HUMAN TOUCH: THE MISSING ATTRIBUTE IN E-LEARNING

Pornchulee Achava-Amrung, Ed.D.
Graduate School of Education
Assumption University
Thailand

The microelectronic age we find ourselves nowadays has the potential for helping all of us to share in the inherited and accumulating resources of human beings. However, the computer and its accessories will not automatically supply us with improved human resources. We need to be reminded that many past technological innovations that were widely publicized as solutions to problems of curriculum and instruction simply failed to materialize. In their writing, Tyack and Hansot point out that "Those who seek pedagogical salvation in computers ignore the fate of earlier technological panaceas", (Shane, 1987). They conclude that *teachers* remain the key to effective instruction that effective instruction resides in warm persons who care and who can communicate with learners of any age. For such persons e-learning and computers become a resource for extending human potential.

It is the purpose of this paper to extrapolate irreplacability of teachers by exclusive e-learning system. The topics covered are e-learning as an aid to teachers, new framework for curriculum and instruction for the future, tomorrow's teacher role, does technology define our education and finally, can technology save us from our own mistakes.

E-learning as an aid to teachers

There has been a great deal of discussion in recent years about the devices that can be employed to aid the teaching process. These devices are of many kinds. Some of them are designed to present material to the student of a kind that would not be available to him in his ordinary school experience. Bruner, (1960) originally categorized them as *devices for vicarious experience*. Another category is coined *automatizing devices*, computers, teaching machines are in this category. While such devices vary quite widely, they have certain features in common. The machine presents a carefully programmed order of problems or exercises to the student, one step at a time. The machine then responds immediately, indicating whether indicating whether the response was or was not correct. If a correct response is made, the machine moves to the next problem. The progression in difficulty from problem to problem is usually quite gradual in order to keep the student from the discouragement of excessive failure.

What one teaches and how one teaches it with the aid of such devices depends upon the skill and wisdom that goes into the construction of the programs. The art of the program then is the extension of the art of teaching. Clearly, the computer is not going to replace the teacher-indeed, it may create a demand for more and better teachers to produce effective e-learning programs.

New framework for curriculum and instruction for the future

On the basis of future-oriented perspective, structure for curriculum and instruction or educational program is focusing on an overall livelong education process covering a wide range of abilities and skills some of which possible by human touch only.

The primary purpose in developing a forward-looking approach to education is to help people, especially young people, to build a genuine but qualified optimism about their ability to determine their own life's prospects, and to give them power to exercise some control over their destinies. Informed optimism grows from possessing an adequate understanding about one's own society and the world, especially human relationships, master only by actual socialization. The mastery e-learning is not fully capable of imparting, (Beare and Slaughter, 2003).

People, including students, need to see themselves as agents and no as mere spectators in front of a monitor and be given the chance to develop autonomy through decision-making and choice. In this respect there will be some structures which immediately get in the way and should be side-stepped, at least some of the time. For example, the knowledge structures which come to us in the form of stereotyped subjects and disciplines (and e-learning lessons are full of them!) can work against the development of optimism and empowerment because they confront the learner with pre-givens requiring accommodation and acceptance, not reconceptualization and creativity.

What are the outcomes we should expect of education today? What is the purpose of education in today's circumstances? In other words, what's our vision? Education in any delivery system including e-learning should produce:

Knowledge. You need an ever-expanding body of facts in order to understand what you are currently learning, and from which to synthesize creative solutions.

Skill. Skill is what puts knowledge to work. It would include learning how to learn, analytical and creative thinking, clear writing, reading computer skills, communication skills, and ability to see interrelationships within systems. Skill enables the student to become a self-managing, self-motivating. Learner.

Wisdom. The ability to decide priorities, to allow time effectively, to interpret and judge, to be flexible and open minded. Wisdom is the ability to analyze experience and act on the conclusions.

Character. Which is most easily defined by traits such as honesty, self-reliance, cooperativeness, persistence, empathy, the ability to work in teams, to set realistic goals, and integrity.

Emotional maturity. The ability to recognize, express, and mange one's own moods and emotions and respond sympathetically to others; to delay gratification; to manage stress, anger, and anxiety; to resolve conflicts rationally and be assertive without being aggressive.

Out of the five desirable competencies mentioned above, only knowledge and some skill are able to be imparted by e-learning. The rest, especially those of character building and emotional maturity development need human nurturing through socialization. Along the same line, Gardner and other educational visionaries spell out the contention that aspiring youngsters get to work alongside accomplished professionals, establishing personal bonds as

well as a sense of progress as they work together a modeling effects occur- in reality and not virtually, (Rose, 2007). Moreover as mentioned in the four pillars of education, Delors includes "learning to live together, so as to participate in and cooperate with other people in all human activities", (UNESCO,1998).

Tomorrow's teacher role

The role of a teacher will always have the foundational responsibilities of enabling students to learn. However, differences have been seen over time in how teachers accomplish this goal. The role of tomorrow's teacher will still result in improved student learning, but will require the teacher to have broader capabilities of human touch which move, touch and inspire students to be committed to desirable changes more than content knowledge and skills which is the domain of e-learning, (Smaldino et al., 2008).

The teachers in tomorrow's classrooms need to exemplify a willingness to explore and discover new technological capabilities that enhance and expand learning experiences. They must have the openness to learn from students and ask for their thoughts on applying innovative technologies to examine and solve real world problems-thus better preparing students to demonstrate those abilities in their future careers.

Use of technology such as e-learning will not be questioned by teachers of to morrow. Rather, technology will be a ubiquitous tool, freeing the teacher to concentrate on competencies developed only by human touch to supplement the increasing use of microelectronic devices in education.

Does e-learning define our education?

Many believe that it does, but the apparent supremacy of computer technology and its instrumental mode of rationality are not things to be passively accepted. There are powerful reasons for believing that technology can, and should, be given a less dominant place I n a reconstructed worldview of education which reestablishes other, more important aspects of human and social context.

Can technology save us from our own mistakes?

Yes and no. Technology can improve the odds when we understand the range of possible actions of something like an aircraft or another technically controlled machine or system. But education has many dimensions, and not all have accepted pre-programmed responses, so while e-learning may help, it is unlikely to stop mistakes in educational delivery.

In sum, then, the teacher's task can and should not be totally replaced by e-learning system. Teacher's task as communicator, model and identification figure can be supported by a wise use of e-learning that expand experience, clarify it, and give it personal significance. There need no conflict between the teacher and e-learning devices. There will be no conflict if the development of e-learning takes into account the aims and the requirements of human touch in meaningful education.

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