

EdTech Connection

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New captain at the helm



Anthony Saba's office is in the left wing of Hyundai's Mabuk training center in Yong-in City, about 45 minutes south of Seoul. The Mabuk campus is the flagship of Hyundai's global training network.

Courtesy of Hyundai.

Transformative technology

Saba changes the nature of teaching and learning in university & corporate classrooms

By Jerry Foster

Technology transformed EdTech grad Anthony Saba's teaching, and then his career.

Now he hopes technology—and he—can transform the way the world's fifth-largest automaker trains its employees.

Saba, originally from Staten Island, New York, is a 2011 EdTech grad, who has taught university English in Korea since 1998. Last spring, he was recruited by Hyundai to create and manage cultural and diversity training

for 80,000 employees worldwide.

Like a small rudder on a big ship, Saba knows it will take time to turn the corporate training practice from traditional didactic instructional methods, such as PowerPoint presentations, videos, and quizzes, to more interactive teaching strategies because they are more engaging, and the more educators and trainers get learners engaged and involved in their studies, the more they learn.

He'd like to leverage technology more effectively—webquests, for example, for workers

from various countries. The collaborative nature of webquests would give multi-national groups of employees opportunities to work together and compare cultural differences in their working styles. This would be especially useful for employees who will be sent overseas to work on international assignments with diverse groups of people.

Head winds

He'd like to use more technology- supported problem-based learning, but that process generally takes time and many of the training sessions are scheduled only for a couple of days.

Corporate and national regulatory issues are also challenging.

Educators are innately sharers. Researchers publish to share their findings. Teachers share lesson plans. Universities share administrative practices and their sports teams even share game films. But just as sharing is part of the culture of education, it is most definitely not the culture of business. The two cultures are diametrically opposite to the point that sharing—even inadvertently—is anathema in business. Innovations of design, production, or distribution can create a competitive edge by increasing sales or reducing expenses. Either way, loss of proprietary information can **affect a company's bottom line, which is why** Hyundai does not allow employees to use

Google apps—it is just too easy to upload and possibly expose proprietary information to prying eyes.

National regulations regarding personal privacy, particularly in Europe, prevent Saba from creating a global learning network because he cannot access employee personnel data across national boundaries.

Innovators, like athletes, are not recognized unless they overcome great odds. Saba may be a little rudder on a big ship, but his



Saba works with a student in a one-on-one oral description activity in an intensive English class at Hongik University. He taught there 7 years before joining Hyundai.

Boise State master's degree in educational technology fortunately focused on technology-supported problem solving, rather than just computer skills or educational theory. He is now in the EdTech doctoral program, so if anyone can develop the leadership to create effective training solutions within these constraints, he will.

And Hyundai's system for training employees worldwide will be a competitive innovation in itself.



Anthony, Hyun-Jung, and kids on Jeju Do (Island), a popular tourist destination in Korea. The stone statues are called *Hallu-bang*, as the style is particular to Jeju Do. They can be found throughout Korea in various styles, including totem-like wooden versions. They are placed at the entrances to villages and homes to protect against evil spirits. They predate Buddhism, but were continued after Buddhism came to the peninsula.

Technology in the Korean academy

It was that very opportunity—more challenge, more responsibility and a chance for advancement—that convinced Saba to leave a comfortable assistant professorship at **Hongik University, Korea’s preeminent art school whose “eclectic bohemian” students** create a Greenwich Village atmosphere in northwest neighborhoods of Seoul.

Most instructors at Hongik used technology in basic ways, and so did Saba before **joining Boise State’s M.E.T. program. Then, he says, “My focus changed from content presentation to interactive uses of technology for student-centered collaborative learning.”**

For example, he:

- Required his conversational English students to create narrated videos of the best places to go in Seoul, edited them in iMovie or Windows Media Maker, uploaded their video to a YouTube channel, and then discussed—in English, of course—**each other’s videos.**
- Assigned them to use ISSUU to create magazines, which they discussed in class.
- Experimented with text-messaging for collaboration and communication outside of class.
- Set up Moodle discussion boards so students would interact more outside of class

because one of the issues with EFL learning is that students don't use English outside of the classroom. So, they held discussions in forums online between classes around various topics.

