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Student2(2)

Describe an object from your childhood, and explain why it was important to you (then and later).

I had a lot of trouble with this question. There is nothing that really stands out to me like gears stood out for Papert. I can say that when I was young, we had a set of wooden blocks that I really enjoyed playing with. It is possible that this led to my later success with spatial relation tasks, such as when you have to rotate an object in your mind, as well as success in subjects like Geometry. However, there is not really a conscious connection on my part between early block playing and later success.

What idea (or passage) in Mindstorms was most provocative, intriguing, or surprising for you?

I have done a lot of reading about technologies that try to create an atmosphere where a child is an active participant in their own learning and why that is good, and why it is good to set the learning in some sort of real world context or something that is relevant to the child. Although, this has always made a lot of sense to me and I completely agree with it on an intellectual level, I was someone who did very well in a traditional classroom so it has been hard for me to relate on a personal level. However, at one point Papert talks about how LOGO can help teach children about "states". When I was in college I had a CS class that discussed state machines. However, it was all on a very theoretical basis and we never discussed real world applications. I didn't really enjoy the class and actually shortly after I left the CS program and finished in psychology. Later in life, I worked as a developer and actually had to use state machines while designing programs. I finally truly understood what they were about because I had a real life context. Anyway, I guess what I am saying is that what was most intriguing to me is that Papert finally gave me a way to link the education theories that I have been reading to my own personal experiences.

Which ideas in the book stand the test of time? Which ones don't?

Papert's vision of a future where computers were relatively inexpensive and widely accessible has come true, however, I don't believe that it has had the impact on the field of education that he expected.

Although school districts have widely invested in computers, they are still being used in very traditional ways. Technologies that simulate a teacher's lecture or drill and kill activities are what seem to dominate in practice. However, the field of education technology itself has really supported Papert's ideas and most products today do support that constructivist approach where students are encouraged to think about thinking, be active participants in creating their own knowledge, focus on higher order critical thinking skills that are needed for today's society, etc.

What seems to be the biggest problem now is that lack of policy reform and the failure for curriculum and assessment to keep up with the changing society and the era of easily available information thanks to the web. Although the skills that one needs to be successful in today's society have changed, mainstream curriculum has not changed.