Teachers of Human Being
Technology and the Changing Role of the Teacher

We often cite that the advent of new technology, networked and web enabled services will bring about irreversible changes within the education sector but at this moment in time the new paradigm that defines the emerging digital educational landscape still needs to gain consensus. The one thing that we are sure of is that the new technological paradigm of the post PC era will forever alter the shape of current and future pedagogy within the education sector. It is already altering our perceptions of the world and how we engage and shape it.

Technology has yet to disrupt the education system. The evidence for this is seen in every state funded school across the UK. For instance there are approximately thirty pupils in every classroom, schools operate a three term timetable, the school day starts and ends at approximately the same time across the country and the national curriculum needs to better reflect the economic needs of the country. The dominance of traditional pedagogy, practices, norms and cultures within the education sector are many fold and we need to recognise that it will take more than disruptive technology to bring about profound structural changes to the education sector in the UK.

Nevertheless, we must accept that technology has profoundly altered the basic tenets of education. As early as 1995, Dale Spender[1] argued that technology would change the way teachers and students interact with one another. According to Spender, the teacher's role has always been to serve the needs of the learner rather than teaching them what he or she knows. Spender quite profoundly writes that teachers will become teachers of human being, rather than of a prescribed curriculum. Spender argues that teachers will have to lose control of their classrooms and will need to work in a co-operative setting with their students. Technology accelerates the proposition that teaching needs to be subordinate to learning. Perhaps there is a wider message underlying this debate; namely how many true learning organisations are out there?

No one is arguing that technology will undermine the role of the teacher. On the contrary, if used wisely, technology can only augment the role of the teacher. For instance, if we take up Spender's viewpoint, technology can only support a teacher's desire to enable his or her learners to have greater self-determination and a more active and participatory role within the education setting.

Governments, education leaders and teaching bodies will all need to play their part to enable major structural changes to take place to support the evolving role of the teacher.

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1.   Dale Spender, Nattering on the Net: Women, Power and Cyberspace. 1995.