Goals: Then And Now
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Background

In August of 2003, having just graduated with a BA in Political Science, I moved to Prague and enrolled in a Trinity TESOL (Teach English to Speakers of Other Languages) certification course. Three days later, I taught my first class while my fellow cohorts and instructors observed from the back. It was trial by fire. I loved it, and I have been a teacher ever since. The class was fast-paced, interactive, and fun, but, looking back, I realize it still resembled my own teacher-led educational experiences.

Ten years later, having worked in a few other countries and engaged diverse students of all ages and abilities, I had become the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Department Coordinator at a private elementary school in Taiwan with over 1000 students. Teaching, designing curriculum, mentoring and leading a team of eleven teachers, I realized our classrooms little resembled the ones in which I had learned as a child. Education was changing rapidly. The tools had changed, but so had the students. I watched teachers thrive using new tools to create student-centered activities, while others struggled to engage students even with the same tools in hand. It was my job to find out why.

The Goal

Living abroad for many years had taught me many lessons, but none more important than the value of adaptability. Wanting to better understand, adapt and contribute to this 21st-century learning environment that was unfolding in front of me, I chose to pursue a Master of Arts in Educational Technology (MAET) at Michigan State University (MSU). Clearly stated, my goal was to continuously explore the potential of educational technology innovations, and bring the best ideas to those who lacked the time or expertise to do so on their own.

Reflection

Now, five years later, technology continues to change the educational landscape, and the MAET program has altered my views and professional goals. First, completing my master's degree online expanded my appreciation for the effectiveness of technology rich environments, and I consider developing online curriculum an interesting career opportunity. Second, the MAET program's incorporation of maker movement philosophy and broad definition of technology, to include both digital and analog tools, expanded my views on functionality and ultimately led me to switch from teaching EFL to STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art, and math). Third, thanks to MSU's forward thinking program I was able to include an additional Graduate

Certificate in Serious Game Design to further explore the potentials of game-based learning, particularly how to provide students with low-stakes opportunities to learn through failure.

Without abandoning my perspective as a teacher, I still wish to help other teachers enhance their practice with the extraordinary tools that technology provides. I feel my graduate work has provided me the skills to assess the benefits and drawbacks of new technologies, as well as best practices for implementation. Now, thanks to my graduate experiences at MSU, I have a more encompassing vision of the powerful possibilities that technology can provide teachers and learners.