Chapter 4

Higher Education Out-of-the-Box:
Technology-Driven Learning Innovation in Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

Engaged Scholarship entails utilizing Technology driven Learning Innovation in Higher Education (HE) in an integrative manner and more than before in an Out-of-the-Box approach. Proper use of ICTs in higher learning educational systems ensures that not only the resources of the institutions are put in good use but that academic service learning, community based research and community engagement are enhanced. This chapter looks to discuss and address the various challenges HE institutions face as they try to adopt engaged scholarship by putting emphasis on proper use of ICTs and examining the implementation and impact of various ICT tools and of the social media. This will drive engaged scholarship, and the type of learning and development required to empower the stakeholders. Our main point is that proper and often Out-of-the-Box use of ICT tools in Higher Education could increase the engagement of the individuals in the learning process, help empower them and thus also improve their Quality of Life but also lead to improved Economic Development and Sustainability.

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INTRODUCTION

In the last years, various developments in the context of Higher Education (HE) have received growing attention challenging the academic policy making in various levels. The design and promotion of interdisciplinary or integrated curricula and programs, the adoption of various technologies in different areas of academic performance or administration, as well as the availability of diverse platforms for the delivery of learning content are only few of the main aspects of the change (Healey et al., 2014; Fieldsend-Dunks, 2016; Buchanan et al., 2016).

Additionally, critical changes have also occurred in the business models supporting the formal HE, investigating new methods and practices for the creation of new markets of students with different profiles and preferences on the mode and time for the delivery of education. One of the greatest challenges for the institutions of the HE is to reconsider or to update their main strategic mission with student-centric statements. The research team do believe that the new vision for the HE is to craft strategies that promote the creativity, engagement and connection aspects of student learners. With the variety of knowledge available almost everywhere in our days, we do believe that the HE should put critical effort on the evolution of strategies that enhance the critical thinking and the adaptability of students to real world problems (Moody et al., 2014; Buchanan et al., 2016). The connection of HE institutions with the community and its needs is a major need and challenge of contemporary societies.

This chapter looks to discuss and address the various challenges HE institutions face as they try to adopt engaged scholarship by putting emphasis on proper use of Information and Communications Technology (ICTs) and examining the implementation and impact of various ICT tools and of the social media. This will drive engaged scholarship and the type of learning and development required to empower the stakeholders. The main point is that proper and often Out-of-the-Box use of ICT tools in HE could increase the engagement of the individuals in the learning process, help empower them both as learners and engaged citizens, and thus also improve their Quality of Life but also lead to improved Economic Development and Sustainability.

The main purpose, therefore, of our chapter is to propose an alternative approach to the traditional monolithic approach to Teaching Scholarship and Research as it is evident in various faculty evaluation processes. We are proposing an integrated technology enabled strategy for a collaborative Engaged Scholarship in Higher Education. The main contribution of our approach is to think education Out-of-the-Box and to investigate how technology and new technologies like social media, collaboration platforms, virtual reality, immersive technologies, set new challenges
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