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FOR A RADICAL CHANGE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract
Our research has emerged from a passion for higher education. We also feel an urge to radically change it for the better. An increasingly dense literature has documented the harmful effects of screens on concentration and learning. With the emergence of the Internet, early hopes of a universal knowledge-sharing community have been shattered by the greed of companies competing for attention in the cognitive market. The Internet only mirrors the true nature of a humanity that is more interested in distraction than self-development. In this context, youth is particularly vulnerable to the lure of entertainment for its own sake. Based on years of teaching experience and the observation that screens make people stupid, we have developed an experimental design that bans them from the classroom. Teaching relies on the oratory skills of the teacher and true (rather than virtual) communication with students. Interactivity and learning do not require advanced technical artefacts such as videos or games, but quality storytelling and rhetorics - an art of conversation teachers should return to. We have witnessed extraordinary results following this "old school" method which will hopefully become the school of tomorrow. Students were not passively staring at slides that emptied their minds, but developing thinking skills and a taste for imagination that made them masters of their own learning.

Keywords Screens; distraction; tradition; imagination.

INTRODUCTION

The troublesome impact of screens in higher education

The inherent characteristics of knowledge work, when combined with the operation of the Internet in contemporary society, produce a change in the dominant paradigm of what constitutes knowledge work. Since learning is a form of knowledge work, therefore this change will affect university education. The current approach to the Internet and higher education does not account for the changed conditions of knowledge in a network society. New directions are needed which will allow us to make technology and pedagogy choices for future education better suited to a network society (Allen and Long 2009). Most educational

institutions in developed nations, for example universities, as well as important political organisations, such as the EU, emphasise the importance of knowledge generation and exchange for the economy. Thus, education is key to launch and maintain a so-called knowledge society, which is desirable as economic prosperity appears to be linked to a corresponding increase in knowledge. Alvesson (2013) indicates that most governments link increased knowledge and education with more effective forms of democracy, an enhanced quality of life, improved environmental awareness, better health and reduced crime. Economic and cultural globalisation has ushered in a new era in higher education. In global knowledge economies, higher education institutions are more important than ever as mediums for a wide range of cross-border relationships. For the first time in history every university is part of a single world-wide network and the world leaders in the field have an unprecedented global visibility. The specifically global element in academic labour markets has gained even more weight since the advent of global university rankings (Marginson and van der Wende 2007).

Mobile computing devices and the use of social media create opportunities for interaction and collaboration. They allow students to engage in content creation and communication using social media and Web 2.0 tools with the assistance of constant connectivity (Gikas and Grant 2013). However, it is desirable for students to strike a balance in the time spent online for academic and non-academic purposes. The total time on the Internet is weakly correlated with the time spent online specifically for academic purposes. For social science students, a low but significant positive correlation exists between the overall time spent online and the time spent on the Internet for academic research. In a similar analysis carried out for science students, a negative low correlation was observed (Ayub et al, 2014). Academic use of the internet is patterned by a range of potential influences such as students' wider internet use, access and expertise, their year of study, gender, age, ethnic and educational background. Demographic variables explain much variation in internet usage (Khan and Awan 2017). Students' academic internet use is most strongly patterned along the lines of gender and subject-specialism rather than other individual characteristics or differences in technology access or expertise (Selwyn 2008). Social networking sites such as Facebook have been widely-adopted by students and, consequently, have the potential to become a valuable resource to support their educational communications and collaborations with faculty. However, faculty members have a track record of prohibiting classroom uses of technologies that are frequently used by students. Students are much more likely than faculty to use Facebook and are significantly more open to the possibility of using Facebook and similar technologies to support classroom work. Faculty members are more likely to use more “traditional” technologies such as email (Roblyer et al. 2010). Indeed there are significant correlations between technology literacy and pedagogical practice integration. Faculty technology training may be maximised for the integration of pedagogy by using the training strategy of small group faculty forums with a trainer (Georgina and Olson 2008). Social media are increasingly visible in higher education settings as instructors look to technology to mediate and enhance their instruction as well as promote active learning for students. Empirical evidence, however, has lagged in supporting the claim. Most of the existing research on the utility and effectiveness of social media in the higher education class is limited to self-reported data (e.g., surveys, questionnaires) and content analyses (Tess 2013).

