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From Everyman's Right to Everyman's Possibility

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Abstract.

This article describes a blended learning study module that was carried out in class teachers' adult education. The goal of the planning of this module was to create a learning environment that would give a student an optimal learning experience in versatile, authentic, e-learning environments.

In the study, the ubiquitous learning model was based on the principles of transformational pedagogy (OED). The module was carried out in flexible and versatile learning environments based on transformational pedagogy, where knowledge also included command of the 21st century teaching skills 21.

The theoretical framework of the study module followed the model of contextual-pedagogical model [18]. *The study module that was based on a strong pedagogical ground offered the students a possibility to not only choose a suitable time for studying, but also to acquire transversal competences which are linked to transformational pedagogy, as a part of an authentic learning experience.*

1. Introduction

Digitalization challenges traditional qualification structures and hierarchies. Competition in educational market is increasingly global as top universities offer free online lectures anyone can watch at home. The relationship between physical participation and distance learning is an essential question of attractive education today. Honkonen [8] urges education providers to think when it is useful to bring people physically together and when a well-planned virtual connection is enough. Crucial is, which makes a better learning context.

The researchers of virtual education have noticed that although educators know what the elements of an active learning process are, those elements are not always applied in teaching [11]; [17]; [19]; [26] Hodges and Repman [26] state that in university teaching, the learning environments of virtual courses are rather information channels built around technology than virtual learning environments based on methods that enhance and enable authentic learning. Studies show that learning environments that utilize technology in versatile ways and thus make it possible to act in authentic real-life learning contexts are seen as a possibility for developing teaching.

In this research project, the starting point was to offer class teacher students a possibility to do a six-credits' study module (Comprehensively towards context and experience-based learning) utilizing the possibilities of modern e-learning in a versatile way. The project included planning and carrying out a learning process that was linked to authentic learning contexts and utilized virtual possibilities and e-pedagogy innovatively. The virtual possibilities enabled expanding the learning environment into informal and authentic learning contexts.

The study module was based on socio-cultural and situational views of learning, as well as transformational e-learning pedagogy. According to Hodges et al. [6] planning and carrying out pedagogically appropriate learning environments especially for e-learning was seen as the most important objective of the project. The study module was carried out as an intervention and its objective was also to give the students a model for working and learning in authentic learning environments, and developing transversal competences. This learning environment can easily be transferred to different learning contexts also in basic education, where the students will later be working.

2. Comprehensively towards context and experience-based learning

The world has changed and as educators we should admit that so have students and studying. The choices we make as regards learning environments and pedagogy should be guided by learners' experiences and approaches. [21] We approached the planning process from the contextual-pedagogical framework [18], [23], [22] which guided towards authentic learning as

described by Herrington, Reeves and Oliver [5]. Here, authentic learning is seen as an approach which links together real-life strategies and learning and education that utilize e-learning. Authenticity also means planning such learning environments, situations and processes that give the learner a possibility to think and act like professionals and experts. Authentic learning tasks were central in the planning of this study module and, as Purser, Towndrow & Arangui [25] state, planning and choosing authentic learning tasks has a great influence on the quality of education. This is true whether the implementation of the virtual study module is traditional or follows the latest trends, as in this research project.

In this research project, the objectives of the study module – to perceive basic education curriculum from the point of view of interdisciplinary integration; to expand one's comprehension of learning environments to include versatile contextual environments; to apply innovative teaching methods in the planning and implementation of teaching - invited to implement the module from the starting points of transformational pedagogy. They also challenge us teacher educators to expand our views of learning environments and to apply innovative teaching methods in the planning and implementation of an e-learning environment.

