

Autology and the Drive to Personalised E-learning

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Important Details: [Autology](#) is the soon-to-be-launched service developed by David Black and Steve Moorhouse as a successor to their Moorhouse Black educational television initiative, sold to the [Nelson Thornes](#) side of the then Wolters Kluwer Education group. This time the emphasis is not on place and time shifts to accommodate scarce teaching resources, but on the requirement strongly expressed by the UK government to personalise learning in a learner-centric world. This will become an even wider requirement as North American and European educators face up to similar issues around accountability and standards. The Autology approach makes a distinctive contribution here by applying business intelligence principles derived from IDOL. This is not about creating vertical search for education, but it is about using intelligent search processes to surround the learner with relevant material of differing types and depth. Thus a learner is able to 'see' a wide range of content addressing his subject matter/learning objective which is not derived from keyword searching, but from analysis and extension of the materials he or she is working upon. Autology calls this, after [Autonomy](#), "Implicit Querying (IQ)", and when it works well it will stream content to learners that matches their progress and thinking, at a level that they can understand and at a point when it is relevant to them. And the IQ tools also allow the teacher to see the progress which is being made by the learner, and the level and type of engagement with learning resources. Content acquisition from Autology into the learning process will be derived from a variety of sources, since the tools can select relevant content from local or networked VLEs and LMS, from school or network-held resources, from content licensed by Autology for the purpose, and, of course, from wider web-based resources. The service as a whole is being marketed to UK schools at launch at a cost of £ 20 per head, and amongst the first content being licensed is [Huveaux's](#) successful revision aids publishing environment, which includes Letts.

Implications: It becomes increasingly clear, as innovations like Autology hit the market, that blended learning styles and the replacement of the textbook as a focus for content acquisition for learners will be a transitional stage, and one which may come to a sharp stop when a new generation of teachers are prepared to work in an indirect style based on facilitation rather than direct instruction. Learning using Autology will be highly individualised - a voyage of discovery unique to each learner. It is unclear whether teachers will use this as one mode of learning amongst others, or centre on it and supplement it in other ways. With the range of personalised learning journey and lesson planning software in the market at present ([Taecanet](#), [LAMS](#) etc) beginning to build market share and reputation, Autology is not coming into an entirely 'cold' marketplace, yet given the conservatism of that marketplace it will certainly need effective marketing and good content alliance partners to optimise the opportunity. And the opportunity is a very considerable one with serious potential to fundamentally affect the nature of learning, way beyond the limits of e-textbooks or teacher-based innovation around whiteboards and similar technologies. It does move strongly in favour of content optimised for learning (learning outcome delimiters in SCORM-based learning objects would work well in this context). Teachers are likely to ask whether they are still in control, or, in other words, are the assessment environments robust enough to enable teachers to moderate, diagnose and facilitate to get e-learning back on track if it becomes de-railed.

Links to Outsell profiles of companies mentioned: [Autonomy, Inc.](#), [Huveaux PLC](#), [LAMS \(Learning Activity Management Systems\)](#), [Nelson Thornes Ltd.](#), [Taecanet Ltd.](#)

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