Characterising the challenges of education on the internet is a very complex task. We live in an era marked by online activity. The full use of the internet’s potential requires designing new training needs, and must allow for the many technological trends that impact educational challenges in both the medium and long term. “Why talk only about the internet in education when we could talk about pedagogy in general?” This was the initial question that inspired us. The process of educational appropriation of technological

functionality calls for a heuristic approach to better understand the pedagogical dilemmas and affordances encountered in the educational use of technology. Given the interest and use of educational technologies and consequent interest by researchers, it is often challenging to isolate the major issues that have been or can be addressed by academic research. Learning on an educational platform involves more than just learning using a neutral technological system; it involves models of representation of specific knowledge, values and action that must be visible in pedagogical models. Beyond the type of platform, the quality of learning involves other challenges than just good teaching and the efficient distribution of content (Gros, Suárez-Guerrero and Anderson 2016).

So the internet, if not adopted in the correct manner, has harmful effects. We relish screens in our lives, but we dread their effects on our social interactions. We open the gates of our schools to all types of tools, yet we fear it may harm student performance. The internet deteriorates students' competences in reading and writing, dehumanises educational environments, distorts social interactions between teachers and students and isolates individuals (Alhumaid 2019). Both education level and time management have an impact on internet addiction. Many forces motivate institutions of higher education, particularly business schools, to develop and deliver education via the Internet. The question of how courses and degree programmes should be designed for effective online delivery via the Internet is a challenge that requires a deeper exploration of the notion of communication (Rungtusanatham et al. 2004).

The challenge of communication

Scholars routinely evaluate communication methods used to achieve mutual understanding (van Mulken & Hendriks, 2014). Edmonson and House (1991) identified that non-native speakers apply more words to express their thoughts, due to their lower level of proficiency. van Engen et al. (2010) found that non-native speakers consume more time in identifying nuances and differences when being confronted with a text in a foreign language. Henderson and Louhiala-Salminen (2011: 22) state that "unfamiliar communication patterns of metacommunicative routines – which often occur in interactions with strangers or people from foreign countries – influence interpersonal perceptions and attitudes. This is a groundbreaking discovery that tells us that perceptions depend on the selected communication type, which has an impact on the effectiveness of communication. Confrontation to a foreign language or unfamiliar communication pattern has the power to shape the effectiveness of the information exchange (Fredriksson et al, 2006). Gudykunst & Nishida (2001) identified a strong correlation between feelings of uncertainty and perceived effectiveness. Also, interlocutors are found to be more uncertain when communicating with unfamiliar people, which happens often in cross-cultural exchange. Accordingly, Gudykunst & Shapiro (1996) indicate that being able to manage feelings of uncertainty in beneficial for the perceived effectiveness of a communication, and thus most likely also impacts the actual effectiveness. Not only do perceptions about the effectiveness of communication play a major role, but also the emotions and valuation of the conversation partner (Mulken, 2010; Henderson & Louhiala-Salminen, 2011). The actual effectiveness of a communication is positively correlated to a favorable evaluation of the conversation partner (Mulken, 2010). By contrast, Henderson & Louhiala-Salminen (2011) state that negative feelings towards the other speaker will most likely result in a decreased actual effectiveness due to a lower focus on the goal of the interaction and an increased attention given to the negative perceptions of the communication partner.

In sum, research proves that linguistic balance impacts the formation of perceptions, either positively or negatively. Hundreds of studies suggest a correlation between perceptions and actual effectiveness. Dillard and Ha (2016), for example, identified a positive correlation between message effectiveness and information-seeking behaviour. Perceptions have the power to influence

the actual results.

Cultural contingence

It is impossible to correctly interpret the meaning of a speaker without knowing the exact context in which the communication takes place. In addition, personal tastes shape utterances. Thus while one person might like canary wine and Beethoven, the other person in the conversation might not. It would be more correct to say that "canary wine is pleasant to me" (Cavell, 2008: 85). Cross-cultural communication is defined as the process of exchanging messages, either verbally or nonverbally, between people from different cultural backgrounds (Levine and Adelman, 1982). It is a skill that builds, promotes and strengthens relationships across members of different cultures (Gore 2013). To conduct an intercultural communication process, a sender, a message and a receiver are required. Thomas and Peterson (2018) emphasise the importance of sender and receiver, as communication is not only about the mechanical delivery of the message but also subject to the understanding of the meaning of the transmitted message, depending on the cultural environment of both parties. Messages do not only have to be translated to a foreign language; they also have to be transferred from one context to another (Najafbagy, 2008). The probability of miscommunication to occur increases when conversation partners do not share a common language, have different understandings, point of views, mindsets and approached on doing things (Ferraro, 2010).