Piispanen [21] highlights that in the contextual-pedagogical approach pedagogy and learning context are seen meaningful to each other; they are planned so that they support one another, utilize the students' experiences and knowledge, and stimulate several senses. Both the context and pedagogy have a crucial meaning in learning. This meaning is especially linked to allowing room for the student, his experiences, knowledge, and ways of learning. Leppisaari, Meriläinen, Piispanen and Pulkkinen [16] note that acquiring future metaskills requires also new teaching methods. This means that pedagogical models and methods, rich and authentic contents and teaching materials should be paid special attention to in education. According to Leppisaari [13], e-learning is changing as learner-centred and communal learning environments challenge prevailing views of learning.

According to studies [10], [28] the approach of authentic learning, rising from the idea of situational learning, can help to find pedagogical solutions that support the acquirement of 21st century skills. A national assessment of online education, made by the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council (FINHEEC), showed that there is a need to increase authenticity of online

education of universities of applied sciences [15]. In the same way, authenticity is a central development area also in the planning and implementation of e-learning environments in Class teacher adult education. This point of view guided the development work of the study module presented in this article.

The decision to change the implementation of instruction of an existing study module entirely form contact instruction to distance learning was rather thought-provoking among the teachers. However, central and important was that the planning would be guided by pedagogically legitimate teaching arrangements and an inspiring e-learning environment that would enable the students to reach the objectives of the study module and to use their competencies and strengths. It was also important to follow the principles of authentic learning. When we were planning the study module, the teachers' topics of conversation were pedagogy and learning environments, whereas matters related to technology were clearly not a point of concern. Also Puentedura's [24] SAMR model includes this insight to the relationship between learning tasks and technology in planning learning processes that utilize technology. According to Puentedura [24], in learning environments that make use of technology, the nature of the learning task either stays the same while the media that is used change, or the learning tasks are refined and change because of the possibilities provided by technology. This was also the case in the study module discussed in this article.

In the end, if you really think about it, is it anything more than creating a pedagogically suitable learning environment? –That's right, the same questions guide the planning process in contact teaching and distance teaching, because the idea of learning does not change even if the learning environment changes. -That's it! – Somehow I cannot help thinking how we will get Ida to participate in this, I have to remind myself not to fall into that kind of thinking! –Now, let's challenge ourselves and plan an inspiring learning environment that enables reaching the objectives of the study module in a way that is motivating and makes use of students' knowledge, skills, and strengths.

According to Impiö, Meriläinen and Piispanen [9], in planning an e-learning environment crucial to learning is not where the students are and when they are there. Instead, important is how learning and reaching the objectives is enabled independent of time and place, making use of students' competencies and the knowledge of people's ways

in everyday life [9]. This view is supported by Bonk, Kim and Zheng's [3] study, according to which strengthening the possibilities of authentic learning requires teaching and working methods that are compatible with real professional situations and expertise, and thus utilizes the possibilities that virtual teaching and the development of educational technology offer.

The framework for the e-learning environment discussed in this article is the contextual-pedagogical approach to planning and implementing teaching. According to Piispanen and Meriläinen [22], it is based on comprehensive and transversal pedagogical knowledge, the learner having a central role in processing and building information. The researchers [22] emphasize that learning happens in active interaction with the environment, the learner taking the role of an authentic actor and building new information with others using real-life working methods.

Congratulations! Your group has been chosen to a Project planning competition that starts right NOW! Your task is to plan and implement a contextual, experienceful PRODUCTION on the basis of Basic education curriculum and interdisciplinary integration. The culmination of the production will take place in May as an experienceful POP UP School Day around Finland in cooperation with local businesses.

When the phenomenon, the topic of learning, is taken from real world, the working methods follow those of real life and engage the students to the task that is implemented in an authentic situation [3]. As a pedagogical model the contextual-phenomenal learning means using learning tasks that challenge students to solve problems and think as professionals of a certain field. The starting point of this try-out study module was to implement cognitively realistic learning tasks in ubiquitous learning environments that made use of the possibilities of e-learning.

The central questions in planning the try-out module were rather usual in all planning of teaching: What is good pedagogy? Where does learning best take place? What kind of information is needed in order to gain new understanding? How to motivate and inspire students to find and organize information? How to process, structure and shape information into new information? What are the roles of the teacher and the student in the learning situation? In addition to these, we had to ponder how to carry out the learning environment in the contextual-pedagogical framework and enable authentic learning in ubiquitous learning environments.

