Exploring the frontier of informal open learning

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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”
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
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

The image was retrieved from
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 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>
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<tr>
<td>Combining</td>
<td>Compiling similar ideas</td>
<td>Research</td>
<td>Research review</td>
<td>Prepare reports</td>
<td>Prepare reports</td>
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<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>
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
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
Education Reform

• 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
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
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

Flexible · Affordable · Accessible
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
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