

Chapter 13

Technology–Enhanced Learning in Higher Education: Tribes and Territories

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ABSTRACT

This chapter explores issues that affect the uptake and integration of Technology in Higher Education, developing a framework to overcome some of the barriers. Technological adoption varies across disciplines. The authors consider disciplines as tribes, where some find technology acceptable and an enabler, whilst for others it is alien and deemed inappropriate. Some territories reflect technology as an area to defend and expand, whilst for others the imposition of technology and associated practices are considered a hostile intrusion into discipline practice. Within the framework, the authors reflect on various perspectives: practitioners', students', and support teams' perspectives within the wider eco-systems and structures. Practitioner concerns reflect discipline traditions and practices, from teaching through to assessment and how to manage the Wikipedia generation. Students' needs in a technological age reflect the demands of the Netizen as student, and the rise and challenge of MOOCs to the teacher and the learner. Institutional mechanisms provide the situation for the use of technology. The authors provide a framework within which to explore the above concerns and describe mechanisms to unite the academic tribes, to see the territorial boundaries as artificial and counter-productive, and to enable the utilisation of E-Learning in current and future Higher Education settings.

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to explore the issues that affect the uptake and integration of technology in to Higher Education (H.E.), and to consider potential solutions to some of the challenges

that are faced. The uptake of technology varies across and within disciplines, with a variety of factors affecting this adoption. We will consider some of the inter-relating issues in the context of a socio-cultural analysis i.e. in terms of the human factors as opposed to the typical focus on

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technology. In *Academic Tribes and Territories*, (Becher & Trowler, 2001) consider academic cultures (tribes) and the discipline based knowledge (territories) and this approach can be adapted here to consider the distinct tribes and territories of Technology Enhanced Learning. In this chapter we will consider the discipline practitioners as members of tribes and reflect on how different groups find technology acceptable and an enabler, whilst for others it seems to offer little tangible progress or value. In our analysis the territories reflect the way that for some, technology becomes a territory to defend and expand, whilst for others, the imposition of technology and associated practices can be perceived as a hostile intrusion into discipline practice.

In context, whilst individuals will have a broadly common background and problem solving skills e.g. (Newell, 1990), we need to consider some basic demographics of computers and education. There is not a uniform *Internet experience*. Geographical and political location will dictate this Internet experience, with different backgrounds, access and exposure e.g. (Epstein, 1982). Individual history will dictate the affordances of educational applications to people. Good tutorials will leave a positive experience e.g. (Rutter, 2000), whilst others will not do so. Indeed the zeitgeist to look online for tutorial material is both modern and may be generational. That the Internet and its varied modes of delivery are natural providers of education material is now a received norm in many parts of the world. However, the Internet itself does have a language and culture of its own and this reflects upon its educational use. How we communicate on the Internet varies from the specific media used e.g. Hypertext (Nelson, 1965) to YouTube, or the conventions adopted; such as the use of Emoticons (Fahlman, 1982) or Viral Videos (e.g. Star Wars Kid). Thus in a pedagogic context we must be sensitive to how the Internet manifests itself to our current times and the users we consider. The model of social organisation we shall develop considers the technological

experience of tribes, made up of individuals influenced by the above, and locations, territories or paradigms that reflect the tribal backgrounds. The current generation of learners are also up takers of *Polymedia* (Madianou & Miller, Migration and New Media: Transnational Families and Polymedia, 2011) whereby we commonly use Internet based multiple media communication channels to live out our domestic day-to-day lives. In Polymedia it is the communication that matters and the technology vanishes into the achievement of everyday living. The emergence of Polymedia represents a new way of potentially projecting learning in Higher Education.

The discussion and exploration of the above topics will allow the development of a systemic framework within which to explore and describe mechanisms to potentially unite the academic tribes, and to see the territorial boundaries as artificial and counter-productive. The aim will be to illustrate the different issues with examples, including practical advice on utilising eLearning in current and future Higher Education settings.

The term Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) is used to encompass the wide range of computer based approaches to teaching, learning and assessment in modern education. eLearning is typically thought of as synonymous with TEL, though eLearning can be sometime more concerned with learning over Internet and network technologies, rather than the slightly wider remit of TEL that we consider in this chapter.

TECHNOLOGY ENHANCED LEARNING

Since the advent of digital computers, numerous approaches to utilise eLearning have developed, with a wide variety of methods and techniques. Recognised eLearning examples appear in the early 1960's onwards (e.g. (Skinner, 1965); (Alpert, 1975); (Nicholson, 2007)), and have developed in a number of ways since then, with software apps

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