

## **He who learns but does not think, is lost.. - Confucius**

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Undertaking the MAET has organized and given me a chance to reflect and reassess a lot of my thinking on educational technology. I started back in 2010, in another country and in another job than I am in now. It seems like a lifetime away but the one constant variable have been the MSU courses I have been taking. I guess they have tied together a lot of my day to day school experiences, they have been there to mentor me and to prove to me that I am doing the right thing and going in the right direction. The assignments I completed as I went through each course allowed me time to pause and reassure myself that the role I was undertaking in school was the right one; that what I was doing was for the benefit of both teachers and students

In looking back over my time spent completing my MAET some courses stand out more than others and some aspects of my learning stand out more than others. I expect that and I would be lying if I said that every course was life altering or changed my work ethic. I would like to break down some major aspects that I had time to pause and reflect on over the past two years.

### The Role Of Technology In Education

It wouldn't be much of an educational technology course if I didn't have any developments in my thoughts about technology in education! Back in CEP 810 I create a [Personal Learning Reflection](#) in which I laid my main goals on setting out on this journey. I wanted to "develop my current knowledge of technology that could be used in the classroom and learn how and why they can assist in learning". Looking back now, it's a very safe comment to make. I figured that is what would happen. If I think about it, I already had an arsenal of tools and resources at my disposal back in 2010. I guessed that I figured there would be more to add that I had not been made aware of at that time.

As I progressed through the courses I came to the conclusion that I, indeed, had a pretty good grasp on what tools are out there and what tools are appropriate and relevant to use in this day and age with students and teachers. In certain courses we had to assess tools and question what they could be used for most effectively. Although the tool may have not been new to me, it still gave me the opportunity to step back for a minute and carefully assess why and how I would use this tool. If I was using it with students, why did I choose that tool? If I was not using it with students, what were the reasons why not?

Following from that train of thought and something that I will expand upon later, how many times did I choose a tool to introduce to students just for the sake of introducing the tool. Back in Hong Kong when I started the MAET, I was teaching I.T. classes with no set curriculum and no direction or environment within the school to integrate into the core curriculum. I spent the year introducing digital storytelling tools because it's what I felt was the correct thing to do. Had I the students' learning in mind? I did, but it wasn't bigger picture, I wanted them to have tools so that they would know they could tell stories other than writing them down. I suppose you could call it quasi-missional thinking on my behalf.

In my school now in Singapore, two years later, I'm in another situation. I still teach timetabled I.T. classes (classes come at set times to me in the computer lab) to grades one through to five. In these classes that myself and the teachers plane with the bigger picture in mind and full on integration within the core curriculum. For this to happen, administration needs to back up the direction 100% and they need to believe that technology should be integrated as another aspect of

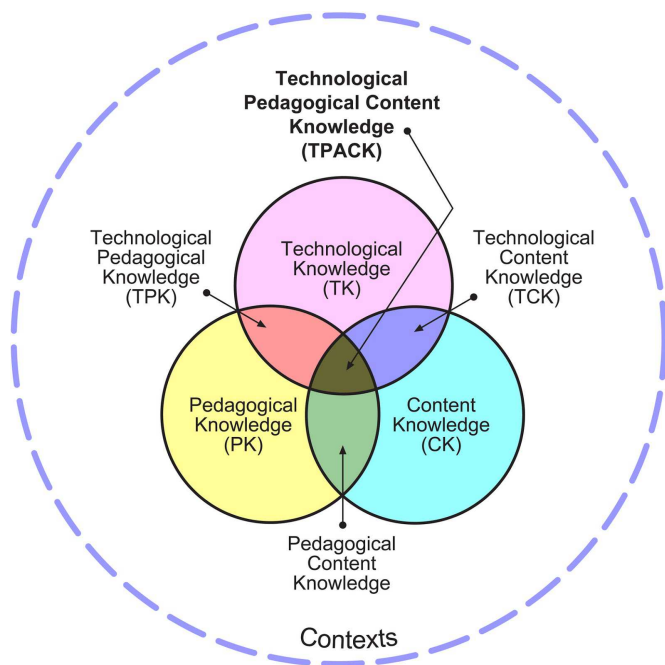
teaching and learning every day in class. I'm at an interesting point where we are in between "teaching" I.T. and integrating it and it is very interesting.

