Feedback for APPA re funding to support study 2014 – Lynda Stuart
Reflection of Foundations of E-Learning Study Paper 261.764

The Learning

This study has undoubtedly not only been timely but exceedingly useful, as I have worked through developments within the school and cluster of schools in my work with the Ako Hiko cluster of schools. I have attached a link to the website that this group of schools has developed firstly through its work as a Learning and Change network and also as we have worked alongside the Manaiakalani group of schools to explore digital immersion. I have constantly referred to my own issues and challenges through the reflections of the different study modules.

[Ako Hiko Education website](#)

Over the year this paper provided me with opportunities to explore many new ways of learning – online discussions, building a website, peer reviews, self analyses and always constant reflection on the ways that this new learning would impact on the teaching and learning environment that I lead. It also enabled me to constructively critique current directions and look for ways to address some of the challenging issues that we face as educators.

The study began with the video by Kevin Honeycutt, which highlighted the importance of teachers as risk –takers and this was helpful as I worked with the teachers in the school, who were working to introduce the Hapara teacher dashboard, class sites, class blogs and effective e-learning programmes in their classrooms. The importance of effective teaching and learning pedagogy was stressed but at times I needed to reinforce this as the key message, as the use of the technology became overwhelming for the teachers at times. So real learning was taken from this as we move into 2015 with a greater number of teachers working in this way. The preparation for their new learning has become a strong focus of the professional development over this last half of 2014.

I have also highlighted some concerns that I have had over the lack of effective e-learning teaching and learning programme preparation, for beginning teachers moving into these digital environments. As I consider future planning for both the teachers and learners in our school/ schools, this has become a point of action for me as a leader. I am also endeavouring to explore this in my discussions with the University of Auckland Faculty of Education, as we are involved in working with trainees from this institution.

The leading of online discussions was challenging to start with however I also found that I learnt a great deal through the process. My choice of the SAMR model was particularly valuable, as it was then used with our teachers, not only in the e-learning classes but throughout the school/ schools, as they grappled with the challenge of authentic use of digital technologies, within their learning environments. The importance of evaluating whether the tool was merely being used as substitution for pen and paper, or was really transforming the learning, was a crucial conversation for us all to have. This certainly became a topic of real reflection for the principals in our group. I also found this helpful to use with parents as we explored the issues of the importance of moving into the digital environment particularly with those parents who are Pasifika and whose educational experiences have been vastly different from those of their children.

I commented in my reflection on Module 2, after reading Noeline Wright's literature review, on e-learning and implications for New Zealand schools
"Where good teaching works hand in hand with appropriate e-learning technologies then students will benefit".

This statement underpins my beliefs about the use of technology, within the teaching and learning environment.

When also reflecting on the online discussions that were led by others I found them invaluable as I could then look at the use of the technologies from others perspectives and in environments other than my own. The questions that I posed during one of the facilitations are indeed questions that I pose to teachers and principals as we work through e-learning integration.

How will this technology support me in the provision of my teaching and learning programme? What is the best tool to use for the needs of my group of students? Do I need access to a variety of tools in the classroom and not just one particular device? Is what we are doing better facilitated through a more traditional method? What software or apps support us with the teaching and learning? (This area is huge as teachers differentiate their needs according to their learners needs. Does our classroom need to look different to enable effective use of the technology? There is also the big consideration of the technical infrastructure in the school – Is it up to the use of the technology throughout the school.

The work through Module 3 was indeed demanding as we grappled with the collaborative project – this was very worthwhile. Not only was there a huge amount of learning, but also some new friendships were formed. We came to this task from our different perspectives, but settled on an inquiry question and this related to us all. The new learning for me was particularly about the global challenges of the digital divide, as I seem to live and breathe the local ones. Narrowing down the presentation was probably the hardest decision to make, as we had all come across so much information. I had also never used Weebly before, so for me that was new learning alongside the recording and embedding of the conclusion. We worked extremely well as a team and this incorporated not only digital discussions, but also face-to-face meetings. [Link to collaborative project.](#)

