

Chapter 6

Before and After MOOCs, Before and After Institutions

ABSTRACT

Digital learning practice using ubiquitous personal technologies can lead to teachers using their craft professionalism to create artfully-crafted, student-centered, learning experiences. Supportive and progressive organisational architectures of participation reveal adaptive institutions working across collaborative networks. The question now is what might adaptive institutions look like if they have been subjected to transformational processes, rather than just “e-enabling” the traditional practice of content delivery within the existing classical subject taxonomies? MOOCs seem to be a continuation of a learning catered for content through delivery; they are not a new paradigm, despite their promotion in this way by universities and the technology companies selling their platforms. In order to look at what transformation rather than e-enabling might look like, the authors review their framing ideas with long-run historical views of education, learning, knowledge, and institutions with a process called “before and after.”

INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century both our business and educational institutions, for the most part, are still basing their activities on the 19th century military “command and control” structures developed in the Prussian bureaucratic model, in which participants are viewed as inherently untrustworthy without explicit

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direction, and thus needing to be disciplined into “following of the rules” see Graebner D (2015). Prussian bureaucracy also installed a rigid education system by 1830 with a “Curriculum inculcating a strong national identity.” This results in a conception of teaching practice determined on a hierarchical basis and governed by the policies of central government rather than being developed with and by the craft professionals enabling learning and working with learners directly, and, therefore, sensitive to locality and context through work with local communities. This may also account for the wide variety of writing and research on education which is often conflictual and confusing. Readers will be familiar with the idea of teachers’ primary duty being seen by managers and politicians, as keeping order in the classroom and organisations where learning is secondary to order and discipline, the subject of many polemics on learner/teacher discipline and leadership in the classroom. An example showing a focus on discipline can be found on the website of the Milwaukee Teachers Education Association which we have chosen because it follows many other guidelines in prioritising an “order first” approach allied with the idea of “make learning fun”, which, with Biesta (2006), we would argue, devalues learning and misses the point of engaging learners in the seriousness of much they will encounter and says little about their potential contributions to their experiences.

A Heutagogy of Institutional Design

This chapter might be described as discussing a “heutagogy of institutional design” meaning we ask what might educational institutions look like if they are designed to enable the agency of self-determined learners? This requires us to apply the key 21st century concept of “resource abundance” to institutions that were originally built around the “resource scarcity of books” and for which a subject discipline based library was both the core educational design principle as well as the entire justification for their existence. By drawing not only on the earlier work cited here but also “Digital Habitats and Technology Stewards” (Wenger, White & Smith, 2009) and a lot of the work done on Ambient Learning Cities and the educational metaphors that blinker our thinking, we look at rethinking those framing metaphors by which we unthinkingly discuss and seek to understand educational institutions in the post compulsory sectors, although, of course, our discussion will stray to the compulsory and university sectors that bracket our knowledge of

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