

EDUTECH ASIA

DAS Presents at Suntec City Convention Centre!

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As the Singaporean education aims to prepare its students to meet the demands of the upcoming digital economy, it must integrate technology into the academic curriculum.

The prospect of educational technologies (EduTech) in the classroom, however, makes some educators uncertain. Yet, the growing importance of future-proofing our learners with 21st century skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, collaborative learning and information literacy is an indication to educators of the need to play catch-up with EduTech when trying to develop these skills in learners. For that to happen, are our teachers ready to embrace ICT? How do we guide teachers through a tech-integration model

such that teachers can evaluate for themselves where they stand in their individual tech-integration efforts. For those who wish to make progress in their tech-integration, allowance must be made for interaction - be it online or face to face for objective sharing, commenting and critiquing where necessary to help everyone grow from their starting points.

From 8 to 10 November 2017, I was buzzing about at Suntec City Convention Centre in search for experts' views and recommendations as well as to find out what the new developments and approaches relating to educational technologies (EdTech) were. On top of these, I was also involved in two panel discussions and two oral presentations.

My first panel session was about assessing the efficacy of disability specific technology solutions of special educational needs (SEN) learning. Being my very first panel session, I was extremely nervous and felt the jitters from head to toe.

Going up on the stage and speaking to an audience of nearly 1000 people was a daunting experience. This panel session was about the effectiveness of disability-specific tools and solutions and the discussion was extremely constructive as to how tools can be fully utilised under various situations to address various learning needs without limiting its alternative uses. This led to the discussion on why teachers should step away from receiving downward information on what tools to use for particular activities but up their game and explore tools on their own and contribute to discussions and sharing. Information that comes from practitioners will have more weight and quality than information from a non-practitioner or policy-maker. Teachers are also able to creatively tweak the use of certain tools and also provide a reality check of pros and cons as well as the suitability of the tool for certain groups of learners.



The second panel session explored the impact and challenges in incorporating educational technologies into the lesson plan, starting with teacher-readiness in the acceptance of such tools. I spoke my part with relation to the M-Learning week initiative in the Dyslexia Association of Singapore (DAS) and how the responses correspond to the available literature associated with teachers' use of ICT. The M-Learning week is a DAS initiative to encourage the current Main Literacy Programme (MLP) educators in the DAS to actively adopt mobile-learning to go beyond mere adoption of educational technologies (EdTech) by sharing their EdTech integration in their classrooms on the association's Google+ account with the relevant hashtags. Sharing increases awareness of alternative uses and also multiplies ideas as well as inspiration. It also encourages those who are yet to come on board with EdTech. M-Learning week is one way to get conversations started on the incorporation of technology into the lesson design.

The concept underlying M-Learning week largely stems from the theory of connectivism (Siemens 2005 & Downes 2010). Connectivism is a learning theory that explains how educational technologies have created new opportunities for users to learn and share information across the various online platforms and among themselves. These technologies include web browsers, emails, websites, online discussion forums, social networks, YouTube, and any other tool which enables the users to learn and share information with other people. In the case of M-Learning Week, the MLP educators used Google+ to share their strategies and activities involving educational technologies.

A key feature of connectivism is that much learning can happen across peer networks that take place online. In a classroom example of connectivist learning, a teacher will guide students to information and answer key questions as needed, in order to support students learning and sharing on their own. Students are also encouraged to seek out information on their own online and express what they find. A connected community around this shared information often results. As the M-Learning was for educators, the same was applied, only teacher to teacher, as teachers posted their activities and had other teachers posting comments or questions. In doing so, over time, the teachers would have created a resource bank that they could refer to if they

need some ideas or better still, simply post a question and watch the comments or solutions streaming in.

The panel discussion will included the following five areas :

- a) possible determinants of teachers' levels of ICT adoption,
- b) relationships between teachers' confidence and perceived barriers to the adoption of ICT,
- c) teachers' access to ICT tools,
- d) methods of ICT training for teachers and the success rate of ICT adoption, and
- e) teachers' perceptions of time-constraints and how it impacts the adoption of ICT.

On top of my sharing, I also learnt from the other panellist's success stories as well as challenges in what makes tech-adoption an overall success and also how it is a never-ending journey because technology evolves so rapidly; by the time the tools reach the classroom, it's considered yesterday's technology already.

The first of my oral presentation was on StoryBird. This is really an awesome tool that I would highly recommend to any educator who is working with their students on writing activities - be it stories, poems or anything at all. All of my students never seem to get tired of StoryBird and the amazing part is that StoryBird involves the parent(s) too. This activity makes room for many discussions to take place between myself and my students' parents and the students just want to continue with their stories even when they are at home instead of waiting for the next lesson with me. So, in class, they would present the stories that they have already completed at home and a handful of my students have even crafted listening comprehension questions for their peers. I have been so touched by this and am simply very glad that I have ignited some excitement for writing in my students who were initially reluctant to write paragraphs using paper, pen and printed graphic organisers.