One of my main reflections after CEP 811 was that you need to base *"any technology integration ideas on the "traditional" strategies of teaching and evolve it from there"*. I think "past me" had something, but I would change it up a bit. I think any technology integration needs to look at lesson plan and learning objectives and see if we can transform the traditional activities to further the learning of our students. It's a fantastic opportunity to look back on that quote and amend it to mirror my learning along the way. Another reflection from CEP 811 was that *"Everything I introduce into my school (we) tend to do it by default but it is very useful for me now to think a little deeper about what we are actually changing, why we need to change it and what is the added value in changing it"*. Remember this was back in Hong Kong when I was not integrating and was teaching tools I thought were useful. Wow! I can honestly say now that what I am doing in school is not be default and that the learning objectives of the students and the central idea of the unit of work drives the type of technology integrated activities that we plan on doing.

I valued that the MAET tried to get us thinking about how to use technology to solve problems. In CEP 812 we were given the task to solve a problem in our school using technology. It came at a great time as I was thinking about how to communicate with our parents and families while our school was in Taiwan on a field trip. I chose to use Twitter and used it as a prompt and up to date news feed for people back home. Since I did that there, I have taken that idea with me to my current school and Grade 3 use Twitter while on camp to send news and pictures to their worried families! We place a Twitter feed on our classroom blog page so that people don't even need to go on to Twitter if they don't want to.

Is it that we have to use technology in every instance because it's that cool?! I've come to learn over the last couple of years, that if you have to think about it even after lengthy planning sessions and there is still not an opportunity to use technology, then don't! This is especially true in lower grades in the elementary school. I removed timetabled I.T. lessons and we bought iPads for their classrooms. Their integration of technology happens with the iPads and the reinforcement of literacy and numeracy using a number of age appropriate apps. I think that during the span of my MAET I have learned from the numerous assignments to plan and assess situations. Take notes and record. Don't jump into making snap decisions. The technology has to be the right choice and the learning and teaching have to benefit in every way possible.

To wrap up this section, I must mention that in CEP 812 I was introduced for the first time to the concept of TPACK. Website [here](#).



I use the concept when explaining to new teachers what on Earth we try to do in our school with technology!. TPACK makes perfect sense. The techno-phobe teachers will grin wryly at the area of the Venn diagram that they know they are not in and the new teachers to our school can look at determine where they think they fit in. It also helps to reach our goal to teach teachers as we teach our students to enable them to become more in line with what we envision which teaching methodologies a modern day teacher should have.

### Moving Forward As A Leader

A major learning moment for me in CEP 810 was a group project we had to complete. I had never done an online project with four other adults before! I questioned at the end of the course “whether I was comfortable being either a leader or a follower”? With the project I took the reins and felt like I needed to get things rolling. I think in my profession I need to be a leader also. I feel like that I know my area of education well and I can organize and lead teachers to learn about how technology can impact on teaching and learning.

In all the courses I have completed I think CEP 815 got me to think about my current and future profession. It was the first time I have thought about what role I would like to take up in the future and what areas that I need to learn more about. In learning about leading styles I could categorize my past (and present) school leaders and I could categorize myself in to what sort of leader I was. I figured out I was an achiever. I try to get the best and most out of the people around me. I try to get things done to achieve the most effective results in an efficient manner. I do tend to take failures personally and I don't deal with plans gone awry very well! If I had to choose a little bit from another leadership style I would take a bit from the “expert” style as I have knowledge of my profession and I have experience in how to utilize my skills.

Action Logic	Characteristics	Strengths	% of research sample profiling at this action logic
Opportunist	<i>Wins any way possible.</i> Self-oriented; manipulative; "might makes right."	Good in emergencies and in sales opportunities.	5%
Diplomat	<i>Avoids overt conflict.</i> Wants to belong; obeys group norms; rarely rocks the boat.	Good as supportive glue within an office; helps bring people together.	12%
Expert	<i>Rules by logic and expertise.</i> Seeks rational efficiency.	Good as an individual contributor.	38%
Achiever	<i>Meets strategic goals.</i> Effectively achieves goals through teams; juggles managerial duties and market demands.	Well suited to managerial roles; action and goal oriented.	30%
Individualist	<i>Interweaves competing personal and company action logics.</i> Creates unique structures to resolve gaps between strategy and performance.	Effective in venture and consulting roles.	10%
Strategist	<i>Generates organizational and personal transformations.</i> Exercises the power of mutual inquiry, vigilance, and vulnerability for both the short and long term.	Effective as a transformational leader.	4%
Alchemist	<i>Generates social transformations.</i> Integrates material, spiritual, and societal transformation.	Good at leading society-wide transformations.	1%

