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A9 - TEL - What is it good for?

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Abstract
Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) is the use of technology to enhance and enrich learning situations or learning experiences. At the conference we will argue that research in TEL is needed in order to assess and gain knowledge under which circumstances the use of certain technologies will enhance the learning experience.

The use of the word technology is here to be understood in a broad sense and includes both analog and digital technology, see McLuhan that described technology* as “any extension of ourselves” [1]. With this view of technology, several analog milestones in the history of learning such as the alphabet, books, pencils and paper is to be considered uses of TEL. Furthermore, the research field of TEL should not be restricted to digital or electronic technologies, which could narrow our view of what could be accomplished. This view further implies that electronic-learning (e-learning) becomes a subset of TEL.

From an activity theory perspective TEL can be seen as the use of technology as a mediating artifact (or tool) for enhancing learning in various kinds of activities, either in formal or informal learning situations [2]. Vygotsky [3] introduced the zone of proximal development as the difference between what a learner can do without help, and what she can do with help. TEL is intended to provide the learner with such help, which then goes beyond helping to learn but also helping to do (i.e., carrying out tasks, whether in a classroom or at work). This help can be regarded as an augmentation of performance, as well as of learning.

To conclude, technology can be used to enhance and enrich the learning experience and the learning situation as an extension to ourselves or as a mediating artifact with the intention to expand the of proximal development. The mission of research in TEL is to contribute to the knowledge about under which circumstances the use of (a certain) technology will enhance the learning experience.

*McLuhan uses the words medium, media and technology interchangeably.

References:

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