So, if you are asking what StoryBird really is, well, it is an online story builder. StoryBird allows the writer to choose their graphics and is very user friendly, especially for young children. It gives the students the feeling that they are doing their very own picture storybook which they can show to



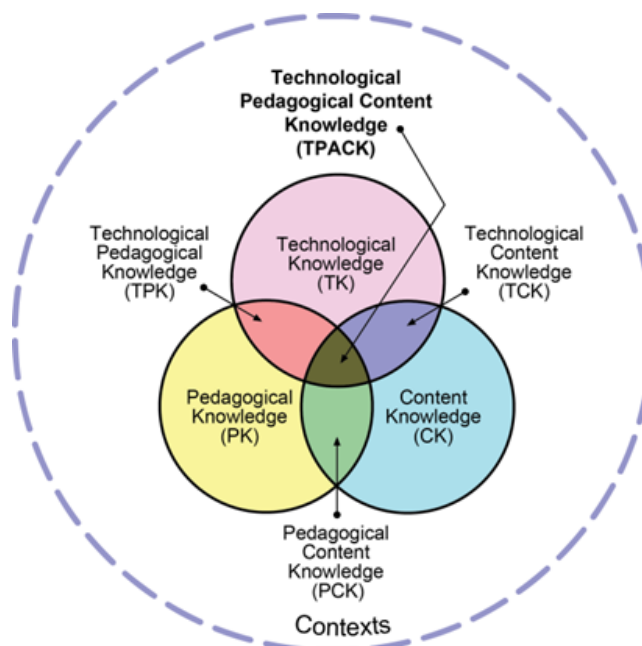


anyone or even print. They can have a very short sentence on the pages or write an entire paragraph. Some of the parents of my students, who are very involved their children’s works, have told me that it has become their Sunday afternoon activity or even a break between their children’s homework time and to top it off, the siblings of my students even want to do their own digital storybook.

The last oral presentation was on TPaCK as well as the SAMR models. Technological Pedagogical and Content Knowledge (TPaCK) attempts to identify the nature of knowledge required by teachers for technology integration in their teaching, while addressing the complex, multifaceted and situated nature of teacher knowledge. The TPACK framework extends Shulman’s idea of Pedagogical Content Knowledge.

At the heart of the TPACK framework, is the complex interplay of three primary forms of knowledge: Content (CK), Pedagogy (PK), and Technology (TK). The TPaCK approach goes beyond seeing these three knowledge bases in

isolation. The TPaCK framework goes further by emphasizing the kinds of knowledge that lie at the intersections between three primary forms: Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK), Technological Content Knowledge (TCK), Technological Pedagogical Knowledge (TPK), and Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPaCK).



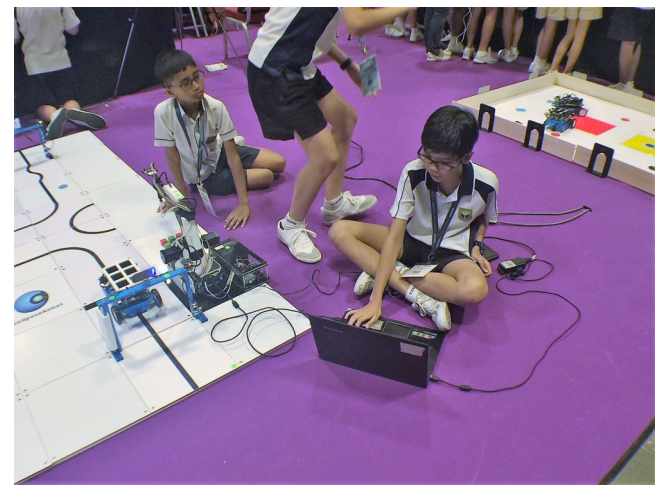
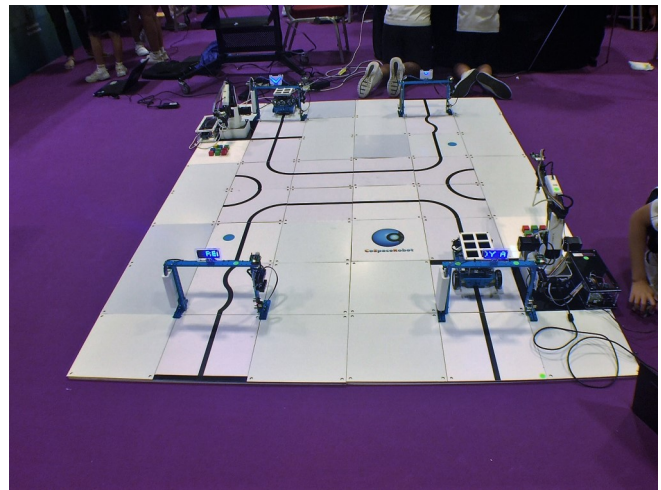
Effective technology integration for pedagogy around specific subject matter requires developing sensitivity to the dynamic, transactional relationship between these components of knowledge situated in unique contexts. Individual teachers, grade-level, school-specific factors, demographics, culture, and other factors ensure that every situation is unique, and no single combination of content, technology, and pedagogy will apply for every teacher, every class, or every learning need.

