REVEALED: FOUR IMPACTS OF MAET

Michigan State University's Master of Arts in Educational Technology (MAET) directed me to focus on the appropriate use of technology in education and ensured my understanding of instructional designs and learning theories in creating lesson plans and courses that are not only technology-effective but are also meaningful to me and to my students. I have learned effective teaching strategies for youth and adult learning. These strategies included approaches that promote recognition of students' perceptions, misconceptions, and readiness to learn; and realization of the importance of the learners' learning needs, experiences, and assessments.

As a learner

The MAET program has given me a deeper understanding of the importance of 21st century skills. Learners need to be adept to technology in learning 21st century skills and to maximize its influence to learning (Maximizing the Impact: The pivotal role of technology in the 21st century educational system, 2007). Students who have the 21st century skills will have the foundational skills for the increasingly competitive professional world (Aronowitz, 2010). "These skills are vital for everyone's success in our times, and global competition, increased access to technology, digital information and tools are only increasing the importance of these 21st century knowledge-and-skills. Today, every student requires 21st century skills to succeed. By integrating the learning of core knowledge, key 21st skills, the effective use of technology and applying this learning to relevant, real world problems and questions, in every classroom, we will help build a society of knowledgeable, responsible citizens, workers and leaders equipped to handle the challenges of our times and to continue learning lifelong" (Q & A on 21st Century Skills, 2009).

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As an educator

This program has set me up to constantly strive in influencing and facilitating my students to "invent the future" by steering their purpose of applying their multi-faceted performance and skills towards "fierce collaboration" instead of aiming for "fierce competition"; and by shifting their attitude and mindsets from "global fear" to "global embrace" learning with technology.

After I reflected on the courses that I have completed in the program, I considered the following insights/framework to have significantly influenced my learning experiences:

1. Creativity in teaching and learning

After completing the CEP 818 class, I can see things in different perspectives which I never imagined. Ideas were creatively twisted, slanted, turned, amplified, sketched, sung, and even tasted! It was Ken Robinson's TED video entitled "Schools Kill Creativity" that initially triggered my understanding of where creativity comes from. I truly agree with Robinson when he said that, "we don't grow into creativity, we grow out of it. Or rather, we get educated out if it." Therefore, creativity is within us, we just need to develop it in every opportunity we can, or else we lose it. The best period to cultivate creativity should begin while we are still young because we are more curious and interested (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997). But regardless of our current age, we can still enhance our creativity by overcoming the four obstacles that prevent our potential: exhaustion by too many demands, distractions, laziness, and not knowing what to do with the energy. During the class, I wrote a weekly personal journal to keep track of my everyday activities as I tried to apply the suggestions that Csikszentmihalyi presented in the same book specifically the chapter entitled Enhancing Personal Creativity. This journal has basically focused on how I can insightfully apply what I have read and how I can relate it to my daily life at home, work, and play. I have realized that most of my thoughts in my journal were dwelling on how I can acquire creative energy. These reflective records of my thoughts were crucial as I -

- relearned curiosity and interest in me by being surprised by something every day;
- cultivated flow in every life through my everyday work, by waking up in the morning with a specific goal to look forward to, and by taking care of the most mundane activities first to improving the quality of daily experience;
- developed the habits of strength by taking charge of my schedule because this task leads to gaining the essential life skills: time management and task prioritization.

CEP 818 presented a different learning approach for me and I enjoyed it so much because it covered both the personal and professional levels of myself.   "Life is nothing more than a stream of experiences – the more widely and deeply you swim in it, the richer your life will be."(p347) "What really matters, in the last account, is not whether your name has been attached to a recognized discovery, but whether you have lived a full and creative life."(p372)

2. Instructional design, framework, and teaching strategies

(a) Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK)

framework was comprehensively covered in the lessons and applied to most of the projects in all my MAET courses. "The TPACK framework emphasizes the role of teachers as decision makers who design their own educational technology environments as needed, in real time, without fear of those environments becoming outdated or obsolete" (Mishra, Koehler, & Kereluik, 2009). I realized that instead of just concentrating on specific tools for education, the emphasis should also include the teaching strategies that can support and sustain changes in technology, content, and pedagogy. I have to be flexible, tolerant, enduring, and willing to work with new approaches to teaching and learning. I believe that if an educator using the technology has purpose, intent, and clearly defined outcomes, then powerful learning experience can happen to his students. It takes a focused teacher to carry out attainable learning goals in making students successful through the use of technology to support instruction. When choosing what technology tools that I should use in my courses to facilitate student motivation and engagement, they should be relevant, sustainable, and intuitive. These tools should not impede learning due to complexity or "inflated beauty" that covers up the course content. A beneficial instructional technology involves technology tools that can be integrated in teaching the subject matter through the practice of effective pedagogical strategies in promoting significant learning experience for both the teacher and the learner.

