DIGITAL LEARNING: KEY CONCEPTS BY FRANK RENNIE AND KEITH SMYTH : A REVIEW

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There is no gainsaying that the world of education is in constant flux of evolution. The revolution in digital technology has particularly become a critical driver of current development in education practice. Educational technology is a constantly evolving field which has attracted a wide range of contributions on concepts and practices. Enthusiasts, students and scholars in the area are however, left to gather different and often differing resources in attempts to grasp current concepts, techniques and practices in contemporary learning practices. *Digital Learning: Key Concepts* by Frank Rennie and Keith Smyth, both Professors of Pedagogy at the University of the Highlands and Islands, United Kingdom, is a contribution to closing the gap stemming the dearth of single reference book on technology in education.

Digital Learning: Key Concepts was first published in 2006 and the second edition in 2020 by Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, London. The 172 paged book contains a well written introduction of 6 pages and 164 pages of 222 concepts covering a wide range of areas which include learning theories, instructional design, digital scholarship and social media. While the depth and breadth of coverage of each concept in the book vary, the explanations are apt and provide working knowledge of each digital learning concept explored in the book. The presentation of the concepts in alphabetical order enables readers make easy reference to particular concept without stress.

The work fills the gap of literature that address the conceptual understanding of digital learning and associated process, practices and techniques in an ever evolving education landscape. That is the raison d'etre of *Digital Learning: Key Concepts*. Reflecting the current realities in educational technology, the book reveals the natural death of some concepts which in two decades ago were apt and core. The authors note "in this time, whole concepts have disappeared, or at least faded from significance to such an extent that the terms look jaded and dated. Many 'accepted' beliefs have been challenged, overturned, revised, adapted or have re-emerged in response to different ways of attempting to utilise technology" (p. 1). In addition to a body of emerging vocabulary are a number of the preexisting ones which are evolving new meaning.

It is now convenient to dub the contemporary time an age of digital everything. It owes to the ubiquitous nature of digital technology in almost all facets of human endeavour, from work setting to leisure and family life. The authors bring home this position by the revelations on how certain concepts have evolved from purely computing-technology domain to adaptation of such in contemporary learning landscape; process, practices, philosophy and techniques. The authors reveal that digitization is even beyond the teaching-learning curve with their explanation on Internet of thing (IOE).

> *This involves using the internet to interconnect computing devices and computing capabilities within technological appliances (including wearable technology and household appliances) so that they can send share data, communicate and interact. Smart home devices, for example, which allow the control of home services and appliances from a mobile app, are one common*

> *example of the IOT in practice. In education, a live distributed lab working across multiple sites is enabled by the interconnecting of devices and computing capabilities that is associated with the IOT (pp 87-88).*

Persuasive is the reflection of how the internet and associated technology have blossomed for education and training owing to a combination of factors such as affordability, miniaturization, more interconnectedness and greater mobility. Rennie and Smyth, however, maintain that technology should not dominate the learning process, rather, the needs of the learner should come first. Put differently, the adaptation of technologies for learners to achieve effective and successful learning experiences resonates as the central position of *Digital Learning: Key Concepts*.

In the flux of an ever increasing vocabulary in educational technology, the book makes an impressive contribution of offering clear definition of related concepts, how these have evolved with succinct distinction between such where applicable. The concepts of e-learning and digital learning are examples of such that the authors exploration justly clarifies, bemoaning the fuzziness of existing definitions. The cross reference presentation of interrelated concepts in the book is also remarkable. This allows the reader get to know about a concept and be able to link such with related concepts as highlighted using **bold** text throughout the book.

Unlike the first (2006) edition co-written with late Professor Robin Mason, under the title, *E-Learning* the authors' breadth of coverage. This edition brings to bear the over a decade experiences of the authors in experimenting new concepts without trying to second-guess the future. Generally, the book adds to our understanding of digital practices, techniques and pedagogic process particularly through clear systematic and logical explanations of intersections between digital technology and education.

Be that as it may, in a future edition, the authors may consider giving a wider world view to the concepts rather than being overly UK biased in the explanations. It is true that such perspective has been largely influenced by the environment of the authors, having studied and taught and researched pedagogy and technology in varying capacities in reputable institutions in the United Kingdom.

The book is an invaluable compendium of concepts, approaches, issues and technologies associated with digital learning handy for an enthusiast seeking to explore the place of digital concepts and practices in the world of education. Concepts explored in the book are products of over a decade evolution, which professionals, academics and students alike need to be acquainted with. For students who is are just being introduced to using technology to enhance learning, the book is a handy companion. Such are learners studying via open and distance learning mode as well as those in blended environment of conventional higher education. It aids better understanding for efficient use of resources and technology deployed for their learning. It is a great resource for students of education and digital learning particularly, teachers-in-training. Similarly, trainers, pedagogues or educators who are in search of innovative ways of enhancing and supporting the learning experiences of their students will find invaluable insights from the book. It is an essential reference resource that broadens understanding of digital practices, techniques and pedagogic concepts.

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