

3 major changes coming to the way we learn

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6 Jan 2020

Benjamin Franklin once said: "An investment in knowledge always pays the best interest." In a world defined by flux, education itself is the only certainty of 100% return - and sometimes the only lifeboat we have to remain relevant in a world tossed by constant change.



Image source: Getty Images

EdTech (education technology) has dominated the news recently, with the massive EduTech Africa expo having just been hosted here in South Africa. Seoul-based education technology start-up Mathpresso, which has international investors impressed, also recently completed a vital second round of funding, showing how viable EdTech is considered by financiers. This is a world dominated by technologically disrupted and disruptive learning.

But what if the very nature of learning and the systems and processes around education are themselves disrupted?

Actually, it is not the 'future', but the 'now'. The learning landscape is shifting, paving the way for a whole new way of learning. Furthermore, because the shelf life of current skills is diminishing rapidly, learning suddenly has a 'best before' sticker, which results in an accelerated urgency for the creation of ongoing learning and development.

So, what does that 'now' look like? What are the latest trends in learning?

Gone are the days of the fixed learning schedule or the booked classroom. The new learning environment is characterised by interconnectivity, collaboration, active engagement, symbiosis and constant change.

Education is changing from all sides – the institutions, educators and learners. There are three key role players that are all equally important in successfully navigating the learning landscape.

1. Changes for the learner

Firstly, the habits of the learners themselves have changed substantially. Learners now learn at the speed of need – where and when they want.

What's more, learners have changed the way they view the value of their learning. It's a far less passive endeavour than when the old guard was bored in classrooms. Learners, today, are asking for more accreditation to show prospective employers their constantly increasing value proposition. In fact, the lines between work and learning are blurring. Learning is now a seamless addition to work itself.

Because of this convergence, education becomes a much more personal experience, necessitating that any learning initiative not only be career aligned, but also fulfil individual interests. During the learning process, learners will be encouraged to become more creative, adaptive and innovative.

2. Changes to the nature of learning itself

Because of this, the focus of learning will be introspective, self-driven and personalised. Rather than punctuated by certain ad hoc milestones, it will become part of a long-term continuous career path. Learning will become more and more learner-led, with development frameworks being scoped and shaped from the bottom up rather than the top down.

Consequently, learning methods will adapt to this and be informed by peer-to-peer learning, even for self-education in the workplace. For example, employees will create and share content that is both relevant and material.

Technology will be paramount to assist and improve learner engagement. And to be sufficiently engaging, the tech will have to be both mobile and social. Augmented and Virtual Reality (VR) will create new simulated learning situations and Artificial Intelligence (AI) incorporated into the content delivery allows us to curate and adapt learning to be personalised and individual. Rather than the previous one-size-fits-all method of education, technologies will expose learners to different and dynamic modes of learning.

Virtual collaboration rooms within organisations will become the new classroom and technologies like gamification and VR will further change how learning happens. Employees want to see how they stack up against their peers, earn badges, collaborate and feel a sense of accomplishment, all through technology, and will have to exhibit persistence, risk-taking, attention to detail and problem-solving to stay on top.

3. Changes to learning within organisations and at work

To remain relevant and competitive, organisations will have to not only change the way that they approach learning, but they'll also need to fundamentally shift the learning culture of the organisation to show learning as assets contributing to driving business results.

Within the workplace, the emergence of Learning Experience Platforms (LXP) like HowNow will enable employees to take full control of their learning and development. Employees will also expect to access content anytime, anywhere,

as they do in their personal life, and workplaces will need to ensure that learning is mobile.

At the same time, the wise company will realise that an increased focus on soft skills training – the human side of the equation – will assist in preparing employees for the future of work.

Let's end with another quote: this one from a more current source. The educational mastermind and coiner of the term 'e-learning', Elliot Masie says this:

“ E-learning is changing. And we will see new models, new technologies and designs emerge. So, let's drop the 'e' or at least give it a new and wider definition. ”

ABOUT ADI STEPHAN

Adi Stephan is Head of Learning HP at IQbusiness, and has more than 16 years of experience in the training and learning environment. He has the ability to identify and create state-of-the-art initiatives and programmes that accelerate Human Resources, improve learning, increase learner retention, and offer overall improvement of organisations.

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