Chapter 6

Doctoral Platforms and Apps for Professional Development and Student Support

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ABSTRACT

Using the experience derived across multiple universities, this chapter endeavors to discuss how ICT can play a role in the larger evolution of higher education, as well as with helping doctoral students complete their research and writing requirements. Practitioner research underpins the discussion of two rounds of research centered on ICTs role in equalizing disparity in financial and social capital between students and taking those solutions to scale. The first round (2012 – present) focuses on the ICT suite of services as they develop, and the second (2015 – present) investigates how, and in what ways, the interdependence between the Deans’ office and the subscription business play a part in student adoption and usage. The findings suggest that a willingness to develop interdependent solutions between ICT developers and postgraduate studies will be instrumental in bringing services for doctoral students to scale.

AUTHOR’S NOTE

Nassim Nicholas Teleb (2012) takes academics to account in the way research writes about innovation. This author agrees with his premise that, to some extent, we are guilty of rewriting history when we take the back and forth, step-by-step process of innovation and synthesise or theorise about it. Discussing the topic of ICT in

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doctoral education is to discuss a view of an innovative moment in the evolution of education. As an experimenter in this realm, this research is written from the dual role of an academic interested in putting words to the shifts in practise, while also a driver of change as the business owner producing the service being investigated. In agreement with Teleb, that it is in fact backwards to the real world of innovation within digital learning to write about ongoing changes, because theory lags innovation, this chapter reports first on the development of the ICT data and then discusses its potential ramifications to postgraduate centred teaching and learning.

Throughout this chapter, I stay true to experience from both the position of practitioner research into doctoral teaching and learning and my leadership as CEO. This chapter first tells the story that explains the work, then moves through the data to what was learned through those experiences, and only then to the lessons and implications to practise that stand out. As a solo academic/edupreneur, the author hopes that the story engages others in a way that a strict research format may not.

**INTRODUCTION**

This chapter endeavors to discuss how ICT can play a role in the larger evolution of higher education as well as with helping doctoral students complete their research and writing requirements. It starts with a short discussion of this authors’ experience as a supervisor of over 50 students who completed degrees in Education or Business, graduating from online programmes in the United States. These doctoral students were “nontraditional”: from diverse backgrounds, usually older, all at a distance from campus, engaging in education that was heavily influenced by instructional design as well as professorial understanding or personality. Then it goes on to outline lessons learned through two rounds of ongoing action learning/research which took place from 2012-2018. Finally, the chapter ends with a view of a potential future and a discussion of recommended next steps.

A Vice Provost at a university we support told me that, “the most important answer for a university of our size to answer is how we can equalise the difference between students, especially those who have less social and financial capital, and how we can take those solutions to scale” (Benedik, 2017). The underlying question that serves as a focus for the research discussed in this chapter cycles back to that problem by asking, “What kinds of technology will be part of the solution and how should it be delivered?”

As author, I stand between two roles in this document: author and researcher on the one side, and founder and CEO of the company that provides the Software as a Service (SaaS) to universities that has been studied. Thus, I am a new type of practitioner, academically trained and previously employed educator, now discussing
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