

*Primary Principal Sabbatical Report
Margie Sutherland
South Featherston Primary School,
Term 3 2014*

What are the benefits of blended learning versus e-learning in order to create greater learning potential for all students.

The 21st century has raised new challenges for schools as students become more interconnected with their world than ever before. Students are born into a world with easy access to technologies and in turn an altered relationship to information. These students are entering our schools with an already prescribed notion of how they gain information and how they want to learn.

New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) Ministry of Education 2007 pg 36 encourages schools to "explore not only how ICT can supplement traditional ways of teaching but also how it can open up new and different ways of learning"

Definitions:

Full digital learning (e-learning); e-learning is learning and teaching that is supported through or facilitated by the appropriate use of information and communication technologies (ICT's). Best practice e-learning enables accessible, relevant and high quality opportunities that improve student engagement and achievement. E-learning has the potential to transform the way learning and teaching takes place. It is focussed on using technologies effectively across the curriculum to connect schools and communities and to provide accessible, relevant and high quality learning opportunities so that every student is better able to achieve their full potential.

Blended Learning; an amalgam of proven traditional teaching practices in association with digital devices being used to add value.

Acknowledgements;

Firstly I want to thank my Board of Trustees for allowing me the time to take a one term sabbatical.

Receiving a sabbatical has provided me with a fantastic opportunity to explore digital practice in other schools and have the opportunity to talk to other Principals about their achievements, challenges and pedagogy regarding digital technologies.

I also want to thank the 14 schools I have been fortunate to visit. I was welcome in all the schools I contacted and was able to go into classrooms of all age groups to view some wonderful digital practice. The schools I visited were from 3 different provinces and were randomly chosen so that I didn't have any preconceived ideas about the level of digital practice they had presently adopted. I am very grateful to you all for your help.

Purpose;

- To observe best practice digital technology in primary schools
- To determine whether blended learning is a better option for schools opposed to full digital or e-learning.
- To talk to principals and teaching staff about their philosophy regarding digital learning in their schools

Background;

All students from year 5-8 at South Featherston School have had individual digital devices for the past 4 years. All numeracy and literacy is taught through teacher planned individual programmes online and students use digital technology for research. No textbooks are used although some work is presently stored using a file folder. We are therefore neither blended learning nor full digital learning under the definitions. The current programme of learning was created initially, as the school, prior to 2011, was affiliated to the International Baccalaureate Organisation (IBO). The introduction of the 1:1 digital device philosophy was in response to the IBO curriculum that the school was following.

“A PYP (Primary Years Programme-IBO) classroom can be connected to the broader world through ICT. Students research and communicate not only through printed media but also through global electronic networks in order to access a vast range of multimedia resources. ICT provides a platform for learners to engage with the world. Through ICT, students learn what it means to be a participant in a global community, to be digitally responsible and to make informed reflective decisions”

The school ceased to be an IBO school at the end of 2011 but we committed to following the future focussed IBO philosophy that we had embedded and continued to invest significantly in digital devices to do

Manaiakalani Cluster of schools;

At the beginning of 2014 I was fortunate to be given the opportunity to visit the Manaiakalani Group of schools in Auckland for a two day hui. This gave me a chance to visit other schools with a 1:1 device pedagogy. I was also interested in how schools were managing the blended versus full digital debate. The visit was highly stimulating

and presented a lot of questions to me around our schools current pedagogy that we need to reconsider and redefine. The visit also highlighted a shift in focus for me. Although I am still very interested in the values of blended learning versus full digital learning, this report will also focus on how schools are utilising technology in their classrooms in order to create greater learning potential for all students.

The Manaiakalani Cluster of schools are an excellent example of how groups of schools can problem solve together to create a rich educational environment where students are engaged in learning experiences that are future focussed and relevant. The group of schools total 2,761 students and are mainly low decile schools. Their model is inclusive of whanau and I believe their strength lies in the openness and connectedness between whanau, student and school and the equitable opportunity for all students they have created through their digital device 'lease to own scheme'.

Their vision was "to support students to become lifelong literate learners who were confident and connected anytime anywhere any place and who would be prepared for work and would contribute positively to their community in the future".

