Changing student learning preferences: what does this mean for the future of universities?

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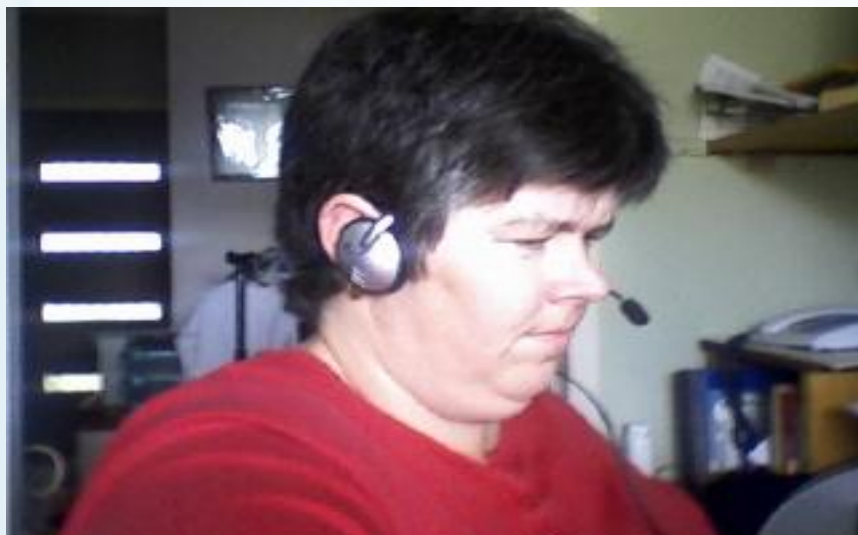
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Introduction

- Widespread ownership of technology and increasing ease of access to social networking and other online tools by people of all ages

- Students increasingly using and seeking to use their own technologies for teaching and learning activities.

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Technological determinism v 'networked individualism'

- The ubiquitous nature of certain technologies, specifically gaming and the Web, has affected the outlook of an entire age cohort in advanced economies (Jones, 2011, p. 42).

- The new technologies emerging with this generation have particular characteristics that afford certain types of social engagement. (Jones, 2011, p. 42).

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Student's use of their own technologies

Use of technology and space can be highly individual and utilised to meet a range of learning, work, social and personal needs.

Connectedness

- Evolving use of social and networking tools for a range of learning activities

- Students are seeking out peers as a first port of call

- Use of 'loose networks' and ability to 'dip in and out of' a variety of peer learning activities.

Mobility

'Anywhere' learning is
seen as highly desirable

Use of technology

- to solve educational challenges

- to support mobility

- to circumvent what is considered to be poor-quality learning experiences

- to overcome perceived limitations of different delivery modes.

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An emerging gap

- Available and emerging technologies provide an endless range of of affordances
- However, still a strong focus on transmission of knowledge - little change in the way the majority of university teachers teach.

Implications for Learning in Higher education

- There is little doubt technology is not only changing the way we teach and learn, it is also challenging centuries-old academic structures and practices, the very notion of what it means to be literate and, potentially, the primacy of universities as the world's arbiters and repositories of knowledge (Williams, 2011, p12).

Institutional paralysis

- General lack of interest in engaging in technology for teaching
- General lack of attention to quality considerations for online learning
- Lack of strategic plans to address a changing environment.

Institutional Responsibility

- Institutions have an emerging responsibility to ensure all stakeholders in the student learning journey are cognisant of the ways that knowledge, its application, access and production are changing and what this means for teaching and learning.

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Conclusions

- Students learning preferences are changing and there is a need for informed understanding of what this means for different learner cohorts

- A need for more strategic approaches to addressing these changing learning preferences at an institution level

- A recognition that 'one size doesn't fit all' and a need for a critical approach to addressing changing learners' needs that is consistent with institutional values

- Government incentives – role of agencies such as TEQSA an be pivitol.

QUESTIONS??