

Stay Present – Future Goals Reflection

“A journey becomes a pilgrimage as we discover, day by day, that the distance traveled is less important than the experience gained.” (Ernest Kurtz, The Spirituality of Imperfection, p.133)

This quote, originally in my ED800 synthesis paper, summed up that class journey specifically, but also describes my route in the Master of Arts in Education (MAED) program and into teaching in general, a road replete with detours, stopovers, delays, and diversions. While I had originally matriculated for a Postgraduate Degree in Education (PGDE) in Hong Kong five years ago, I did not pursue it. I started this MAED with a vision of my timeframe, courses, and focus, yet over the past two years I have been coaching sports – not what I had planned entering. Now I stand on the brink of graduating, yet concurrently taking a teacher certification course. Yet the experience has given me a greater appreciation for the profession and a deeper understanding of my goals. I have been able to refine my aspirations in developing ‘real life’ leadership and decision making courses; staying involved in sports while expanding my knowledge base in sports coaching; and fulfilling a long-ago prediction to become published.

‘I plan, God laughs.’

If experience has taught me anything, looking back, the road I have taken looked nothing like I had expected, so I can probably assume that the journey going forward will likewise be unpredictable. I need to avoid expectations – notice I did not say ‘plans’ - to be more open-minded toward opportunities that do arise. Yet at the same time, I still must plan and carry out my day-to-day work, trusting that in doing so, I will put myself in the best position to capitalize on those opportunities.

To that end, my student teaching internship is in the History department at an international secondary school (high school). History is my background, where my personal and professional passion lies. I have a vision to create a course that combines my prior diplomatic experience with history content to examine issues in

leadership and decision-making during formative periods – Civil War, Vietnam, WWII, the Cold War - with students role-playing as historical figures to face decision points in a 'leadership roundtable' environment. Texts such as these - Manchester, MacPherson, and McNamara - would be excellent starting points, and students would be leading the learning and understanding first-hand the consequences of their decisions.

I have also become aware of teaching roles that would leverage my sports coaching experience and certifications. While classroom teaching is my 'heart's desire', I have always been involved in sports and would like to continue, but more education and professional qualifications would likely be necessary – such as MSU's Master of Science in Sport Coaching and Leadership. I have also begun teaching swimming to several autistic and special needs children in Hong Kong. The initial learning curve was steep, and I still feel a bit out of my depth, so if I want to continue I would need more specific training in this area. AUSTSWIM (the Australian national teaching swimming body) provides courses in this area.

One final goal comes from a prediction that a colleague made to me more than 25 years ago. She predicted that I would write and publish a book. I know I write well, but there is trepidation over whether I would have the stamina, the creativity, and the content to do it. I may have the ambition, but ambition without action will not result in a book being produced. History is the logical direction I would take, but again, I need to be open to possibilities and recognize it may not be the journey I take. I have seen friends occupied for months and years writing, still to no end. Yet I have also seen friends publish children's books. Resources abound with tips for prospective writers, but I believe I would probably be best served talking with those people who have actually gone through the process, gradually building relationships in the industry, and keeping my eye on the ultimate objective. But as a friend once told me, "You can starve to death reading a menu." I need to take positive action to make it happen.

"In God's world, there are no coincidences."

Everything happens for a reason; while the route I have taken to get to this point is not the one I anticipated, or would have chosen, every experience and understanding I have gained has been valuable. I have goals for the future, and however things develop, the pilgrimage also tells me that I must be prepared to take a different route if the inner voice is present.

References

Kurtz, E. and Ketcham, K. (1992). *The spirituality of imperfection: Storytelling and the search for meaning*. New York: Bantam Books.