LEARNING CENTRED ENVIRONMENTS SUPPORTING THE ENVIRONMENT OF E-LEARNING IN SOUTH AFRICA IN LAW CLASS

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ABSTRACT

Learners differ from one another, therefore teaching approaches should differ according to the individual learners. Mentoring is a powerful personal development and also an empowerment tool. When it is effective implemented, it is a way of helping people to progress in their careers and academic live and it will increase the potential that a person can reach. A partnership exist between two people (the mentor and mentee), due to the fact that we are empathizing Higher Education the partnership can be considered between the teacher/lecturer or facilitator and the student that works in the same or similar field. A good learner centre learning environment is an environment that will allow the students space and time to interact within the learning and the teaching process. The question that arises is why do we have to create a positive learning environment? The simple answer is the students will feel comfortable, safe and engaged. In classrooms where values and roles remain constant and the focus is placed on the positive aspects of learning, the students will be more open to actively participate in the class. An e-learning facilitator has the role as instructor and is consistent with seminal adult learning research in, which and instructors guide is self-directed in the learning problem-centred environment. Finally, when interrogating online learning and face-to-face learning, the authors noted that when online learning is enforced in learner centred learning environments, that in the beginning the help of the teacher/instructor or facilitator is required. However the more knowledge the student gets (tacit or explicit) the more self-confidence the student will acquire and therefore will be learning much wider as anticipated.

Keywords: Face-to face, Learning environment, Problem-centred, Online, Knowledge, Teaching process.

List of Abbreviations

ADDIE Analyse, Design, Develop, Implement, Evaluate

HEQC   Higher Education Quality Committee

OECD   Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

Contribution/ Originality

Contributed to the e-learning environment in proving that learners differ from one another and therefore teaching approaches should also differ. Traning I contemporary education has moved from being the instructr- and teacher-conntrlled to a process where learners are more likely to assist and expected to be involved in the planning and that is a constructive approach.

The article is original where the authors think and express themselves in an independent and individual manner to improve their creative ability. It can be distinguished from reproductions and theirfore the article is created in a unique style and substance.It is applied as a compliment to the creativity of the authors and thinkers. The teachr-centred method and the learner-centred method should therefore be combined in order to achieve optimal learning facilitation.

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper discusses a view to the creation of learner centred learning environments which support learners in the environment of e-learning, and will argue that e-learning is also learner centred. The paper will further differentiate between the different learning environments.

Learning can basically be viewed as the process of acquiring new knowledge, skills, insights and attitudes. Argyris (1991) has identified two types of learning; single-loop learning and double-loop learning, whereas single-loop learning occurs when learning took place, but has a little impact on the outlook or the behaviour. Double-loop learning occurs when the activity or study results in the modification to the learner's attitudes or behaviour. Double-loop learning is especially important due to the fact that it increases the focus on learning and problem solving skills (Smith and Blake, 2005).

Learners differ from one another, therefore teaching approaches should differ according to the individual learners. Teachers and trainers have a wide range of aids available to assist facilitation. Examples of this is face-to-face teaching, demonstrations, use of mentors, workplace experience, group discussion, independently used learning resources, e-learning, collaborative learning, and problem-based learning (Smith and Dalton, 2005).

For this article face-to-face learning is defined by The World Bank (2011) as a face-to-face session in which participants, instructors, facilitators and students meet together in the same place, at the same time. The characteristics of face-to-face learning are that it helps to break down the barriers and to provide real cross-cultural experiences and networking opportunities. Visually diverse media such as PowerPoint presentations, notes, documents, drawings, physical objects can help to emphasize points (The World Bank, 2011).

Nichols (2003) defines e-learning as strictly being accessible using technological tools that are web-based, web-distributed or web-capable. Benson (2002) and Clark (2002) believed that e-learning not only covers content from CD-Rom, internet or intranet but also include audio and videotape, satellite broadcast and interactive television according to Ellis (2004). Tavangarian (2004) include the constructivist view and state that e-learning is not only procedural, but also

shows some transformation of and student experience into the student's knowledge through the knowledge construction process. Based on the forgoing discussion, this article looks at the constructivist theory in higher education.

