



The Future of Education

El Futuro de la Educación

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Abstract

A doctor from one hundred years ago, visiting a modern hospital, would be completely lost. The tools, procedures, medicines and the criteria for the doctor's role would all differ. In contrast, a teacher returning from one thousand years ago would find many classrooms reassuringly familiar. The hierarchy remains teacher-centered in countless classrooms that still feature students quietly listening to lectures. However, education is undergoing massive change, fuelled by technology, research and private and public innovation.

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Gamification

Lee and Hammer (2011) describe gamification in education as using the interactive aspects of video games to allow students to be involved in new experiences, roles and emotions. Essentially, gamification creates computer-based educational opportunities. An interactive science fiction novel, for example, might be adapted into a game where the reader takes on the role of each character, exploring plot choices.

When students solve problems, they are rewarded with harder problems that encourage development of comprehension, strategies and other abilities. Gamification improves motivation for learning but, at the same time, faces criticism for making education about being entertained rather than true learning and problem solving.

The Flipped Classroom

The flipped classroom presents most learning experiences online in the form of video lectures and tutorials. Students review them, and when they meet their teachers, problems the students have encountered are discussed in depth. Among the most prominent examples of the flipped classroom are courses in mathematics and other subjects offered by Khan Academy. Students appreciate opportunities to review the materials over and over, progressing at their own pace.

However, the flipped classroom requires discipline: students work on their own and they decide when to return to class; a teacher will not always have time

to give each student personal attention.

Crowd-Sourced Knowledge

Wikipedia is one of countless websites where people freely offer their time and expertise to share what they know. This crowdsourced knowledge is modified as people edit and update existing entries and add new ones, forging mind map-like links.

Online newspapers have adopted the model, asking readers for their stories, pictures and videos, and inviting extensive reader comments. In educational settings, students and teachers create wikis of mind-mapped information that others build on and edit. But this approach ignores the expertise of professional materials developers; a student's opinions are not more important than a professor's facts.

E-texts

Whether or not crowd-sourced materials and wikis eventually replace textbooks, what is certain is that students are likely to dispense with traditional paper textbooks and read digital versions instead. These may be more expensive initially, but are more convenient to carry and more interactive. Waller (2013) points out that e-textbooks can be reached only by touching the screen; besides they permit to highlighting information or take notes, they are easier to use than the traditional ones.

A curious concern with e-texts is that they make searching for explanations too easy; if readers never face problems in trying to understand something, they never learn to think.

“Just-in-Time” Learning

The apprenticeship system has long allowed novices to learn with a master of a particular craft. This is still an educational model for some. Aspects of it are also implicitly part of the conventional school system that assumes most knowledge should be absorbed and tested for some unspecified future use.

In contrast, the just-in-time learning model implies you can wait to learn until you need to use the information. Tutorial videos have become just-in-time learning solutions for a range of topics, such as how to deliver a speech. For many, this is preferable to going to class to learn the skill, but online tutorials are not interactive; when you don't understand or something goes wrong, the video cannot remedy the situation.

A Perfect Future?

Will these educational innovations collectively change the nature of schools? Other technologies like radio correspondence courses showed great initial promise but did not explicitly have much lasting value in driving major changes in education. Many of today's technological innovations will turn out the same way.

References

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