

Chapter 25

A New Trend in Education: Technoself Enhanced Social Learning

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ABSTRACT

The study of self-concept is essential in the fields of psychology, education, and for society in general, whilst self-concept is widely valued as a desirable educational goal. With the advent of social networking on the Internet, the great impacts of social interaction have rapidly migrated into the online world in order to enable people to share opinions, insights, expertise, experience, and interests with each other for collaboration, discovery, and even construction of self within an evolving technological society. The emerging technologies have expanded a new dimension of self— 'technoself' - driven by socio-technical innovations and challenged ideas of the next generation of Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL). This chapter is to bring attention to technoself enhanced social learning in education. By investigating the convergence of social media technologies for technoself enhancement, it examines the way in which Social Virtual Worlds (SVWs) are transforming the nature of learning as a social practice and discusses the role of technoself in social learning. The author has traced the new trend in TEL and recommends a novel pedagogical and sociological model of learning – an augmented learning approach which couples the technoself enhanced social learning with formal learning in education.

INTRODUCTION

People are fundamentally social beings bounded to interact with each other by establishing empathy relations, to create groups, and to collaborate with others. Social Interaction usually follows a set of predefined behavioral patterns or models shaped by our natural abilities and rational skills to improve productivity and creativity, especially

when a group of people works in a given homogeneous cultural environment (Quemada, 2008). Therefore, the social information obtained through interaction plays an important role in decision making and collaborative working. Furthermore, people develop and maintain their self-concepts through the process of taking action and then reflecting on what they have done and what others tell them about what they have done. This reflection is based on actual and possible actions

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-4666-2211-1.ch025

in comparison to one's own expectations and the expectations of others and to the characteristics and accomplishments of others (Brigham, 1986; James, 1957). Therefore, self-concept is not innate, but is constructed and explored by the individual through social interaction. Franken (1994) states:

There is a growing body of research which indicates that it is possible to change the self-concept. Self-change is not something that people can will but rather it depends on the process of self-reflection. Through self-reflection, people often come to view themselves in a new, more powerful way, and it is through this new, more powerful way of viewing the self that people can develop possible selves. (Franken, 1994)

With the advent of social networking on the Internet, the great impacts of social interaction have rapidly migrated into the online world in order to enable people to share opinions, insights, expertise, experience, and interests with each other for collaboration, skill-development, and discovery and even construction of self. Social networking facilitates social interaction and share of own-generated content in a collaborative environment. It has evolved and transferred the Internet into a dynamic platform for developing novel psychological and pedagogical learning models which emerge out of an organic mix of "wisdom of the crowds" and "just in time" social learning. Social networking has already begun to foster an intuitive and immersive virtual environment by converging Web 3D technology. As one of emerging technologies, Social Virtual Worlds (SVWs) have expanded a new dimension of self – 'technoself' within an evolving technological society and challenged ideas of the next generation of virtual learning environments. It is important for educators to analyze and understand what the characteristics of the 21st century learners are, how the learners construct and motivate themselves, how the learners shift and adapt in Technology Enhanced learning (TEL) and how learning is

changing as a result of these learners' participating in these technoself-enhanced environments in comparison to the conventional e-learning.

The main objective of this chapter is to bring attention to technoself enhanced social learning in education. This chapter investigates the emerging social media technologies and the convergence of social networking services and virtual worlds for technoself enhancement. It examines the way in which Social Virtual Worlds (SVWs) are transforming the nature of learning as a social practice and discusses the role of technoself in social learning. By identifying key issues, limitations and challenges in TEL, the author has traced the new trend and recommends a pedagogical and sociological model of learning – an augmented learning approach which couples the technoself enhanced social learning with formal learning in education.

BACKGROUND

The development of the self is a function of human awareness, aspirations, attitudes and values. Like all human creative processes, it is a process of self-conception. It is defined as a deliberate focus by an individual on self-improvement and the self-awareness of their identities, goals and desires. It can be physical, experiential, mental, emotional or spiritual. In human evolutionary history, ever-growing numbers of philosophers, psychologists, and sociologists have explored and studied the self-concept. As early as one of the influential Chinese philosophers, Zhuangzi, who lived around the 4th century BC during the Warring States Period, a period corresponding to the philosophical summit of Chinese thought, explored the self-awareness through his well-known legendary idiom – the butterfly dream (Watson, 1968):

Once Zhuangzi dreamt he turned into a butterfly, a butterfly flitting and fluttering around, enjoy-

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