(see manaiakalani website,

<http://www.manaiakalani.org/project-management#TOC-Vision-Of-The-manaiakalani-Programme>

To do this the cluster have adopted an overarching philosophy of "Learn, Create, Share" . Alongside this the students all have individual digital devices which they own. These devices go to and from school with the students and all homes within the cluster of schools have internet access thanks to the ingenuity of the staff and Principals. This has developed an incredibly high level of connectedness between students, schools and their communities and is an excellent example of how to develop digital citizenship.

My observations of digital devices for learning;

As part of my sabbatical I visited 14 different schools across three different regions. There was a varied range of practice across the schools, from schools where devices were used predominantly as a word processor, full literacy and numeracy programmes online, to classes where students were using devices throughout the day for the majority of their work in a way that was academic, creative and purposeful.

In talking to principals there was a shared belief that our students need to be *“digitally competent so they can participate successfully in a modern economy and society, support their families and contribute to the wider community.”* (*Brett O’Rielly Chair 21st Century Learning Reference group*). There was also a shared belief that in order for this to happen, teachers needed to be upskilled appropriately to facilitate this in classrooms. We were all of the belief that technology in classrooms was an effective tool in many ways but only when coupled with effective teaching practice and a sound pedagogical knowledge of the value and the direction that ICT in classrooms should take.

The other shared belief was that digital technologies alone do not significantly change learning outcomes for students. There was a strongly felt belief amongst all the principals that the interpretation and delivery of the curriculum by inspirational dedicated teaching staff was crucial for engaging and motivating students.

*Michael Fullen states “Never think of technology, without worrying about teachers and mentors. It is teachers **with** technology who will make the difference.*

”Karen Melhuish Spencer states on the TKI website youtube video that “e-learning is part of a conscious choice to choose the best and most appropriate ways to promote effective learning” and that in summary “learning and the curriculum is the vital element”.

In this constantly evolving digital age ICT in the classroom is essential, but from my observations, schools have been ‘cutting their own path’ to create a pedagogy to support this or in some cases the pedagogy is being created as they go along.

“The integration of technology and pedagogy to maximise learning must meet four criteria. it must be irresistibly engaging; elegantly efficient (challenging but easy to use); technologically ubiquitous; and steeped in real life problem solving.”

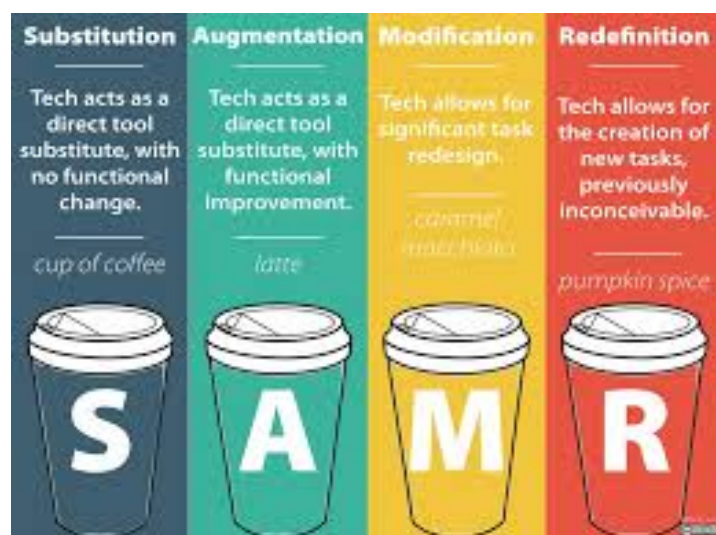
Michael Fullen

The 21st Century Learning Reference Group ‘Future Focussed learning in connected communities’ report states that *“current strategies are inadequate to the task. We urgently need a co-ordinated approach by education agencies and sector leaders.”*

“The wide variation in pedagogical practices within and between ECE services, schools and kura is one of the biggest challenges facing New Zealand education. This applies to the adoption and use of digital technologies as much as it does to other aspects of education.”

In this constantly evolving digital age, the beliefs and values around ICT are a critical and fundamental foundation for a successful classroom programme where digital technologies become a tool to assist learning. ICT has become an ubiquitous part of a learner's life at school in most of the classrooms I observed. Teachers have a responsibility to help students engage in learning with the use of ICT that will contribute to their success as lifelong learners in a digital age and Principals have a responsibility toward their teaching staff to give them every opportunity to increase their learning knowledge so they can see themselves as teachers who have the skills to integrate ICT throughout the curriculum rather than as a tool to deliver the curriculum.

