Technology and Educational Change

Technological determinism supports a commonly held view that technology has a profound and direct causal effect on human behaviour and it ultimately shapes how individuals learn and acquire knowledge. It can also explain how teachers organise their behaviour to meet the needs of technology. For instance, the programme to support the roll out of interactive whiteboards in schools over the last decade has inadvertently tethered teachers to the teaching wall and exacerbated traditional pedagogy and practices in the classroom. The paradigm also goes someway to explain how not all technological advances bring about positive outcomes within the education sector. For example, if technological design is poor it will invariably lead to poor pedagogy because it brings about negative human behaviour and interaction.

Whilst this viewpoint can explain simple cause and effect relationships between technology and learning it fails to address how tried and tested technologies can have a positive impact on teaching and learning in one educational establishment and have little or no impact on teaching and learning in another.

What matters is not the technology itself, but the social and cultural setting within each educational establishment. If a school, college or university is able to promote and drive positive change among its staff and students the more likely that new technologies and services will be adopted and applied to support teaching and learning.

Change (Technology) = Educational Transformation

If educational establishments place more emphasis on promoting positive cultural and pedagogic change the impact of new technologies and services will be more pronounced. Where schools, colleges and universities ignore change management programmes when introducing new technologies and services to support teaching and learning they will make little or no progress with technology enhanced learning.

On a final note, do not be surprised if the return on investment on technology and services is not realised immediately. The education sector will adjust to major and rapid technological advances but only after a period of cultural lag[1]. The period of cultural lag could be short or prolonged. The lag is determined on the whole by the predilections and instincts of teachers and the educational establishments within which they work. Hence the need for schools, colleges and universities to have a sustained change management programme when introducing new technologies and services.

**For further information
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1. William Ogburn, Social change with respect to culture and original nature, 1922