Sage on the Stage to Guide on the Side: The Changing Perception of Teachers'Role and Subsequent Worth

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Abstract

The introduction of technology has lead to the increasing vulnerability for teachers who feel insecure about: the integration of technology into their classroom teaching; the surveillance of students online behaviour; or the engagement of students with less colorful paper and pencil activities that lack media animation. Four school districts participated in this study representing teachers, parents, administrators and IT staff from the provinces of British Columbia and Ontario. This paper presents data related to the expectations for teachers to conduct surveillance of student behaviour online during school hours. Results indicate a surveillance culture that encourages reporting of teacher behaviour by all other stakeholders (i.e. use of cellphone) and implicates teachers roles as changing from teaching to prison guards, monitoring all student activity and responsible for inappropriate use. In some cases, references to teachers as "not doing their job" imply a decrease in the respect for teachers previously warranted.

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Abstract

The introduction of technology has lead to the increasing vulnerability for teachers who feel insecure about: the integration of technology into their classroom teaching; the surveillance of students online behaviour; or the engagement of students with less colorful paper and pencil activities that lack media animation. Four school districts participated in this study representing teachers, parents, administrators and IT staff from the provinces of British Columbia and Ontario. This paper presents data related to the expectations for teachers to conduct surveillance of student behaviour online during school hours. Results indicate a surveillance culture that encourages reporting of teacher behaviour by all other stakeholders (i.e. use of cellphone) and implicates teachers roles as changing from teaching to prison guards, monitoring all student activity and responsible for inappropriate use. In some cases, references to teachers as "not doing their job" imply a decrease in the respect for teachers previously warranted.

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Sage on the Stage to Guide on the Side: The Changing Perception of Teachers

1. Introduction

The perception of a teacher as an expert to be listened to while students remained silently seated became one of the catalysts for "Pedagogy of the Oppressed" (Freire, 1970) and subsequent changes to teaching styles that encouraged student discourse (Sadownik, 2018). Stanlick and Sell (2016) believed Freire (1970) posited the power given to teachers lead to oppressive individuals who held privilege and power; asking teachers to reflect on how those practices marginalized and disempowered others, namely the students they wished to teach. Currently, the profession of K-12 teaching has transformed into designing lessons that facilitate learning opportunities for students to engage in rich conversations, ask questions and develop student voice both online in and in face-to-face environments (Sadownik, 2018). While this focus on student-centered learning has many advantages for students, is there a cost to the perception of teacher skillset, expertise, or general ability to manage a classroom environment?

Additionally, technology is increasingly integrated into classroom activities with the introduction of Google Apps for Education (GAFE), student emails, shared Google drives, and technology agreements that require students and parents to accept responsibility for appropriate use of technology and all electronic resources. This coincides with Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) campaigns that are cost effective measures for school districts who aim to put a laptop or tablet in each students hands, specifically vulnerable and marginalized students who often do not have access to electronic resources at home, or who are asked to share. This increase in technology has demanded school districts to monitor online and electronic resource activity while on school grounds, and this responsibility and accountability has mainly been pushed onto teachers' as an additional requirement for their teaching position and continued employment.

Previous research conducted on the use of BYOD for teacher and student laptops and mobile phones, teacher professional development with BYOD and the potential surveillance of teachers and students while on these personal devices on school property was reviewed (Berg, 2015; Fuller, 2019; Goodyear et al., 2019; Hope, 2016; Monahan, 2006; Page, 2017; Perry-Hazan & Brinhack, 2018; Taylor, 2013). There exists a gap in current scholarly research into the effects on teachers vulnerability while under surveillance in schools, and this critical study aims to research vulnerable and marginalized populations, inclusive of teachers and regardless of whether that vulnerability is communicated or known to them at the time of signing the technology agreement.

Specifically, this research is interested in understanding:
- *Are marginalized and vulnerable populations at risk for negative career consequences as a result of their poor understandings of surveillance and inappropriate use of BYODs during work?;*
- *Does a teacher's sense of professional identity relate to their level of comfort with technology?*
- *Does a teacher's sense of professional identity affect how a teacher understands and interacts with new mandates related to the use of technology?*
- *In what ways do teachers feel professionally vulnerable when using technology in the classroom?*

2. Theoretical framework

Freire (1970) famously asked educational professionals "to honestly acknowledge power imbalance and re-examine their role through "conscientization" (critical consciousness) (p. 80). This consideration of empowering students through agency and voice has lead to several changes in curriculum and instructional design that now asks teachers to continuously monitor the use of devices in their classroom and during school hours. In comparison, Robert Greenleaf (1970) is noted for his research and publications related to Servant Leadership. Servant Leadership presents the leader as "servant first" (Crippen & Willows, 2019). The implications for student teacher relationships have recently been studied in the context of how best to synergize the role of a teacher leader as servant first (Crippen & Willows, 2019; Spears, 2010).

