



The world is at our fingertips

Doug Loader

Modern technologies have meant that distance is no longer a factor for people who want to connect. The internet keeps global communities tightly woven, only separated by time zones. Companies and entrepreneurs can easily traverse continents, bringing together major cities and creating a fertile and booming online market place. A digital space that is so competitive that employing a PA in India is completely viable, and local web designers and marketers find themselves hugely out-priced by global competition.

For the first time, every school in the world has an opportunity to place themselves amongst the highest achieving academies. The very best online education resources are often completely free, meaning that every student on the planet can have the same opportunities. Cloud services like Edmodo or Google Apps For Education are so powerful that, to not align oneself with these resources, and to not expose students to these tools, is considered by some to be reckless.

Every principal and every teacher is limited only by their imagination. Technology prices continue to fall each year; I believe that a school

Classroom tools will continue to change, just as our student's needs change

in remote Africa has every chance of producing some of tomorrow's greatest minds as a school in a first world country. Only the constraints of a stable internet connection hold some back but in the coming years this will no longer be a factor.

About four years ago these opportunities were recognised by a comparatively small school, in a low socio-economic area called Rockingham in Western Australia. I became part of that school's journey about 18 months ago, and I am fortunate enough to have been exposed to some of the most forward thinking minds in the process.

Kolbe Catholic College is a co-educational secondary college with an enrolment of over 1000 students in Years 7 to 12. We are an independent Catholic school, and although many strategic decisions may appear independent, I have learned that the pathways taken have been chosen largely via deep consultation with a local

and global education community.

Like many schools Kolbe embraced the National Secondary Schools Computer Fund (NSSCF). I conducted a fairly thorough review of how this four-year funding was spent and what I found was something that, although typical to Kolbe, was alien to many schools.

Kolbe chose to share. We collaborated deeply with local and national schools to study the effect of a digitally driven classroom. I recall reading Kolbe's report when I was working with another Catholic school. Classroom practice was documented, surveys were completed by students and staff. Even pricing and leasing schemes were evaluated and shared for other schools to see.

Decision making was not taken lightly, and for a school like this one, the NSSCF funding was a treasure chest which was not going to be wasted. Kolbe invested heavily in a stable network, talented employees and Apple technologies.

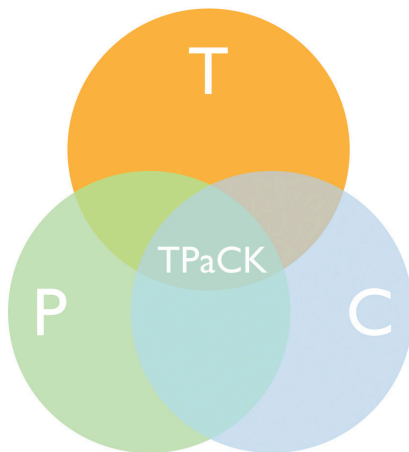
Early direction

I recall attending a Kolbe Open Day about four years ago. The message was similar to other



TPaCK

Technological, Pedagogical and Content Knowledge



schools at the beginning of their technology journey: '24/7 learning, any where... any time.'

Opinions now are a little different. Mobile devices allow for personalised and self-directed learning. Students have the opportunity to learn when and how they like. Today's students have an appetite for digital expression and they want to be connected. Modern teaching should accommodate and capture this curiosity.

Kolbe regularly opens its doors to the local community with the (now annual) Kolbe Open Day. Previously, the focus revolved around technology, however in recent years the focus has transitioned predominantly to learning and teaching.

Mirroring the attitudes of all staff, technology has become so ubiquitous that our modern classrooms and digitally driven curriculums are not considered unique or important. The focus is squarely on diverse learning opportunities and personalised learning. These processes are enhanced with iPads, but it is not forced.

The Kolbe Open Day captures the essence of

our school: prepared to take risks for the benefit of our students. It is a chance for local schools and fellow teachers to see how Kolbe teachers teach, what kind of professional development we provide internally, and a chance for all to share ideas. I encourage you to attend on Friday 23rd May. More details can be found at www.kolbe.wa.edu.au.

Where to on this part of our journey?

Last term in *Education Today* I wrote about where we had come to in 2013 and what our plans were for 2014. We had some significant challenges, particularly with our network connection speeds, which we overcame, and 2014 has already seen a significant shift of attention from a leadership perspective.

In my discussions with the school's principal Robyn Miller, I am often encouraged to challenge myself. We still face technical problems, but we have established a sound infrastructure. So I find myself working closer with pedagogy experts in an effort to transform some components of

teacher practice.

Here I find a two-pronged challenge. First, what does transformative teaching look like? And second, how should one address a teacher, who may have been teaching for decades, and suggest they consider using new technologies such as Twitter? (Incidentally, the responses from some staff to this suggestion were quite negative, after all, where would a teacher find the time to investigate an activity that depends largely on procrastination?)

For many years I have been referencing the TPaCK model. It illustrates perfectly the necessity of three main ingredients which combine to make a well rounded teacher. Technology, Pedagogy and Content Knowledge.

I have often found myself dwelling on the T component. However, it is becoming clear to me and my colleagues, that this venn diagram is merging ever tighter each year. Eventually we should see the T component disappear completely, as the P component expands to encompass it.

My mother retired from teaching last year; five years before her retirement she was instructed to use an interactive white board. Needless to say she responded with words to the effect: "My students constantly achieve the best grades in the school, I am not prepared to change my teaching to justify your overspend on new equipment."

With the use of IWBs seriously declining, you could argue that my mother was wholly right in refusing to integrate this tool into her teaching. But IWBs have had their role to play in the classroom, just as overhead projectors have. A teacher needs to be adaptable and willing to move with the times because classroom tools will continue to change, just as our student's needs change.

At Kolbe we pride ourselves on building a community. We support each other and ultimately we listen to each other. Professional learning for staff should be the same. Teaching is a highly respected career choice, pedagogy is something unique to each staff member and I believe that only through respect of this, can you begin to implement positive change from the roots up.

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Doug Loader is a technology enthusiast with a track record of delivering effective and working solutions in education and business. He is an Apple Distinguished

Educator and has worked in education for over five years. He manages the IT Department at Kolbe Catholic College in Rockingham, 45 minutes south of Perth. Visit his website for more articles, guides and opinions: www.isupport.com.au