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Learning as an environmental activity: moving beyond the here and now to the whatever, the wherever and the whenever.

ABSTRACT

This paper takes its cues from three terms of reference: ecology, education and environment to reappraise contemporary worlds of education and learning. This is a theoretical paper that utilises Bakhtin's cultural theory of dialogue to explore this theory in an educational context. Pedagogy can reveal much about the formation of learning and systemic knowledge but is limited in its ability to understand the type of 'e' learning taking place outside the dominion of the school. This paper argues that 'e' learning is an environmental activity consisting of micro and macro dialogues with social, cultural, spatial and technological environments. How to bridge the gap between school environments and learners' worlds has been problematic since the emergence of mass education systems in terms of defining what qualifies as an education and what constitutes an educated person.

THE 'E' EQUATION

The aim of this paper is to unpack a number of competing voices and interests in educational discourses with the view of exploring Russian literary and cultural theorist Mikhail Bakhtin's concept dialogue. The reason for using Bakhtin's theory in an educational context is to illustrate that more consideration should be given to the view that educational contexts are constitutively places of communication. Focusing on Bakhtin's views, the paper will show that we are continually in dialogue with our social and cultural worlds. Dialogue therefore constitutes an environmental activity and an actual place of learning within the schema of dominant social cultures. By examining the relationships between other worlds of learning, it may be possible to position another way of understanding the significance of macro and micro dialogues between learners and their environments. Educational theories provide a range of solutions and methods that aim to close the gap between formal education and

learners' worlds. As indicated by Mary Field Belenky and others in 1986, ways of knowing represent a field of competing discourses in which assumptions are made about the development of the self, voice and mind. In the tradition of education pedagogy, one aspect of students' development as learners becomes visible through their ability to execute teachers' projects in teachers' own terms (224). On the other hand, connected teaching provides an environment for the student and the teacher to grow together where they are in a mutual dialogue of learning. Learning is a central theme of this paper in terms of focusing on a range of discourses that shape our cultural world and understandings of reality. A selection of URL sites are presented as a practical demonstration of Bakhtin's theory of dialogue with the cultures of life that both educators and learners share.

In contemporary educational discourses, the 'e' equation that educational theorists and government policies are familiar with is the notion that 'e' learning represents a technologically facilitated mode of education delivery. Computers in every classroom and computers for every child in Australia are well-known appeals in government election promises and policies for more educational funding. If successful learning environments are determined by the numbers of computers in schools, the statistics are impressive. In Victorian schools in 2002, there were 186,737 school-use computers (including those used by teachers). The average use per student to each computer was calculated at 3.93 students per curriculum computer.¹ Equally, the Internet has become a rich site for teachers in that there is a plethora of research on the positive value of 'e' learning across a range of educational contexts, from pre-school to higher education.

Sites like EDNA in Australia, and others in England, the United States and elsewhere, provide instructional designs, lesson plans, teaching strategies, and content materials to assist teachers in delivering electronic curricula. Yet, as the McKinsey & Company Report in September 2007 showed, despite the staggering amount of investment by OECD countries in computer technologies and in programs for systemic reform in education, there has been little improvement in the quality of school systems in decades.²

¹ Information and Communication Technology Statistics for Victorian Government Schools June 2002, <http://www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/ict/computer/inschools/pdf/ITstatsJune2002.pdf> [accessed: 19/11/2007]

² Estimated at \$2 trillion as a world government figure. Michael Barber and Mona Mourshed, *How the world's best-performing school systems come out on top*, September 2007, McKinsey & Company. Contact authors: Michael_barber@mckinsey.com Mona_mourshed@mckinsey.com [accessed: 19/11/2007]

'E' learning has captured the imagination of educational researchers and educational futurists. Milojevic (2005:11) has described how educational philosophies weave between utopian and dystopian paradigms of educational reform. On one hand, education faces the uncertainty about where curricula and pedagogic reform will lead - (the utopian push); on the other, educators have to deal with the legacy of educational histories and learning traditions which are agencies of discipline and control - (the dystopian pull). At the level of ICT 'e' learning, educational futurists promote the notion of seamless convergence between learning place (schools) and learning ('e' environments) and point to accelerated interactivity between learners, learning applications and technologies of learning (Bowles, 2004; Brown and Davis, Eds., 2004; Masie, Ed., 2005; Taylor and Hogenbirk, Eds., 2001; Tiffin and Rajasingham, Eds., 1995; Tumin, Ed., 1992).