The Substitution Augmentation Modification Redefinition (SAMR) model offers a method of structuring the progress of how educational technology might impact teaching and learning. It also describes the progressive stages that adopters of educational technology often go through as they integrate technologies into their lesson designs.

While one might argue over whether an activity can be defined as one level or another, the important concept to grasp here is the level of student engagement through the use of educational technologies. One might well measure progression along these levels by looking at who is asking the important questions. As one moves along the continuum, educational technology becomes increasingly important in the classroom but at the same time becomes more invisibly woven into the demands of good teaching and learning.

While these were the four key areas I was presenting or sharing on, I learnt much more from other presenters and panelists which I will be incorporating into my future EdTech workplan.

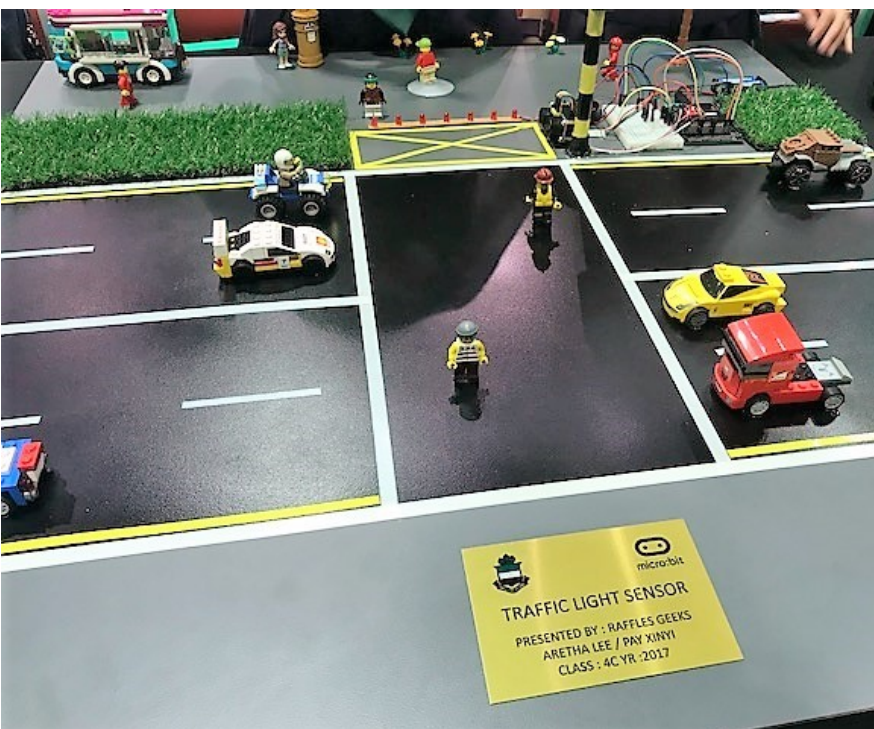
Having attended EduTech Asia every year since 2016, it is one conference I would definitely recommend for educators who want to know what's new and what's out in the area of instructional design with technology.





SOOFRINA is the EdTech Coordinator for the Main Literacy Programme (MLP) at DAS. MLP provides a comprehensive and quality curriculum to support students with dyslexia facing literacy challenges. The MLP curriculum integrates key essential learning components that are crucial in remediating students with learning difficulties and these recommended areas of instruction are adapted from the National Reading Panel, 2000.

Educational technology is a critical component of the programme. We are focused on the application and study of educational technologies and how it enhances skills and cognitive characteristics in both educators and learners and so we pilot and lead initiatives with educational technologies such as studying users' perceptions on uses of iPads in the MLP classrooms, impact of Mimio Teach Smart Bars on MLP educators and dyslexic learners, and the formative approach to the digitalization of the Curriculum Based Assessments.



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