

Chapter 18

The Great Classroom Migration: From Face-to-Face to Virtual

Labrini Rontogiannis

American Community Schools (ACS), Athens, Greece

ABSTRACT

Education is continuously changing and constantly adapting to philosophies and methods, even more so in the world of educational technology. The author's own professional path has taken her from chalk and blackboard, to advanced tools adapted to promote learning in both synchronous and asynchronous environments. Most recently in the last months, teachers all over the world were asked to become virtual teachers; teachers scrambled to convert their face-to-face classrooms into a virtual environment overnight. This sudden change from face-to-face to online learning was unprecedented and will have long lasting effects on K-12 education for many years to come. This chapter will outline the journey that was taken to convert a face-to-face class into the virtual environment at the American Community School of Athens, Greece.

INTRODUCTION

Looking back at my i²Flex chapter (Rontogiannis, 2016), I realize how many things have changed; not only in terms of the technology used, but my methods and of course the mode of delivery. In the world of educational technology, so many things change within such a small span of time. With the advent of technology in education, where information is so readily available, teachers have had to adapt moving away from being the bearers of knowledge, but rather guiding students to seek and unravel information, and to in turn create. Teachers are competing with knowledge-riddled Google and YouTube, and must adapt. Within the last 15 years, my own teaching career has taken me from good ol' chalk and blackboard, overhead projectors, Starboards, explainer videos and the flipped classroom, and now blended learning and virtual classes. Moreover, as this chapter comes to fruition, education and educational technology has taken yet another enormous leap; one no one really anticipated. In a matter of weeks, days, and even hours, the face of teaching and learning took a turn. New teachers, seasoned teachers, young and old,

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science or language arts, went from the traditional brick and mortar classroom to being full-on online teachers. Online instructors may have trained years to do what “regular” teachers did overnight during the height of the COVID global pandemic.

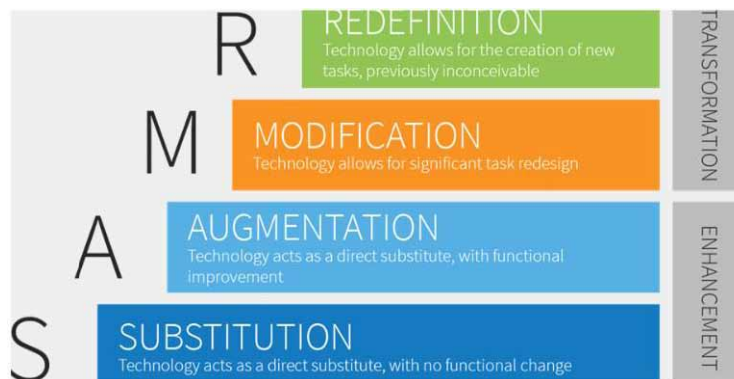
The American Community Schools (ACS) of Athens has been an incredible vehicle in driving these changes in educational technology and being a leader and an example to follow. Located in Athens, Greece, ACS Athens is a large, private International K-12 school embracing American educational philosophy, principles and values. In its mission to do this, ACS Athens is committed to providing innovative programs in order to help students realize their unique potential. Before COVID was even in the picture, ACS Athens was committed to developing and offering online synchronous and asynchronous, meaningful, and challenging high school courses that embrace the American educational philosophy, but are also holistically aligned with the school’s mission of encouraging responsible global citizenship (School Website).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Since 2006, ACS Athens has been adapting to the ever-changing world of technology in education using learning management systems (LMS) and steering their teachers as they delve into the world of educational technology (edtech). Less than a decade ago, the i²Flex learning methodology has guided teachers and students in taking their learning beyond the four-walled classroom. The methodology encourages students to be independent, inquiry-based learners, becoming architects of their own learning through a flexible environment; whether that be face-to-face, blended or virtual (Avgerinou & Gialamas, 2016).

Using technology in education is not as simple as taking a tool and incorporating it into an activity. Technology can be used to enhance an activity, lesson or unit, but even more so to augment it as seen in the SAMR model (Figure 1).

Figure 1. The SAMR Model



When considering the integration of technology in teaching and learning, whether it be in a face-to-face, blended or in a virtual environment, it is important that the use of technology is purposeful. The TPACK framework (Koehler & Mishra, 2009) takes into account and weaves together technological,

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