WHAT MAKES A GOOD TEACHER CONCERNING IP?

I.A.Bashlak

The subject itself is rather controversial .Is it a must for a teacher using technology to be an expert in this field of expertise? Or it's a good idea to rely on professionals in terms of computer training? I'm interested in exploring this question, . I guess whether you're a teacher of information and communications technology, or someone who teaches with educational technology, there are some common denominators of what makes the teaching good.

The first requirement is a willingness to experiment and take chances. You never really know whether something is going to work until you try it. A piece of software may be great when used by an individual, but not scale up very well when used with a class.. But you will never know it until you sit down with the software and spend time using it and thinking about it. Not everything is within the individual teacher's control. I am thinking in particular of the next requirement: the opportunity to experiment. Too many schools, colleges and universities are so frightened of being named and shamed for not having achieved the requisite number of passes at all sorts of tests that it takes a very brave, stupid or fortunate teacher to feel that they have the time and the support to be able to try things out, especially given the amount of stuff that has to be covered in the curriculum. A third requirement is for intellectual honesty. I think one of the most difficult things to do is to admit to oneself, let alone one's colleagues, that as far as achieving X is concerned, the last 3 weeks have been less successful than one would have liked. But there are a few counters to this way of looking at things: Firstly, adopt the scientific view: an experiment is only a failure if it yields no results at all, ie you find out nothing from it. If you get negative results, you've learnt something which will be useful to both yourself and your colleagues.

Secondly, take a cost-benefit approach. Basically, even if the experiment looks like having been a waste of time, if the benefits outweigh the costs, than it hasn't been. This is all a bit subjective, of course, but let's consider an example. Suppose the use of a website or application has added nothing to the knowledge of 15 of the students in your class, meaning that you wasted a few hours preparing the lessons based on it, and those 15 pupils have wasted the one or two lessons they spent on it. But at the same time, one student, who was thinking of quitting the course, and who has already mentally opted out, is suddenly fired up by the experience and really starts to 'get it'. It's arguable that the net gain has outweighed the net cost. Thirdly -- and this leads on nicely from the point just made -- it may be that your success criteria need to be changed. In the example of 15 students gaining nothing in terms of learning anything new, if I was the teacher I would ask them to analyse why they gained nothing, and how the resource (or my use and teaching of it) could have been improved. Also, academic achievement has to be balanced by other kinds of development. If the website or program added nothing to their knowledge or technical skill set, but facilitated critical thinking or collaborative working -- even though they may not have been the intended outcomes -- then I would suggest the whole thing has been very worthwhile. A fourth requirement for good teaching is a love of the technology. That does not necessarily mean being a geek, but having a love of what the technology can enable you to do. For example, I love my digital camera, my smart TV and smart Nokia cell phone. They are good enough for me and when I use them I feel I am not cut off the mainstream and keep pace with the latest technologies. Really I feel much better surrounding myself with this kind of stimulai. I can slip my camera or a mobile telephone in my pocket or briefcase, and I use it to take shots which are either interesting in themselves, and which I could therefore use as stimulus material, or to illustrate all sorts of projects. A fifth requirement is a willingness to not know everything. I think that when it comes to technology, there is every chance that at least one student, and probably all of them, will know more about at least one aspect of it than you do. That's why I have no hesitation in asking my students I know how you do certain things in Facebook or Blog TV. They know things I don't. I also know things they don't. What's so threatening about exchanging knowledge and ideas as equals? Does this mean that teachers should go along with the old chestnut about teachers being a 'guide on the side' rather than a 'sage on the stage'? No, because that is a false analogy. There is no point in spending an inordinate amount of time encouraging kids to discover something that you could have told them in 5 seconds, so the guide on the side thing is not appropriate in all circumstances anyway. I like the way Terry Freedman views the idea of a teacher being a "guide on the side".- "I don't have a catchy phrase to express this idea, but the way I see it, the class is like a group of walkers going on a guided ramble. You have the leader, who knows the terrain and knows what to look out for and to point out. But at the same time each person on the walk is making sense of it all in their own individual way, and discovering other delights that the leader has not pointed out.