In this way, Greenleaf and other academics may support the use of teachers walking around a classroom, monitoring students behaviour and supporting, correcting or discipling as needed by their students, given the agency and voice to select topics of interest, and modes of learning. However, Freire, may consider surveillance of teachers to be just as oppressive and in need of re-examination. Considering the impact of displacing automatic respect for a teacher with servant leadership ideals, the perception of a teacher may also have been impacted. Surveillance of teachers is a topic that has been reported recently by the Ontario College of Teachers and other provinces (Hills, 2018; MacKenzie, 2016; Maxwell, 2018). The research presented in this paper, involved interviews with school board administrators and instructional technology leaders, in addition to analysis of Bring Your Own Devices (BYOD) in Education policy documents and legal expectations for appropriate use.

3. Methodology

Research and data collection began in 2019, with four Canadian School Districts (located in British Columbia (BC) and Ontario (ON)) agreeing to participate in person and online. Coronavirus disease 2019 protocols for Face-to-Face contact were followed and noted in this study, with the additional complexity of Ontario teachers and administrators engaged in Work-to-rule job action which has yet to be resolved as of the date of publication. Interviews took place on-site at school board offices, and online through videoconferencing, over the phone and through emails. Triangulation of data was achieved through teacher written response (list of questions), followed by teacher interview, and finally through external review. A case study approach was used to summarize the findings.

There are limitations to the present study. First, it should be acknowledged that the participants in the study were selected based on their technological background, and position within the participating school districts. Second, the sample size is a limitation. Socio-economic status (SES) is a third consideration in this study due to the technology provided to the schools, and the experience with technology students and parents or caregivers had in the home. One final consideration is the potential for participants to formulate responses that the researcher may wish to hear, or that the school district may wish to hear when participating in a research study, such as this.

4. Data sources, evidence, objects or materials

Table 1. Demographic information collected from study participants

	Case Study # 1	**Case Study # 2**	**Case Study # 3**	**Case Study # 4**
Date	Jan 8.2020-Jan 10.2020	Oct 29.2019	Nov 1. 2019	Dec 13.2019
Location	Vancouver Island, BC	Vancouver Island, BC	Toronto, ON	Vancouver Island, BC
Size	8,000 students	11,300 students	247,000 students	14 700 students
Gender	Female: 1a, 1b, 1c, 1d	Male: 1a, 1b	Female: 1	Male: 1
Position	Teacher : 1a, 1b, 1c, Administrator : 1d	Head of Department : 1a Director (IT): 1b	Administrator : 1	Management (IT): 1

Interview transcripts were reviewed with an open-coding format, which facilitated the consideration of emergent patterns. The information collected set a framework for the literature and guided the direction of themes emerging from previous interviews, ones that aligned with the literature review as well as new ones that had yet to be mentioned. The combination of the data from the four case studies and literature review helped to refine and differentiate categories to explore that seem promising to develop. Axial coding is used to relate emergent patterns found in the case study data with literature review themes.

5. Results

Q1: *Are marginalized and vulnerable populations at risk for negative career consequences as a result of their poor understandings of surveillance and inappropriate use of BYODs during work?*

- Teacher acceptance of the policy and regulation can be assessed by administrators through teacher conduct and performance reviews, "if a teacher, you know is walking around the room and doing what they should be doing and checking in with kids to see if they are doing work, it is pretty easy to catch them" (CS3).

- In case study three, the administrator/parent implied a teacher is accountable for the students use of technology, stating their policy stipulates "any device that is brought into this school, it is the expectation that you use that device under a teacher's direction for an educational purpose" (CS3).

- Administrators have commented on the policy related to the use of cell phones for students and teachers. "For Staff, I think it would be beneficial to have stricter policies about what devices (namely phones) should be used for and when" (CS1-1d). This administrator believes that staff and students both need to be regulated on

devices, and this is also implied by the administrator/parent in case study three who supports a policy in her school that adults set the example they wish the students to follow, including on devices (CS3).

- Student lack of voice and resistance to the policy is also clear through their reaction to each other, "the kids will never, they don't tell on each other" compared to their reaction to their teacher "The teachers, well, from time to time we have had to have conversations with staff around phone use in the school. We have had staff members that have been caught playing video games during instructional time" (CS3). Sometimes administrators have parents report a teacher and they contact IT staff, "Often with teachers it comes through a parent, their kid has had a concern and gone home to their parent and said, you know, my teacher is playing video games in class" (CS3).

- For other teachers it can be completely contextual, "Taking photos of people without consent, videoing without consent, looking up inappropriate topics on internet, gossiping about people within the school community on text/social media" (CS1-1c).

- For other teachers it is related to time of day, "Searching personal interest websites during instructional time" (CS1-1b)

- In case study four the IT staff/parent participant felt sympathy for the requirement for teachers' to conduct surveillance of cell phones, stating, "texting, tough to police" (CS4).

