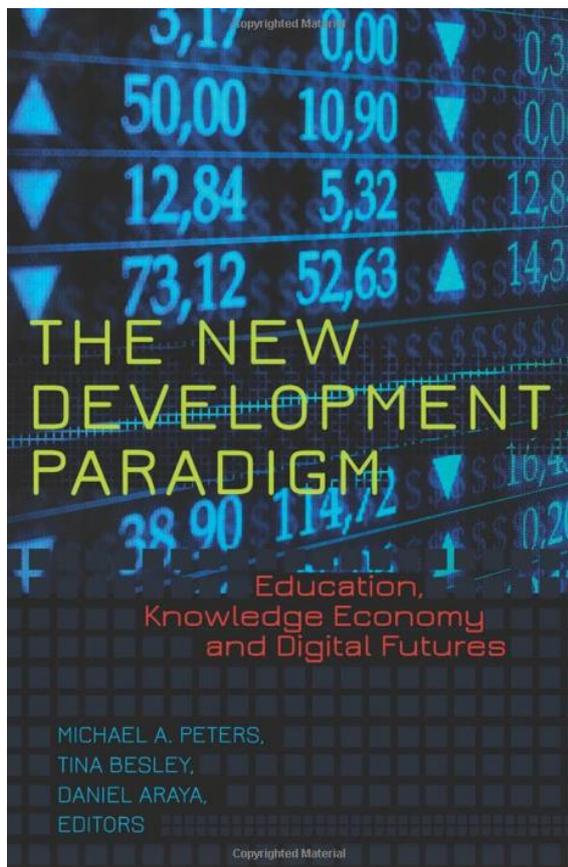


Book Review:

The New Development Paradigm: Education, Knowledge Economy and Digital Futures

Reviewed by William Van Zyl — September 5, 2014

Title: The New Development Paradigm: Education, Knowledge Economy and Digital Futures
Author(s): Michael A. Peters, Tina Besley, & Daniel Araya (eds.)
Publisher: Peter Lang Publishing, New York ISBN: 1433118882, Pages: 285,
Year: 2013 (cost -paperback about \$32 US).



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The book is about developing education as a transformation agent in the constantly changing world. Post-industrialization and Neo-liberalism are analyzed and explored in relation to *modernization*. The challenge in the book (several essays) is on continuous innovation within the *global development of education* as a tool for *change* and *modernization*. The book also touches on philosophies, economics and politics and explores the *global developmental* ideas in regard to *modernization* over the past 100 to 150 years. In the collection of diverse essays the three editors, Peters, Besley and Araya, distinguished academia with many years of experience in education, philosophy and digital possibilities, have been able to combine an amazing amount of diverse essays together in one unit. Over 20 writer's views and perspectives on education, the knowledge economy and digital futures are brought together in one book, a great feat in exploring the bio-diverse thinking on the *knowledge economy* and *modernization*. The book consists of fourteen chapters including an introduction by the editors and an analytical postscript by one of the editors (Michael Peters). Peters start the postscript with a short excerpt from the UN's report and discusses the vision of the United Nations (UN) and the MDG's (Millennium Development Goals) in relation to education as development and modernization. This postscript is packed with a very brief, but powerful overview of *creativity, innovation* and *openness* in the *knowledge economy*. The editors write: "The marriage of openness and creativity together in their myriad forms, socially enabled, really begins to transcend the western paradigm because it emphasizes a radical social and cultural contingency" (Peters, Besley, Araya, 2013, p.284)

The P2P foundation recognizes the interconnectedness of the different essays and comments as follow on the interconnected issues and strategic collection of different perspectives. The P2P foundation comments as follow: "This book of in-depth

essays tackle these interconnected issues head on and inquiries into the shape of an emerging integrative eco-system that is taking advantage of all the recent social innovation to give new hope to the perennial movements for social empowerment” (Michael Bouwens, Founder, Peer to Peer Foundation). Readers and students who are interested in alternative strategies, and approaches to the issues of *modernization* and *development education* are encouraged to read the essays to gain a wider perspective.