Therefore, communication is always influenced by a culture's values, norms and cognitive structures (Thomas & Peterson, 2018). According to Zhu et al. (2006), the cultural dimensions of Hofstede (2001) impact cross-cultural communication, either directly or indirectly. Also, the dimensions of high and low context cultures, as provided by Hall (1976), are relevant for the communication style. Moreover, the formality, pacing and usage of euphemism and slang are characterising the communication style and can therefore impact the understandability of both interlocutors. Decoding a message without context is not possible, as the meaning, to a certain extent, is transferred by the respective context of the communication. High context cultures convey their messages implicitly. There, nonverbal communication is used to a larger degree or information is internalised in the person, while the receiver is expected to be able to decode information correctly. Consequently, only a minimum of the message is explicit. By contrast, low context cultures communicate directly, or explicitly. Therefore, at least the sender of the communication clearly indicates the actual meaning of the message to be transmitted. While Hall (1976) refers to high and low context, Thomas & Peterson (2018) as well as Ferraro (2010) use the terms explicit versus implicit communication to describe the same phenomenon. Thus, there is no clear distinction between their framework and the one provided by Hall (1976), especially as the contemporary authors refer back to the classic concept of high and low context cultures. Thus, this is a good example that an identical phenomenon can be described with different words, even in the same language. For example, low context communication would refuse a request by answering "no". However, in a high context setting, the receiver would reply to the identical request with silence, vague responses, indirect neglecting or body language (Steers et al., 2013). These discrepancies in communication styles might cause disastrous misunderstandings as high context might not be understood by explicit speakers or, in return, explicit messages are perceived as rude (Hall, 1976).

The success of a communication depends on whether or not the communication partner is addressed appropriately. Consequently, research on forms of addressing has been in the focus on sociolinguistic scholars. This is due to the fact that the degree of formality used in conversations impacts the receiver's perception concerning the respect, politeness and haughtiness of the message transmitted. In some languages, subject pronouns are used to express a certain level of politeness. Also, the focus of these subject pronouns can convey information about age, sex, social and

economic status. Thereby, values and cultural norms can be communicated simultaneously. Some languages allow different versions of "you", address communication partners with their titles and their last name, thereby implying formality (Schneider et al., 2014). Mostly, formality refers to the correct application of the formal and informal "you" in different languages and cultures (Scheu-Lottgen & Hernández-Campoy, 1998; Steers et al., 2013; Thomas & Peterson, 2018). Addressing individuals with their last name and titles can have a significant impact on the flow of the conversation. For example, in the United States addressing somebody with their first name creates an informal and friendly atmosphere. By contrast, in Austria this approach would be considered as impolite, offending and unprofessional as first names are reserved for long-term relationships, such as family and friends. Certain countries, such as Germany, Portugal and Italy, use (academic) titles complementary to the last name. Even in long-term work relationships, people might still address each other with their last name and titles as opposed to the United States, where people are instantly introduced with their first names (Schneider et al., 2014). This is due to different expression of status prevalent in the respective countries. While in Western economies material wealth plays an important roles, developing countries might form status based on other features, for example age. Failing to address the communication partner might result in misinterpretation, negative perceptions and feelings towards the sender of the message or, in the worst case, a breakdown of the conversation.

Hall (1990) stresses the importance of time and timing in communication. Monochronic cultures consider time a scarce resource, which must not be wasted. Common practices in these cultures include intensive scheduling, focusing on one issue at a time and avoiding interruptions in business context. By contrast, polychronic societies rate time as unlimited and simultaneous. Consequently, their focus is more on human interactions than time schedules. Thus interruptions may lead to misinterpretations. For instance, Latin Americans or Mediterranean Europeans tend to talk in a fast pace and change the topic frequently (Levine & Adelman, 1982). Hall and Hall (1990) identify North America and Europe as predominantly monochronic cultures whereas Asian and Latin American countries are clustered as majorly polychronic.

