Chapter IV


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Abstract

This chapter explores the evolution of thinking about learning, resulting from the increasingly ubiquitous presence of instructional technology and communications technology in learning environments. It provides a short history of the pedagogical growth of technology usage. It further describes the impact of technology on the potential transformation of four-walled classrooms into global, online learning communities from a constructivist perspective, while looking at learner/teacher roles in the learning process. The Global Forum on School Leadership (GFSL) and the Global Forum on Educational Research (GFER) are introduced as applications of interactive educational technology, suitable for twenty-first century learners, teachers, and school leaders, that emphasize creation of new knowledge using exploration and collaboration through self directed, technology-enhanced
learning controlled by the learner. The intent of this discussion is to explore the impact of technology on learning, and recognize the transformative power behind introducing this learning experience into school leader preparation programs.

Introduction

This chapter explores the evolution of thinking about learning, resulting from the increasingly ubiquitous presence of instructional technology and communications technology in learning environments. It provides a short history of the pedagogical growth of technology usage. It further describes the impact of technology on the potential transformation of four-walled classrooms into global, online learning communities from a constructivist perspective, while looking at learner/teacher roles in the learning process. As examples of the type of collaborative learning that can result from this educational metamorphosis, the Global Forum on School Leadership and the Global Forum on Educational Research are introduced as Type II applications of interactive educational technology suitable for 21st century learners, teachers, and school leaders. Type II applications are those that emphasize creation of new knowledge using exploration, discovery, and collaboration, through the use of the computer as a self-directed learning tool controlled by the learner, rather than technology applications that parallel programmed-learning events, such as drill and practice exercises, which are considered to be Type I applications (Maddox, Johnson, & Willis, 1997).

The concept of the Forum Series brings together learners who share a common goal, a common subject area, or a common profession, and encourages them to interact and learn together. Among the many differences that learners bring to the learning task, the one central, and very obvious difference upon which the Forum Series depends, is culture. The Global Forum on School Leadership creates a learning partnership between a class of neophyte school leaders enrolled in a school leader preparation program in the United States, and a similar class of students enrolled in a school leader preparation program in Australia. The Global Forum on Educational Research is designed for a doctoral program, and replicates the success patterns of the GFSL, with the added variable of Web-based video interactivity. The discussion in this chapter begins with a strong focus on the evolution of technology use in schools, the concomitant application of pedagogy as the computer merged with classroom activities, and the related evolution of learning in increasingly technologically rich learning environments. The Forum Series is then introduced as a Type II application, capable of facilitating a self-directed, student lead orientation to learning, increasingly
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