EXPLORING THE FRONTIER OF INFORMAL OPEN LEARNING (IOL)

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Objectives

• To serve as a point of discussion about the next frontier of learning and education

• To offer a suggestion for an alternative learning approach

The image was retrieved from http://www.innovationmanagement.se/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/innovation-capacity-learning-education.jpg
Traditional Education System

- Structured curriculum
- Standardised examinations
- Emphasise on academic achievement ("elitist" model)
- Produced in "batches"

The image was retrieved from http://www.exposingtruth.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/producinggraduates.png
Critics of Education System

Ken Robinson (Author, educationist):
– The system suppress diversity and creativity.
– Learning should be personalised, and not standardised.

Joichi Ito (Director, MIT Media Lab):
– Education is what people do to you and learning is what you do to yourself.
– People are more motivated to learn independently.
Open Distance Learning (ODL)

- A breath of fresh air..
- Break away from the constrains of physical classrooms
- Conduct class to large student population
- Reduced the dependency of students on teachers
- Retained characteristics:
  - Curriculum structure
  - Standardised examination

The image was retrieved from http://distance-educator.com/wp-content/uploads/MortarBoardComputers_01.jpeg
Alternative from the classroom: Problem Based Learning (PBL)

- Focus is shifted from the learning content to the problem to be solved
- Learners take control of their own learning
- PBL approach helps to break away from rigid curriculum structures

Tan, O.S. (2003). Problem-based Learning Innovation
Alternative from the Community: Maker Movement

- Extended from the extension of the Do-It-Yourself (DIY) culture
- Constructivism - emphasises on learning-through-doing
- Technology applications: product design, fabrication, calligraphy, movie making and software programming

The image was retrieved from http://www.enterrasolutions.com/media/The-Maker-Movement.png
Why Informer Learners?

- Moore (1973): more informal learners than formally registered students
- “Invisible” learners who have left formal education but continue to learn for career or leisure
- Self-directed in determining what and how they learn.
Informal Open Learning (IOL)

- No fixed syllabus
- No examination
- No certificate
- Lifelong
- Focus on value
Knowledge Management Approach

• Managing informal learning is difficult - it does not have fixed curriculum.

• There is a fixed pattern in the learning process

• Learning process involves flow of knowledge
Knowledge Management Approach

- Nonaka and Takeuchi (1999), SECI model
- The conversions of “tacit” and “explicit” knowledge across four quadrants
- Tacit knowledge - in the brains
- Explicit knowledge - codified and recorded
Value Creation

- Solve a problem
- Create a product
- Make life better
Environment for IOL

• Socialising: Space for meeting and discussion

• Externalising: Platform for sharing the recorded activities

• Combining: Facilities for previous work references and publications

• Internalising: Online learning contents searchable by functional topics
**Possible IOL Framework**

- Create an environment that encourages self-directed learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Socialising</th>
<th>Idea generation</th>
<th>Finding members</th>
<th>Forming group</th>
<th>Carry out project</th>
<th>Group discussion</th>
<th>Complete prototype</th>
<th>External review</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Externalising</td>
<td>Writing down ideas</td>
<td>Writing down proposal</td>
<td>Project plan</td>
<td>Record activities</td>
<td>Record activities</td>
<td>Record activities</td>
<td>Complete portfolio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combining</td>
<td>Compiling similar ideas</td>
<td>Research</td>
<td>Research review</td>
<td>Prepare reports</td>
<td>Prepare reports</td>
<td>Final report</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internalising</td>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>Understand tasks</td>
<td>Self learning</td>
<td>Self learning</td>
<td>Self review</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Increase in Values**

- Flexible
- Affordable
- Accessible
Alternative to Exam & Certificate: Show your skills online

- The results of learning is reflected directly from the values of work (Flores, 2014)

- E-portfolio can serve a few purposes,
  - to validate the work
  - to advertise the capabilities of learners
  - to be used as record knowledge so that others can learn from the experience

The image was retrieved from http://www.webaxis.info/assets/img/Portfolio.png
Target Shift in Learning

• Formal education:
  – Standardised
  – Just-in-case
  – Pass examination
  – Qualification and assessment

• Informal learning:
  – Diversified
  – Just-in-time
  – Create value
  – Skill and capability

The image was retrieved from http://wsdwheel.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/just-in-time.png
Bridge the Academia-Industry Gap

- Academic research are far ahead in time to be relevant to the industry
- Researchers who seek publication avoid “industrial relevant” projects
- The projects for informal learning should fill the gap in terms of industrial relevancy
- Project value should directly meet industry needs
Almost all countries in the world are looking for education reform.

Usually education reforms started from lower education.

With informal learning, reform can also start from another end - the pool of experienced learners.

Usual reform direction: Primary → Secondary → Tertiary

We start from here: Adult informer learners
Benefits for School Dropouts

- More drop out of schools due to the increase in education costs or lack of interests
- Most of school dropouts have little chance to succeed (Carlozo, 2012)
- IOL can play the role in guiding dropouts to work on their interests and redevelop skills

The image was retrieved from http://preventhighschooldropouts.weebly.com/uploads/1/9/7/8/19787253/1771728_orig.jpg
Benefits for Sharing Economy and Aging Society

- Informal learners present themselves as service providers (as employee or self-employed) through the skills demonstrated

- Retired personnel can be financially independent and continue contributing their skills or re-skill through sharing economy (Burns, 2013)
In the Nutshell

Informal Learning  Value creation

Sharing

→ Employment

→ Self employ
Possible Future Directions

- Improve usage of Self Directed and Problem Based Learning in the current system
- Introduce IOL in corporate training
- IOL in independent projects or Makers’ projects

The image was retrieved from http://top-10-list.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/following-the-right-path.jpg
Conclusion

• The quest for academic excellence must continue in traditional education.
• IOL can bridge between the industry and academic needs
• IOL offers an alternative path for lifelong learners to take control of their learning