INTRODUCTION

There have been various attempts to categorize a so-called ‘new generation’ of students who have emerged with the Web and new digital technologies in the early 1990s. Some of the prominent labels include ‘cyberkids’ (Holloway & Valentine, 2003), ‘net generation’ (Tapscott, 1998) or ‘digital natives’. The concept of digital natives was first outlined by Barlow (1995) and subsequently popularized by Prensky (2001), Tapscott (2008) and Palfrey and Gasser (2008). According to this argument, a digital native refers to a young person who was born after 1980 and grew up in a world in which the use of digital technologies and especially the Web has been normalized. Digital natives are familiar with the use of computers, mobile phones and other digital devices such as personal music players and gaming devices, and have grown up with the Web ‘always on’ or ‘always connected’ rather than with a ‘dial up’ connection. Young people belonging to this generation are ‘native’ to a digital world and a ‘digital lifestyle’, as opposed to ‘digital immigrants’, who were born before 1980, and have therefore been asked to adapt themselves to new technologies.

In addition, recent advocates of Web 2.0 digital technologies argue that a new generation of digital natives is entering educational institutions already equipped with new skills in the use of a wide range of digital technologies and Web 2.0 applications. If correct, the argument is that this new generation will need a wholly different pedagogy for teaching and learning in order to engage them in education.

Tapscott (1998) argued that the net generation brought with them a truly transformative power to supplant the transmission model of pedagogy with one based on more interactivity and collaboration. The transmission model of pedagogy is predicated on a ‘one size fits all’ mentality, in which knowledge can be disseminated to all learners regardless of individual differences or learning styles. Pre-empting a significant amount of later research connected with social constructivism, Tapscott outlined the principle of an interactionist pedagogy closely aligned with the requirements and opportunities of the digital age, in which he identifies a movement from:

1. Linear to hypermedia learning;
2. Instruction to construction and discovery;
3. Teacher centered to learner centered education;
4. Absorbing material to learning how to navigate and how to learn;
5. School to lifelong learning;
6. One-size fits all to customized learning;
7. Learning as ‘torture’ to learning as fun;
8. The teacher as transmitter to the teacher as facilitator.
Tapscott’s work on interactivity also looks forward to the recent interest in the use of digital games for learning, viewing them more as an opportunity for today’s net generation to experiment with interactivity and associated skills rather than as a threat due to their popular image of violence and distraction.

The ‘digital natives’ hypothesis then has three main aspects:
1. Digital natives constitute a largely homogenous group or generation;
2. Digital natives learn differently from preceding generations of students;
3. Digital natives demand a new way of teaching and learning.

All three claims are in need of deconstruction (here defined as a process of interrogation in terms of their foundational validity). Existing studies of digital natives need to be more disciplinary specific and ‘digital nativeness’ cannot be expected to be applicable across all educational fields, as well as gender. The need for more ‘discipline specific’ research therefore responds to Bennett, Maton and Kervin (2008) who argue that it is necessary to examine claims surrounding the terms ‘digital natives’ and ‘digital immigrants’ by considering empirical research in specific contexts.

In agreeing with this emphasis, this new book aims to produce a more balanced, research-based view of digital natives that responds to the two tendencies that have plagued much discussion about learning technologies over the last few decades: “Neither dismissive scepticism nor uncritical advocacy enable understanding of whether the phenomenon of digital natives is significant and in what ways education might need to change to accommodate it” (Bennett, Maton & Kervin, 2008, p. 9). The question precisely is to what extent and in which ways learners are changing (if at all) in the digital age, and how a more pluralistic understanding of them can be developed. As a collection of innovative, scholarly chapters this book will attempt to steer a more productive path between the temptations of ‘dismissive scepticism’ and ‘uncritical advocacy’ vis-a-vis digital natives, to produce an international overview of developments in digital literacy among today’s young learners.

CHAPTER PROPOSALS

Chapter proposals are being sought for the first section of the book (6-10 chapters). Chapters should focus on a substantive area of pedagogy related to digital natives in education. Completed chapters should be between 6,000 - 8,500 words in length, and fully referenced following APA style guidelines.

CASE STUDIES PROPOSALS

The second section of the book includes 5-10 case studies that develop and compliment the themes of the first section of the book by exploring instructors’ practical experiences.

All of the case studies are organized according to a similar format thus enabling comparison. Case studies represent first-hand accounts from those involved directly in the projects described. The case studies should be based on research done with digital natives in the last five years. Each case study should address the following sections where appropriate:

(i). the context of the project
(ii). the rationale of the project
(iii). the teaching and learning aims and objectives of the project
(iv). the technology infrastructure
(v). the evaluation and assessment criteria used
(vi). the learning outcomes and findings of the project
(vii). future implications of the project (institutional, for teaching, for learning, for professional development)

The final word-length of each case study is expected to be in the range of 3,500 – 6,000 words
SUBMITTING A PROPOSAL

Please send a 1-2 page proposal outlining the main features of your proposed chapter or case study and how it is relevant for the collection.

Proposals should be sent as MS Word documents by email to: Michael Thomas, at: michael.thomas@gmx.co.uk. The deadline for the receipt of a proposal is October 15th, 2009. The subject line of the email should read, “Digital Natives Chapter/Case Study Proposal.”

All proposals should include the following information:

(i). Full name and title of the author(s)

(ii). Professional status (Teacher, Lecturer, Professor etc.)

(iii). Professional affiliation (Name of your educational institution)

(iv). Professional and Email addresses

(v). Please attach a short biographical statement of each author (max. 150 words).

All proposals will be vetted and returned to the authors within 2 weeks of receipt with appropriate feedback. The first draft of the chapters and case studies is due on or before March 15th, 2010. All submitted papers will be subject to a refereed process of peer review. Authors of accepted proposals will be sent further guidelines for the development of their chapter or case study. Prospective authors may submit more than one chapter and/or case study proposal. However, only one chapter and case study can be accepted per author.

The book has attracted interest from a number of educational publishers and it is expected to be published in 2010/11.

ABOUT THE EDITOR

Michael Thomas Ph.D. is Professor of Language Learning Technologies at Nagoya University of Commerce & Business in Japan. He is editor of the International Journal of Virtual and Personal Learning Environments. His research interests are in digital literacies and Web 2.0, digital technologies and TESOL education, the Internet and society, and the philosophy of language. He is author of The Reception of Derrida: Translation and Transformation (2006), editor of Handbook of Research on Web 2.0 and Second Language Learning (2009), and co-editor of Interactive Whiteboards for Education: Theory, Research and Practice (in press) and Task-Based Language Teaching and Technology (forthcoming 2010).

FURTHER INFORMATION

More information about the book may be found at: <http://wirelessready.nucba.ac.jp/digitalnatives.pdf>