Euphemisms and metaphors can be used to paraphrase particular words, sentences or expressions to circumvent cultural taboos. Thus, it might be applied for sexual content or natural functions of the body, for example in relation to digestion or menstruation (Ferraro, 2010). In this respect, it is necessary to interpret the context of the communication to identify whether the speaker is referring to the literal or metaphoric meaning of the phrase. Slang and jargon are other forms of deviance from the standard language to be considered in international operations. Furthermore, the mode of speaking in terms of tone of voice can give implications on the cultural origin of the speaker (Thomas & Peterson, 2018). While 55% of the message is conveyed by nonverbal cues and 7% by the verbally issued content, 38% of the message is transmitted by the tone (Mehrabian, 1981). Pitch, emphasis, speed, volume, accent and inflection all affect the tone of voice (Eunson, 2012). Boredom, sarcasm, anger affect it too. The volume of the tone, for example, serves as an indicator for dominance, timidity or confidentiality and might change depending on a private or public setting. High-pitching voices creates an inmate situation and is mostly used in close relationships, while low-pitched voices suggest the opposite (Eunson, 2012).

METHODOLOGY

Our objective was to measure the effects of a screen ban on student performance in business schools. Experimental classrooms were designed in two locations (Thailand and Taiwan) over two semesters (Fall and Spring), during which mobile phones, laptops, tablets, desktops and pagers were forbidden in class. We conducted satisfaction surveys and focus groups in these locations. We noticed a sharp increase of grades, and satisfaction

on the rise (reported further).

The history of focus groups can be traced back to marketing research methods, but they have also been used in ethnographic research. Our study, which used this approach as part of data collection, raised many issues of analysis and interpretation: in particular, the importance of paying attention to the sequence of discussions, the individuals involved, and the social context of the focus group. Focus groups are not an easy method of collecting data, since issues of validity and the relationship between focus group data and other data require careful consideration. A focus group is a group interview or discussion with a small group of individuals, usually numbering between six and ten people, who meet together to express their views about a particular topic defined by the researcher. A facilitator, or moderator, leads the group and guides the discussion between the participants. In general, a focus group lasts one and a half to two hours and an audio recording is made of it. Sometimes a video is made as well. The audio recording can be transcribed for the purpose of analysis. This description of a focus group implies that both participants and facilitator will be physically co-present for the discussion (Gilbert and Stoneman (2016: 302-3).

Prior to the start of the focus group, we provided each participant with a consent form. All participants consented. We then collected the forms and proceeded with the protocol. The consent form noted that individual responses would not be reported and that participants' input would be aggregated into larger thematic statements. Once the experimental classroom was over, we asked students what they thought about the screen ban.

RESULTS

In Taiwan, the majority shared Melody's opinion:

Personally, I really enjoyed this time away from my smartphone… I think it was a struggle for everyone. But in the end we could concentrate a lot more on whatever "theory" the teacher wanted to share with us. Even if it was boring. At least we could remember the boring theory.

Other students stressed that the reason they attended classes wasn't the content, but possible business connections. Networking mattered a lot more than knowledge. As John, a second-year MBA student, put it:

I value practical experience and the rest is "blabla", if you know what I mean, a bit of a waste of time really. What I loved in our programme is the internship with a company before we can graduate, which, regardless of whether you start working for them after you graduate or not, is still really helpful. You have that thing under your belt before you actually start applying for jobs.

Sophia similarly insisted on practical experience as a major strength, followed closely by the sense of community they had as students.

I mean, not being able to use the internet in class… I don't really care, right? I can catch up on my Insta later. These days I'm very much into Club House [a radio-like application] and if I'm afraid of missing anything, I can always ask Jane [her classmate] to keep my phone and I'll listen anyway through my pods [tiny headphones] without the lecturer noticing. The screen ban was a good thing, and not an issue for me. I got A for my presentation and A+ in the final examination. Whatever lesson we have isn't as important as the connections we get. I always ask myself: "so what? What's the take-away here?" And I find that as LinkedIn says, it's not what you know but who you know that will get you a job.

Essentially tied as a leading motivator is the perception that pedagogy is improved by the unique characteristics of a real discussion, rather than Powerpoint-based monologue. There are several dimensions to this. Self pacing for the students was mentioned frequently. But so was the ability to interact more, and more personally, with students. As Elon said,

You begin to learn about the work habits of your classmates very quickly and I think you get to know them, because you're dealing with them in a verbal way as opposed to chatting online… You have these interactions in the classroom, you can really get to know your teacher and participate with classmates along much more.