2. THE CONSTRUCTIVIST THEORY

The constructivists suggest that learners construct knowledge and meaning from the circumstance where they have experienced knowledge, and the construction is being viewed as an ongoing interpretive process that is reinforced by the past and ongoing experiences (Smith and Blake, 2005). In interpreting what is stated above, it means that people come to understand something by drawing on what they already know and believe. Furthermore, it means that different people may develop different understandings from the same learning experience.

(Bruner, 2013) is of the opinion that learning is an active progress in which learners construct new ideas or concepts that is based upon their current/past or future knowledge. The learner selects and transforms the information, constructs hypotheses, and makes decisions. The students ae relying on a cognitive structure (for example a schema or mental models) to do so. This cognitive structure provides meaning and organisation to experiences and it allows the individual to "go beyond the information given" (Bruner, 2013). In the constructivist paradigm, the accent is placed on the learner rather than the teacher/lecturer or facilitator. The learner constructs his/her own conceptualisations and finds his own solutions to the problems, thus mastering autonomy and independence (Thanasoulas, 2013). The instructor/lecturer should try and encourage students to discover principles by themselves. According to Bruner (2013), the instructor and the student should engage in an active dialog (for example Socratic learning). The instructor/lecturer or facilitator task' is to translate the information that is to be learned into a format that is appropriate to the learner's current state of understanding. Therefore the curriculum should be organised in a spiral manner so that the student continually builds upon what they have already learned (Bruner, 2013).

According to Bruner (1966) the theory of instruction should address four major aspects, namely:

• The predisposition towards learning;

• The ways in which a body of knowledge can be structured so that it can be most readily grasped by the learner;

• The most effective sequences in which to present material; and

• The nature and pacing of rewards and punishments.

It is stated that good methods for structuring knowledge should result in the simplifying, generations of new propositions and the increasing the manipulation of information (Bruner, 2013).

The theory is linked to child development research. Bruner (1973) used an example to explain the constructivist theory. The concept of prime number will be more readily grasped when the child, through construction, discovers that a handful of beans cannot be laid out in completed rows and columns. These patterns, of which the child then learns is called prime. Therefore factoring, multiplication and primes in a construction can be visualized (Bruner, 1973).

2.1. The Principles of the Constructivism Approach

• The instruction must be concerned with the experiences and contexts that the student make willingly and are able to learn (readiness).

• The instruction must be structured in such a manner that it can be easily grasped by the student (spiral organisation).

• The instruction should be designed to facilitate extrapolation and/or fill in the gaps (Bruner, 2013).

Within the constructivist perspective, learners are given more latitude in becoming effective in solving problems, identifying and evaluation problems and well as deciphering ways in which to transfer their learning to these problems (Thanasoulas, 2013).

It can be seen that the above mentioned constructivist theory, gives the student the opportunity to develop him/herself as they feel comfortable without the intervening of the teacher/lecturer.

3. ELEMENTS OF A LEARNER CENTRED LEARNING EXPERIENCE

3.1. Learning Facilitation: An Art and Complex Skill

The art of instruction that strikes equilibrium between the learning content and learning process is referred to as the art of facilitation. To facilitate literally means to "make easy". Therefore it can be seen that the teacher/facilitator or lecturer have to be able to make the learning process easy, meaning to get the learners actively involved in the learning process (Phookun, 2000). The teacher/facilitator teaches by showing how things are done, and the primary intention is to teach the learners how to learn for themselves using their own experiences as a benchmark. (Victor Valqui Vidal, 2006). The authors want to use a moot court example. The class can be about role playing. The teacher/lecturer or facilitator can be set as the judge in determining who the winner will be in the case. Students can be set in groups and present the defendant and the other group can be the state for example. The student will use their own experiences (which they gained in previous subjects) as the benchmark.

Seven conditions of facilitating adult learning have been identified (Phookun, 2000):

1   Participation of adult learners

2   Definition of their personal objectives

3   Tolerating divergent options and a diversity of ideas

4   The right to make mistakes

5   Welcome openness

6   Self-esteem and respect

7   Acceptance of individuality

The art of listening can be seen as understanding the learners questions and scenario and the art to asking questions is not as much as obtaining a right answer, but rather to stimulate the learners to think and explore (Phookun, 2000).

