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Logo Revisited

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Abstract

Logo entered school some thirty years ago on the crest of a wave of enthusiasm with an impeccable academic pedigree. Today it is a shadow. Its niche was primary school, secondary and tertiary niches already being occupied by other languages. Its entrée on the back of a Turtle with novelty called turtle geometry as a language made for learning. Described as a philosophy of education with a family of related programming languages, it promised much. Little was delivered. Its progenitors have abandoned text and school in favour of pictograms out of school clubs and internet.

The intervening thirty plus years have seen much technological change, none of it fundamental. Primary school teaching remains stubbornly traditional. It is timely to take a long view of Logo. Was Logo killed by Turtle Geometry? What might its real relation to primary education be? What is its role in relation to the enduring core of primary education: literacy and numeracy?

A constructionist perspective is used, reinforced by the recent technicity proposal, to consider these questions. It is suggested that Logo was before its time and that more recent drag-drop programming environments have less to offer the primary school child. Past implementations of Logo have been mathematics and computer science oriented. (Recall the disdain of many when LogoWriter was released.) It is argued that Logo should fit not a subject but the developing child mind. Letter and numeral based, It would be designed to serve the core of primary education. The question then arises: Do computer scientist have it in them to stop and reflect and having reflected, craft an implementation of Logo fit for the present?

Keywords

Logo, history, primary school, turtle geometry, constructionism, literacy & numeracy.

Biography



Mícháel Ó Dúill, is an experienced educationalist in the primary and special needs fields, where thinking beyond craft traditions is essential. A psychology and engineering background led to an interest in language and technology. Questioned about entropy by his university admissions tutor, he has an abiding interest in the power of the simple. Realisation that the word is not enough and that we don't know how we can draw led to the proposition that humans evolved a unique technological capability – technicity.

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