

Teach – Tool – Learn: Social Media as a Tribute to Lev Vygotsky

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HETL Note: We are pleased to publish this insightful opinion article by **Dr. Piet Kommers, Ph.D.** In response to an invitation by the Higher Education Teaching and Learning Association, Dr. Piet Kommers delivers his thoughts on some phenomena he has observed during his 30 year involvement with media in education. Some of the questions Dr. Kommers tries to address are: How to teach contemporary learners who refuse to be pruned into “nice shapes” like some bonsai tree? What can social media bring to education? Who will be the first to excel in converting social networks into education networks – students or teachers? You may submit your own article on the topic or you may submit a “letter to the editor” of less than 500 words (see the [Submissions](#) page on this portal for submission requirements).



Author's Bio: [Dr. Piet Kommers](#) is Associate Professor at the [University of Twente, The Netherlands](#). His research interests are in the areas of media, learning and visual communication. Dr. Kommers was the scientific director of [NATO's](#) Advanced Research Workshop on “Cognitive Technologies” in 1989. Since 1990 he has been increasingly involved in a broad range of European based research projects in media supported and continued learning. His role in initiatives related to higher education in Eastern Europe led to his [UNESCO](#) chair, and was followed by the award of a honorary doctorship by [Capital Normal University](#) in [Beijing, China](#) in 2000. In 2005-2007 he was involved in mobile teaching and learning with the [Fontys University of Applied Sciences](#). He is an adjunct professor in the faculty of computer science in [Joensuu University \(Finland\)](#) and an advisor to the [Ministry of Education of Singapore](#). Dr. Kommers' publications include six books and more than fifty conference papers and journal articles. He has supervised twenty-four doctoral students and more than 80 master's projects. Dr. Kommers can be reached at P.A.M.Kommers@utwente.nl.

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In the late seventies social scientists were focused predominantly on making education more democratic and more emancipatory. It is interesting to observe that so far almost all educational methods have ended in creating tools for the learner, ultimately helping build a learning attitude. An example is presented by the so-called “[Intelligent Instructional Systems](#)” that were based upon models of expert knowledge and models of the initial student knowledge.

However, the paradigm of optimizing teaching by reconciling the expert-novice gap was left behind as we found out that learning is not a simple extrapolation of the previous learning of experts. What was kept though was the





Soon we will see students orchestrating social networks via social media and accessing experts who would exceed the mastery of their teachers. This is the moment to stimulate teachers to undertake social networking, before students excel first.

**Piet Kommers**

### **References**

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### **Endotes**

For the origins of the activity theory and its creators (Vygotsky, Luria and Leont'ev) , see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Activity\\_theory](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Activity_theory)

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