3.2. Factors that Should Be Taken into Consideration when Selecting Facilitation Strategies

• The needs of the students – adult learners possess highly diversified needs that motivates and have reasons to learn.

• The age of the students – younger learners in schools uses the pedagogy method and adult learners use andragogy method.

• The intellectual abilities of the students.

• The physical and mental characteristics of students – adult learners experience gradual physical deterioration on account of age.

• The purpose of the lesson.

• The content to be taught – it is important that students construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world through experiencing objects and reflect on the things (Ramusi, 2013).

3.2.1. Characteristics of Adult Learners

Knowles identifies five key characteristics of adult learners:

• Self-concept: as a person matures his/her self-concept moves from one of being a dependant personality towards one of a self-directed human being.

• Experience: as a person matures he/she accumulate a growing reservoir of experience that becomes an increasing resource of learning.

• Readiness to learn: a person matures his/her readiness to learn increasingly becomes orientated to the developmental task of his social roles.

• Orientation to learning: as a person matures his/her time perspective changes from one of postponed application of knowledge to immediacy of application, and accordingly his/her learning orientation shifts from subject-centeredness to problem centeredness.

• Motivation to learn: as a person matures the motivation to learn is internal. (Knowles, 1984).

Taken into account when choosing the learning strategy, the above mentioned factors and characteristics should be considered.

3.3. Facilitation Strategies

3.3.1. Direct (Teacher Centred Method)

Learners are presumed to be passive and copious recipients of knowledge from the teacher. Examples of this method are expository or lecture methods (Makokha and Ongwae, 2013). The author will apply this method at first year students; in order to learn students what is specific module is going to be about. This will be, when talking about law, that the students don't have law subjects in schools, so in their first year they can learn though a teacher/lecturer what the law is. The law is also very diverse, so if you for example study environmental law, that respective legislation cannot be applied in the law of succession.

3.3.2. Indirect (Learner-Centred Method)

The indirect or learner centred method is where the teacher/instructor or lecturer is both a teacher and a learner at the same time. The teacher plays a dual role as a learner and teacher. The teacher also learns new things everyday of what he/she didn't know in the process. Examples of learner centred methods are discussion method, discovery or inquiry based approach and the Hill's model of learning through discussion (Makokha and Ongwae, 2013). The learner centred method will find its application also in the moot court example listed above. Different lectures (for example a lecturer who specialise in law of succession) can sit in as "judge" from another law field such as environmental law, for example.

3.3.3. Integrated (Combination)

The integrated or content focused method is where both the teacher and the learners have to fit into the content that is being taught. Emphasis is laid on the clarity and the careful analysis of the content. An example of this method is a method that subordinates the interest of the teacher and learners to the content in the programmed learning approach (Makokha and Ongwae, 2013).

3.3.4. Interactive/Participative Method

The last category, interactive/participative method borrows a bit from the three above mentioned methods without necessarily laying emphasis unduly on the learner, content or teacher. This method is driven by the situational analysis of what is most important for us to learn/ do now given the situation of the learner and teachers (Makokha and Ongwae, 2013).

The direct strategy would best serve at an undergraduate level (in law) due to the fact that it gives detailed information about the law. The indirect strategy would be appropriate when the students have the information given to them with the direct strategy and the indirect strategy would then discuss the work or by heuristic (by personal experience) such as the moot court idea. With the combination of the direct and indirect strategy, optimal learning facilitation will occur.

3.4. Mentors

To mentor is to support and encourage people and students to manage their own learning in order that these people and students may maximise their potential, to develop their skills, to improve their performance and to become the person or student they want to be (Parsloe, 1999).

Mentoring is a powerful personal development and also an empowerment tool. Due to the fact that we are empathizing Higher Education the partnership can be considered between the teacher/lecturer or facilitator and the student that works in the same or similar field.

3.5. Knowledge

The oxford dictionary defines knowledge as "facts, information, and skills acquired through experience or education; the theoretical or practical understanding of a subject" (Oxford Dictionary, 2013).

