Norbert Pachler and Caroline Daly. *Key Issues in e-Learning. Research and Practice.*

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E-Learning, which has lately become a buzzword and a center of much interest in different circles, is the subject of the book by N. Pachler and C. Daly. The controversy concerning attitudes towards this issue is stated right away in the Introduction. The authors point out that many academics − the manuscript is focused on the use of technology in the university − see e-learning as expensive, time-consuming, growing constantly obsolete, and, at the least, challenging ways of teaching. Moreover, digital technologies are often sold on a false premise of inflated benefits, without consideration of how they may disrupt established pedagogical and administrative practices. On the other hand, there is no denying that technology is fast becoming an integral part not only of our everyday lives, but also of higher education.

So is this yet another one of numerous books on the advantages that digital technology and the Internet applications can bring to education? Hardly so, as Pachler and Daly address not the particulars of learning with technology, but the key issues that are integral to any aspect of e-learning. In a holistic approach to the analysis of the complex interplay between learning, teaching, and technology, the authors attempt an understanding of the processes and pedagogy involved in the university teaching using technology.

The book is quite compact and is arranged in six chapters, which do not need to be read sequentially. The first chapter, "The 'e' in e-Learning," explores the place of the term among others used to denote the use of technology in education. With "e" standing for "electronic" (and synonymous with it "online") learning, the term is chosen by the authors over "blended," "mobile," "distance," "technology-enhanced" and other overlapping terms. The reasons for this preference are embedded in their understanding of the processes occurring in such learning. It is not only about technology, but also about the whole shift in the learning-teaching environment involving factors of time and place, cultural practices, communication and so on. The radical change of the nature of interaction between all agencies involved in education, which happened with the appearance of Web 2.0, prompts the authors towards the idea of upgrading the term to "e-Learning 2.0." Thus, the introduction sets the stage for looking at e-learning from pedagogical considerations and an explicit theory of learning foremost, rather than technological nuances favored by the other publications in the field.

This perspective is developed in Chapter 2, "Changing Contexts," where the authors look at the changing contexts of education and suggest an "ecological" view of e-learning. Such an approach allows a deeper understanding of the subtle and shifting balance in the relationship between teachers, learners, and the environment in which they practice and learn. Emphasis is placed on personalized learning needs, rather than the advantages of technologies or the skills of teachers

engaging them. Web 2.0 and mobile technologies have embedded computing in everyday objects. The digital experiences and expectations of new generations of learners about how to engage with the world are far ahead of formal education, according to Pachler and Daly. This is especially true of mobile devices, such as cell phones with multiple functions, which are ubiquitous in young people's lives but remain mostly excluded from schools. The authors stress that one of the main challenges for educational institutions in coming years will be the need to incorporate the divergent social and cultural realities of students' lives into learning practices in order to make the latter relevant to learners.

Chapter 3, "Theories, Concepts and Models," examines the ways in which e-learning is reflected in theoretical and conceptual thinking about altered relations between individuals and the social context, and their roles in knowledge construction, dissemination and distribution. The review of various theoretical models and concepts shows that, currently, learning theory is focused on the shared construction of knowledge, communication and participation. With computer-mediated communication and social networking, e-learning results in a profound cognitive transformation, where previously polarized notions of "social" vs. " individual" and "autonomous" vs. "collaborative" become no longer adequate to describe the evolution of knowledge. Learners themselves describe multiple and contradictory experiences of those notions, while research argues that e-learning is better understood as a combination of individual-cognitive and social-interactionist processes.

In Chapter 4, "Online Learning and Teaching and Learning about Online Teaching," the authors focus on discussing knowledge construction, which in e-learning is maintained through interaction, participation and distributed cognition. The need for revisiting pedagogical templates, models and frameworks offered by academic literature is grounded in the understanding that learning is not confined to formal, instructional settings. It is rather "the making of meaning of and through being (including social interaction) in the world." The affordances of new, mobile technologies with their multi-functionality and convergence with the Internet enhance the potential for, and importance of, learning in informal settings. In this context, new pedagogical interventions, which foster learning in "communities of practice" and collaborative meaning-making are required. Some templates and models, which reflect processes involved in e-learning, are analyzed. They all show that educational institutions and teachers now face the challenge of losing their position of being the sole providers of learning opportunities. This challenge can be well met only by building a fruitful relationship of opportunities, presented by the dynamic technological infrastructure and students' own social networks, with "what is on offer in-house."

This concept is further developed in the next chapter, which explores the notions of student self-regulating and ownership of the learning experience and knowledge-making process. *E-assessment, e-portfolios, quality assurance and the student experience* is the title and the contents of Chapter 5. Following the discussion of how the nature of learning changes with digital technologies, Pachler and Daly argue that assessment and evaluation of such learning also consequently changes. Traditional strategies for knowledge assessment and the collection of student feedback are not able to adequately support quality enhancement. They suggest

several principles of e-assessment, identified in the research literature, and offer some examples of successful assessment practices. Special attention is given to e-portfolios and their purposes, functions and use in teaching and learning.

The final chapter, "Researching e-Learning," presents e-learning as an established research field, though messy and chameleonic, but progressively maturing. The review of research shows that one emerging focus is on the contribution of e-learning to work-based learning and professional development, with adult learning communities becoming the subject of increasing investigation. There is also an obvious shift from a narrow range of quantitative approaches to the analysis of the abundant online data to more sophisticated qualitative approaches, focusing on the learners' cognitive engagement and conceptual change. One research finding is somewhat disturbing: over the past two decades, e-learning practice has proliferated across all education sectors, but in many instances, this has been done regardless of e-learning research, rather than informed by it. With more and more higher education institutions offering accreditation for work-based learning, e-learning, without thorough conceptualization, is often viewed as a cheaper alternative to traditional teaching methods. Moreover, the current climate in education encourages a view of e-learning as a panacea for decreasing higher-education budgets rather than as a research-informed pedagogical development. Pachler and Daly stress that though this gap between research and practice is hardly new, the burgeoning field of e-learning requires a critical review of the relationship between teaching, evaluation and research. For research to make a critical difference to e-learning experiences, practitioners and researchers should assume the roles of co-constructors of the body of knowledge about e-learning.