The Future
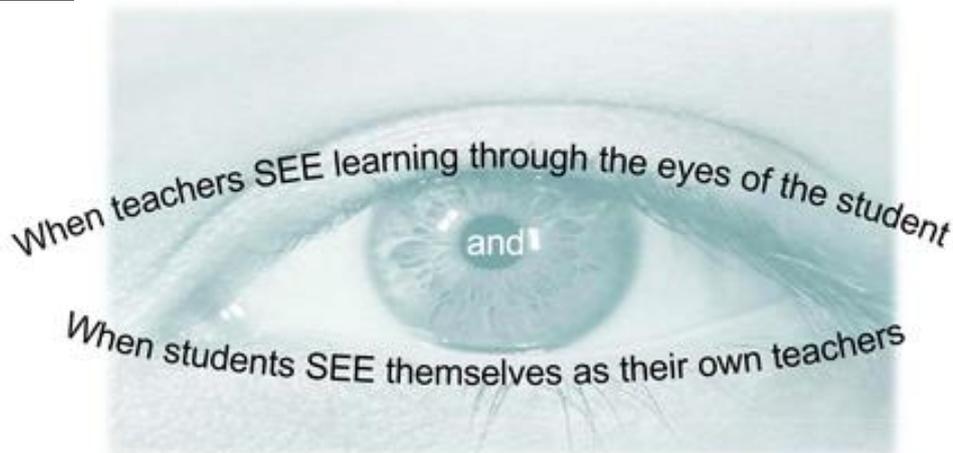
I found the 5th online discussion very valuable. This was around making learning visible and although I do not agree with all that Hattie (2012) says, I do agree with his statement, that it is what teachers help students do in the class, that is the strongest component of an accomplished teachers' repetoire (Hattie 2009 p. 35).

When I think about the future I am brought back to the reading " Future focused learning in connected communities" which we have used in the planning for our cluster development. This document outlines the ten strategic priorities for 21st century skills and digital competencies. The vision is that every young person in New Zealand is a confident, connected, lifelong learner equipped to live a full and active life, and contribute to a thriving and prosperous economy. (p 4, 2014).
The use of digital technologies is seen as an enabler for this vision to be successful. The priorities outlined in this document are indeed crucial to our future and can be viewed from the link below. This also resonates with the work by Bolstad et al. These documents show that this focus on e-learning within our education system and communities is indeed identified as important for the future of New Zealand.

The importance of allowing for creativity and innovation within our education system cannot be minimised. This will take a deliberate and planned approach for it to be successful – there must also be

a genuine desire on the part of our politicians to enable this. There has been a start with the implementation of the SNUP (School Network Upgrade Programme) and also the Network for Learning managed network and the POND for teaching and learning resources. However these initiatives do not address the challenges of equitable access for all learners and communities. There is indeed a digital divide in New Zealand, as highlighted through our collaborative study – this is where the efforts of politicians and communities are really needed. It should not be up to schools, like those in the Manaiakalani Education Trust or Ako Hiko, to set up trusts in order for this to happen. Our focus needs to be on the provision of effective teaching and learning environments with digital technology usage supporting effective practice.

When I think about the future I look at the challenges that face us in our setting and hope that we can assist by paving a way for our young learners. For me this means ensuring that starting from 2015 our bilingual Samoan classrooms can have the opportunity to take advantage of the 1:1 chromebook scheme and that we can be a part of building up the resources necessary for this to happen. Our children should not have to choose between their language, which is their identity and the digital world. This also means greater collaboration between schools and the resources for this to happen. I think it is all very exciting but as I said earlier it will take some deliberate resourcing and real effort on the part of our politicians, initial teacher education providers and the sector in its entirety.

Resources

Bolstad, R., Gilbert, G., McDowall, S., Bull, A., Boyd, S. & Hipkins, R. (2012). *Supporting future-oriented learning and teaching.* Report to the Ministry of Education: New Zealand Council for Educational Research. Retrieved from: http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/schooling/109306

Ministry of Education. (2014). Future focused learning in connected communities. Retrieved from: http://www.minedu.govt.nz/~/media/MinEdu/Files/TheMinistry/EducationInitiatives/FutureFocusedLearning30May2014PDF.pdf

The Digital Divide- Global and Local Perspectives. Retrieved from http://digitaldivide-research.weebly.com/

Wright, N. (2010). e-Learning and implications for New Zealand schools : a literature review. Report to the Ministry of Education. Hamilton