Paul concurred:

Thanks to the screen ban, I get to know my classmates better because I spend so much more time with them because when they type stuff on their phones, they ignore you. The professor gets much more input from us, and you gets to know us better.

Tiffany summarised this idea in the Taiwanese classroom:

It's not just deeper, we're becoming more creative. Do you know I didn't know I could do it? I didn't know that I knew so much.

As Sophia pressed her for clarification, she added:

I mean, it's about concentration. Now I'm happy I can follow the course without being disturbed, and learn about Hofstede's cultural strategies and Porter's five forces, even though it will never use it in my real career. But having an idea that this exists is good, because when I'm back home I can check it out from Wikipedia. When my professor taught us Maslow's hierarchy of needs last term, I was distracted by some of my friend's posts and messages, and I couldn't focus. I quickly forgot what this was about.

Mentioned frequently as an advantage of the medium is its support for the emergence of a learning community among the students (in both Thai and Taiwanese contexts). One faculty member who experimented the screen ban said that students formed better relationships with other students than they would if they were in an online environment.

That's kind of a motivator for me because I feel I get closer to students. One of the things that I like about the no-screen classroom is it encourages the instructor to use creativity to create interesting things which we don't always do online. It's enhancing creativity on the part of the instructor.

His colleague, who joined the focus group because he saw us during lunch break, explained:

You bet. I have to think a lot about how to motivate students to catch up with readings and assignments. It was really challenging for me and I really enjoyed it and I find many different ways to motivate them. That was the reason that I really like a normal conversation without PowerPoint, YouTube, Netflix or I dunno what Pokemon activity we always feel we need to deliver. I had to think. It was a big challenge for me to motivate them. It was kind of an experiment for me. If you're asking me if I love it, I'd say "yeah, kinda", and when I think again, I'd rather go for a strong "yeah, defo". We need to talk more and show less. We need to develop their thirst for knowledge [he guffaws]

The first faculty member echoed the sentiments of an instructor who described

the challenge of a classroom without technology... I just happened to enjoy using words and jokes instead… Okay, yeah, sure, okay, occasionally it was frustrating, I'm not gonna deny that… But come on… at the end of the day… We also save time on class prep, right? [he snorts] What new ways can I use that I haven't used before? If you're Korean like me, you don't know what appeals to Taiwanese students. Personally, I think that the technology… after a while, even if you use Netflix, it can get repetitive. So I just mention my favourite series, Dr. X, and if they want to watch it after class then so be it! Why should I always be the "textbook guy"? I'm serious but I also have a life, and my life doesn't revolved around teaching. I'm also a father, see? And do you think I will teach Maslow to my kids? Hell no. We have to be more human. We have to talk, go to restaurants and so on. I play mobile games with my kids, but only while waiting for the food. When the food is served, I tell them to "focus" on the food. It's a temporary ban [he laughs]… And after dinner, fine, we just watch the end of an episode or something if we have time but we won't start another episode. Otherwise it's endless. It never stops.

Several faculty and students spoke very passionately about the fact that they felt that they worked harder (and did a better job) without PowerPoint or material from websites in the classroom. However, their work was devalued or stigmatised by the administration and their peers for not using technology. For example, one

instructor lamented:

I have a huge problem about lack of recognition from the community.... Lack of recognition from my peers. All of my buddies in my school of management, they all laugh at me, because I don't use the power of sounds and images. They say a picture tells a thousand words. Yeah? But I draw charts and write words on the whiteboard. They think it's so lame. As if I'm not doing anything. So I wonder whether the administrators also think that way, that we are getting away with bullshit teaching... Anyway, that's okay with me. The point is that people all laugh at me, they think that I'm lazy, okay then, so be it.

The Korean faculty member jumped in:

Not only peers and administration, I think there's a general stigma like "1980s-degree" kind of thing.

Among the significant comments that were contributed during the discussions included the point that convenience wasn't always a factor for students. Saving travel time was not always the priority. Instead, the overwhelming motivation to attend classes was career/personal advancement. They have had positive experiences with their previous education, and they seek more education, because they understand that it will make them more worthy and valued in the workplace. As Saisuri says in Bangkok,

Of course I could save a lot of time with distance learning! But staying behind a screen isn't always motivating. I enjoy seeing people and talking to them in the real life, rather than through chats, even if these days we have lots of cute stickers and video clips to share… Still, I think seeing someone's face and hearing her laugh or complain is part of what makes campus life attractive. So, yeah, I think we can also do both? A bit of real-life classroom, a bit of virtual classroom: the MOOC, right? Like my friend Mook in Pattaya [Laughter]

Overall, it appears that utilitarian self-interest doesn't necessarily drive their enrolment in business schools. They also want, as Sophia said repeatedly, "fun":

How am I going to be motivated if the class isn't fun? I only want three things after I've completed my MBA courses: a degree, a network, and fun. Is that too much asking?

