

Foreword

Circumstances and timing have a significant impact on teaching, learning, research, and creative expression in learning focused organizations. In this book, Gary Berg gives us examples and case studies offering different successful approaches to tutoring, mentoring and non-classroom based learning. The array of case examples and the differences among them provide a valuable and diverse understanding of the personal development benefits of tutoring, mentoring and other support services that enhance learning. Berg covers the broad landscape of emerging technology and its intersection with the education world. He does this particularly well through his presentation of carefully-selected case studies.

The format of the book has a focus that centers on the applications of emerging technologies to teaching, learning, research and creative expression. Each case study introduces and describes a different method and approach including the particular relevance of a unique approach to education and learning. Many of the examples feature innovative work and offer valuable new insights for those interested in tutorial and mentoring centric education approaches. The cases explained reflect the increasing globalization that continues to affect the way we work, with whom we work, and how we work, collaborate and communicate. Those educational institutions and organizations who do not adapt to the rapidly changing world will find themselves on the sidelines. The growing availability of tools to connect learners and scholars all over the world in new ways is breathtaking. They include online collaborative workspaces, social networking tools, converging mobile devices that do almost anything you wish, and voice over IP and example after example of methods and techniques for transcending traditional learning barriers and fostering teaching and scholarship. Mentoring and tutoring are at the new center.

In a sense, Berg helps redefine the “e” in e-learning. Generally thought of as “electronic,” his presentation helps you understand that the “e” actually means; exciting, empirical, empathetic, extra, emerging, energetic, exceptional, early, eloquent, everywhere, ephemeral, extended, effortless, epic, evangelistic, eclectic, engaging, extended learning and more. The point is that e-learning may be individual, tutorial, a significant part of a mentoring process and a tool for personal communication that is not well understood by generations preceding the “digital natives” of our new generation. In short, tutorial techniques and mentoring using e-learning tools provide access to a rainbow of learning opportunities whose “pot of gold” benefits those who have learned how to learn.

Peter Drucker, a colleague and cousin by marriage once said to me, “Bernie, we design our objectives, organize our learning experiences into detailed plans. Our students that we teach then take what we offer and they learn any way they can.” I have always remembered Drucker’s exceptional insight. What a tutor and what a mentor he was.

Online tutoring, e-mentoring and e-learning in the modern era amplify collective intelligence. These approaches are redefining how we access information. They are reshaping libraries, books and other more traditional ways. New learning tools such as using Google, Yahoo, Facebook, and YouTube are stimulating a grassroots of learning. Today’s learners are intimate and active participants in their experiences.

The very theme of this book that centers on mentoring and tutoring implies acceptance of the “guide on the side,” as opposed to the more traditional “sage on the stage” method of teaching and learning.

The case studies presented underline the fact that one approach need not completely replace the other but more independence and freedom of style are clearly emerging from the diversity. What this work reinforces is the idea that learning how to learn is the key. It also defines and exemplifies the idea of the “scholar/practitioner” and asserts that tutors and mentors who function as scholar practitioners can be very successful with their learners.

This timely book makes the case that significant shifts are taking place in the many ways teaching and learning are carried out. It argues that there is a growing need for formal instruction and education for tutors and for mentors so that they have a repertoire of new skills, including information, visual, technological and learning literacy. Tutors are professionals and professional development is being recognized as important. I believe that graduate education programs concentrating on these fields as specialties will emerge.

Because of his wide range of examples, Gary Berg gives us a more expansive definition of a category of learning and learners. These case studies might be credited with contributing to the rise of what can be termed “The Learning Class.” The Learning Class, in my view, presently numbers in many millions, and includes all of those in the increasingly successful profit and non-profit distance learning colleges and universities, the increasing number of K-12 home schooling participants and the rapidly migrating online access to the necessary continuing education for licensure programs for physicians, attorneys, psychologists, marriage and family therapists, licensed clinical social workers, school psychologists, mental health counselors and traditional blue collar occupations such as contracting, plumbing, electricians, and so on. Tutoring and mentoring using 21st century tools are fundamental to scholar practitioner growth in these areas whether they be traditional white or blue collar fields. With the increasing requirements for licensure for every trade and profession, this type of learning is growing apace. This is true in areas in which distance learning and e-tutoring were viewed with askance in the past. There are still holdouts, but they are diminishing.

Daniel Bell, author and Harvard sociologist, in his book titled, *The Coming Post-Industrial Society*, first published in 1973, looked back in time. He identified how the invention of the cotton gin by Eli Whitney transformed the farm, forced people into the cities and created the Industrial Revolution. Bell argued that computers and telecommunications, like the cotton gin of an earlier era, were bringing about yet another shift in the economy, or what he called the post-industrial society. Bell’s treatise was a significant literary effort that identified structural changes in society leading to the information age. Now, almost forty years later, we are attempting to define yet another shift in the basic structure of the world’s economy. We know that it is global, and Thomas Friedman of the *New York Times* has told us, that “the world is flat.” At least we can agree that it is rapidly getting flatter, even though we must recognize that it is a world of worlds with many borders and cultural idiosyncrasies. Current global financial conditions support the proposition of the flattening world, in spades. Therefore, what may be emerging is “The Global Learning Society.”

Presently, especially in the United States, the pressures of surging enrollments and diminishing space, advancing technology, globalization and dramatically impacted world economies are making distance education, including tutorial learning, mentoring and other forms of non-classroom based learning increasingly and rapidly acceptable. I think that these pressures will cause a burst of leadership, entrepreneurship and innovation. Many segments of education are booming in the falling economics of 2009. Education is touted as one way out of the dilemma. However, if education is to be the boon that is forecast, it must be for adults who are working and it must be now. Tutoring, mentoring and the use of support services are fundamental to success in addressing this opportunity.

In addition, the success of the better profit and non-profit universities that employ tutorial and mentoring models and online learning are becoming examples for others to follow. We are entering a *Brave New World*, as we did with industrialization, the emergence of computer technology and now the birth of a learning society, where those who have learned how to learn will benefit most.

Among the new features of our learning society is what has been termed the first generation of “digital natives.” They will transform our politics, culture and structure of our learning institutions forever. Most were born in the 1990s. They are entering adulthood. They are affecting every aspect of modern life. They can do business, learn over greater distances, and immediately understand how to manage one to one situations on the telephone, video conferencing and all manner of methods. They are “born digital.” The case studies in this book highlight how this digital, tutorial era is transforming the ways people live their lives and relate to one another and the world around them. They don’t distinguish between online and offline. They simply live their lives naturally, because this is the form of communication and learning into which they were born. They are constantly connected. They are comfortable in virtual worlds. They collaborate in ways not possible thirty years ago. They have a larger sense of global community. Certainly there is still a digital divide. It has to do with haves and have not’s. And, even though Friedman asserts that the world is flat, what is more accurate is that it is flatter. It is still a world of worlds, of different cultures and the new learning ways are helping to address this situation.

The timing of this book is significant. Tutoring, defined by Berg as one-to-one teaching/learning, and mentoring, being guided by an experienced advisor, are subjects that are at the leading edge. Digital technologies and digital natives have converged. Education and learning are rapidly changing. The profit schools and universities have recognized this and are profiting, and the traditional non-profits are dragging their bulky torsos into this area of education. The case studies in this book range from degree-granting institutions to non-profit and for-profit organizations. They represent developments occurring around the world from Greece, India, Australia, China, the United Kingdom and the United States.

One-to-one learning in our new digital world is enabling a new way of being. Mentoring, tutoring and new services are the vehicles of progress. This book is an insightful addition in enhancing perspective. It makes the case. It is worth the read.

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