In the study module Comprehensively towards contextual and experience-based learning, the students were supported and encouraged to plan phenomenon-based, authentic, and experienceful learning wholes for, and together with, basic education pupils. The learning wholes were implemented in schools chosen by the students in different parts of Finland.

In the study module the students went through a contextual-pedagogical learning process phase by phase in learner's role. During the process they planned and implemented a contextual-pedagogical learning process with a class of pupils, following the principles and methods of project work.

According to Rule [27], authenticity in learning includes an inquiry-based approach that supports the acquisition of thinking and metacognitive skills, and increases discourse within a community of learners, and the learner's choice.

The learning environment thus plays an important part in a successful e-learning experience. Therefore, planning a learning whole must be guided by pedagogy, and working methods must be chosen so that they support it. Lombardi [20] points out that a well-planned, learner-centred, and authentic e-learning environment prepares learners for working life.

3. Planning and implementation of the study module

The development of a new pedagogical education model began with defining pedagogical and technical issues in January 2014, and the work went on for the entire year. The basis for planning was the contextual-pedagogical learning approach [18] which emphasizes transversal competences (pedagogical, substance, and 21st century teaching and citizenship skills) as part of a teacher's pedagogical abilities. Planning the study module was guided by Curriculum content and performance descriptions, which helped outline pedagogically legitimate, authentic learning tasks to achieve curriculum objectives. The objectives were not only content-related, but also transversal competencies and generic skills were included.

The e-learning environment included several elements, through which the learning process became visible. Table 1 presents the connections between the learning tasks and performance descriptions. Students were given instructions for each task of the learning process on the course web pages, as well as provided with examples from earlier years' plans, instructions for making

presentations, iPad applications, instructions for AC meeting rooms, and current and related articles to deepen the study module's theoretical framework.

Table 1. Contextual-pedagogical e-learning environment

Curriculum contents	Learning tasks	Performance descriptions
Planning a Basic education curriculum - based, contextual and experienceful learning whole with interdisciplinary integration	• Writing a project plan according to given instruction • Familiarising oneself with articles, discussing concepts, making comments (web discussions) • Carrying out and documenting the project	Perceives Basic education curriculum from the viewpoint of interdisciplinary integration
Networking, cooperation, internationality, and shared expertise in planning and implementation of the learning whole	• Choosing the class of pupils for the project • Presenting the class and the learning environment (web discussion) • Creating and updating a blog throughout the project • Familiarising the teacher of the project class with the project	Expands his/her concept of learning environment to include versatile contextual environments
Expanding learner-centred pedagogy into the surrounding society	• Pitching the project and working as an opponent • Planning and arranging a pedagogical afternoon, reporting it in a blog • Writing a press release	Applies innovative teaching methods in planning and implementation of teaching

	and arranging a press conference	

The six credits' study module was carried out during a period of three months, during which all students and teachers got together in an e-learning space four times. Holmes and Gardner [7] link learning with the concept communal constructivism, which describes the student's role not only as an active knowledge builder alone and in cooperation with others, but also as an active developer of information for oneself and the community of learners that he is a part of. When planning the study module we paid great attention to the contents and implementation of the four web seminars. The starting points for planning were Holmes and Gardner's [7] shared communal expertise, and we wanted to enable this with challenging and inspiring working methods. Web seminars made use of the flipped classroom strategy, so that the students were well prepared for the e-meetings, and it was possible to share and deepen knowledge in a versatile and multi-channel way.