Tacit knowledge is the unwritten, unspoken and hidden vast storehouse of knowledge held by practically every normal human being that are based on this human being's emotions, experience, insights, intuition, observations and internalised information. Therefore it can be said that tacit knowledge is integral to the entirety of a person's consciousness that is largely acquired through association with other people. The concept of tacit knowledge was introduced by the philosopher Michael Polanyi. Tacit knowledge is also referred to as informal knowledge (Business Dictionary, 2013).

Explicit knowledge can be defined as articulated knowledge, expressed and recorded as words, numbers, codes, mathematical and scientific formulae and musical notations. Explicit knowledge is easier to communicate to, store and distribute and as usually the knowledge that a person acquire in books, on the web and other visual and oral means (Business Dictionary, 2013).

Knowledge is a continuous moving concept as once it is mastered it becomes a catalyst for further knowledge discovery (Hampson, 2013).

Tacit to tacit	Observing, imitating and practising under the mentorship of an employee.
Tacit to explicit	The use of data from around the company and applying personal tacit knowledge to create a new source of knowledge.
Explicit to tacit	Absorption of a new source of knowledge into a personal process, converting the knowledge to tacit knowledge.
Explicit to explicit	This is to collate data from different sources to create a new knowledge source.

(Adapted from (Hampson, 2013)).

In practice it should be seen that all knowledge is a mixture of tacit and explicit elements rather than being just the one or the other. Explicit knowledge is sometimes seen as less important. Tacit knowledge on the other hand is most valuable source of knowledge and it is

almost likely to lead to breakthroughs (Frost, 2010). Knowledge Cluster is a system for technological innovation and establishes networks of individuals in academia and the private and government sectors (ANON, 2012). It is expected that students bring their own pre-knowledge about the subject, apply the knowledge and to make this knowledge to tacit knowledge. Therefore it is important that the student should have both explicit knowledge and tacit knowledge in order to make breakthroughs in their specific fields of study.

3.6. Learning Environment

An Australian study conducted by Choy and Delahaye (2005) showed that young learners between the age 17 to 24 years were characterised by the preference for surface learning, have low levels of self-directedness in learning and prefer learning that is instructed (Smith and Blake, 2005). Learners from the age of 25 tend to be more self-directed and while they are tolerant of uninstructed learning contexts, they prefer structure (Smith and Blake, 2005).

A good learner centre learning environment is an environment that will allow the students space and time to interact within the learning and the teaching process. Factors that can be included in a good learner centre learning environment include motivation of students, aptitude of the instructors, organised presentation by the teacher/instructor or lecturer and practice with reinforcement (Ask, 2013). An all-inclusive leaner centre learning environment is a school where the student's ability level receives teaching in the same place. This can include that able students learn alongside those student who have special educational needs (Koenig, 2013).

A learner centre learning environment include adequate resources that are appropriate, identifiable, accessible and relevant to the student' learning needs. It is also argued that a quieter environment will enrich the learning environment (Bronzaft, 2013). The authors want to include some points that she had felt that lack in certain areas. Safety is not only about being emotionally or physically hurt by those students who share the space, but also that their ideas be valued. Also opportunities for fun will enhance the learner centre learning environment (Couros, 2010). Another point the authors want to include is the environment must be clean.

3.6.1. Creation of a Learning Environment

Most students sit in a class trying not to nod off or listening to an instructor who is brilliant in a particular field but who has no ability to engage in the students. These learning environments that students refer to as "boring" can be overcome through self-motivation. Meaning that we (as students) create the positive learning environment and this can be done through being motivated by the genuine interest in the subject or by the urge to get enough credits to graduate (Footprint Recruiting, 2012). The question that arises is why do we have to create a positive learning environment? The simple answer is the students will feel comfortable, safe and engaged. The opportunity will also be given to the students to be responsible for their own learning, and will be more likely to benefit from the lesson and thus be more self-motivated

(Footprint Recruiting, 2012). A positive learning environment can be achieved through the following factors: core ideals; ambience, expectations and relativity.

3.6.1.1. Core Ideals

It should be remembered that each teacher/lecturer of facilitator will have different standards and values in their classroom, but the only universal element is that these domains remain consistent so that the students know exactly what and when something is expected from them. The environment must be community oriented in order that the students know that they are inclusive and respected (Footprint Recruiting, 2012).

