

Marilyn Equihua
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ETEC 525

Final Reflection

This class gave me the opportunity to experience the educational culture of Costa Rica. The readings, online discussions here in California, the symposium at the Universidad Nacional (UNA), the two days I spent at the private school in Costa Rica, and the day to day interactions we had while we were there, all taught me a great deal about the cultural differences that exist. It was a great experience to see how a different culture views education and educational practices.

The class readings and online discussions I learned a lot about technological change in education and in general, as well as the different biases and that exist within technology, youth, equity, and gender. For me, the most interesting topic during our readings and online discussion was the issue of technology and the "net" generation. It seems that it is a common misconception that teens know all about technology because they grew up with it, even though in reality that is not the case.

During the symposium at the UNA, I was surprised to see how much they integrate technology in education in Costa Rica. Before going on this trip, I had the impression that Latin American countries are not as technologically advanced as we are, but that is clearly not the case. In fact, the presentations that the students showed us during that first afternoon at the symposium were very impressive and applied technology in education in very innovative ways.

I also had the opportunity to go to Integral Institute of Child Psychology and Isaac Martin College for two days. This was a very interesting experience because it demonstrated how different Costa Rican culture is in education. Like I mentioned in my second reflection, teachers are a lot more affectionate with students in Costa Rica, especially with the younger students. I was also very glad to see that these students start using technology at a very early age in school, since preschool, something I have not encountered at any of the public schools that I have worked at here in California.

During the daily interactions and different activities that we participated in during our stay in Costa Rica, I also noticed that their culture is very much pro green. Costa Ricans use all their natural resources, such as coffee and sugar cane, in a positive way. I also noticed that there were recycling trashcans everywhere I went, including the private school that I mentioned earlier.

Overall, I felt that through the study abroad experiences, we touched upon all the course objectives. Below, I will discuss how our trip extended our understanding of three of the course objectives.

b. Analyze issues of equity pertaining to information technologies and media, both in United States and abroad.

During the two days I spent at the private institute in Costa Rica, I spoke to the teacher that hosted me, Indira Marin, about differences between public and private schools in Costa Rica. She mentioned that their institute has many technological tools to use in comparison to public schools. She stated that many public schools there do not have computer labs. Most private schools, however, are equipped with computer labs as well as with other technologies, such as IPADS, like the one she used in the classroom.

I believe that this is the case in the United States as well. Schools that are better funded, have more technologies available for both teachers and students to use. Ritzhaupt, Liu, Dawson, and Barron (2013) conducted a study that using the *Student Tool for Technology Literacy (ST2L)* to see how these issues in access to technologies affects our youth. The study shows that students with higher socio-economic status outperformed those with low socioeconomic status in every subtest of the ST2L.

c. Analyze political implications of information technologies and media and their role in globalization.

In 1998, Neil Postman discussed five things that we should be aware of in regards to technological change and globalization. These included: all technological is a trade-off, the advantages and disadvantages of new technologies are never evened out, embedded in every

technology there is a powerful idea, technological change is ecological, and that media tends to become mythic.

The idea that I notice the most is the last one, which states that media tends to be mythic. In both, Costa Rica and the United States, information technologies are seen as things that have always been, especially for younger generations. Being in a preschool classroom for two days during this trip, I noticed that students considered the technological tools they used, such as the IPAD, as second nature to them. They do not think of these things as innovative because they are being exposed to them at such a young age.

d. Evaluate ways in which information technologies and media influence the lives of learners, both in the United States and abroad.

As we well know, and as Boyd (2014) suggested in chapter 7 of *It's Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens*, many of today's learners, both here and in Costa Rica, are involved in social networking and other forms of online media. However, that doesn't mean that students have "the knowledge or the skills to make the most of their online experiences" (p. 176). Therefore, it is up to parents and educators to provide learners with the knowledge they need in order to make the most of online resources.

During the UNA poster presentations, I noticed that technology has a major influence in students. That is true in the United States as well. Learners of all ages are turning to information technologies to write research papers and complete projects. Prensky (as cited in Boyd, 2014) developed the term "digital natives" because these young learners think and learn very differently than their parents and grandparents due to all these new information technologies that influence their lives. In *Grown up Digital*, Tapscott suggests that the new "net" generation demonstrate eight different characteristics that distinguish them from previous generations. They include: they prize and value freedom, want to customize things, they're natural collaborators, scrutinize any organization, demonstrate integrity, want to have fun, love speed, and believe innovation is part of life (p. 6-7). If educators keep this in mind and allow for this in their classrooms, today's learners will definitely thrive.

