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Historical Connection of IT to Learning and to Communication

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Summary

Information Technology is nowadays considered fundamental for many activities in the modern societies. The development of technology has influenced most human activities and in particular communication of all sorts. People in general are much more familiar with the influence of IT on communication than on learning. Even many professional educationalists still lack knowledge, visions and experience in how to combine IT with learning. We shall look at how IT is connected to learning and to communication and how the connections have developed historically.

Learning has for thousands of years been conceived as a particular subject, but it has predominantly been tied to and linked to the different levels of school teaching. When IT started being widely used in the 1960s, a number of projects tried to put IT into the learning process. Some regarded children as receivers that needed drill exercises, others considered children more as inventors or makers of knowledge, and some put “the child at the heart of the educational process”. But none took a discussion of where and how IT could support childrens learning or how IT can challenge learning and teachers, and we still haven’t solved these problems.

Communication is ubiquitous in the society, not tied to any particular institutions. But IT was quickly used in communication, simply because the technological development allowed production of cheap and smart communication devices. Especially the creation of computer networks in the 1980s gave all of us the possibility to use advanced IT to do more and wider communication than ever before. But because no particular institutions have been established to teach and study the interaction between IT and communication, it has taken rather long time to understand the character of this interaction and to combine it with pedagogical know-how.

Studying IT in connection with the powerful concepts of Learning and Communication is both illuminating and rewarding and may lead to a better understanding of how IT and Learning can support each other.