How does educational technology allow us to create a culture of innovation?

The role of educator has changed significantly since the integration of technology. Teachers are not the esteemed holders of knowledge as they once were because students' have a wealth of information at their fingertips. There has been talk for years about how the skills of the workforce have changed and how educators are preparing learners for jobs that do not even exist. Friedman's article, "How to Get a Job at Google," highlights five attributes of hirable candidates. These include cognitive ability, leadership, humility, ownership and expertise (Couros, 157). Education is about so much more than reading, writing and arithmetic. Educators must now prepare learners to be creative, critical thinkers who flexibly solve real-world problems across multiple content areas and then communicate solutions to a wide audience. According to Forbes, 40% of U.S. jobs will be automated by 2030, "Today's kindergartners are the graduating class of 2030, so while the challenge might seem far off, it is actually quite urgent." Luckily, brilliant educators across the globe have felt that sense of urgency and are accepting this transformational challenge and making significant changes for learners.

Equity, a key focus of educators, administrators, superintendents and school boards, isn't about all kids – it is about each and every kid. Districts are investing time and resources to prepare students for college, career and life readiness. As part of that preparation, educational technology has significantly impacted our classrooms. For instance, the 1:1 initiative ensures every learner has his/her own device during the school day. In educational technology circles, personalized learning is the new buzz. The International Association for K-12 Online Learning, iNACOL, defines personalized learning as, "Tailoring learning for each student's strengths, needs and interests–including enabling student voice and choice in what, how, when and where they learn–to provide flexibility and supports to ensure mastery of the highest standards possible*" (*Abel, 2015*).* Both 1:1 and personalized learning are excellent shifts in the direction toward equity and innovation. Technology is a tool and alone, technology will not make the necessary change. "Learners are the drivers; technology is the accelerator" (Couros, 2015). The right educational approach is learner focused; these learners include both educators and students.

In the book, The Passion-Driven Classroom: A Framework for Teaching and Learning, the authors discuss the achievement gap in education as a reflection of a gap of passion rather than achievement. They state:

> *Students are not falling through the cracks because our standards are low, or because our classrooms are ill equipped with the latest technology, or because we failed to use the right book or strategy. They are falling because we have not yet found a way to sustain the energy, excitement, and love for learning they came with when they first entered our classrooms* (Maiers and Sandvold 4)

Educational technologies can support our work in reaching each and every learner and these tools can be transformational.

Couros references Porter's three levels of integration: literate, adaptive and transformative (157). At a literate level, you become familiar with the tool. Adaptation occurs when the tool helps you do something

with the tool that you used to do without it. Transformation only happens when the tool allows you to do something new that was not possible without the tool. In order for learners to get to the transformative stage, it's important to remember that less is more (Couros 157). With thousands of apps and technology tools out there, educators must choose carefully. Simplicity and focus will help you achieve a true level of transformation because transformation requires time and creativity. "Creativity is where we start to think differently, and innovation is where creativity comes to life" (Couros 158). Being innovative and using technology tools in transformative ways, we begin to push learners beyond their own limitations to achieve their fullest potential.

Educational technologies have changed the face of education and rewritten the age old role of educators. These technologies are a tool, and yes, some can be transformative; however, technology doesn't innovate, humans do. Innovation isn't something that happens in a vacuum and it's not a process to be rushed. Innovation occurs by fostering a culture of creativity, allowing time for teachers and learners to move from literate to adaptive to transformative levels of integration. Make the opportunity to innovate accessible to all. It is about simplicity, passion and equity. You have what it takes so take that first step.

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