

Chapter 8

Digital Transformation Projects

ABSTRACT

This chapter looks at Ambient Learning City, the fullest implementation of the Emergent Learning Model because it looked at learning “beyond the classroom”; WikiQuals; JISC Digital projects in FE; as well as the work of several others, especially Thom Cochrane and Vijaya Khanu Bote, who have taken the core concepts of learner-generated contexts and applied them in university and primary school settings, extending our work beyond the UK post-compulsory context. A key dimension of the open context model of learning was the PAH Continuum, which showed how the heutagogic practice of enabling learner agency could be embedded in any educational institution. Each year on 23rd September, World Heutagogy Day pulls together emerging practice on a range of themes, which continue to inform work, such as creativity, resources, environment, teaching and digital learning. The authors also look at third places as change agents of learning as in the Erasmus Plus project “The Origin of Spaces”. Overall, this chapter provides a range of examples of the kind of transformation of education that digital projects can enable and exemplify.

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INTRODUCTION

From 2010 Nigel continued to work for the government, for JISC, during which time he commissioned and evaluated many new digital projects in FE colleges and other learning providers, and pulled together responses for FELTAG, the Further Education Learning Technology Advisory Group. Fred meanwhile was mostly operating as a Visiting Research Associate at the London Knowledge Lab (a research lab jointly funded by Birkbeck College and the Institute of Education) and worked on various free-form projects based on the Emergent Learning Model, especially WikiQuals and Ambient Learning City. They both continued working with other member of the Learner-Generated Contexts, such as Drew Whitworth at Manchester University, and other e-learning actors and researchers as and when possible. Both remained members of the JISC e-learning expert practitioner advisory group. During this time they both came into contact with many other researchers and projects and shared their ideas concerning the future possibilities of digital learning as a superset of education, not a subset concerned only with “distance education” (as HE KPI’s continued to define digital learning technologies).

Ambient Learning City

Ambient Learning City started as an idea after the EU-IST 7 research call in 2008 had a strand of research called “The Future of Learning” which, amazingly for those of us who had written the Open Context Model of Learning which was about modelling our ability to learn in any context, started with the words “In the classroom of the future”. We immediately thought we needed to test how the “future of learning” could be located “beyond the classroom”.

Inspired by the “Mudlarking” project in Deptford Creek which looked at how digital tools could help turn a river into a learning environment (based at the Creekside Environmental Education Centre) Fred had been working on developing “ambient learning environments” with both Ealing Council (for Northala Park) and Kew Gardens (the current Wifi hotspots there come from that) but neither initiative took off. He also proposed to FutureLab that a workshop be held and a report could be developed detailing how “Ambient Learning Environments” could be created in practice. Whilst this never happened Keri Facer (FutureLab) and Drew Whitworth later co-convened a workshop in Manchester at LSEN with 16 partners including Hewlett-Packard the BBC and Manchester City Council, in order to identify how to

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