The manner in which 'e' learning has been adopted as the province of technology and ICT communications would suggest that technologically enabled learning has resolved the time and space bound restraints of traditional school models that emerged as separate learning spaces that could control interference from the outside world. Educational ICT futurist Stephen Heppell holds out to the hope that new worlds of learning will evolve through converging the space of the school with virtual spaces of 'e' learning and ICT learning places. In his thinking, and, through his research on how positive learning experiences have been achieved in 'e' learning environments, Heppell's vision for education in 2016 may represent the utopian dream of tearing down the barricades of school-based and school-focused learning.³ Reaching out to the world, rather than being constrained by disciplinary knowledge and content based on bureaucratic outcomes-based and standards-driven education, it may be possible to realise the critical goal of education that would be able to create 'an authentic mode of living in which a person comes to terms with the world' (Cicovacki in Magnell, T., Ed., 1998: 23). Sohail Inayatullah et al (Eds. 2006) propose a pedagogy of liberation for teachers and learners through a neohumanist education that would reconnect learners with their worlds. The guiding narratives of neohumanist education promote partnership and consensus, co-operation rather than conflict, so that it could be possible to reawaken the spiritual connection of *being* in the world.

Traditional education systems have reached a critical point. Inayatullah et al., (2006) emphasise a holistic approach to learning and education that would be based on inclusion, student-centredness, mutuality, self-sustaining, ethics and reflection. 'E' learning in the

³ Stephen Heppell talks about his work in UK education and successful learning engagement http://www.google.com.au/search?sourceid=navclient&aq=t&ie=UTF-8&rlz=1T4ADBF_enAU248AU248&q=Stephen+Heppell [accessed: 20/11/2007]

technological sense in which it is applied in educational contexts, is on its own unlikely to be the mechanism that will produce the type of liberated learning that Inayatullah and others wish. They are cautious about technological utopianism in the sense that they see a problem with learning that has a greater focus on external characteristics, such as access and volume of information (Internet) and computer-linked opportunities for social communication (FaceBook, MySpace, blogs, wikis). Technological learning does not recognise there are distinct differences between external modalities like, 'data and information' and the internal modalities such as the need for self-reflective processes that lead to 'knowledge and wisdom' (Anthony in Inayatullah, Ed., 2006:135). Anthony has argued that the:

Use of computerised technology and the internet requires an externalised focus of attention, thus stultifying the development of the inner worlds for learners... estrangement from the psyche and inner life may be exacerbated by the continuing dissociation process that is inherent in focusing attention upon computer screens all day (135).

Inayatullah et al., have raised concerns about the type of communication that ICT technologies produce. They contend that the popularity and widespread use of computerised social interaction has led to an atomised, individualistic and self-centred form of social inhibition. In turn, this inwardness has implications for retarding the very essence of 'humanness'. Citing the findings of German and other research into the prolonged use of television, computers, mass media entertainment, and ICT applications (downloads, MP3, iPod, films, videos, popular music)⁴, concerns were raised about the effects of reduced sensory acuity. By inference, there was less meaningful interest and engagement with the world in general (136). In arguing for a neo-humanist education that would embrace the ecological (as in the sense of knowledge and wisdom); education (the getting of knowledge); and the environment (intuitive, related, connected, holistic and engaged learner) – Inatayalluh et al (2006) articulate a theory of convergence in desires to recover an innate and ethical self-mind-body-universe-spirituality. Focusing on the machine alone will not necessarily restore the nexus between the learner, their learning and their worlds.