The S.A.M.R. Model



The Substitution, Augmentation, Modification, Redefinition model developed by Dr. Reuben Puentedura shows a progression of technology implementation within teaching and learning. Teachers are able to use this framework to identify the level they are at with the tools they are using. This allows schools to shift their skills and abilities from merely using ICT's to enabling learners to learn something in a way that's not possible without technology. We need to therefore

aim to use technology to accomplish things that would not be possible without technology. Often this requires a paradigm shift in both the student and teachers understanding of the importance and capability of technology and how this can impact in the classroom. This allows students to own the learning process, and for teachers to enable students to do so.

Learning and Change Network:

Students today are born into, immersed in and connected to a world of wired technologies and with this a new educational landscape has emerged. It is critical now that students have opportunities to engage in ways that will ensure a positive educational experience that in turn will lead to greater progress, achievement and excitement in learning to learn.

Learning and Change Networks have been set up by The Ministry of Education throughout New Zealand. They are made up of groups of schools that are in the same geographical area “ *to accelerate achievement for students yet to achieve national expectations for literacy and numeracy through future focussed learning environments*” (Education Gazette 6/11/14)

As part of a Learning and Change network we have had the opportunity to work together to analyse in-depth the constraints we have in our schools with regards to connecting our schools with students and their families and students from other schools and other countries, engaging students in meaningful activities and identifying and adopting strategies to raise student achievement for all priority learners. Our schools have worked together over the last 2 years to share good practice strategies that work, and problem solve in order to make changes in our schools and our leadership practice, to best meet the needs of all our students and families.

The use of ICT in schools as a means to develop the skills of our learners and create connectedness with families, our community and other communities of learning has emerged for the group, as being of significance.

Conclusions;

The conclusion I have reached after my term of research including on site dialogue with principals and teachers, visits to classrooms, reading, watching youtube videos and the use of ‘google’ is that technology in schools, whether it be blended or full digital learning is secondary to the ICT pedagogy that schools need to use to integrate technology into their Curriculum delivery.

The IBO philosophy challenges us to think beyond a 9-3 school day and beyond students working in a prescribed way with only those in their immediate classroom. It also challenges teachers to think beyond the traditional education system of a 9-3 day with their students and the immediate staff that they work with in their schools. We are

all lifelong learners and if the International Baccalaureate School pedagogy were to be adopted by students, staff and their families, the world of learning for learners would become thoroughly global and teachers and families would share the job of being facilitators in a child's lifelong learning.

Model for Managing Complex Change



Adapted from Knoster, T. (1991) Presentation in TASH Conference, Washington, D.C. Adapted by Knoster from Enterprise Group, Ltd.

Regardless of whether Principals are technology savvy or not, they need to take the lead with the help of those who are able to guide them, to determine the vision and path that schools will follow in order to create our digital citizens of the future. The above model of change, (Knoster, T.) although quite clinical is an excellent way to assess the components, complexities and missing links of the area that needs to change. This is the model we will be adopting to develop our pedagogy around e-learning in our school over the coming year.

Bibliography;

Ministry of Education - New Zealand Curriculum- 2007

Manaiakalani website-

<http://www.manaiakalani.org/project-management#TOC-Vision of the manaiakalani-programme>

Michael Fullen- Stratosphere- Integrating Technology, Pedagogy and Change Knowledge (Pearson - 2012)

Karen Melhuish - TKI website [e-Learning Planning Framework / Professional learning](#)

Reuben R Puentedura, Ph.D - As we may teach: Educational technology from Theory to practice (2009)
SAMR and TPCK: A Hands on Approach to classroom practice

Knoster, T - presentation in TASH Conference, Washington (1991) Adopted by Knoster, from Enterprise Group Ltd.

Brett O’Rielly - 21st Century learning reference group

International Baccalaureate School - Primary Years programme - [International education - International Baccalaureate® www.ibo.org](#)

Ministry of Education - Education Gazette - 6/11/14 - Learning and Change Networks

[Margie Sutherland - Principal South Featherston School](#)