When reading the collection of essays it prompts one to think about the work of Bourdieu (1989) who coined the term *habitus*. This word is not just another word for ‘personality’, but from a sociology perspective, it is a more dynamic fluid and much less deterministic view of culture and the production of knowledge. The different essays allow the reader to analyse, though not immediately, the ways of thinking and being and doing from one place to another. As the well-known quote about *habitus* from Bourdieu rings ‘...when habitus encounters a social world of which it is the product , it finds itself as a “fish in water” , it does not feel the weight of water and takes the world about itself for granted’ (Bourdieu, 1989, p.43). As the reader skips between the different chapters the ‘familiar waters’ are recognized and the reader is subjected to different thought processes as he or she moves from ‘pond to pond’ and from ‘fish species to fish species’. Peters, Besley and Araya directs the reader from ‘fish pond to fish pond’ to explore the possible digital futures where we as ‘fish’ could thrive in. To what extent do the ‘fish’ have control or a say in these matters, one may think, when reading? One wonders how the chronological order was determined when compiling the works. When one plans a world tour for a group of people you think about the route and the stops. The editors have considered this but a ‘brochure’ to explain the route and stops in more detail could have given the reader a more

informative view before starting each chapter. Probably the editors have left it open for the subjective interpretation of the reader, on purpose. It is the reader who has the opportunity to move between chapters and to choose the chapters that are relevant and challenging to them in this book. One point of criticism is that the editors could have included some 'maps' and diagrams to set the scene for the range of essays. The editors could have included some introduction to every chapter with possible visuals to information about the position the writer of the essay takes to explain the 'flow of events'. Visual charts and maps could have been a great way to open up and to illustrate the scope and wide angled approach which the book takes. One example of such a wide angled 'photograph' is The Hype cycle for emerging technologies 2011 (figure 13.3, page 225). It is an excellent illustration of the flow of events, and the speed at which technology has evolved and is evolving.

In chapter 13, Michelle Selinger and Richard E. J. Jones comments that "...it is no small wonder that educators have a hard time keeping up with and making full use of each relevant technology as it comes to market...". This is probably the most illustrated and best documented chapter in the book. The social-constructivist approach which writers adopt uses *blended* and *virtual learning* paradigms to explore the role of video and video clips and the latest technology available, within the higher education landscape. Their conclusion is that through the interactivity of these technologies it has changed online learning, online activity, and the blending of learning forever.

The introduction refers to Amartya Sen (1999) and comments on the relationship between individual freedom and social development (Indian Nobel Prize Winner) on page 1 of the book. It is this introduction that sets the scene for the reader to explore

the different types of freedom, the reader can identify personally with the 'familiar water', 'new water' and different 'ponds' of fish' (referring to Bourdieu's quote- 'habitus', 1989). The writers cleverly identify the specific trends and disseminate the woven threads on a 'new future paradigm'. It mainly considers the role of digital futures and education as a tool; and suggests a new approach, to solve developing and developed world issues. Together the essays create a kaleidoscope of different perspectives, just as in a complex ecosystem in nature. All together the book encapsulates the critical agents, which are necessary for a global democracy and global citizenship, and to take action. It further hints on the formative cultures required for global citizenship to exist. Different perspectives on the possibilities within the new digital age are communicated and proposed. It addresses a very wide range of perspectives and touches on many elements within the biosphere of *Modernization and Global Developmental Education*. The editors successfully link and contrast the different perspectives, just like Foucault in his *bio politics* approach to describe and explore the bio-diversity of the digital world as we know it today and further expands on the *modernization* potential of the digital age we have ahead of us. The more than 20 writer's perspectives on the knowledge economy, openness, and social entrepreneurship, the innovation of technology, social networking and new media are presented as a possible new paradigm for modernization. It could have been beneficial to include a diagram to show the range of perspectives before the reader starts out with the book. The other advantage is that readers will remember the diagram and refer to it when discussing the book. The work done by the editors to compile all these perspectives together in one book however is commendable.

The New Development Paradigm probes beyond Neo-Liberalism into the future of education as a tool to *modernize* and to solve developmental problems. It makes cutting edge inroads into a new developmental approach, as many of the different writers suggests in their essays. The ideas of many experienced academia, educationists, and experienced teachers are first stacked on the table and then the editors leave it to the reader to blend it together. The editors first comments on the possibilities and then allow the reader to conjure up exciting new possibilities for solving development problems in the world today. One wonders how the sequence was established and why the specific order was chosen. Could the editors maybe have linked the chapters together with “linking-scripts” in-between chapters? The knowledge economy is discussed, analysed, and the policies scrutinized, in an attempt to suggest how it could be used as a tool to bring about change. As the title suggests, a ‘New Development Paradigm’ explores the possibilities of digital futures, and it might just inform the possible role digital futures could play in the digital age and in future. *“This is a stunning book, which every educator and students teacher should read and own”* (Henry Giroux, Global Television Network Chair and Professor of English and Cultural Studies, McMaster University).

