

The Learning Innovation Cycle: How Disruption Creates Lasting Change

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Disruption is an interesting topic for the same reason that cowboys, gangsters, and villains are interesting. It's unpredictable. Problematic. Against the grain.

It's kind of aging as a buzzword in the "education space," but it's other-worldly powerful, and there are few things education needs more. How exactly it produces change is less clear, but I thought I'd create a model to think about. First, a quick preface. The iconic vision of disruptive innovation comes from Clayton Christensen, who uses the term to "describe a process by which a product or service takes root initially in simple applications at the bottom of a market and then relentlessly moves up market, eventually displacing established competitors."

"Companies pursue these "sustaining innovations" at the higher tiers of their markets because this is what has historically helped them succeed: by charging the highest prices to their most demanding and sophisticated customers at the top of the market, companies will achieve the greatest profitability. However, by doing so, companies unwittingly open the door to "disruptive innovations" at the bottom of the market. An innovation that is disruptive allows a whole new population of consumers at the bottom of a market access to a product or service that was historically only accessible to consumers with a lot of money or a lot of skill."

I usually think of disruption as any change that forces itself substantially on existing power sets. This force causes transfer—a redistribution of something—market share, money, credibility, knowledge, or something we collectively value. Here, in this literal re-vision (seeing again) and neo-vision (seeing new), is where enduring learning innovation can be born.

In education, most of the talk around disruptive innovation revolves around education technology, owing to the potential scale of these technologies, and desperation of education to revise itself. But innovation doesn't necessarily have to be a matter of economics, as Christensen originally thought of the term, nor of technology, which is the most tempting angle. It can, but there are other disruptors that can lead to innovation that have little to do with either. What might be more interesting than the disruptors, then, might be the process itself. (See also, trends in education for 2015.)

Source: [Teachthought](#)