Chapter 24

Is All that Glitters Gold?
Re-Thinking E-Learning and Education Revolutions

Matthew Piscioneri
Monash University, Australia

ABSTRACT
Knowledge is only a click away. Technology is a tool. Chalk and talk is an anachronistic and unproductive teaching and learning delivery mode. There is a new generation of “net.gen” “digital natives” who can only learn via information communication technology, thereby requiring an entirely new approach to education. This chapter suggests the persistence of tropes such as these in discourse of technology enhanced learning, particularly at the tertiary level, is noteworthy and invites our critical interest. Taking this analysis of contemporary discourse of technology enhanced learning as a platform; the chapter examines broader issues concerned with the commercialization of tertiary education and the new managerialism in the higher education sector.

INTRODUCTION
Knowledge is only a click away. Technology is simply a tool. Face-to-face, “chalk and talk” is an anachronistic and unproductive approach to teaching and learning in the contemporary classroom. There is a new generation of “net.gen”, “digital natives” who can only learn via information communication technologies and who demand an entirely new approach to their pedagogy. This chapter argues that the persistence of these and similar clichés or rhetorical tropes (Jay, 1993) in discourse of technology enhanced learning (TEL)], particularly at tertiary level, suggest an exaggerated endorsement of TEL, especially information communication technology (ICT), in university education.
Is All that Glitters Gold?

teaching and learning (T/L). Indeed, in some overly enthusiastic quarters, I suspect that a questionable conflation of medium or mode and educational content might also be occurring. In other words, it might be the case that increasingly in educational contexts, technology and its use becomes an end-in-itself. This has quite profound implications. Learning becomes simply the setting for the use of technology. Knowledge (reduced in this setting to information/data) becomes simply the “stuff” to facilitate the acquisition of technological skills and their practice.

A major argument of this discussion is that central themes in contemporary discourse of TEL complement the synthesis of modernist and postmodernist rationales that helped “naturalize” the underpinning ideological precepts of the corporate academy. In aspects of contemporary discourse of TEL, modernist preoccupations with newness, progress and normative self-certainty merge with post-modern affectations for transience, play and the ontological primacy of the superficial to massage the construction of the new academy. When aligned with the normative precepts of universal education and the hyperbole of globalization, the synthesis promotes an unbalanced and even disingenuous ideological justification for significant and arguably retrograde changes in higher education that date back to the 1990s, that is the corporatization of higher education. Based on this, as educators, we need to be vigilant about claims made as to the pressing need to base teaching and learning practices on ICT. I think we also need to question “education revolutions” that propose ICT as the golden key that opens the door to an educational Promised Land. Claims and promises such as these should be viewed with care and even suspicion. After all, all that glitters may not actually be gold.

BACKGROUND

More than a decade ago, Newman and Johnson (1999) argued a similar point. As grand plans for the new wave of “virtual” universities began to crest in the late-1990s, they lamented ‘reducing professional training to the telematic transmission of an organized stock of knowledge is shown to be ultimately incoherent because it ignores the crucial need for implicit understanding and skill’ (Newman & Johnson, 1999, p. 79). And, yet, similar mindsets among policy makers, administrators and teachers continue to be observed across the educational spectrum, from P-12 to tertiary education. Perhaps the fundamental question posed by this discussion is how many information communication technology inspired education revolutions are needed before a more balanced approach is taken to planning for and implementing ICT in our classrooms? For example, in 2008, the newly elected Australian federal government pledged such a revolution:

Australian schools will be better equipped to face the future. The Digital Education Revolution is being rolled out in secondary schools in collaboration with state and territory governments. The Rudd Government’s $1.2 billion investment over five years provides an opportunity to transform the way teachers teach and students learn, and to equip our students for the future. (Gillard, 2008, para. 9)

Not all that different from the visionary language of Malaysia’s Smart School program launched in 1997 which reconceptualized the school as a ‘a learning institution that has been systematically reinvented in terms of teaching-learning practices and school management in order to prepare children for the Information Age’ (Smart School Project Team, 1997, p.10). And, very similar in tone to what was foreshadowed in Korea’s 1995 Education Reform Proposal which argued, ‘The ultimate goal of informatization in education is to encourage human creativity that will excel in the new knowledge-based society’ (Korean Government, 2000, p.5).

Ironically, more sustainable and effective implementation of ICT in the classroom at all
11 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the product's webpage:
www.igi-global.com/chapter/all-glitters-gold/58022?camid=4v1

www.igi-global.com/e-resources/library-recommendation/?id=1

Related Content

Online Synchronous vs. Asynchronous Software Training Through the Behavioral Modeling Approach: A Longitudinal Field Experiment
www.igi-global.com/chapter/online-synchronous-asynchronous-software-training/19400?camid=4v1a

Strategies for Enhancing and Evaluating Interactivity in Web-Based Learning and Teaching
Adams B. Bodomo (2010). International Journal of Web-Based Learning and Teaching Technologies (pp. 18-43).
www.igi-global.com/article/strategies-enhancing-evaluating-interactivity-web/52597?camid=4v1a

Self-Assessment During Online Discussion: An Action Research Perspective
www.igi-global.com/chapter/self-assessment-during-online-discussion/28776?camid=4v1a

Assessment Activities in Massive Open On-Line Courses: Assessment Activities in MOOCs
www.igi-global.com/chapter/assessment-activities-in-massive-open-on-line-courses/137321?camid=4v1a