



The New Development Paradigm: Education, Knowledge Economy and Digital Futures

reviewed by [Bessie Mitsikopoulou](#) – May 20, 2014

Title: The New Development Paradigm: Education, Knowledge Economy and Digital Futures

Author(s): Michael A. Peters, Tina Besley, & Daniel Araya (eds.)

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The New Development Paradigm: Education, Knowledge Economy and Digital Futures is an innovative collection of articles written by more than 20 well known intellectuals from different parts of the world who deal with education and openness, knowledge economy, social entrepreneurship, technology innovation, social networking, and new media in education. The three editors of the collection, Michael Peters, Tina Besley, and Daniel Araya, are distinguished professors with extensive experience in education, philosophy, and digital media. The book consists of an introduction, fourteen chapters, and a postscript.

The introduction of the volume sets up the tone of this collective book by embracing what the Indian Nobel Prize-winning economist Amartya Sen declared in 1999: “Expansion of freedom is both the primary end and the principal means of development” (p. 1). Acknowledging that such a relationship is rooted in Aristotle’s philosophical inheritance, the editors urge us to keep track of what is brewing in development education, knowledge economy, open knowledge production, social networks, and net games-based education and collaboration.

The first article of the volume, “Education as Transformation” by Daniel Araya, examines the education reform that is currently under way in the US. Araya notices that the government has adopted a top-down reform in order to rectify the economy, without managing “to mobilize and sustain local will” (p. 24). The whole mechanism is, to his view, self-defeating. The author argues that we cannot expect creativity-based education when we apply top-down management; he suggests that “education will need to undergo a massive transformation from the industrialized factory into something quite different” (p. 31).

In “Advertisarial relations and aesthetics of survival” (Chapter One), Jonathan Beller examines the relationship between advertisement and the Internet. He supports that far from being a set of autonomous technologies, the Internet is “a historically-emerged system of expropriative communication-organization” built on older forms of inequality that are still embedded in social life today (p. 43). He also suggests that in the context of existing capitalism, all cultural practice on the Internet entails a movement toward advertising and its exploitative pedagogy.

The next chapter by Axel Bruns, “Beyond the Producer/Consumer Divide,” deals with the blurring boundaries between producers and consumers as netizens and the hybrid role of consumers who are invited to become producers. Acknowledging that several of our expectations of Web 2.0 technologies were not in fact realized, the author outlines features of *produsage*, a process based on a principle of inclusivity which aims to gradually improve shared content, and he proposes a number of principles to be followed by both professional and amateur producers.

Adopting a view of language as socially constructed, Ergin Bulut in “Labor, Aesthetics, and Cultural Studies in the Age of Digital Capitalism” (Chapter Four) suggests that communication has in fact become labor and claims that the discourse on the novelty of new media should place more emphasis on political economy. The author engages in a discussion of cultural consumption and labor and argues that the discipline of cultural studies adopts a dialectical approach to studying digital labor and aesthetics in order to pave the way for a more democratic engagement with new media.

In “Education in the Age of Extreme Digital Exploration, Discovery, and Innovation” (Chapter Five), Hernandez *et al* argue that the traditional model of education which focused on the outcome of the learning process promoting memorization and repetition of facts should be replaced by a new model of personalized education that encourages knowledge discovery and creative inquiry skills, builds on learners’ experiences, and explores how learners interact with each other and with technologies. As the authors claim, today “collective intelligence is more than simply a human intelligence; it increasingly includes intelligence generated through interaction with machines” (p. 96). Their suggestion for colleges of education and teacher-training institutions is to integrate advanced technology in all forms through a modular curriculum consisting of digital educational materials that are used like LEGO blocks to create courses.

According to Heylighen, Kostov and Kiemen in “Mobilization Systems “(Chapter Six), ICTs may have increased the mechanical productivity of work, but at the same time information overload has made it more difficult and stressful for people to commit to any particular choice, and much easier for them to become distracted, decreasing their psychological and social productivity. To offer a solution, the authors suggest the use of a mobilization system—a set of techniques to motivate and coordinate people to work toward a given objective. One such technique, gamification, applies a variety of game techniques to help produce an engaging experience for the user.

The seventh chapter by Smith, McKenna and Rooney is entitled “Reconceptualizing Business Education for Knowledge Work” and it presents findings of an empirical study that aim to re-evaluate business school education. Posing the question ‘what differentiates a highly effective international organization from a corporate cult?’ the study reveals important differences at the level of culture and sociality. Based on these findings, the authors conclude that business education for knowledge economies should focus on values, balance and integration as a way to avoid the creation of organizational knowledge cults.

“Digitization has done for the economics of knowledge what the steam engine did for the costs of transporting goods and people in the nineteenth century” (p. 165) claims Peter Murphy in “Beautiful Minds and Ugly Buildings” (Chapter Eight) referring to the digital reproduction of intellectual artifacts such as books, articles, and music. And as people became obsessed with questions of access to knowledge, confusion emerged between the production of knowledge and its reproduction; however, Murphy insists, knowledge is a form of objectivation, as are the physical artifacts around us (such as buildings) that produce symbolic meaning.

