

Chapter 1

The Open Context Model of Learning

ABSTRACT

Various digital technologies, the internet, the web, information appliances, smart phones, and particularly, Web 2.0 enable us to review and interrogate how technologies, business, social, personal, and learning technologies can help reconfigure the organisational infrastructure of learning to better align with how human beings learn about the world around us and ourselves. Hazel Henderson said, “Technology is the essence of politics,” but perhaps “Technology is the essence of education,” which for 1000 years has been based on a content-scarcity model of resources and focused on a content-delivery model of learning to an elite who will benefit from access to these scarce resources, themselves based on a subject-based taxonomy that took root in the 19th century and has dominated the design of 20th and 21st century educational institutions. The Open Context Model of Learning argues that we need new models of teaching and learning (obuchenie) built around the PAH continuum of pedagogy, andragogy, and heutagogy and an underpinning belief in the co-creation of learning and education between “teachers” and “learners.”

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INTRODUCTION

This book is about how we might develop educational Institutions that are built around the learning processes of individual learners; what we have come to term “building a learning infrastructure.” Arguably the tipping point in our work towards this was the advent of user-generated content, that is material being produced by “amateurs” which was being hosted on technology platforms built by professionals, sometime in the early 2000s. Just as the analogue technology revolutions of the 1960s, such as single-lens reflex cameras, portable tape-recorders and hand-held film cameras had moved technology “out of the studios and into the streets” the development of a range of digital technologies forty years later offered to move computer technology “off the desks and into the pockets” of users. Arguably the critical technology device in this ever-evolving process was the iPod because it made storage devices with massive capacity portable wrapped around with masses of creative functionality. (Arguably client-server architecture is more transformative, but this is a back-end process technology and does not have the visibility of a single consumer device - or information appliance - that we own and carry around with us for use throughout the day). The resource storage limitations that had originally brought Universities into being around storage facilities full of “content” called libraries just 900 years previously were, overnight, rendered redundant; at least potentially. It was as though any petrol-driven motor vehicle could now carry its refueling requirements around with it instead of having to repeatedly stop at petrol-stations. Or, to extend the sixties analogy, the devices we were now walking around with on the streets were becoming studios in themselves. As Steve Jobs would say “rip, mix, burn” or, put another way, we were now in a world where everybody could become a content-producer and various proprietary technology companies vied to be the hosting platform of choice in order to e-enable that content creation. And monetize it, of course.

EDUCATION AND TECHNOLOGY

Universities, as the central place for learning and defining the nature and purpose of learning in our societies, had slowly evolved from locations where scholars held discussions with great thinkers and wise men, to locations that had that great rarity 30 hand-written books (Oxford University 1093), which were

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