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Abstract for Teaching and Learning Forum 2016

Universities in the 21st century - what are we really purveying?

This presentation will consider some of the ways in which university learning and teaching has evolved over the past 25 years. Drawing on lessons from companies such as Kodak, Lonely Planet and Nokia, we will consider implications for reconceptualising what we think we are purveying/selling/ trading/supplying in higher education. In the case of Kodak, Kamil Munir argues that "Kodak's top management never fully grasped how the world around them was changing. They hung on to now obsolete assumptions about who took pictures, why and when". In the case of Lonely Planet "the problem was that Lonely Planet focused too much on its own problems – selling more books – instead of its overall mission: To make it easier for more people to travel" (Gus Balbontin). So what are the lessons for those of us who pride ourselves on being purveyors of fine learning in 2016 and beyond? Are we focussing too much on our 'own problems' rather than our 'overall mission'? In this presentation I will argue that there is much to learn from the past but if we want to be relevant to students over the next 25 years, perhaps it is time to rethink what we are 'purveying' and how best to engage with learners and learning in changing times.