Learners in a Changing Learning Landscape: Reflections from an Instructional Design Perspective

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Instructional Design Research

- Find instructional methods and method-media combinations that yield effective, efficient and appealing learning, given:
  - Task or content
    - task and content analysis
  - Contexts or circumstances
    - contextual analysis
  - Target group
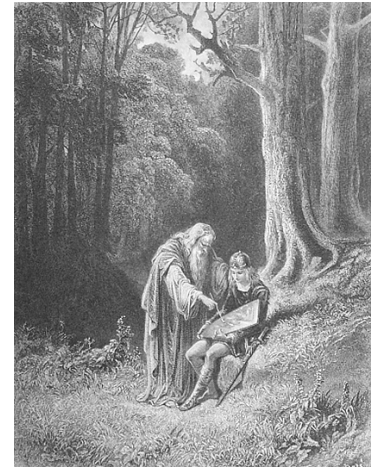   - target group analysis

Changing What is Learned

- Rapid changes in society & technologies
  - flexible problem solving and reasoning skills
    - professional competencies
  - higher-order skills for lifelong learning
    - learning competencies
- Implications for Instructional Design
  - focus on learning from whole, meaningful tasks
  - real/simulated task environments

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Changing Contexts

- Technology-rich, informal and professional settings
  - 24/7 connectivity to others and to resources
  - mass individualization/customization
- Implications for Instructional Design
  - rich "media mix" allowing for (partial) place- and time-independent learning
  - focus on *individual learner* rather than a whole target group (learner-centered design)

Changing Learners

- Lifelong learning
  - Older learners
  - High-expertise learners ("expertise reversal effects")
  - Large differences in conceptions/perceptions
- Implications for Instructional Design
  - We need to *reconsider* much of our research results and place more emphasis on individual learner characteristics

What About the "Online Learner"?

- Old-fashioned focus on an overly broad target group?
  - In order to increase the flexibility of education, and to be prepared for the information age, we need narrowcasting rather than broadcasting

- Differences between individual learners, whether online or not, are much larger than differences between "online learners" and "traditional learners"!

Conclusions

1. Yes, the learning landscape is drastically changing
2. Mass-individualization asks for more, high-quality instructional design research (ID yet has to move from the industrial to the information age!)
3. Ambiguous notions such as "online learning" and "the online learner" are not very helpful to inform such research