Maxcy (1995) pointed to the potentiality of 'e' learning to break down linear barriers between learners and their worlds. However attractive the notions of democratic learning and empowerment are, there remains a propensity for educational bureaucracies to enforce order on processes of communication so that 'a system and the system are in flux' (32-56). In Australian schools, it is a matter individual policy where it comes to deciding whether students have unrestricted access to the Internet and mobile phones in schools. As Maxcy has indicated, educational systems are fundamentally and philosophically opposed to having

⁴I use these to demonstrate the developments in mass communications ICT technologies.

disorder within the school environment. School environments are highly regulated, administered and bureaucratised systems of governance. While 'e' education holds out the possibility of self-directed learning, ICT technologies of learning are ultimately reliant on highly structured, organised, and sequential applications that not only require technical expertise but are subject to monitoring and reporting.

Opinions on 'e' learning approach the issue of convergence of learning from different paradigms but come together in terms of an underlying humanist agenda. According to Freire, not only does education literally 'light the lamp' of human ignorance but it has the capacity to empower citizenry to enhance social progress, political democracy and human development. In terms of national and state policies on education, Freire has argued that there are conflicting messages about the delivery of democracy in action through the school. Rather than learners being able to act democratically in thought and word, political and education systems actually disable genuine democracy through bureaucratic monitoring and controlled curricula and content⁵. At the same time however, Freire recognised there were tensions between the cultural worlds of the education system and other environments of learning. He wrote that:

The role of the progressive educator...in offering her or his "reading of the world", is to bring out the fact that there are other "readings of the world", different from the one being offered as the educator's own, and at times antagonistic to it (96).

Freire was not persuaded by an 'antitraditionalist position' if it led to educational practices that excused the 'hard, heavy work of serious, honest, study' and if it also meant reducing school work to expressions of 'mere *experiences of this and that*' (98). Permissiveness was seen to be as damaging to learning as was the imposition of authoritarian control. Equally, the authoritarian position was problematic if it was based on assuming exclusive ownership over the type of content to be delivered to learners. Whether neo-liberalist, authoritarian, populist, progressive, and democratic, each educational theory represents a particular "reading of the world"; in turn, these readings are laden with ideological, cultural and social meanings relative to the manner in which education systems and learners constitute respective worlds of learning.

The issue for educators and educational theorists, whether they are seen as utopian reformers or traditional conservatives, the central question of how to reach the 'other' side of the world

⁵As an example, Victorian State Labor government policies on student performances under VELs measurements of performance across the curriculum (primary and secondary)
http://vels.vcaa.vic.edu.au/assessment/maps/maps_domain/hpe/level1.html
[accessed 22/11/2007]

of the learner remains elusive. Freire's pedagogical stance may be liberating in the sense of showing the possibilities that an education can ideally produce in terms of informed and politically aware citizens and national subjects. He does not quite develop a theory of convergence that would lead to the breaking down of the barriers between education and student and the school and the learner. His central criticism was that education had largely failed to find the means of developing the type of public and social information that would be available for a broad range of uses by the broadest communities of stakeholders. He acknowledged that there was a spatial and generational barrier that represented an inherent tension between environments of reading the world and ecologies of 'reading the word' (90). Reading the world was not the privilege of educators and academicians to impose the "knowledge of living experience" of the culture they lived in, nor did the voice of educational authority speak for learners. In order for education systems to close the gap between education and the learner, they had to become attuned to the 'syntax and semantics' of popular mass culture and learn to know the ways in which people crafted their ecological and environmental knowledge through their cultural worlds (91). Educational systems did not live 'outside' the culture of a particular society.

