**USABILITY IN USER GENERATED LEARNING SPACES, MY UNDERSTANDING**

**OVERVIEW**

Learning is the central activity of colleges and universities (Oblinger, 2006). I could agree no less with Oblinger on this. However, this very fact has obviously skewed the way this learning takes places to a very biased degree. The dictionary defines “Learning” as “the cognitive **process** of acquiring skills and knowledge”. This definition has consciously or otherwise, led to the concept that the learning process has to be “One person (paid to do so) passing on knowledge to another person”. This is the traditional method of teaching/learning which I refer to as “Teacher GIVES, student RECEIVES knowledge/skill transfer technique”. This has obviously had an impact also in the design of “Learning Spaces”. Traditional learning spaces are designed such that the learner sits in front of the teacher and listens all through while the teacher attempts to pass on the knowledge and/or skill. However, research has shown that Human beings—wherever they are—have the capacity to learn through their experiences and reflections (Chism, 2006). According to Chism (2006),

“Learning takes place everywhere on a college campus. In fact, learning arguably happens everywhere—on city sidewalks, in airplanes, in restaurants, in bookstores, and on playgrounds. Human beings—wherever they are—have the capacity to learn through their experiences and reflections.”

This has led to a change in the way Learning Spaces are conceptualised, designed and built. Learning spaces that allows the learners to generate knowledge and skills are now preferred due to the inherent benefits of such designs. Furthermore, due to the inter-connectedness of today’s world, collaborative learning is fast becoming a norm rather than an exception. Thus “built pedagogy” is presently an ongoing attempt to design learning spaces that fits the way learners should acquire skills and knowledge.

**DEFINITION OF TERMS**

**USABILITY**

The ISO defines usability as "The extent to which a product can be used by specified users to achieve specified goals with effectiveness, efficiency, and satisfaction in a specified context of use” (ISO 9412).

Usability is a quality attribute defined by five quality components (Nielsen, 1993) namely:

* **Learnability**: How easy is it for users to accomplish basic tasks the first time they encounter the design?
* **Efficiency**: Once users have learned the design, how quickly can they perform tasks?
* **Memorability**: When users return to the design after a period of not using it, how easily can they reestablish proficiency?
* **Errors**: How many errors do users make, how severe are these errors, and how easily can they recover from the errors?
* **Satisfaction**: How pleasant is it to use the design?

**LEARNING SPACE**

Learning spaces encompass the full range of places in which learning occurs, from real to virtual, from classroom to chat room (Brown, 2005). My investigation shows two types of learning spaces namely:

* Physical Learning Spaces and
* Virtual Learning Spaces

**PROJECT OBJECTIVES**

* Not too sure of what to put down here

**RESEARCH AREAS & SCOPE**

* Not too sure of this too

**DELIVERABLES**

* Apart from the dissertation report and the software, is there any other thing here?