- Created a mobile app to provide class information, including an RSS feed from discussion boards in Moodle, which they could view through the web-app.
- Used webquests to make instruction more interactive and collaborative and blurred, in fact, the lines between class time and free time.

His students enjoyed using technology in their learning but, like students everywhere, complained that the class required too much time and effort, particularly outside of class.

His colleagues, on the other hand, expressed interest in learning more about effective integration. Most of them are still using things like paper handouts, textbooks, chalkboards, and such. "Ironically," he says, "Korea in general and young college students in particular are very fond of technology and use it heavily outside of class (or in class) to talk with their friends, but instructors barely use it at all."

In the beginning

In 1998, Saba's twin sister Mary Ellen convinced him to put work on an earlier master's program on hold and go with her to Korea. So, he committed and on the night before their departure, she canceled.

Saba went to Korea and three years later, a friend introduced him to a girl at a party. Her name was Hyun-Jung Jo (Jo is her family name) and, after dating awhile, they got married—twice, once at home in New York and once in Korea. Their daughter Rylee is almost four now and Anthony Jr. is 18 months. He is just learning to talk, but Rylee is bilingual because her mother speaks to her primarily in



Anthony and Hyun-Jung at their traditional Korean wedding. They also were married in New York, so American family and friends could attend. A few family members attended both ceremonies.

Korean and her father speaks to her in English. "When we are all together, we pretty much just mix-it-up. It can be quite humorous at times!"

Q&A

What do you like to do when you're not teaching and being a doc student?

Hmmm. Being a dad! That's pretty much all there is time for these days, since I work for 11 hours, study for four and play with the

kids for two or three hours in the evenings. Weekends, I try to reserve time strictly for my family. We go to parks and playgrounds, and hike in the many mountains of Korea.

What do you eat at home, mostly American or mostly Korean? We mix it up—a lot of Korean food at home these days since the kids were born. We are a pretty **traditional family now that I'm working full days** with the wife doing the traditional household chores. She does make things like pasta, but often it is some kind of Korean-American fusion dish.

If you eat much American food there, what do you eat most often? Well, if we eat American food, whatever that is these days, we often go to family restaurants like TGIF or Pizza Hut.

Of Korean food, what do you like the most? Korean barbeque is my favorite, especially the beef ribs. I also like many of the **rice dishes and things like kimchi stew. I'm not so fond of the Korean style seafood**, but there are tons of Japanese restaurants everywhere these days, so I enjoy eating sushi as well.

Who cooks in your family, you or your wife? Wife these days. Pretty traditional family structure, even though we are not traditionally minded. I cook breakfast on weekends—pancakes, French toast, eggs, that sort of thing.

I think students would like to know about salaries and costs there.

Salaries are a bit lower than in the United States, but the taxes are lower and the cost of living can be lower, depending on lifestyle

choices. Housing can be a bit expensive if you want something on the scale of what you might expect in the United States. If you go native and live in the more typical smaller apartments, then the cost is not bad. A young starting teacher at a private institute can make about \$2000 a month with free housing and plane tickets to Korea and back home, two weeks of vacation, national holidays, medical insurance and a one month salary severance pay at the end of a year contract—all that for 20 hours of instruction per week. University instructors make around \$3200 a month, sometimes housing is included or subsidized, medical insurance, and 22 weeks (Yes, 22 weeks) of paid vacation per year with opportunities for extra work during winter and summer vacations for about 12 hours of instruction per week. Full professors in a specific domain area can expect to make more money, approximately \$6,000 to \$8,000 per month.

In a company, the pay can range greatly depending on the industry, position and whether or not you are working as a domestic employee or as an overseas employee.

Did you have to learn Korean when you went there? No, I didn't have to learn it. In fact, many westerners don't learn Korean beyond a superficial level because it is too easy not to learn, and many Koreans want to speak with them in English to practice their English ability. In my first year, I was living alone in a small country town with nothing to do, so I spent my evenings studying Korean at home with textbooks and tapes, and I became quite good by the end of my first year.

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