Concurrent with contemporary globalisation, convergence of international and national economies, nation-state-corporate entrepreneurialism, reforms in education have also become subject to the rhetoric of efficiencies associated with national economic wealth, economic competitiveness and the need to deliver skilled labour forces to maintain national and economic prosperity (Olssen and O'Neill, 2004). What is now being seen in contemporary education is a radical pedagogical change where education has now more in kind with industrial models of inputs and outputs. As a result:

Knowledge becomes an atomic system of epistemic building blocks which get additively combined into larger epistemic modules...Knowledge, because of its movement, through learning, from the simple to the complex...leads naturally to the legitimization of a 'pick and mix' type of curriculum (Parker, 1997, 15-16).

In the model of post-Fordist economic-industry, an outcomes-based education is seriously emaciated if intended to resolve political, social, cultural and economic problems (34).⁶

In supporting the need for a new vision for a twenty first education, notions of convergence predict a world of learning that is inclusive, mutual, self-sustaining, ethical and reflective and engaged with learners' worlds. On the other hand, technological views promote terrestrial, temporal and spatial convergence through creating virtual learning spaces that may open up

⁶ Contemporary examples of Australian educational policies on communications technologies in schools. 'A Digital Revolution' http://www.alp.org.au/download/now/labors_digital_education_revolution_campaign_launch.pdf [accessed: 22/11/2007].

other possibilities to learners. However idealised as virtual mobility and virtual spatiality, ICT technologies do not completely resolve time-space-place boundaries or dismantle operational mechanisms within school environments that aim to regulate virtual communication and learning within school environments.⁷

How to organise, manage, or draw zones of learning and teaching around multi-vocal and unruly contexts of cyberspace communications, opens up as many problems as there are solutions. Selfe and Hilligoss (Eds., 1994) reported that learners could not adequately perform learning tasks because of the cacophony of virtual dialogue. They were, to use the title of a popular movie 'lost in space'. George Landow, whose notion of 'hypertext' opened up ideas about hybridity, and the potential of ICT communications to realise multi-authored texts, also recognised the limitations of ICT technologies. The systems-based operational logic of log-ins, permissions and approvals had to be negotiated each time a cybertext was presented in an electronic medium so that it would be possible for multiple readers and authors to reconstruct the text (1992: 4). Landow pointed out the fallibility of technological forms of communications. In essence, cyberspace offered a potential space of communication for writers from many places and cultures to present ideas, however, access to sites was patrolled by gate-keepers and other forms of permission.

Having set out some ideas concerning the 'e' equation, the next part of the paper explores Bakhtin's views on dialogue. In this sense, there is some similarity between Freire and Bakhtin in that both acknowledged a paradox existed between environments of education that read the word and learners' ecologies of 'reading the world'.

BAKHTIN'S ECOLOGIES: HOW DIALOGUE LINKS ENVIRONMENTS

The Oxford dictionary is useful for providing a basic interpretation of the word ecology so that it is possible to locate Bakhtin's notion of dialogue. It defines ecology as the science of studying nature (environment), relationships (the whatever) and interactions (the wherever and the whenever) between organisms (people) and their natural environments. In other words, the reference to 'ecology' suggests a dialogue with the natural world. The Oxford definition provides an accessible way to approach the fraught ontology of knowledge in terms of how we define the thing called 'learning' and the things that are called science, nature and environments of learning. The simple definition of the term 'ecology' opens up the landscapes of interpretation, conceptualisation and representation in terms of how the world

⁷Individual school policies on the use of mobile phones in the school and access to computer labs during school time mitigate the possibilities of converging school and learners' worlds.

of nature is perceived as something different or special or unique, and separated from human experiences and human environments. The 'natural' is something holistic, 'in nature' and in harmony; whereas, we humans live in artificial 'natural' worlds of technology, industry, progress and civilisation. In relation to those basic identifying typologies, we, as a human species, are removed from nature in many instances and in particular through education systems where knowledge is calculated and applied pedagogically. Our understanding of ourselves and contextual references to our worlds are delivered and prescribed, and as often, proscribed notions of class, ethnicity, culture, nationality and gender.