Purm from Bangkok echoed her Taiwanese counterpart:

I'm paying quite a lot for this and I'm not going to waste it. So if you can give me a passport for a successful career, hurry and do it! And if we can have some fun too, I won't complain [she grins]

Others wanted to prove to themselves that they can successfully earn a degree - not necessarily because it will lead to a better job but because it is a lifelong goal that could not be pursued earlier. Several members of the focus group felt that incentives and enablers for prospective college students are important factors that contribute to a student's decision. Marketing is often most effective when it is by word-of-mouth. As a faculty professor tells us,

Colleges can certainly get the word out via their standard communications; however I think word of mouth by users of this mode of delivery is the most effective way. The point 'personal influence' over more impersonal information sources has been demonstrated by a lot of research in management and information systems.

For most students, the major obstacle to higher education may be the demands and pressures of their (part-time) work roles and family lives. But even more challenging is technology, which to many students remains intimidating. Saisuri insists on this:

I've tried Zoom and I don't like it. Honestly, FaceTime is way easier to use. When you're an Apple fan like me, you don't want to download another crappy app on your phone. You go with what you trust. You follow your instinct. These folks assume we can use silent modes and background for our videos and whatnot, but if nobody trains you, how the heck are you gonna do it?

Therefore, it seems important to explore accessibility of various technologies, comfort level with those technologies and comfort with the different pedagogies each entails. Fear of

technology, it was felt, could be more of a problem for individuals over age 30 than for individuals who are traditional age college students or even those in their 20s. The Korea professor was very clear on this aspect:

Gen Z, right, Millenials… They know how to deal with it. I'm gen X, am I old? I don't think so! It's just that I used to be an expert with my own stuff, and they keep changing it all the time. Upgrades, updates, planned obsolescence, faster and faster chips, 3G to 4G to 5 and 6Gs, well yeah I admit it, I can't keep up. It's like trying to catch a train that's not stopping. You run fast when you're very young, but at some point, you know… Even if you're careful with your diet… Your muscles just don't respond, right? Same thing. You gimme an Amiga, MS-DOS or Windows 3.1, no problem. I run the machine like a pro. Even the tiny thing, Tatoo, I can send a phone number in no time. The next generation, the Nokia something, I can text with two thumbs and get that important message across at the speed of light. But I mean, this tiny Blackberry keyboard - come on, are you for real? And touch-screens… Just got used to my Samsung Galaxy III, but it took me a while all right. iPhone? Can't even imagine getting that damn thing to work.

We could go on with such insightful comments but we are limited with the word count, and must provide instead recommendations. Time to wrap up.

Recommendations and limitations: tips for further research

The focus group discussion stimulated students and faculty to think of examples and extensions of ideas that they otherwise would not have thought of. Among the most actionable results that we obtained is the following discovery: people said they worked harder when everyone was offline, and when the whiteboard was used instead of slides. The great majority of students in our two Thai and Taiwanese samples improved their grades (92 and 96%, respectively). However, some instructors felt that their efforts were devalued by the institution and by many of their colleagues. Official praise and encouragement from high administrative levels, which costs nothing, would go a long way towards eliminating this source of dissatisfaction.

In terms of the practical implications of the results, we need to determine generalisability beyond these first two locations, to a much broader set of institutions, ideally outside Asia. The concepts of time and place dependency and fear of technology are relatively recent issues that require further research. Age and gender also appear to be issues of importance. Little discussion in the focus group centred on the previous educational experiences of students. Another area that was mentioned only in passing is potential impact and influence that work have on a postgraduate student.

Although it might have been possible to conduct this focus group using video conferencing equipment, the cost of doing that would have also been substantial. The latter techniques would have allowed a focus group to work in a synchronous or live manner, and would have been possible within a limited amount of time. But expenses are a real part of research, and often, the most economical method becomes the best.

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