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CEP 815 thought me more about the affects your decisions have on others. It's not just me making decisions for me, it affects a number of stakeholders. The metaphor "passing the monkey" stuck with me as it was introduced and I am so much more aware of the various monkeys being passed around at my school. It's about how people pass off jobs to other people (the monkey) which takes all your attention and time away from your other jobs! I know my job description and if it is not the most effective and efficient use of my time I will refuse all monkeys!

### Missional not Instrumental Thinking

Another great learning moment from CEP 815 was the notion of missional not instrumental thinking when planning technology integration activities (or broader implementations of technology in your school). It gave me time to think about the decisions I have made in my profession so far. This course came at a perfect time as I was planning for the next school year and what we wanted to purchase technologically-wise. It was important to survey and have discussions with the teachers about what their students needed to learn throughout the year and what tools would help them achieve that. For example, Pre-K and Kindergarten students are learning letters and numbers so the iPad was the right tool for that grade. All other grades need more scope to research and create projects throughout the year so we decided on Macbook Pros. The tools (instrumental) did not drive the learning vision (missional). The students' learning was the reason for choosing the technology tool that we did.

As I mentioned earlier, if the technology tool does not work for the learning goals and what we want

our students to achieve we need to think about other solutions. In planning units of work, we look at what the learning objectives are and work backwards. Can technology assist or transform a particular activity to assist learning? Yes? Then let's do it! No? Then look elsewhere in the unit of work.

As I brought up in CEP 815 one of the most tragic cases of instrumental thinking in schools around the world was the introduction of Interactive Whiteboards. Little was done or planned to teach teachers how they can impact student learning and most schools use them as mere projectors. I've seen it far too many times in schools that I have visited. On the other side of the coin, if the school investigates their teaching and learning vision and discusses and plans how IWBs could assist in teaching and learning then that's when they can become an integral part of a classroom.

### Making Learning Uncomfortable

I went to a conference in March 2012 where [Scott McLeod](#) Skyped in and told us about companies that are offering online schooling platforms and pretty much got a room full of teachers up in arms about what these companies were trying to do. The organizer after the event told me that Scott loves making teachers upset with innovative and "uncomfortable" learning moments! It was only when I heard that that I valued his presentation. We should be made uncomfortable! New things are uncomfortable sometimes! I make teachers uncomfortable every time I teach their students something new and they don't get it as fast as their students! Good, I'm glad!

In my last course of my MAET, CEP 816, I've been made feel uncomfortable and my first reaction was to be angry and question the professor. That's fine, I have the right and my questions did lead to more clarification on a certain activity. Basically, we were given a great [animated talk on Network Vizualizations](#) and told to research what we felt like that branching off from that video and see what you come up with. Go deep we were told. Well that was unsettling and uncomfortable! But how do we know we are doing it right? But how do we know when to stop? After a couple of emails from Dr. Spiro I started smiling. This was something new to me and I was not comfortable. So I started enjoying it! I was tasting my own medicine. Students and teachers ask me questions all day as they are unsure, perhaps uncomfortable, of their learning journey and now that was me.

I think CEP 816 and the MAET as a whole made me realize the barriers to innovative teaching are huge. We are trying to introduce conceptual teaching and learning styles when we are not that comfortable with similar approaches ourselves. Flexibility and adaptability were not taught in college but it's become a major player in living and working in the 21st century and in particular in the teaching world. The one aspect of teachers I would love to encourage is flexibility and adaptability. Move your teaching along, try something new and scary and challenge yourself. I see too many bored teachers teaching the same way and if I had one goal leaving the MAET course it would be to try and stir that teaching flame that made teachers want to teach to begin with. Look around, get inspired by the wondrous times we are living in, live the life your students are living in, empathize with their complicated digital live and embrace it all.

*Get busy living or get busy dying. Damn straight. - Red, The Shawshank Redemption*