

Democratising Education

The Role of Technology



We live in an age where the pressures to re-invent the education system and the paradigms that support it have never been greater. One of the key drivers for that change is the availability, affordability and the growing maturity of education technologies. Whilst we accept that educational innovation is not wholly dependent on technological advancements; increasing recognition must be given to the fact that education technologies and services are playing an ever more important and valuable role in determining the shape of the education landscape. One particular area of interest is the part that technology plays in enabling learners to have greater self-determination and a more active and participatory role within the education setting and how we determine and assess technology's role in democratising education.

The efficacy of technology to democratise, customise, adapt and transform education will be one of the primary conditions for achieving the kinds of educational outcomes needed to build a thriving digital knowledge economy. If these pre-conditions are not in place there is a danger that the education orthodoxies of today will threaten and undermine the opportunities available to graduates as they attempt to become active participants in the modern digital economy.

By sponsoring, supporting and fostering technological development and growth within the education sector will see will greater opportunities for democratising schooling and learning. Learners do not just want more choice, they want more of a say. Learners are not just passive consumers of content or of learning objects; rather they should be active participants, contributors and players in the networked and connected school. The networked school entails that teachers and learners are no longer isolated from the community and the economy around them. One of the best ways that a school can add value is to bridge the divide between learners and the technologies that surround them. Schools should be promoting the mantra of 'plug in, get connected, stay connected and get creative'.

There are many benefits for schools if they facilitate, promote and foster effective learner participation through connected technologies; and we need to recognise that the benefits of doing so far outweigh the cost of introducing new technologies to a school.

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