The evoLLLution
ILLUMINATING THE LIFELONG LEARNING MOVEMENT

The Potential Of Cloud-Based Education Marketplaces

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The Internet has a way of disrupting industry after industry – as it introduces new ways of doing business, sharing information, connecting people, etc. Some of the more visible examples of the industries that have been disrupted by the Internet include journalism, tourism, the music business, the video rental business, bookstores, brokerages, and others.

I used to think that the world of education – and higher education in particular – were "on deck." But now, I think higher education is "at bat." However, it is not just higher education that is being impacted by the Internet, but also organizations and projects aimed at K-12 education as well as those providing lifelong learning opportunities. Such organizations are being impacted by a variety of emerging technologies and trends – two of which I want to highlight here are:

• **Online-based marketplaces—as hosted on "the cloud"**
• **The convergence of the television, telephone, and the computer**

One of the powerful things that the Internet provides is **online-based marketplaces**. Such exchanges connect buyers with sellers and vice versa. You see this occurring with offerings like Craig's List, e-Bay, PaperBackSwap.com, and others.

Applying this same type of business model to educational endeavors, there are now places where students/learners can find teachers/professors/trainers and where such providers can find interested students/learners. Other sites create exchanges for people doing a similar job – for example at TeachersPayTeachers.com teachers buy and sell original teaching materials.

Where this phenomenon gets even more interesting is when we talk about "**the cloud**" – a term referring to computing resources existing somewhere out there on the Internet. We don't care where the actual server is or what technologies it may be running. We just want to use some piece of software or access/store some piece of content out there. Such cloud-based marketplaces are starting to form – providing easy-to-access mechanisms whereby developers can create and sell their educationally-related applications and content.

Now add to that **the enormous convergence of the television, the telephone, and the computer** and you have a very powerful means of distributing high-end, multimedia-based, team-created educational content that is accessible 24 x 7 x 365. Because communication technologies are also available here – whether that be within the Internet-connected TV itself or via the use of second devices such as tablets or smart phones – social learning and networking can go hand-in-hand with the content that's being accessed via an Internet-connected TV.

PHOTO BY STEVE WILSON

Cloud-based mechanisms have the potential to massively change accessibility and delivery of higher education.

I recently designed and posted a graphic that captures the above items, available here.

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