

Foreword

At the very first lines of this book you get caught by the writers' courage to mention the real opportunities and threats of the World-Wide Web. Labelling the problematic phenomena like cyberbullying and plagiarism as "the dark side" the authors show affinity with the classical drama where after the exposition an intriguing conflict emerges and threatens to take over the enthusiastic mindset of internet pioneers forever. Their story goes beyond the apocalypse of dystopia like in many current critical essays nowadays. What is this book's overall message?

In terms of learning and teaching its message is that the magnitude and challenge of high-quality distant learning material will change our current business models, and not at least the way students will be assessed and evaluated; Interaction is no longer a critical resource; Learners need involvement and attachment to real-life cases. Teachers face a task of being mentor and coach. Universities will be ranked to the extent to which they let students finish as creative team players and dedicated societal innovators.

The epitome of this book is the understanding of sustainable education: It will be the situation where the student is the owner and at the real center of his/her learning process. The learning is seen as an existential process rather than acquiring a certificate in itself.

This book is honest and shy to mention what metaphor the learning sector will call upon itself next; will it be a process of catharsis: opening up our latent wishes and fears. Or will it be like taking a bath in the lake of wisdom and serene thinking? While in the early episode of Enlightenment, the term "learning by heart" pointed to the fact that genuine learning implies "take the new knowledge in your intimate mind" (provided that the human mind was supposed to be in one's heart rather than in the brains. The same metaphoric swivel from 'acquiring knowledge' into 'acquiring the full spiritual impact' might lift off, once the web offers all potential views and mining hidden understanding.

Finally this book launches the power of visual language, avatars and virtuality. May it convince you that learning nowadays will not predict what we understand as learning in ten years from now; we will smile tenderly if we watch pictures from 2014 where students open their tablets and smart phone. Learning in 2020 will be immersive and ubiquitous; even the term learning may disappear as it will be part of everything in life: working, playing, sleeping and ... dreaming.

I recommend you read it now.

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Piet Kommers is Professor of UNESCO Learning Technologies and built his career as researcher in cognitive and social support for communication and education. He instigated European research projects from the early stage of DELTA (1988) until this very stage of Horizon 2020. The citations of his more than 150 publications exceed 3000 and reach the h-index of 24. He has been keynote speaker in more than 40 international conferences and received guest professorships around the world. The International Journal of Web-based Communities and five yearly conferences under the IADIS auspices were initiated and chaired by him. He is professor at the University of Twente and Utrecht State University in The Netherlands. He promoted more than 20 PhD students and about 160 Master students in the fields of educational paradigms, mobile-, virtual and vicarious learning. Since 2001 he is advisor of the UNESCO International Institute for Technology in Education and author of numerous Specialized Training Courses and Policy Briefs on Social Media, Mobile Learning and the International Master Course “ICT in Teacher Professional Education”. He was consultant delegated by the EU Commission on Internationalization in Higher Education in the ASEAN countries.