Chapter 1.5
The Evolution of E-Learning Management Systems:
An Ethical Approach

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ABSTRACT

The development of educational technologies is enhancing a distinctive feature of learning environments: the learner's personalized environment. However, the current literature in e-learning seems to neglect an important discussion: will individuals (learners and lecturers) and organizations face an enhancement concerning ethical dilemmas due to this evolution? To promote this discussion, this paper builds on a consideration of e-learning definition and its ethical dilemmas, and human-centred learning concept and its dimensions, to examine the implications of integrating social and cultural contexts. By examining the evolution of e-learning management systems the argument progresses to a discussion of the relationships between pedagogy and ethics. By framing evidence at different scales, the authors critically reflect on the ethical dilemmas embedded in e-learning systems. The discussion concludes with advocating the adoption of an extension of "three P" mode of pedagogy to become the "P3E" model: personalization, participation, productivity, lecturer's ethics, learner's ethics, and organizational ethics.

INTRODUCTION

Nash, Dutton, and Peltu (2004) suggest that network collaboration unlocks new opportunities for rethinking educational stakeholders' relationships, because it provides them further choices about how to engage in education and learning activities. However, it simultaneously represents a dilemma for educational institutions regarding the challenge to transform novel rhetorical ideas and models into actual practice and an appropriate organizational context (Hannan, 2005). This scenario resumes a certain intellectual affiliation between learners' and technologies, as well as a more personalized "education architecture". Therefore, instead of using technologies to lead learners through prearrange interactions; learners may use technologies that function as "the mindful engagement of learners". In this way, when students learn with computer technologies, instead of being restricted by them, they increase their thinking (Small & Vorgan, 2008).

Crump and Costea (2003) suggest that these different types of technology-related learning exist on a dynamic continuum. Despite these arguments, it is remarkable that the e-learning literature seems to pay little regard to the possibilities of the need for moral behaviours concerning e-learning agents (individuals and organizations), or that dynamic process enhances ethical dilemmas. The relationship of ethics and learning using technologies is complex (Jefferies & Stahl, 2005). To achieve responsible use of technology for learning, participants need a considerable degree of education concerning social and ethical norms (Stahl, 2002a). This is considered to be fundamental to e-learning becoming globally accepted as a prerequisite for future social and economic development (Richards, 2004). Against this backdrop, the paper considers that the evolution of e-learning management systems significantly enhances the ethical dilemmas. The paper discusses the implications of the concept of e-learning - and its ethical dilemma - human-centred learning and its dimensions, and evolution of e-learning management systems, to provide an evidence base for an argument for an expanded e-learning pedagogical model.

E-LEARNING

Definition

The literature on e-learning is immense and rich. From it, the authors' emphasize the following definitions: "e-learning will here be defined as the use of ICT in higher education, which aims mainly the independent use of technology by students" (Stahl, 2005, p. 21); and, e-learning is defined as the online delivery of information for purposes of education, training, or knowledge management, and is different from formal education, which occurs off campus, and usually, but not always, through online resources (distance learning) (Turban *et al.*, 2006). These definitions entail a formal scope of educational design that the new learning environments challenge in a continuum of thought, from "established" at one end to "emergent" at the other. Barnes and Tynan (2007) criticize the attempt to compel formal education in developing student-centred learning environments 2.0, such as: networks, skype, msn, and blogs. Furthermore e-learning 3.0 (web semantics) enhances this critique, because it transgresses the boundaries of traditional institutions, increasing self-organised learning.

The authors, therefore, claim that e-learning is evolving from a collective ("e-learning 1.0"), to a person-centred learning ("e-learning 3.0"). In spite of this e-learning evolution, the literature broadly describes four general categories of technological systems: Learning Management Systems (support administrative tasks); Managed Learning Environment (including the whole range of information systems and processes, which contribute directly or indirectly to learning and learning management); Learning Content Management Systems (allowing

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