3.6.1.2. Ambience

The learning environment should be dynamic and engaging place for the students. This can be achieved from a portable poster for each group you teach. This will establish a sense of belonging by the students (Footprint Recruiting, 2012).

3.6.1.3. Expectations

The teacher/lecturer of facilitator should establish their expectations for the student's behaviour early and keep them consistent (Footprint Recruiting, 2012)

3.6.1.4. Relativity

The role of the teacher/lecturer or facilitator goes both ways. They are responsible for imparting knowledge to the students but you as teacher/lecturer or facilitator should also allow yourself to learn from the students. This can be as simple as learning a different culture (Footprint Recruiting, 2012).

3.6.2. Proximal Development

Vygotsky, a Russian psychologist developed the zone of proximal development. He describes the optimal learning environment as, sometime is the work to easy, or sometimes the work is too difficult. Sometimes the work is just right and when it is just right is creates an optimal learning environment. Vygotsky describes it further as; when the work is too easy, the students can do the work on their own and don't need any help. Meaning that the students don't step outside their "comfort zone" and no learning will take place. When the work is too difficult, the student can become frustrated and even it the student receives help, he/she will be in their "frustration zone" and is likely to give up. The area between the comfort and frustration zone is the place where learning will take place. The student will need some help or will need to work hard to understand the concept of task. This zone is the proximal development zone (Bainbridge, 2013). Zone of Proximal developing has become synonymous with the term "scaffolding".

4. E-LEARNING

Online support is topic-orientated, procedural or reference information that is delivered through computer software. Online support is a form of user assistance and most online support is designed to give assistance in the use of a software application or operating system (Web Help, 2013).

Therefore it can be assumed that e-leaning facilitators don't know all the answers, but they offer their own unique insights as the help students acquire knowledge and developing skills (Hootstein, 2002).

According to Berge, e-learning facilitator's primary instructional tasks are to:

- Provide information to help the students complete assignments;
- Suggest ideas or strategies for learning; and
- To help students connect content with prior knowledge (Hootstein, 2002).

As seen with the above mentioned, the conclusion can be drawn that initially the students will need and instructor/teacher or lecturer in helping to understand the concepts, thereafter the instructor/teacher or lecturer will slowly withdraw him/herself in order that the student can learn independently and apply previous knowledge to current problems.

5. INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN FOR AN ONLINE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

To design an all-inclusive learning environment, the elements of ADDIE (assessment, design, development, implementation and evaluation) are still needed, but these elements need to be implemented in an interactive and recursive way. (Bozarth, 2013).
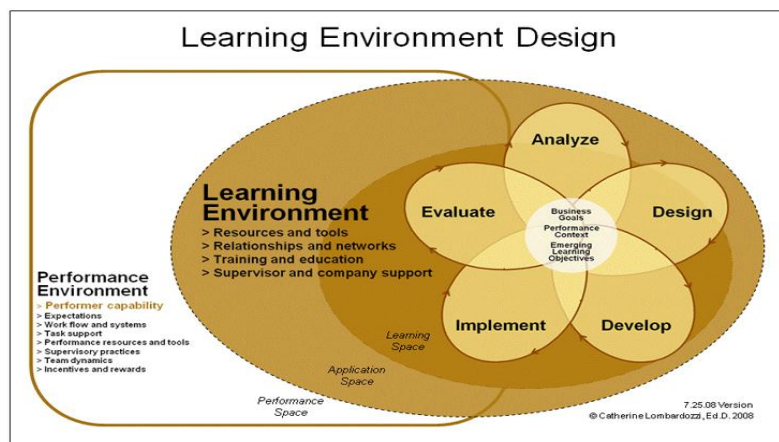
In this model, during the assessment, we need to explore capabilities that influence the design, as we design we need to consider the limitations when implementing the model, while implementing and evaluating the prototypes, we must go back and tweak and design. Doing all this while still following ADDIE (Bozarth, 2013).

5.1. Analysis

In the analysis phase, it involves the gathering of information to make inform decisions about the instructional strategies, media and technology. It will also evaluate the success of the design (Tufts University, 2007).

By applying "analysis" as the first step of ADDIE, the chance can be given to students to experience the different types of active learning. This would allow the students to form groups and teams and begin to develop group norms and standards (Martin, 2013).