The first chapter by Daniel Araya opens the discussions with an in-depth analysis of the US economy and works through the economic down turn and the quest to revive the waning US economy. The billions of dollars spent is staggering, however the writer hints: “What China wants is what America is eager to throw away- an education that respect individual talents, supports divergent thinking, tolerates deviation, and encourages creativity; a system in which government does not dictate what students learn or how teachers teach...” (Peters, Besley, & Araya, 2013, p. 25).

This comment relating to innovation and creativity in the first chapter links very cleverly with the last sentence in the book (p. 284) to inform the quest for *creative and innovative approaches* and *radical openness*. Michael Peters (editor), in the postscript, underlines the progression of radical openness as an alternative to Neo-liberal theory for development education as a means to *modernization* and *development* in the world today.

Axel Burns calls the producers and consumers *netizens*, hinting on the *produsage* within the knowledge economy (Chapter 3). The chapter's title is "Beyond the Producer/Consumer Divide" and Burns explains how the boundaries of production and consumption are blurred, he further comments on the role of consumers that are ultimately invited to become producers. He uses Wikipedia as an example, he further refers to the Web 2.0 technologies and he projects how the principal of inclusivity is slowly moving the masses to become co-creators of knowledge. In an interview with Henry Jenkins (henryjenkins.org) in 2008 he commented on the process as follows:

'For educational institutions, this begins quite simply with putting learners in a position where they might experience both the outcomes and the dynamics of *produsage* processes (and also involves offering help and support where such processes are confronting) – schools and universities which close off access to Wikipedia on a wholesale basis, for example, do their students a significant disservice, and would be better advised to take learners on a guided tour of exploration of that space; such a tour could highlight the pros and cons of community-based *produsage* processes in comparison to the industrial model of

knowledge management which is practiced in other encyclopaedias, for example’.

See more at:

http://henryjenkins.org/2008/05/from_production_to_produsage_i.html#sthash.YAuNz9l2.dpuf

The question arises then that should education institutions and schools get fully involved into this process? From a development education perspective, referring to modernization, this could be a great idea. However, who will make the rules and manage the policies that are the big question?

“Governments must recognize the limited nature of national curriculum and testing systems; otherwise will condemn their populations to an increasing impoverished education experience, and restricted forms of certification” (p. 191, Chapter 9). Harry Torrance makes this statement after examining the open learning and open assessment in the present (old school) educational paradigm. He continues to ask the question of the role of *blended* and *hybrid schools* as a new approach to overcome the entrenched status quo of education systems around the world. He further suggests the extensive use and development of the Web 2.0 tools to make learning centres more open. He does not give a practical concrete strategy, but explores the ideas in a rich and well thought through fashion.

I conclude this review with some comments on chapter 8, “Beautiful Minds and Ugly Buildings” by Peter Murphy. He refers to the production of knowledge as a form of *objectivation*, as are the physical artefacts around us that produce symbolic meaning. He compares the aesthetic quality of architecture to the aesthetic qualities of the production and reproduction of knowledge. He prompts the reader to think

about shape and form: "...the world is not only open but also limited. Objects emerge first as shapes-as outlines with boundaries" (Chapter 8). This essay attempts to take the reader on a journey around the world, so to speak, to show the architecture of knowledge and the production thereof from different angles. This spectacular mosaic of shape and form, pattern, texture, and colour paints a picture of a 'world of possibilities'. These 'images' inspires us to experiment in our 'own backyard' while portraying the world and knowledge from different angles. It sort of invites the reader to 'experiment' with 'extravagant thoughts' in one's own shed to solve *modernization* issues, and inspire extensive thought, and ideas about the future, and a possible *digital future*.

The reader who is interested in alternative approaches to examining and exploring digital futures will find the remaining chapters an informative and very prompting read. Readers are invited to 'explore the world of knowledge architecture' from different 'lens perspectives'. The chapters cover a very 'wide field of view' and include different perspective to development education. From a 'photographers' perspective the 'album' reveals some secrets about the amazing 'places' visited, and the 'snapshots' are very unique and crisp. Indeed a kaleidoscope of 'fun and 'colour photographs' compiled in a contrasting 'stock pile' of radical thinking about *development education and modernisation*.

*Word count 2583