THE TRIBE OF EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGIES

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Abstract

This article looks into the claim that the international academic community of educational technologies seems to have functioned in a 'tribal' way, having formed themselves around tribe-like patterns. It therefore addresses the research question: What are these claimed tribe-like practices that such a community exhibits? This question is answered qualitatively, examining empirically the habits of three Saudi Arabian Bedouin real tribes, followed by empirical comparison of these tribal habits with the habits of the academic community of educational technologies. Having analysed the data using the grounded theory approach, three key themes emerged: Cultural Similarities between Tribes and Academic Communities; Political Similarities between Tribes and Academic Communities; and Social Similarities between Tribes and Academic Communities. Having considered these themes collectively with reference to the existing literature, a theoretical proposition has been grounded: that academic communities are similar to tribes in the sense that all, naturally, constitute themselves in ethnic groups characterised by distinct cultural, political and social norms. The implication is thus that such communities are, at least partially, culturally, politically and socially different. Echoing such an implication, the recommendation is not to seek to remove such cultural, political and social differences and therefore make them act as one, but rather to foster cross-community cultural, political and social exchange and therefore learning.

Keywords: Tribe, Education, Technology, Saudi, Anthropology