5.2. Design

The information that was gathered from the analysis stage, a preliminary design for the new instruction and/or material can be created. The reason why this information is gathered is to see if the design reasonable reflects the goals that are set down for the instruction or instructional materials (Tufts University, 2007).

5.3. Development

The development phase involves the actual creation of any "deliverables". This included a web page, hand-outs, PowerPoint presentations or online activities that can be used with the student (Tufts University, 2007).

5.4. Implementation

The implementation phase describes the first use of the instruction or materials with the students. The student's problems or unpredicted instructional challenges may arise with the first execution of the new instructional design and materials (Tufts University, 2007).

5.5. Evaluation

Evaluative feedback on the success of the instructional design of the lesson, course, curriculum or materials in meeting the original instructional goals and learning objectives will be gathered in the evaluation phase. If the feedback meets the expectations and goals for the design, it can be considered summative or final (Tufts University, 2007).

Therefore it can be seen that a module can be developed when ADDIE is used. The learning environment shapes out design and how we implement a module. The following paragraph will indicate the author's view.

6. AUTHOR'S VIEW

All students however are supposed to learn the principles of a subject. The objectives of accreditation are captured in an ECSA document of August 2000 (Marock, 2000) and provide an overview of the objectives of accreditation. It suggests the objectives as follows:

- To establish whether or not a programme meets the educational requirement towards registration in a particular category;

- To establish whether the graduates of a programme are ready to enter employment and are equipped to continue learning throughout their careers;

- To establish the international comparability of programmes;

- To assure the public of the quality of the programme; and

- To encourage improvement and innovation in education in response to national and global needs (Marock, 2000).

However, all learners are supposed to learn the principles of a subject according to how is it accredited. Accreditation is the evaluation of whether an institution or programme meets a threshold standard, and qualifies for a certain status. In obtaining accreditation it may have implication for the Higher Education Institution itself, as well as for the students (Kis, 2005).

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries widely supports the method of accreditation (Kis, 2005). South Africa is one of the non-member economies with which the OECD has a working relationship in addition to its other 30 member countries. South Africa was also invited to participate in the OECD's "Emerging Market Economy Forum" to its closure in 2000. The OECD Council at Ministerial level adopted a resolution on 16 May 2007 to strengthen to co-operation with South Africa, as well as Brazil, China, India and Indonesia through a programme of enhanced engagement (OECD, 2013).

In South Africa the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) accredits courses and does national reviews, quality promotion and capacity development (IEASA, 2013).

7. CONCLUSION

The major conclusion at a glance is that contemporary education and training has moved from being almost entirely instructor- and teacher-controlled to being a process where learners are more likely to assist and are expected to be involved in planning of what is to be learned (the constructivist approach), how and when and how the learning will be assessed.

Taken into account, when facilitating learning in the field of law, it will be an advantage when the facilitator uses the teacher-centred method as well as the learner centre method. Facilitation takes places when existing knowledge is applied. In the field of law, when a person enters first year, have no knowledge about the law, so in order to gain knowledge, the teacher should teach you (in other words the teacher-centred method is being used). Learning facilitation in the authors opinion can take place on master's and doctoral level, and then you can apply the constructivist approach, due to the fact that you then can apply existing knowledge.

The constructivist states that different people may develop different understandings from the same learning experience. In law this would be quite difficult due to the fact that legislation, case law, promulgations (for instance) are already set into place, and must be enforced as it is stated in the legislature and the work can't be mistakenly be interpreted. However, in applying this

approach case law will differ from case to case, so in order to be a good lawyer, the lawyer will resource the "loop hole" in the legislation for future learning experiences.

Finally, when interrogating online learning and face-to-face learning, the authors noted that when online learning is enforced in learner centred learning environments, that in the beginning the help of the teacher/instructor or facilitator is required. However the more knowledge the student get (tacit or explicit) the more self-confidence the student will acquire and therefore will be learning much wider as anticipated.

The authors conclude with the statement from Dewey (1910), "Only by wrestling with the conditions of the problem at hand, seeking and finding his own solution (not is isolation but in correspondence with the teacher and other pupils) does one learn."

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