By proposing that Bakhtin's theory of dialogue can be usefully mobilised in the context of this paper, the subtleties of Bakhtin's approach relate to the paradox of reading the word and reading the world. At its most basic point of explanation, the world is a representation consisting of social and cultural symbols, mythologies, narratives, stories. Reading the world is reality in action and reality enacted, framed and communicated through meaningful experiences and interpretations of reality. Reality, subjectivity and representation are theoretically intertextual as related and relational meanings of 'I' the person and 'I' in the world. Representation is central to learning how to interpret meanings of the world and because they give us ways to think and 'construct' meanings in particular ways. Representations link historically, socially and culturally and are communicated through politics, ideologies and interpretations of meanings assumed to exist across time and space as well as being instrumental in shaping our identities, and as authors, readers and writers of our own experiences of life and that of others.

Education and learning are therefore not separate fields of experiences of life but sites of contested and conflicting arguments where learners and teachers actively construct their sense of identity and knowledge.

Bakhtin's theoretical, philosophical and political ideas emanated from his life story in Russia. Born in 1895 near Moscow, his cultural, social and political environment was shaped by the Russian revolution in 1917, first and second World Wars and Stalin's totalitarian regime. Bakhtin's views on language, text and reader were strongly influenced by his life in the cosmopolitan and multi-lingual and multi-cultural cities of Vilnius and Odessa. He read Kant, Planck, Einstein and Bohr with 'Bakhtin Circle' intellectuals like Voloshinov and Medvedev. He submitted his dissertation on Rabelais in 1941 and was awarded this ten years later in 1951. His work on Dostoevsky was 'discovered' by Moscow students in the 1960s (Zappen, 1996).

He died in 1975. He wrote *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* in 1963: *The Dialogic Imagination* was published in 1975.

In developing a different approach to traditional theories of authorship and writing, Bakhtin found himself immersed in the question of how to move beyond traditional structures of inquiry that focused on the centrality of the author as the locus of meaning. He wanted to know how the 'out there' reader brought meaning to 'reading the word'. He argued the author of a text did not have the sole ownership over meaning. Instead, reading the word consisted of multiple reading positions constituted by layers of dialogue and multi-storied intersections and interactions. As Zappen (1996) has illustrated, Bakhtin's notions of dialogue can be attractive when thinking about a way to resolve conflicts between culture, identity, language and ethnicity and pedagogies of learning. Here again, the issue of conflict opens onto the presumptive layering of constructing the negative rather than a sense of agency. Bakhtin contended that conflict was not inherently a negative trait or problem but provided a method for discovery. Where conflict occurred, it was because different interpretative layers and meanings were being challenged. At the point of conflict, multiple voices and multiple dialogues of meaning met so that a coherent and mutually understood dialogue could emerge. Conflict in communication was critical to the way in which new thinking emerged, new language developed, and new ways of communicating could be understood.

The theoretical core of 'dialogism' has two mobilising forces that are both relational and oppositional. We do not read the world nor the word in a linear fashion. Ecologies of learning involve multi-tasking and random interpretations of meanings and understandings. Schools are places of communication that mobilise and attempt to make cohesive learning environments through opposing the other and reimposing a universal system of meaning and understanding. In effect, it is necessary for the survival of traditional / formal education structures and hierarchies to maintain the hegemonic view based on differentiation. Dialogue however has a different construct of otherness that is 'not merely a dialectical alienation...it is the differential relation between a center and all that is not a center (Holquist, 1990:18).

Dialogue is relational *and* 'separate and simultaneous' and as impossible to separate as the air we breathe, or, as this paper argues, as impossible to separate as is learning from their environmental constituencies. The emphasis on the word *and* is purposeful. In arguing that learning is an environmental activity, dialogue with the worlds of the school and beyond the school cannot be separated. The technological sense in which communications technologies are seen to converge space, place and time barriers is not quite the same sense of dialogue that Bakhtin proposed. Dialogue is not something to be switched off or on.

We cannot choose *not* to be – in dialogue, not only with other human beings, but also with the natural and cultural configurations we lump together as ‘the world’ (30).

