

University of Wolverhampton

Towards auto/pedagogy:

A reflexive auto/biographic case study of professional learning mediated by technology

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Abstract

Tracing the development of my thinking and professional practice from the late 1980s to the present day, this thesis uses the auto/biographic method developed at CCCU by Linden West (e.g. West, 2004), in combination with a personal, reflexive dialogic hermeneutic redolent of the epistemological approaches of liberation theologians in the 1970s and 1980s, to evaluate critically the influence of five illustrative moments on the generation of new knowledge. The thesis argues that demonstrable learning gains were made when particular factors came together in these autobiographical moments. The insertion of the slash "/" in auto/biography denotes the self-directed reflection on these narratives, carried out systematically in order to derive meaning from them. The process of critical reflection on the narratives interwoven with reading around epistemology, the self and (information) technology, led to a framework emerging. Within the illustrative moments there appear to be four factors that, in combination, cause learning to occur: need, knowledge, networks and the application of newly-acquired knowledge in a new context or setting. Phonically, the framework can be argued to be N^d. I argue that in the 21st Century, especially where what is to be learned is something technological, learning most likely occurs when all these factors are present. Recognising this to be a personal phenomenon I adopt the term auto/pedagogy to describe it since I believe that learning is a personal commitment to changing the state of one's being.

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Over the 12 years of this process, I have relied on the support of my family. In both the foreground of some of its pages and in many aspects of the sub-text, they appear. The thesis is, therefore, dedicated to Sheila, Mary, Ellen, Anna and Sarah.

It also acknowledges Alan Turing, Seymour Papert, Steve Jobs, Bill Gates, Jimmy Wales, Larry Page, Sergey Brin and Mark Zuckerberg who, it could be argued, over the lifetime of this project, have changed learning, one invention at a time.

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Foreword

Whilst every effort has been made to write this thesis in plain English, there are some moments when technical language is unavoidable. Where necessary some of that language has been changed into metaphors in the interests of clarity or to make understanding easier.

Throughout, UK English spellings have been adopted for critical terms like *programme* - meaning an organised system of study - but rendered in the US English form - e.g. *program* -when a specificity of language is necessary to identify, describe or analyse the phenomenon in focus. This accounts for the American use of a 'z' in the spelling of terms like globalization as opposed to an 's' in the English version.

Where a quotation does not conform to these rules, a verbatim presentation of the words is recorded.

Permission was granted by the two school leaders whose 'tweets' are cited in Chapter 2.3 and these are available on request.

Glossary of Abbreviations

Commonly occurring acronyms in the thesis

BETT - British Educational Technology Trade fair

CCCU - Canterbury Christ Church University

CILT - The National Centre for Languages

CPD - Continuing Professional Development

HE - Higher Education

IM - Illustrative Moment

IPRN - Initial Teacher Education Professional Resource Network

ITE - Initial Teacher Education

PC - Personal Computer

RE-Net - Subject Resource Network for tutors of Religious Education

SRN - Subject Resource Network

TDA - Training and Development Agency for Schools

TTA - Teacher Training Agency

TTRB - Teacher Training Resource Bank

URL - Uniform Resource Locator

WYSIWYG - What You See Is What You Get