I applied this framework when my classes (CEP 812, CEP 820, and CEP 815) gave me an opportunity to use a learning management system (LMS) in providing accessibility to the course content through the internet [TCK]. The LMS made the course available anytime and anywhere to one or more students [TK]. This technology ensured the consistency of the instructional design and content when retrieved by students [TPACK]. Scheduled virtual sessions with students through the use of Adobe Connect added value to the course content because it enabled both the learner and the teacher to focus on specific issues that were related to the course [TPACK]. The technology facilitated the agreement between the student and the educator and it encouraged problem solving after brainstorming ideas with other classmates [TPK]. The course content in an online environment communicated relevant and updated information on the concepts, instructions, activities, and task-based skills assessments [CK]. Online sessions were used to present the relevance of the lessons being learned, how the learning will be

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"Laptop"
Dreamstime.com

accomplished, and the evaluation criteria used in assessing student understanding [TPACK]. I used online discussion as an instructional strategy that encouraged active participation among learners [PK]. Relevant technology tools allowed me to easily design, organize, and arrange customized training modules based on specific learning needs [TK]. I used learning contracts as an effective strategy for an online course [PK]. Student progress was easily tracked through generated reports that highlighted their success and flagged skills that required reinforcement [TPK]. Students received a set of completion dates for projects or activities, which became a great approach for planning and time management [PK]. The pedagogy and the course content were easily evaluated by receiving immediate feedback from students through forums, surveys, emails, chats, and real-time interactions [TPACK].

(b) CEP 811 has introduced to me a foundational teaching strategy based on Dr. Merrill's instructional design with three essential elements: **demonstrate, apply, and motivate**. Examples of where I
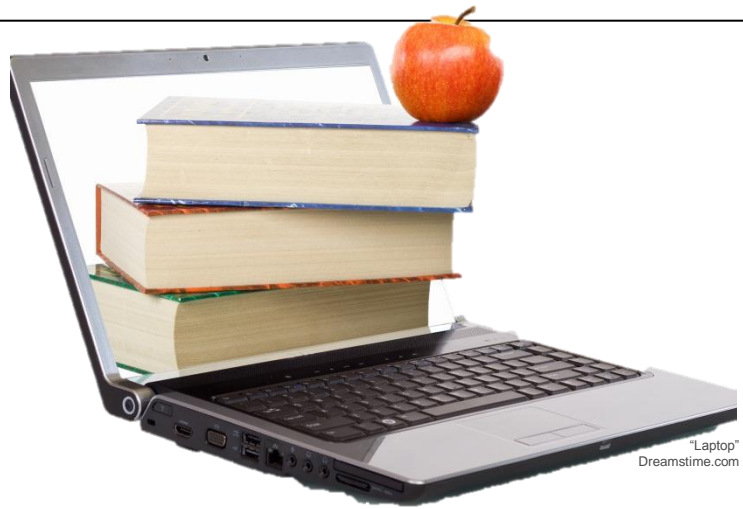
applied these three elements were when I designed a WebQuest, an online course, a face-to-face (F2F) course, and a Stand-Alone Instructional Resource (StAIR). I learned to use animations, videos, and both online and offline tools to keep learning more engaging. These projects, if used, could motivate students to perform real world projects which will enable them to develop new skills while reinforce their existing skills through constructive evaluation and feedback from the teacher and classmates.

(c) Uniform Design for Learning (UDL) is defined as a set of principles for curriculum development that gives all individuals equal opportunities to learn (CAST: Center for

Applied Special Technology). This was a new concept for me when it was introduces in the CEP 811 course but it was further applied during the CEP 820 class. It is very crucial to foster

UDL when planning and designing lessons and assessments, and when creating instructional objectives and learning outcomes. It is because UDL provides flexible approaches and solutions that allow individual student needs to be tailored. I think an educator who supports UDL is sensitive and thoughtful to every student's desire to succeed and to every student's positive contributions to the whole class.

