Partnership in design: Designing learning activity collaboratively

Lee Yik Sheng
Communitcation & Information Technology Centre
Tunku Abdul Rahman College

Loi Yaw Yuen
Extra-Mural Studies Department
Tunku Abdul Rahman College

The process of designing a learning activity does not arise entirely from an individual without any reflections or interactions with the individual's environment. This includes students, colleagues, management and institutional culture. This poster describes the practice of designing and implementing a learning activity involving informal collaborative work between a learning technologist and an academic staff. Both are situated in different departments within the same institution which has just introduced a virtual learning environment (VLE) in recent years as a platform to promote the adoption of online learning.

The learning activity is designed for an English language subject and the number of students taking the subject is large. The activity is deployed in a blended learning environment where the academic conducts face-to-face tutorial classes with his students. The learning activity is an extension of the classroom teaching activities. The focus is to enable the students to learn through reflective journal writing of their learning experiences in the classroom environment. Students are given instructions to write down what they have learned on presentation skills and their performance in delivering presentations in the tutorials. This is done by the students throughout the entire semester of 14 weeks. The normal rate of journal entries is three to five entries. This is because of the instructions given by the academic staff. Students are advised to read each other's journal and give their comments. This is to encourage collaborative learning and to develop critical skills in doing peer review.

Oliver (2002) mentioned that there is a common pattern for successful collaborative development work between the learning technologist and the academic staff. The pattern can be divided to different phases. The initial approach is to provide technical support in the use of technology. This is followed by the negotiation of a project where the learning technologist begins to understand the departmental context and the academic starts to realize, through dialogue, their taken-for-granted cultural values. The next phase is to establish how certain tools work in a particular context. The discussions, then, could lead to further questioning of assumptions and the introduction of findings from educational research to address general issues. Although this collaborative work is important, it is not well-documented (Oliver, 2002). This study aims to fill the gap that exists in literature. The main research question is what actually happens in the collaborative work? Is there a common pattern and how does this pattern emerge from the practice?

Using Wenger's (1998) model of community of practice, the design and the implementation of learning activity can be described as a practice that involves mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoires where meanings are negotiated through participation and reification. In addition, the concept of legitimate peripheral participation aptly describes the collaborative work between the learning technologist and the academic (Oliver, 2002).

Due to the dynamic nature of the emerging practice, data collection methods utilized in this case study are a combination of conventional techniques i.e. through interviews and journals, and innovative approaches such as chat archives, e-mails and recorded conversations. This captures the meaning-making processes that emerge from the interactions between the learning technologist and the academic. These interactions occur in both formal and informal social settings. The analysis of data reports the activities occurring in the practice, the artefacts produced for negotiation, the roles and relationships established and the situated understanding of the designers.

This study argues that this type collaborative work may have some form of common pattern that can be described in a four-stage cyclical process, namely service, proposal, negotiation and

implementation, but, the practice is complex and emerging, and it cannot be defined as a clear demarcated sequential process.

References

Oliver, M. (2002). What do learning technologists do? *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 39 (4), 1-8. https://doi.org/10.1080/13558000210161089

Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511803932

Lee Yik Sheng
leeys@mail.tarc.edu.my
Loi Yaw Yuen
loiyy@mail.tarc.edu.my

Please cite as: Lee Y. S. & Loi, Y.Y. (2007). Partnership in design: Designing learning activity collaboratively. In *ICT: Providing choices for learners and learning. Proceedings ascilite Singapore 2007*. https://doi.org/10.65106/apubs.2007.2853