

SoTEL Symposium 18-19 February 2021

Creative Forest: an emergent learning environment

Renea Mackie
Creative Forest
hello@creativeforest.info

Submission Type: Trendsetter

Keywords: innovative learning environments

Abstract:

Creative Forest is an educational space that connects, facilitates and empowers learners in education, enterprise and local community. Using an ecosystem methodology that resembles a forest metaphor, learner's co-construct networks, interact, collaborate, and seek out and share expertise as a way of transforming social and cognitive relationships and values that craft a future of learning that is distinctly different and unconstrained. Learners are integral to the operation and success of the learning community as a way of designing, managing and promoting individual or group/community design projects for either self-discovery and knowledge creation or creative and entrepreneurial endeavour. The essence of the ecosystem relies on a permeable structure that allows participants to reveal tactics to reinvent, subvert, and recontextualise the folds and refolding of the learning space for meeting the needs and understanding of encounters of everyday practice. Learners are central to the ecosystem. "Learning is usually a progressive change in what we know or can do" (Nuthall, 2001). For Creative Forest, *learners* is a term that applies to everyone, everyone is a learner, everyone is a teacher, and learning to do by doing.

Creative Forest is a reorientation in educational thinking that has challenged traditional, didactic education for its implied assumption of a separation between knowing and doing, where knowledge is treated as an integral, self-sufficient substance, theoretically independent of the situations in which it is learned and used. This assumption is in conflict with the social knowledge that emerges from learners' interaction with each other and the Internet, which they use as a tool to reach out, interact, mentor and share experiences and knowledge. Given this situation, learning organisations are sometimes challenged to shift from their traditional role, perceived as the transfer of abstract, decontextualised formal concepts rather than personalised interconnecting socially constructed experiences (that promote critical learning and citizenship). Building a system that encourages students to co-construct, interact and collaborate on individually orientated projects shaped the foundation structure and supportive mechanisms for the development of Creative Forest.

This paper presentation will discuss a journey into building Creative Forest as an emergent innovative learning environment and talk through its application in education, business and community contexts.

References

Nuthall, G, A. (2001) *Student experience and learning process: Developing an evidence based theory of classroom learning*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Seattle.