

Chapter 3

Transitioning to the Future

ABSTRACT

Chapter 3 summarizes why there is little value in the traditional approaches and further massive spending is unwarranted, and highlights the rise of social media and other pervasive, disruptive, empowering technologies. These changes suggest that a new model of career choice is needed; one that incorporates the influence of these technologies and the centrality of the individual. We need to adapt to the rules of the new social era or lose relevance.

You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete – Buckminster Fuller: architect, inventor and futurist.

“Over the last 20 years much has been done to encourage female students to choose computing courses and computing careers. Some instances of positive effects have been reported, yet the proportional disparity in gender in this discipline continues to grow” (Ashcraft, Eger, & Friend, 2012).

“Attraction, Promotion and Retention” has been the catch cry of many passionate activists in this field around the globe for decades. Yet to date the “secret” of:

1. Attracting females to study technology and to enter technology careers;
2. Navigating suitable promotional pathways; and
3. Retaining women in technology industries

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has not yet been discovered despite significant global efforts. Why is this? What has been done and what can be done? What is at the core of this issue?

THE OLD APPROACH

For more than two and a half decades it has been noted by government employment statistics reports, researchers and the general industry that there are noticeably fewer females in technology than there are males (Atlassian, 2018, Quiros et al., 2018). Having been identified as a problem, it has been subject to numerous theories regarding its cause and effect. Additionally, researchers, educators and those in the industry have banded together via the formation of industry associations and groups, or acted individually, to design and implement solutions to solve the problem. These solutions have comprised a variety of projects and activities designed to correct what has been assumed to be the underlying cause(s). Their intent has been to intervene and artificially adjust the naturally occurring statistics of females attracted to and working in IT. These projects and activities have become known as intervention programs (von Hellens, Trauth, & Fisher, 2012).

With the obvious exception of circumstances that limit access, such as poverty or strong cultural bias, there have been no noted issues or problems for female participation in the use of technology, and in fact in a number of areas females are avid users of new and emerging technologies (Ashcraft, Eger & Friend, 2012). Instead the problematic areas noted have been in educational and career choice: the number of girls undertaking technology studies at school, TAFE/VET and tertiary levels, and the number of women then entering, being promoted within and remaining in technology-based careers. As such the design of intervention programs has been multi-pronged, both delivering differing activities and tailoring projects for the numerous target groups. All aim to *make a difference* to the attraction, promotion and retention of females in technology studies and careers, and more specifically to make a positive improvement in the participation rate.

WHAT'S THE SCORECARD?

The short answer is “Good Intentions – no Outcomes” (Barbara Tobin: industry participant, former president of Queensland’s Women in Technology

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