

Chapter 23

Promoting Active and Meaningful Learning for Digital Learners

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ABSTRACT

This chapter focuses on learners and the transformation of education for UNESCO SDG4 to ensure inclusive, affordable and quality education for all to support lifelong learning, based on access, equity, diversity, and quality. It addresses the current need for open, innovative, and collaborative education. The first theme concerns the next generation of learners, and includes lifelong learning, ethics, inclusion, and modernization of higher education. The second theme focuses on 21st century skills and digital learners. The third theme examines the ways in which learners take the lead in and own their learning, including self-determined learning. The last theme considers models of quality learning for the next generation of learners, as well as learning, and teaching in unbundling scenarios. A model on systemic transformation through a smart framework is also presented.

INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, people use the Internet and mobile devices as part of their daily lives as international citizens. In their education, they demand not only modern, up-to-date modes and technologies but also smart, contextualized, situated, and authentic personal learning. Today, the high-level resources and content of international prestigious universities can be accessed freely at any time and from anywhere through open access, open pedagogy, and open education, such as open access journals, open educational resources (OER) and massive open online courses (MOOC). High-quality content is available only a click away on mobile devices such as smartphones and iPads. In addition, because most countries are members of the Open Government Partnership (OGP, 2107), e-citizenship is increasing, and much governmental

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-3438-0.ch023

content and many citizens' services are available through the Internet and applications that can be used offline. Consequently, higher educational offerings and services should lead the digital transformation to prepare learners to participate in the work places of modern societies across the globe.

During the next 15 to 20 years, the global enrolment in higher education is expected to more than double to approximately 435 million students (UNESCO, 2015a). The only way to meet this enormous rise sustainably is by scaling up and improving the quality of education, using information and communication technology (ICT), and promoting lifelong learning through open access, equity, gender equality, and inclusion. In addition, there are huge demands for collaboration and networking, among universities around the world, although learners and institutions are competing for students, and funding's. The global megatrends anticipated by UNESCO (2015b) are globalization, demography, and digitization. In 2015, the members of the United Nations agreed on a global agenda that comprised all countries and all levels of education, including higher education. The Education 2030 Framework for Action (UNESCO, 2015a) stated that by 2030, equal access to affordable and quality technical, vocational, and tertiary education, including university, would be available to all, both women and men. Some key issues in meeting this goal are employability, retention and drop out, lack of jobs, lack of student support and mentoring systems, capacity building for the digital transformation, and ensuring relevant competences and skills for jobs that might not currently exist.

In relation to UNESCO's Education 2030 Framework for Action (2015), the fourth industrial revolution (Schwab, 2016), and global demands, there is an urgent need for educational organizations to consider the role of higher education in the immediate future (Grajek, 2016). They need to determine what learners in the 21st century require from higher education in a context in which high-level content can be offered by international prestigious universities to anyone, at any time, and on any device (Sharples et al., 2016).

Mobile learning has been used for several years, but it plays an even larger role in the connected society of the 21st century. Moreover, digitization and technological development can be achieved on and through mobile devices. Today, individuals are becoming increasingly independent of the need to communicate in physical spaces. Hence, mobile devices allow learners to create, own, transform, discuss, discard, share, store, and broadcast ideas, opinions, images and information, as well as to create and transform identities and communities, which constitutes a major shift in previous conceptions of learning spaces. Mobile devices, such as smartphones and tablet computers allow immediate access to not only learning but also active citizenship. Current and potential learners have access to better, cheaper, faster, and newer digital technology than is usually available in educational institutions. Hence, educational organizations are experiencing a systemic shift in which the concept of bring your own device (BYOD) is recognized as facilitating personal learning environments. Studies have shown that increased mobility and connection change how we think of our identities, our affiliations, our relationships, and ourselves (Ossiannilsson & Ioannides, 2017; Schwab, 2016). Nowadays, many people have multiple online identities, sometimes even within the same cyber domain, including different genders (Traxler, 2016).

As learners take the lead in their learning and orchestrate their own learning environments and potentials, educational institutions will need to apply new open pedagogical knowledge. Research, including learning analytics related to MOOCs, has shown that institutions should acquire knowledge that will enable them to improve their offerings and services to increase learners' satisfaction, engagement, and completion rates, as well as to meet their needs and requirements (Bayeck, 2016). Hence, capacity building and systematic changes are required, particularly the systemic development of new open pedagogical models that facilitate smart and self-determined learning that is aligned with ethical values of the 21st century, which include sustainable global models of education for all (Singh & Stuckelberger, 2017).

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