



## education review // reseñas educativas

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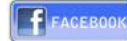
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Kamenetz, Anya. (2010) *DIY U: Edupunks, Edupreneurs, and the Coming Transformation of Higher Education*. White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing.

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“If you do what you've always done, you'll get what you've always gotten” (Robbins, n.d., para. 7). Words like these address Kamenetz’s view of higher education’s past and transitions to where higher education is heading. Her view is to transform higher education toward a new platform, which utilizes technology. Kamenetz reports the new “American Dream” for high school students is to go to college. She questions the cost of higher education and evaluates whether or not many college’s tuition is worth the high price. Also, Kamenetz makes recommendations as to what may be done differently.

Kamenetz identifies four trends in higher education’s transformation. The first trend is the 80/20 rule. This rule looks at the growth in higher education and sees an increase in more nontraditional and minority students

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choosing non-selective institutions. Kamenetz's second trend, the unbundling of services trend, is related to geography, course content, and technology. Technology defies limitations. Kamenetz names the third trend techno-hybridization, which is a combination of traditional classes and technology. The last trend focuses on reaching the dropouts and finding alternate learning avenues through developing personal learning networks and paths for students to direct their own learning. There exist colleges that are already exemplifying the trends and making changes for students.

Kamenetz begins by examining the history of higher education. Brock (2010) describes the students attending college prior to 1965 as "middle and upper class white males" (p. 110). After World War II, the starting point for open access to higher education began making the opportunity possible for any individual. Enrollment in higher education continues to grow. The number of undergraduates has doubled in the last 40 years. As Kamenetz states "access to education tends to enhance people's sense of personal possibility and freedom" (p. 22). Today, a higher education is so important that farmers have realized the importance of not just planting the crop but the business of selling the crop as well. The world is changing, and learning institutions must decide how they will fit into the new learning arena.

Kamenetz claims many higher education institutions have become more focused on the institution's perception and needs and less focused on the individual student's needs. While the institutions continue to make sure they are meeting their own needs, the tuition forced upon its pupils continues to escalate. Kamenetz accentuates how higher education institutions are trying to "compete on exclusivity and quality of experience" (p. 57) because students look for these two qualities when deciding on an institution. Like clothing and automobiles, people think the more exclusive and expensive the better. Therefore, affordability can actually be detrimental to a college. This is where I began to really side with Kamenetz. College tuition needs to stop spiraling out of control. Price limits attendance for certain groups. Hence, Kamenetz questions the large debt incurred by students after attending an exclusive, high quality school. Ultimately, Kamenetz sheds light on why many parents and students will try to

save money by choosing college programs and classes that are only a click away.

Kamenetz goes on to explain some new, innovative ideas for moving beyond the traditional higher education model. She suggests a textbook free, open-content learning arena for higher education that has free classes and content for students to use or take for credit. However, some colleges are not giving college credit for many courses yet still charging fees. Kamenetz frequently emphasizes the online degree, and yet one wonders if an online degree holds the same value as a traditional degree.

Change is necessary. Kamenetz has ideas. She explains that open teaching stresses facilitating and collaborating among peers located anywhere in the world. Students do not need a traditional face-to-face class to build relationships with the instructor or peers. In the face-to-face class, many instructors are stuck in one method, an approach that generally does not encourage interaction, whereas the online interactive process explained by Kamenetz encourages students collaborating on projects. In our current digital world, the digital savvy student will utilize the software and technological tools that will enhance his or her learning.

Change is good. Kamenetz stresses the need to move beyond tradition. One way to start is “deschooling.” She describes deschooling as “replacing formal schools with a technologically enabled, largely self-directed, free, and open exchange of information” (p. 112). The Internet exists and can drain power away from higher education institutions; or, the institutions can use this advantage by sharing resources, reducing costs, freeing up space, and unbinding the learner. Some instructors feel compelled to follow the same guidelines and lessons every semester, relying on the textbook as the only source of information. Living in the technology age provides an abundance of information at the fingertips of the instructor and learner. Kamenetz’s essence of DIY U is for all students to be in charge of their own learning where they contribute, learn, and explore.

Change is imminent. Traditional classrooms must change in ways so as to take advantage of free and open resources that enhance the opportunities for their students. DIY U encourages human creativity, not a teacher transmission

method, and a collaborative approach where relationships are fostered. Kamenetz states “as humans we are hard-wired to learn and discover” (p. 134). In traditional classrooms, many instructors stick to a stagnant style, covering the same material semester after semester in the same manner. While fostering relationships and collaboration are important in their own respects, I agree with Kamenetz. Instructors must change methods and styles to accommodate the learner; otherwise, students will seek out alternate methods of instruction. Kamenetz offers resources for guidance in making changes to old approaches.

“Higher education institutions need to change, will change and already are changing” (p. 136). Time will tell how the change occurs, but the reality for the institutions is that change must happen. Kamenetz illustrates an important point when she writes that “more prisons doesn’t mean more justice and more schools doesn’t mean more wisdom” (p. 113). Traditional approaches and institutions will not wither away; instead, these institutions can be enhanced to develop the student for the 21st century. Kamenetz deserves high marks for promoting the ideas of open-content and better utilizing the world of technology as ways to gain knowledge for the 21st century.

## References

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## About the Reviewer

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