

Five Disruptions That Will Change Everything

Education is facing the kind of deep disruption and reconfiguration that Amazon brought to retail and that iTunes brought to the music industry. Looking ten years out, we expect to see learning resources and experiences fit together in a much more modular way than we are used to, the way we now purchase individual songs more often than whole albums. We have already seen teaching and learning become unbundled from traditional education institutions. Next, we expect to see learning agents, learners, and other stakeholders put those innovations—along with long-established solutions—together in multiple ways to create a resilient learning ecosystem. Think individual learning playlists and radical personalization.

Democratized Startup

Transformational investment strategies and open access to startup knowledge, expertise, and networks will seed an explosion of disruptive social innovations.

Open knowledge about what it takes to implement an innovation is combining with new funding mechanisms, and with new ways of matching funders and innovators, to expand the opportunity for anyone with a great idea to become an entrepreneur. A culture of innovation promises to help educators iterate toward the best possible solutions for learners.

High-Fidelity Living

As big data floods human sensemaking capacities, cognitive assistants and contextual feedback systems will help people target precisely their interactions with the world.

We will be able to corral data about learners' academic performance, and also data about their social and emotional needs, to match each learner with the particular learning experiences that will help him or her move forward. Learning analytics and dashboards will enable radically personalized learning that reflects our deepening understanding of how people learn and what motivates learning, as well as individual insights.

De-Institutionalized Production

Activity of all sorts will be increasingly independent of institutions as contributions become more ad-hoc, dynamic, and networked.

Work and all sorts of productive activity will increasingly take place via social networks. We will see full-time employment decline as routine tasks are increasingly automated and as organizations use distributed networks to find the individuals who have the knowledge and skills needed to complete specific highly-skilled tasks. As ad-hoc employees in a global talent cloud, we will need to manage our personal brands and engage in continuous career readiness. Do-it-yourself credentialing will expand as people—and learning experiences—become increasingly independent of formal organizations.

Customizable Value Webs

Innovative, open business models will leverage complex networks of assets and relationships to create ultra-customer-centric experiences across industries.

Building off what we have seen for some time now with open education resources, flipping classrooms, and, more recently, MOOCs, freely available blockbuster-quality learning resources will raise new questions about the value of any given learning experience. Learning providers will have to think anew about what they offer learners and how they might connect with other providers or resources to deliver value. Learners and their families will be able to assemble individual learning playlists that match their exact needs, interests, and goals.

Shareable Cities

Next gen cities will drive social innovation, with urban infrastructure shaped by patterns of human connection and contribution.

More and more people are living in cities, but cities—like all levels of government—find themselves increasingly challenged to meet citizens' needs. At the same time, a do-it-yourself maker culture is shifting how people collaborate to solve problems. Instead of waiting for cities to get things right, citizens will come together to fill the service gap. Using rich information about what is happening where they live, citizens will create solutions that reflect where people are and what they need. Cities that use this new source of creativity effectively have the potential to spur economic development and embed learning across the urban landscape.

For the full forecast, see knowledgeworks.org/future-of-learning