- Since IT staff are not engaged in active monitoring (CS2) they are responsible for creating firewalls to block identified sites (CS2; CS4) that are classified as inappropriate and for changing settings on student or staff accounts to implement restrictions. "But to be clear, though, it is not an active monitoring where we go in and look for incidences, it is more reactive in that if we have an incident than we go back in and do an investigation" (CS2).

- One school district attributed a portion of their work to reviewing apps that teachers and students could use "trying to find that fine line between where the tool is actually useful and it is contributing to the learning versus situations where it is inappropriate or distracting from the learning process" (CS2-1a).

- The concern for this school being the potential for malware or malicious files downloading or uploading to district resources through the internet connection (CS2-1b). IT staff have in both case studies "isolated to a separate network from the main devices" (CS2-1a); and "no intent on giving them access to files on district, or district files rather, just letting their device connect to the World Wide Web" (CS4).

- However, IT staff are quick to point out their investigations are reactionary and triggered by accessed websites, "We don't monitor emails so we do monitor all

websites accessed, and we monitor all basic traffic on the firewalls, right, so sites they are going to on firewall." (CS2-1b) or a filter, "and that is for everyone" (CS4).

Q2: *Does a teacher's sense of professional identity relate to their level of comfort with technology?*

- Age related decisions also differ across school districts, schools, and hallways, which is the case for the administrator in case study one, "At the elementary level students do not BYOD". This is echoed by another district who acknowledged older students are typically accorded more flexibility to bring their electronic devices to use at school, "I mean there is somebody [that] has a device in secondary school, almost every single student does nowadays, right" (CS4).

- "It is teacher by teacher based, what we are seeing is that middle schools tend to be clamping down a little bit more and trying to block the access. High schools, we haven't had any real issues there, elementary they want more access, so it sort of a range, right?" (CS2).

Q3: *Does a teacher's sense of professional identity affect how a teacher understands and interacts with new mandates related to the use of technology?*

- Teacher resistance to policy can include union if escalated by the administration "It has never gotten to a point where we have had to involve the union" (CS3).

- For the participant in case study three, the incident that occurred five years ago is recognized as a pivotal moment for her and her staff in the creation of a policy that they still follow five years later, "we have been under that school policy ever since" (CS3). Due to the collaborative effort of the policy making and shared experience of the incident, each staff member had a voice in the creation of the policy but for new staff members and new families the school ensures they continue to educate and promote their policy through weekly communications. "Goes out to the parents every week. Here is the electronic device policy. Here is what we follow." (CS3).

Q4: *In what ways do teachers feel professionally vulnerable when using technology in the classroom?*

- Concerns were also apparent by one administrator that it was important to protect her teachers' privacy by concealing their phone numbers from parents (CS1-1d). This was shown in her adherence to the use of a phone app that allowed parents to contact teachers and vice versa without providing contact details and concealing actual phone numbers.

- Depending on the school district, a policy that regulates the type of devices a student is allowed to bring in may exist, and an acceptable use policy for computer devices may exist, but an acceptable use policy for student personal devices may not, "So, I will say it isn't well defined right now and we actually are working on an

administrative procedure on BYOD so what we do have right now is one procedure that has to do with the use of technology in the district, right" (CS4).

- Both case studies with IT staff participants echoed the same response, "What we have is for the use of all communication devices, we essentially have a procedure that we put in place, that let's them know that anything and everything on their computer can and will be monitored if required. It is not specific to BYOD but it is just general use of all computing devices" (CS2).

- Personal devices brought to the school and connected to the school wireless fidelity (Wi-Fi) are subject to monitoring of those devices…" (CS2-1b).

- From a security perspective, personal devices are also kept apart from district owned devices through the use of separate networks for accessing the internet. "Yes, it is for security, because we don't trust those devices, we don't control them, we don't trust them." (CS2-1b).

6. **Conclusion**

Various key findings surfaced after reviewing the data. Most importantly, teachers conducting surveillance may be unaware of the potential consequences for a student in breech of a technology policy, as it maybe outside of their scope to determine punishment or record frequencies of severity or violations. Cell phone use at school, in particular: during tests; taking pictures; video recordings; accessing social media and texting raised concerns for IT staff, parents, students, administrators and teacher. However, the surveillance of teachers use of cell phones during class time suggests a lowered respect for the professional autonomy of teachers at work. To this end, teachers may not have had a voice in the creation of a policy and this may be a key factor in the acceptance, promotion or regulation of the policy. Additionally, life experiences of stakeholders, regardless of role, may be a key factor in the voice of the stakeholder and the acceptance, promotion or regulation of the policy. Vulnerable and marginalized populations may need to use technology during school hours and this may not be viewed appropriate or acceptable use of personal devices on school electronic resources. Teachers who chose to use personal devices may be restricted in accessing shared folders, shared drives, and district information stored locally and may only access the internet and may only use a separate network Wi-Fi connection. The changing perception of teachers as professionals that are required to monitor students use of technology during the day, who require monitoring of their own use of technology by others, and who can be reported on by their students, parents or other staff members has subsequently raised the question of who is oppressed in the current educational environment?

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