

Chapter 17

Game Changers for E-Learning Systems in Connected Society

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ABSTRACT

As learning moves into an informal, networked, technology-enabled realm, new game changers for e-learning systems has begun to pop. In this chapter, these game changers will be discussed. Firstly; what is e-learning, components of e-learning systems, and learning trends vs. technology is given briefly. Secondly, concept of connected society is examined. After that, Social Media Learning, Open Access to Education, Assessment of Prior Learning, Talent Management and Cyber Transparency will be discussed respectively as game changers for e-learning systems in a connected society.

INTRODUCTION

Possibilities of using aggregators to bundle and filter communications and information have dramatically changed with the Web 2.0 tools, which triggered the connected society formation. In connected society knowledge is a force that is constantly evolving through open and social networking learning environments (Tu & et al.). According to Tu & et all, it requires learners to make connections to the resources; to attach meanings to resources; and, to create and organize their own learning resources. Therefore, learning is constantly evolving. This evolution forms a constant change, and creates new game changers especially for e-learning systems. This chapter discusses the change in the learning habits of individuals by the means of the social change in the connected society. Therefore, the chapter focuses on the concept of connected society, emergence of new learning environments and trends in today's world.

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Concept of Connected Society

In the last two decades the world has faced significant changes by the means of communication technology and interactivity. These changes have formed new social structures and new ways of communication between individuals. To begin with the concept of connected society, the essential start point could be the new generation and its characteristics. No matter how we name them, Y Generation, Net Generation, Google Generation or Digital Natives the fact is that they grow up with these technologies. Prensky (2001) uses the term “Digital Natives” for the new generation of students as he claims they are all “native speakers” of the digital language of computers, videogames and the Internet. As the concept of Digital Natives became a highly controversial topic in the last few years, this chapter does not intend to discuss the soundness of this concept. The main purpose of the chapter is to clarify the formation of a new social structure connected to each other with information and communication technologies (ICT), the change in the learning habits of today’s individuals and educational systems enabling learning for the new generation. In this context, for educational institutions and the learning activities of individuals, we have to say that the game has changed.

The ICT’s rapid development caused a change in the social structure of developing countries. Today, as we are witnessing the advent of the global information society where technology has increased the amount of information available and the speed of its transmission beyond all expectations, there is still along way to go before we achieve genuine knowledge societies. (UNESCO 2005: 19) As this change created a digital divide particularly between generations and countries. Consequently, new social groups and new habits of communication have come forward. The way we learn and know about something changed also. Jarvis (2008:13) claims that any individual is born into a social group and learn to become members of that community. In this context, every person is socialized into the group he or she was born and internalize its culture. The learners of this age are born into a connected world, which is conceptualized as “Network Society” by Manuel Castells (2010). Many other theorists name this new structure of society and economy as information society, knowledge society, and post-industrial society (Bell1999, Toffler 1980, Castells 2004).

Van Dijk (2005) asserts that 21st century could be called as the age of networks. He also claims, at the individual level the use of networks has come to dominate our lives. Today any individual is spending hours on broadcast networks, mobile communication devices and the Internet. Above all, people spent enormous amount of time in an average on networks at schools and work. Castells states that while networks are old forms of organization in the human experience, digital networking technologies powered social and organizational networks in ways that allowed their endless expansion. At the level of society and on a global scale we can see that media networks, social networks and economic networks reach into the farthest corners and edges of the world. Our world has become truly globally connected (van Dijk, 2005).

Concordantly, with the development of information technology, universities and other institutions of education also became able to co-operate across the globe (Jarvis, 2007:83). In this connected world including learners and institutions taking part in the network, the learner’s needs of education are corresponded with a new paradigm of learning called as e-learning. The mentor and the learner are meeting in a cyber space under favor of new communication technologies. The time-space dimension of the

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