In “Open Learning, Open Assessment?” (Chapter Nine), Harry Torrance argues that a key linking mechanism between education, the economy and the labor market centers around what is taught, what is learned, and how it is assessed. A century old view of education as a privilege of the few has now been replaced by a view of education as an economic investment on the part of the individual and the government and as an issue that concerns the majority of a national population. As an effect, the focus of assessment has moved from identifying individual achievement of a relatively small elite group to reporting the educational achievement for the majority of a population in the context of global economy. The chapter deals with the challenges facing assessment and certification of knowledge today—from the movement of national standards and high-stakes exams to open

assessment and portable certification—and it suggests that open assessment and accreditation will allow local communities to address global issues.

In “Web 2.0 and the Transformation of Education” (Chapter Ten), Leonard Waks invites us to think outside-the-box and consider Web 2.0 technologies as drivers of revolutionary educational change in the context of post-modern culture. The present (old) educational paradigm is contrasted with the new paradigm, small components of which are beginning to become visible today, for instance through blended or hybrid schools, which he envisions to become open learning centers making extensive use of Web 2.0 tools.

The two contrasting trends in education today, led by globalization and technology, are discussed in Yong Zhao’s article “Mass Localism” (Chapter Eleven). On the one hand, homogenization, standardization, and centralization constitute trends in educational reform and are supported by central government education authorities that specify the knowledge students should learn through national curricula. On the other hand, according to the author, educational reform in the new age should be based on localization, diversification, and personalization. Zhao argues that in order to prepare students to live and work in the age of globalization we need a decentralized system with strong local control and professional autonomy that would cultivate creativity and individual talents.

The effects of digital technologies on writing and their role in the future of pedagogy are discussed in Michael Peters and Peter Fitzsimons’s article “Digital Technologies in the Age of YouTube” (Chapter Twelve). The authors then turn to discuss the democratization of knowledge that the Internet has brought by challenging traditional authority and by “overturning long-held notions of ownership, value, and institutionalized expertise” (p. 233).

In “A New Blend of Learning and the Role of Video” (Chapter Thirteen), one of the most well documented and inspiring articles of the volume, Michelle Selinger and Richard Jones adopt a social-constructivist approach in their discussion of blended and virtual learning paradigms. By exploring the role of video and its latest related technologies in the new higher education landscape, they conclude that through their interactivity these technologies “have changed online and blending learning forever” (p. 260).

The new higher education landscape is also discussed in the last chapter of the volume entitled “Toward a Multi-vocal University” (Chapter Fourteen) by Renald Barnett, who asks “Does the university have a voice?” placing his discussion in the context of two opposing driving forces that lead the university in different directions. The knowledge economy, according to the author, orients the university’s voice toward a market addressing potential customers, while the new digital landscape opens up new opportunities towards democratization of knowledge. Barnett methodically analyzes what he calls “the unsure” and the “hesitant” voices before he presents the “new” voices that place the university in new global spaces. “We are witnessing the coming of the multi-vocal university” (p. 276), he argues, which opens up possibilities for public discourse, democracy and liberty.

The book closes with a postscript by Michael Peters who points to the realization that, since the beginning of the new century, discourses about openness have been systematically used in the name of development and that open education “is one of the nested discourses and practices that sits with a wider and more global set of evolving structures” (p. 283). Peters concludes with the statement that the real value of openness is that it enables people to work together in order to solve common problems and that openness marks the beginning of an era of social development characterized by values of transparency, sustainability and open government.

This polyphonic volume is a demanding book to read and the reader may struggle at some points to make links among the different chapters and the overall argument permeating the book. A brief description of each chapter in the introduction of the book would perhaps guide readers towards a

more cohesive reading, while the addition of the writers' bionotes would add to the validity of the volume.

Some of the articles of this collection attempt an in-depth sociocultural analysis of the Internet and its associated technologies, while some others remain at the dominant rhetoric of the new media impact on education and economy. All of them, however, outline elements and features of an emerging shift in all these crucial fields. Readers will not find a fully-fledged description of the new development paradigm, but they will be exposed to what we have available today, in this transition period: bits of a mosaic (principles, features and elements) of a new paradigm which is characterized by open learning, e-learning and user-created media and which calls for more integrated and collaborative networks as well as a new kind of citizenry.

Overall, this is a highly recommended book that may surprise the reader as it quite often draws on ideological battles of the past to understand the present and the future. It also invites readers to challenge commonsensical perceptions of the role of new media in education. This volume is a must-read book for all those concerned about the future of education and the sweeping changes coming to classrooms.

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About the Author

Bessie Mitsikopoulou
University of Athens

BESSIE MITSIKOPOULOU is an Associate Professor at the Faculty of English Studies, University of Athens, Greece. Her research interests are in the areas of educational linguistics, critical discourse analysis, new media in education, digital and academic literacies. She is the Director of the Centre of Self-Access Learning Centre and Materials Development of the Faculty of English Language and Literature and she has participated in various projects in the areas of language education, curriculum reform and critical literacies. Her recent book is *Rethinking Online Education: Media, Ideologies, and Identities* (Boulder, Co: Paradigm Publishers, 2014) and she is currently coordinating a project on designing interactive EFL materials.

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