3. Understanding student understanding

Understanding student understanding was one of the significant modules in CEP 800 that helped me delve deeper into the main core of my learning. I strongly believe that every student should be treated uniquely in terms of how the subject matter is delivered and how the "norms" in defining the learning expectations is created for every learner. This course demonstrated how educators should connect with parents, school system, community, and other educators in recognizing students as they create their unique "fingerprints" for learning and understanding. I must

value and support students' creativity in carrying out their thoughts and visions in order to validate their individuality. It is crucial for students to clearly understand what they have learned. This is the key element to make learning be "transferred" for further learning or to be treasured as a lifelong lesson. Therefore, I realized that educators can bring about students' deeper understanding of what is being learned by developing the habits of:

- appreciating student's effort of understanding what he is learning;

- encouraging him to speak his ideas, opinions, views and feelings;
- communicating patiently with the student without judging;
- involving the student in creating the learning outcomes;
- viewing learning and teaching challenge as an opportunity;
- considering time with students as an investment in the student's future; and
- using misconceptions and misunderstood facts as a perfect time to thoughtfully clarify the facts to the student.

4. Leadership through transformative learning.

"Migrating Geese" by Vlado
freedigitalphotos.net

In EAD 863 and CEP 815, I learned that if I aspire to be a leader, then I should unceasingly support and aim for transformative learning as a goal for myself and for my students. I regard transformative learning to be the "highest" characterization of

learning (compared to performance- oriented and reflective). It seems like most leaders are performance-oriented and they eventually become reflective as they evaluate the knowledge and experience that they have acquired throughout the teaching-learning process. "What differentiates leaders is not so much their philosophy of leadership, their personality, or their style of management.

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Rather, it's their internal "action logic"- how they interpret their surroundings and react when their power or safety is challenged" (Rooke & Torbert, 2005, p. 67). We are in a society with constant development and changes and through transformative learning, learners are prepared to become effective leaders who can understand and deal with these changes and who can make an impact on society. Learning becomes transformative after the learners have realized which lessons have been significant in their learning. Learners who have realized their most meaningful experiences and noteworthy learning have the ability to go to the next level of deeper and meaningful understanding of what they have learned.

IN CONCLUSION

"Having an Idea" by nicolas_
iStockphoto.com

I have grown as an educator tremendously in this program. I firmly believe that regardless of all the beliefs or myths that are hindering my conviction within me to be a creative educator, it really takes one's initiative, strong determination, and genuine passion to be one. I have learned to see myself successful if I am willing to repeatedly go back to the drawing board to reiterate any process just to find the solution that works in my teaching and learning. I am now willing "To look at different things, and to look at them differently; to learn to think new thought, have new feelings about what we experience" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997, p. 359). I accept personal accountability in any actions I do to give me more freedom of choosing and determining ways to express what drives me to have more meaningful experiences with my students.

As a result of this program, I gained the confidence in myself to acknowledge that I have grown to be an effective instructor. With having a goal of being a lifelong learner, I need to continue focusing on how to research and use technology in making a difference in education; and on increasing my skills in applying the TPACK framework in my teaching. My analytical, creative, technical, social, and organizational skills have been significantly developed through the experiences that I received from this program. I may be nearing to the completion of the MAET program, but I will continue to explore and further evaluate the technology and the design principles that I have learned. The evaluation will guide me in deciding which technology and teaching strategies should be added or used for teaching and learning. A highly influential American librarian, John Cotton Dana, once said, "Who dares to teach must never cease to learn." Therefore, a dedicated teacher never stops learning. I am in a profession that requires an unending desire to learn new teaching methods but not disregarding the foundations of education.

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- CEP 810: Teaching for Understanding with Technology
- CEP 811: Adapting Innovative Technologies in Education
- CEP 812: Applying Educational Technology to Issues of Practice
- CEP 800: Learning in School and Other Settings
- CEP 822: Approaches to Educational Research
- CEP 807: Proseminar in Educational Technology
- CEP 815: Technology and Leadership
- CEP 818: Creativity in Teaching and Learning
- CEP 820: Teaching Students Online
- EAD 863: Training and Professional Development

CEP – Counseling, Educational Psychology, & Special Education
EAD – Educational Administration

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