Chapter 9
Expanding the Imagination, Thinking, Knowledge, and Relevant Skills: True Innovation With Electronic Hive Minds?

ABSTRACT
“Creatives” online, those who innovate as a regular part of their work and lifestyles, are likely one of the most diverse electronic hive minds, with often highly dissimilar and heterogeneous members. As a general group, they are specialists in their respective areas but often engage online with professionals in their respective communities of expertise as well as with others in disparate fields in order to benefit from the cross-fertilization of ideas. They are by nature and practice exploratory and often sharing. This chapter explores what the pursuit of inspiration looks like for the EHM based around creative work.

INTRODUCTION

Dominick Cobb: What is the most resilient parasite? Bacteria? A virus? An intestinal worm? An idea. Resilient... highly contagious. Once an idea has taken hold of the brain, it’s almost impossible to eradicate. An idea that is fully formed - fully understood - that sticks, right in there somewhere.” - Christopher Nolen (screenplay author and film director), Inception (2010)

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A revised version of Bloom’s Taxonomy for levels of learning suggests that people have to acquire particular capabilities in order to wield more complex skills. At the base of the Bloom’s Taxonomy triangle is remembering, then understanding, then apply, analyzing, evaluating, and creating. It is no accident that the ability to create is at the pinnacle (1956, mid-1990s, as cited in Anderson, Krathwohl, Airiasian, Cruikshank, Mayer, & Pintrich, 2001). The imagination seen as a “higher mental function” as “a consciously directed thought process that is learned through collective social interactions” (Vygotsky, 1931, pp. 14 – 16, as cited in Smolucha & Smolucha, Aug. 1986, p. 3). Another researcher points to creativity as “the epitome of cognitive flexibility” Dietrich, 2004, p. 1018).

It is one thing to understand the world accurately and to function effectively in it, but to be able to see possibilities (with imagination) and actualize them in the world (with innovation) requires expertise in the target domain combined with imagination—for an informed imagination. There needs to be “the collaboration of imagination and thinking in concepts” as a necessity for “both artistic and scientific creativity” (Vygotsky, 1931, pp. 14 – 16, as cited in Smolucha & Smolucha, Aug. 1986, p. 3). Expertise without imagination, and imagination without expertise will leave people short of the goal. It one thing to retroactively look back at a set of facts and assume that a particular advancement was fated, but in the real, such discoveries are challenging. Actualizing new innovations in the world is a hard problem, with real world constraints. Expertise in one area can be difficult to apply to other contexts, and prior paradigms may exert undue influences on thinking, making new thinking difficult.

A number of fields may be considered ones for “creatives,” those who create new contents (writers, designers, editors, marketers, and others). There are those who invest much effort into exploring new thinking (artists, performers, and others). Those who work in research have to be creative because they are advancing their respective fields with new discoveries. Engineers, chemists, and other scientists also work in spaces where constant new thinking and new doing are de rigueur. For many, invention is the job. How creativity is actualized may differ based on the respective domains, the available technologies, the collaborating teams, the work context, and the creativity processes of individuals. Indeed, there are collections of books about how to be creative and all sorts of tools and methods designed to encourage creativity.
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