While Bakhtin’s thinking was shaped by a different historical, political and technological era, the consistency of the principle of dialogue is relevant when confronted with traditional pedagogies based on an agenda of separation between ‘word’ knowledge and the ‘world’ knowledge of learners’ environments. While it is tempting to use Bakhtin’s theory of dialogue to resolve my argument, his theoretical interests focused on the relational and dialectical conundrum of language, text, reader, audience and meaning. In the educational context, dialogue represents the hard work of learning, because, ‘To live means to engage in dialogue, to question, to listen, to answer, to agree...disagree’ (cited Todorov, 1984: 97). Dialogue is answer and question, problem and solution, dissent and consensus. It requires address and response, something needs to be said, some one saying it, adapting it and reframing it through competing, overlapping and shifting conversations.

Dialogue is not something ‘out there’, to be harnessed as a thing. It is central to notions of the self and relationships with the world.

There is an intimate connection between the project of language and the project of selfhood... “I” is the needle that stitches the abstraction of language to the particularity of lived experience (Holquist, 23, 28).

As Bakhtin indicated, we make sense of our world through cultural rituals and social communication. His work on the nature of folk humour in the Middle Ages period has resonance when read in the context of educational desires to create ideal learning environments through the polyphonous instrument of the Internet. During Medieval carnivals, all hierarchical order was suspended and all reference to rank (signified by ecclesiastical and bureaucratic regalia) was removed. The carnival ‘was a consecration of inequality’. In his dissertation on Rabelais and the Renaissance, Bakhtin wrote:

All were considered equal during carnival...in the town square, a special form of free and familiar contact reigned among people who were usually divided by the barriers of caste, property, profession, and age....People were, so to speak, reborn for new, purely human relations. These truly human relations were not only a fruit of imagination or abstract thought; they were experienced. The utopian ideal and the realistic merged in this carnival experience, unique of its kind (1993:10).

The informality of the carnival, or, the disordered world of laughter, parody, grotesque comedy, broke down barriers between class and social structures and hierarchies of order. Carnival was an ultimate expression and experience of what convergence meant in terms of transcending the boundaries between the worlds of authority (formality) and the people (informality). The carnival was a time in the cultural and social calendar where it was

possible to experience the freedom of ‘the here and now...and the whatever, the wherever and the whenever’. No one cared. When the carnival was over, the ‘word’ of law took over and the ‘world’ returned to the order of separate universes. The carnival indicated how people in the Middle Ages lived between two universes. One was the highly bureaucratised and hierarchical universe of officialdom, subjugation, fear of authority, structured and social control. On the other hand, the carnival represented the potential to be creative, radical, free and even blaspheme those in authority without fear of penalty or retribution.

Whereas the Medieval carnival represented a ‘closed’ system of celebration and freedom, this is not the idea of closure that typified Bakhtin’s idea of carnivalesque in terms of how to conceptualise the relationship between reading the world and reading the word. The idea of carnivalesque is not just confined to the genres of comedy and satires in the formalised sense but represents a lively political, cultural and social space where it is possible to be free to literally rage against systems of authority and the establishment. To join the carnival, is to be invited into a world of costume and mask, fake and make believe but to participate in the carnivalesque is to be able to use a ‘special type of communication impossible in everyday life’ (Bakhtin, 1941: 10). In relation to the contemporary phenomenon of cyberspace and virtual communication, there is a theoretical resemblance to the notion of carnivalesque where a ‘special type of communication’ becomes apparent in the language used in social networking sites (MSN, FaceBook, YouTube) and in cryptic text messages on mobile phones. The resemblance ends however where the type of language used, content, graphic and visual images cannot escape the world of world of formal administration designed for the protection of intellectual property on-line and for the moral, cultural, economic, political guardianship of global communications systems. Censorship regulations have been imposed on communication, content, and political ideas that may be seen to upset the rule of order of the contemporary world.

THE CARNIVAL CULTURE ?

