



Education and New Technologies

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Abstract

As we enter a new millennium, most people are by now aware that we are in the midst of one of the most dramatic technological revolutions in history that is changing everything from the ways that we work, communicate, and spend our leisure time. The technological revolution centers on computer, information, communication, and multimedia technologies, is often interpreted as the beginnings of a knowledge or information society, and therefore ascribes education a central role in every aspect of life. This Great Transformation poses tremendous challenges to educators to rethink their basic tenets, to deploy the new technologies in creative and productive ways, and to restructure schooling to respond constructively and progressively to the technological and social changes that we are now experiencing. At the same time that we are undergoing technological revolution, important demographic and socio-political changes are occurring in the United States and throughout the world. Emigration patterns have brought an explosion of new peoples into the U.S. in recent decades and the country is now more racially and ethnically diverse, more multicultural, than ever before. This creates the challenge of providing people from diverse races, classes, and backgrounds with the tools and competencies to enable them to succeed and participate in an ever more complex and changing world¹. In this paper, I argue that we need multiple literacies for our multicultural society, that we need to develop new literacies to meet the challenge of the new technologies, and that literacies of diverse sorts including a more fundamental importance for print literacy are of crucial importance in restructuring education for a high tech and multicultural society and global culture.

My argument is that in a period of dramatic technological and social change, education needs to cultivate a variety of new types of literacies to make education relevant to the demands of a new millennium. My assumptions are that new technologies are altering every aspect of our society and culture, and that we need to comprehend and make use of them both to understand and transform our worlds. My goal would be to introduce new literacies to empower individuals and groups traditionally excluded and thus to reconstruct education to make it more responsive to the challenges of a democratic and multicultural society.