

PhD defence by Thomas Ryberg:

Patchworking as a Metaphor for Learning

- Understanding youth, learning and technology

16 November 2007 at 1.00 pm, room 1.104 (auditorium), Kroghstraede 3,
Department of Communication, Aalborg University

Supervisor: Professor Lone Dirckinck-Holmfeld
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Assessment committee:
Pirkko Raudaskoski, Associate Professor, AAU
Dr. Christopher Jones, The Open University (UK)
Professor Barbara Wasson, University of Bergen (No).

Abstract

*"Something old, something new
Something borrowed, something blue"*



The old saying and wedding tradition cited above captures well the essence of metaphorically understanding learning as a process of patchworking. The metaphor of patchworking highlights how learning processes can be seen as processes of stitching and weaving together different 'patches and pieces' into something new. The patches and pieces may not all be new, but can be old borrowed and of a widely different fabric; yet in their combination they form a new patchwork.

During 8-10th of August 2005 six teams of young 'power users' worked intensively on addressing different open-ended learning challenges. This took place within a larger event and symposium arranged as part of the 'Power Users of Technology Project' – a research project formed around the hypothesis that young power users of technology might be learning, working and solving problems in new and innovative ways due to their intensified use of technology; and that we can gain valuable insights about the future design of education by studying young people and their use of technology in relation to learning and problem solving processes.

On basis of a close empirical examination of the Danish team of Power Users and their work on a self-chosen learning challenge this thesis argues how we can theoretically understand, analyse and methodologically approach learning processes through the metaphorical lens of 'patchworking'. Furthermore, the thesis critically discusses the relations between youth, learning and technology and what valuable insight, for the future design of education, we might gain from studying young 'power users of technology'.