As most of the study module was carried out ubiquitously, according to the student groups' own schedules, the students had to take responsibility of their learning. The learning tasks guided the students towards the learning objectives. An authentic task that guided the students to plan and implement a contextual-pedagogical project with a group of pupils, their teacher, and the school staff, engaged the students to the learning process and the responsibility of one's own learning was taken quite naturally as the project proceeded from one phase to another [21] as presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Contextual-pedagogical tasks of the study module

4h Familiarise the class teacher with the contextual-pedagogical approach and ideology. Material for this is provided on the course web pages. Get to know the pupils in the class and find out their interests and inspiration and the levels of knowledge and skills needed in the project.
8h Prepare well for the web seminar. Create a multi-channel presentation of your project and plan a pitching of the project plan according to the collegial reflection schedule. Send your presentation to the opponent group by the scheduled date. The opponent group: prepare for your task well according to given instruction.

> 6h
> Arrange a pedagogical afternoon (or a parents' evening) in the school. The target group may be teachers or some other suitable group. Your task is to work as an expert and promote contextual-pedagogical culture among the target group. You can choose your approach to the pedagogical afternoon.
> Tips from earlier courses:
> - Activating Apps training in contextual-pedagogical framework
> - Presenting an implemented project
>
> The duration of the event is 2h. Document the event in a suitable way in your blog.

Biggs [1], [2] emphasizes that pedagogically good, legitimate planning consists of perfect consistency between curriculum contents and performance descriptions, chosen methods and learning assignments, learning environments, and assessment. The objective of planning the study module presented in this article was to plan a pedagogically sensible learning environment that is independent of time and place and enables achieving the learning objectives of the study module for every student in the best way possible. This can be seen in the discussion between the teachers:

These are the important words that guide the planning: PEDAGOGICALLY SENSIBLE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT, plus motivated adult students. Can you think of anything else? –A pedagogical manuscript is important, and the whole study module, and all the paths and oasis that are linked into it, must be explained and described clearly so that everybody knows what is expected of them. –Did you notice that nobody has said anything about technology – I would have expected it to have a bigger role in this discussion. –Well yes, it does play a part in distance learning, but one should not get stuck to it when planning a study module.

Biggs' [1], [2] ideas about planning a high-quality learning process confirms that the teacher's responsibility is to plan the learning assignments so that a student can show his performance by committing to the assignments, whether the learning environment is a classroom, an online environment, a mixture of these two, or ubiquitous, as described in this article. Dillon et al. [4] describe learning that happens in an e-learning environment with open and closed development paths: formal and authentic learning that happens in the moment can be planned so that it is a closed, strictly defined, and uniform learning path, or, as in the study module presented in this article, it can be planned so that authentic learning assignments enable an individual and communal learning path that opens new perspectives and ideas.

4. Conclusion

It is advisable to plan one's first study modules with a pedagogically sensible and flexible learning environment that is based on socio-cultural approach of learning and is independent of time and place, on cooperation with another teacher. The possibilities the internet provides may a t first chain one's thinking and narrow down options in implementation. Collegial cooperation helps change the focus away from technical things, and flexible learning help achieve curriculum performance objective at least as well as teaching that happens physically in the same place. A successful study module needs a good manuscript and a clear timetable that each participant commits to. Co-planning and sharing expertise openly are possibilities of university education.

According to the feedback from Class teacher adult education students (spring 2014), students hope for more possibilities for distance learning, and that the good methods that have been used during the on-going project period would be used more. In addition, providing the students with personal, modern technology in the beginning of studies enables the expansion of learning environments outside classrooms. If teachers' work does not change, education does not change. Independent, motivated and highly educated teachers are the heroes behind Pisa success. Finnish teachers have great autonomy and power to decide what and how they teach. A part of the teachers are enthusiastic and passionate about learning new things and they also develop teaching and learning boldly. But teachers' autonomy also enables them to close the classroom door and go on as if nothing in the world had changed. That may end up with great differences between schools and classes. Some teachers use technology, experiment new assessment methods and give up on desks. Others stick to the old ways. [12]

This is the core of the whole thing: it does not make a difference in learning where we are and when, the point is, like you just said, how learning is made possible and planned so that it is possible to achieve the objectives in a sensible way.

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