Each meeting was audio recorded, field notes were drafted and materials that were used in the meeting were collected. The field notes for the whole group meetings were coded for content and themes that emerged within each meeting as they related to individual mentor and facilitator talk about assessments (Ryan and Bernard, 2003). Descriptive field notes that were coded will later be transcribed for a conversational analysis as a way to locate discourse.

## Findings, Conclusions, and Implications:

Using an inductive approach to guide the preliminary analysis of the data, emergent themes related to talk about assessments has revealed that it passes to innovation within new media curriculum development appeared to be more prevalent within the less verbal digital domains such as music, graphic design and video game design. This difficulty appears to be due to an inability of both the facilitator and mentors within these domains to build understandings across content and pedagogy. When examining instances of talk about assessments, the facilitator did not have enough content knowledge in music, graphic design and video game design, and the mentors in these domains did not have enough pedagogical background and in some cases a willingness to adopt particular schooling practices such as creating new media literacy standards across all digital domains.

Analysis has revealed that the facilitator's prior knowledge was based on a pedagogical knowledge rooted in traditional reading and writing literacy. The traditional literacy practices were reproduced in the design and implementation structures of the professional development meetings in several ways. 1) Readings that were used to guide the professional development sessions and facilitate talk about assessment were based on traditional reading and writing literacy. 2) Although the mentors had created rubrics for their respective digital domain, the facilitator predominately used the digital storytelling rubric within professional development settings. 3) Instructional strategies and assessment strategies that were introduced and expected to be adapted into all digital domains required verbal interactions between mentor and students. In order for the mentors to have access to the pedagogical knowledge presented within the rubric, readings and instructional strategies, the mentors needed to be able to apply the more verbal, traditional literacy paradigm to their digital media domain. Digital domains that do not emphasize verbal interactions within that domain's cultural practices can make application of a verbal and written assessment tool an inauthentic and awkward instructional practice. The more digitally technical and non-verbal digital domains such as music, graphic design and video game design did not easily fit within the traditional literacy paradigm thus, making access to the pedagogical knowledge within these domains more difficult for the facilitator and mentors to identify and incorporate into the new media curriculum.

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