The culture we live in gives sense to our social reality. It is not a matter of agreement or disagreement on whether the cyberspace generation represents the decline of moral standards and social values. Such judgements are left to others. The key argument of this paper rests with the idea that that we are in dialogue with these texts of contemporary culture and as such, the shaping of our selves in these worlds.⁸ This paper began with the premise that learning is an environmental activity consisting of micro and macro dialogues between

⁸Sites accessed 24/11/07

cultural, social, spatial and technological environments beyond the institutional reach of the school. The concept terms of ecology, education and environment occupied centre stage in this paper to illustrate how institutional systems of knowledge are limited by the manner in which pedagogies of 'reading...the word' and ecologies of 'readings of the world' constitute border lands of life learning. In this context, Bakhtin described how learning represents a dialogue with texts of life through reading how these realities are communicated as well as developing their own agency by agreeing and disagreeing through continual interactivity with ecologies of learning outside formal elements of the school.

When providing a practical demonstration of Bakhtin's theory of dialogue through using the technological means of communication that construct those worlds of learning beyond the school, readers of this paper are invited to read the texts of our world. Under each heading, there is a selection of URL sites to enter so that it can be seen how these meanings are enacted.

Dialogue

These are music clips of the popular song 'I've been everywhere man' that Telstra Big Pond advertisements have used to promote broadband connectivity in Australia. I would call this the

utilitarian view of dialogue. It relates to technological assumptions that dialogue can only be delivered by the machine.

<http://folksong.org.nz/ivebeeneverywhere/index.html>

(Music clip version)

<http://poparchivesblog.blogspot.com/2005/06/obscurities-forget-em-we-want-ive-been.html> (I've

been everywhere man lyrics)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IOADNQqBIj0&feature=related>

(Song itself)

Carnival

Schoolies weeks have become rites of passage for Australian Year 12 school leavers.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YyMEY1jVO-k> (schoolies week in Surfers)

This video was taken from a mobile phone and communicated across the world (literally the universe) for audiences to 'read' about Australia, the Australian way of life, and Australian 'youth' culture.

Otherness

A selection of video clips from Yahoo – entertainment or education

<http://new.music.yahoo.com/videos/> (music videos)

The music videos are images of popular culture. As Freire has indicated, educators need to read the 'syntax and semantics' of popular culture so that they are more able to understand the 'crafting' of learners' ideas and their identity.

Blogs about the experiences of living in regional Australia

<http://blogs.abc.net.au/heywire/>

This is a situation where rural audiences experience the effects of a lack of 'dialogue' with the rest of Australia.

Knowledge

Randomly accessed Websites from the United States on 'e' learning applications

Clip art icons: graphic designs and lesson plans

http://www.teacherfiles.com/clip_art_subjects.htm

Professional development

<http://www.interactivewhiteboard.net.au/story.asp?sc=0&id=784>

Instructional design materials

Conclusion

This paper traced some trajectories in educational discourses to illustrate that worlds of learning are not simply reducible to the ways in which traditional educational structures have evolved historically, culturally and politically. In adapting a conceptual framework around the

terms of ecology, education and environment, it was shown that the notion of dialogue has critical relevance in contemporary educational theories. However, Bakhtin's notion of dialogue suggests that we have a relatively limited view of dialogue in that we assume that it is something that can be mobilised through delivery of education via instrumental means, such as ICT technologies. ICT technologies are seen to have the capacity to transcend the gap in dialogue between learning systems and learners' environments. As Bakhtin has shown, dialogue *is* engagement with the world, *is* interactive by way of communication with culture and *in* culture. By offering a practical demonstration to illustrate the concepts of dialogue that Bakhtin theorised, it is hoped that readers of this paper will be able to relate to the way in which readings of these worlds represent what is considered in this paper as environmental learning. Bakhtin's notions of dialogue and carnival are theoretically productive in educational contexts in terms of exploring the relational and dialectical paradox of reading the word and reading the world.

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