



Technology: Design and Communities

What if design and technology were about serving communities?

Patrick wanted his design and technology class to think about design as something that could make a difference to a community.

"I started the lesson by showing images of Swaziland, showing its climate and landscape. I sketched the following scenario:

"There are many creative and enthusiastic people in Swaziland, but there is little work (40% unemployment); many people can't afford to buy medical care or schooling for their children, and have little money to spend in the stores. Tourists do come to Swaziland to see the wonderful wildlife and often buy local goods.' I asked students to imagine they were local investors willing to put money into some small businesses in the area. I divided the class into teams, and they each came up with a simple design idea for a small business. I gave them the following to think about:

- A simple product that could be sold in a craft market at a stall that sold things for children.
- Who they think will buy it.
- What difference the business might make to the local community if it flourished.

"The students' ideas ranged from pencil cases to decorative insulating sleeves for bottles to keep them cool. Together we looked at the difference these ideas might make if they were translated into small businesses. We wrote the results of our discussion on cereal boxes. These were set up as a domino rally showing the positive unintended effects. Examples:

- If the business were successful, it would pay workers, who then would have more money for medical care and education.
- Workers would spend money in the stores.

- The stores might be able to hire more people.
- The people would have more money to spend on health and education, etc.”

What’s going on here?

Patrick **saw** design as a way of making a difference to communities by bringing about change.

Patrick **engaged** students by pointing them to a community focus and having them rethink the wider consequences of design work for a community. He had them actively invest their own ideas in this process.

He **reshaped his practice** by changing the context for a creative design task, asking questions that pushed the focus out to others, and finding concrete ways of encouraging students to see that change is possible. He supplemented this with a way to help them imagine the outcome (domino activity).

What does this have to do with faith, hope, and love?

Christian **faith** and **love** grows and is exercised in community, as part of the fellowship with other Christians. Christians can form serving communities that bring **hope** to the wider community. The Bible emphasizes people in community. Often the word “you” in the Bible is plural, but we read it as singular because our culture tends to stress the individual. For example: “You are God’s temple” (1 Corinthians 3:16) is plural, but is often read as singular.

What difference does it make?

Changing the scenario made students think about the community aspect of change and the effects that our work can have on others, rather than just designing for individuals. The unit also offered encouragement that change is possible, since the effects of actions can multiply.

Where could we go from here?

Students can explore different ways of using design and technology to make a difference to communities. They can look at low-tech solutions to community problems (using, for instance, the *Low-Tech Magazine*, <http://www.google.com/search?gclid=CjwKAEjYhZkSBBQjAigAGD8wYk8wAAQAAQ>) and how small initiatives can make big differences.

Digging deeper

We each live within overlapping communities: family, church, district, nation, and world. As part of God's human family we are bound to these wider communities, not just our local ones. People can use their gifts to help communities flourish. In the Bible, people who had been taken away as captives to foreign cities were told to work for the peace and welfare of those cities (Jeremiah 29:7). The Christian hope for the future is a communal one, a city where peace and love define life.

A man of a right spirit is ... concerned for the good of the community to which he belongs, and particularly of the city or village in which he resides, and for the true welfare of the society of which he is a member. Jonathan Edwards

We cooperate with the Holy Spirit to be agents of change. The Bible talks of the "fellowship" of the Holy Spirit; this word can also be translated "partnership." In the appropriate context, it could carry both meanings (2 Corinthians 13:14).

God is looking for you and me to be fellow workers with God. Bishop Desmond Tutu



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