Chapter V

Space as a Learning Context:
The Role of Dwelling in the Development of Academic Reflection

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Adult learners are not blank slates; they don’t have funnels in their heads; they have little patience for being treated as “don’t knows.” . . . New users are always learning computer methods in the context of specific preexisting goals and expectations.

(Carroll, 1990)

Abstract

The concept of “dwelling” is offered as a foundation for learning and for understanding the role of space in educational settings. This chapter is a first attempt to connect the concept of dwelling, perceived as power over space in the phenomenological sense, with the concept of meta-learning as researched in experimental psychology, in distributed cognition, and in experiential learning, all fields sharing the idea that for learning to become self-regulated individual experiences should be acknowledged, some freedom of choice should be offered, and change should be stimulated. Examples of learning environments with a dwelling quality are presented together with a list of behavioral patterns.
trating the role of space. In this way the chapter shows education managers how to take the quality of dwelling into account in evaluating and designing contexts of learning.

**Introduction: Reason Needs to Dwell**

The global demand on lifelong learning is challenging the pedagogy of academic education, from the credit system to the architecture of the learning environment. Times are changing, and institutionalized ways of working are no longer automatically accepted and taken for granted on the global market of education, where students are becoming customers. The idea of using information and communication technology (ICT) in university teaching was initially to help overcome space and time constraints: students could be taught at a distance as if they were almost present at campus lectures. Now ICT is also used in on-campus teaching, out of interest in optimizing teaching resources and learning outcome. Many concerns are raised and researched regarding this development. Going virtual is assumed to have implications for the outcome of teaching, the pedagogy, the content, the teacher-student communication, the economy, and the workload on teachers and students. All these elements are supposed to undergo some kind of change—but space, although fundamental, is not much considered, apart from the assumption that physical is somehow different from virtual. In this chapter, this distinction is bracketed because of a deeper concern regarding space: the need for reason to dwell.

Reason needs a “dwelling.” By extending university teaching to virtual settings and making content available to more students, the access to the academic way of learning—through reasoning and arguing—is diminished, not because of the virtuality per se (letters have over the centuries proven to be an excellent medium of academic reflection) but because of a potential lack of dwelling. Therefore, managers of learning in virtual settings have to be aware of how to create dwelling in virtual settings and mixed mode learning environments.

Reason is a power of Nature, says Whitehead. In his treatise “The Function of Reason,” he describes reason as follows:

> History discloses two main tendencies in the course of events. One tendency is exemplified in the slow decay of physical nature. With stealthy inevitableness, there is degradation of energy. The sources of activity sink downward and downward. Their very matter wastes. The other tendency is exemplified by the yearly renewal of nature in the spring, and by the upward course of biological evolution. In these pages I consider Reason in its relation to these contrasted aspects of history. Reason is the self-discipline of the originative element in history. Apart from the operations of Reason, this element is anarchic. (Whitehead, 1929/1958, introductory
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