

Listening to Students' Voices II

Research into the transfer value of successful learning practices using Web 2.0

INHolland Centre for eLearning

Introduction

In the academic year 2008/2009 research has been conducted on the expatiations and experiences of students, pupils and novice teachers with respect to the implementation of ICT in learning processes¹. The results have given evidence to multiple possibilities for an effective implementation of ICT which furthermore may be expected to enforce in the near future². The growth in all Web 2.0 applications is seen as a privileged development, yet a perception of effective implementation within regular learning processes is still in an initial stage. Especially for students and pupils, but up to a certain extent also for novice teachers, this initial stage gives reason for concern in correlating between formal learning environments and their own personal learning environment in emerging technologies. Essential in this environment is self esteem and being in control in the new technologies. Yet these aspects enhance the necessity for innovative learning practices in which the control is shared in a way that students on the one hand, and the educational institute on the other hand have joined responsibility for contents and processes in order to develop intrinsic and fundamental connections between formal and informal learning environments.

Expected Outcomes

This sequel to the first stage of Student Voices is expected to lead to a centre of knowledge that can be implemented in a productive way in education. The description of successful practicing should gain insight into the aspects of any given learning practice contributing to successful results. Other than motivation and ownership of all parties involved, characteristics of the context, contents of the learning practices, didactical strategy, choices with respect to media and communication, features of target groups and other parties involved, available learning environments, and supplementary conditions which may have been part of creating a successful environment, should be taken into consideration. Subsequently, analyses will show which factors may be considered context specific and hence are not expected to appear in other types of education; factors which may transcend or may be transformed into conditions applicable to multiple situations. The aforementioned conditions, including any aspect which may be specific for a given learning practice, will be described, after which its essence will be recorded in a brief video coverage. Video coverage enhances the transferability of information as it may serve as inspiration for others in education. Furthermore, it offers the possibility to question the professional field in education in a wider range, based upon selected footage, in an innovative way on recognition, acknowledgement and appreciation of the visualized learning practices. The fact that a number of countries have shown interest in the Students' Voices I research and have expressed interest to participate in the sequel research may create excellent opportunities to compare the output pertaining from research performed by the United States of America, Canada, Portugal, Sweden, Norway, Ireland and the United Kingdom.

¹ Students' Voices I has been conducted both in The Netherlands and in Australia. The Australian research has been conducted under supervision of Doctor Kathryn Moyle, Associate Professor at the Faculty of Education of the University of Canberra and Dean of the Secretariat of the Australian ICT in Education Committee.

² The full report of the Students' Voices I research can be visited at: www.inholland.nl/eLearning

Theoretical Background

A significant feature of traditional learning practices in regular education is the fact that full control is in the hands of the educational institute, with respect to both contents and learning processes. Recent developments in views on aspects of learning and teaching have shown an acknowledgement of the importance of any learning individual, yet in practice transfer of management on learning processes is done without preparing the learner for this new task and role. Foremost, management is still in the hands of the educational institute, whereas the fact that this does not match with the current environment of the learner seems to be ignored. Since the introduction of Internet, the possibilities of informal learning have taken flight and new developments in Web 2.0 show that the learner has more opportunities than ever to participate and cooperate in the production of learning contents. Informal learning processes within Communities of Interest are promising and should be an inspiration for redesigning learning practices in regular education. Yet this could be even more effective if formal learning practices match with informal learning practices in order to reinforce the quality of both practices. To accelerate this quality, both the formal virtual learning environment of the higher education institute, and the informal personal learning environment should collaborate, a development which only succeeds if it is designed from a 'shared conduct' and 'locus of control' concept. This concept should be formulated with respect to both learning contents and learning process. The diagram below gives an overview of management on contents versus process:

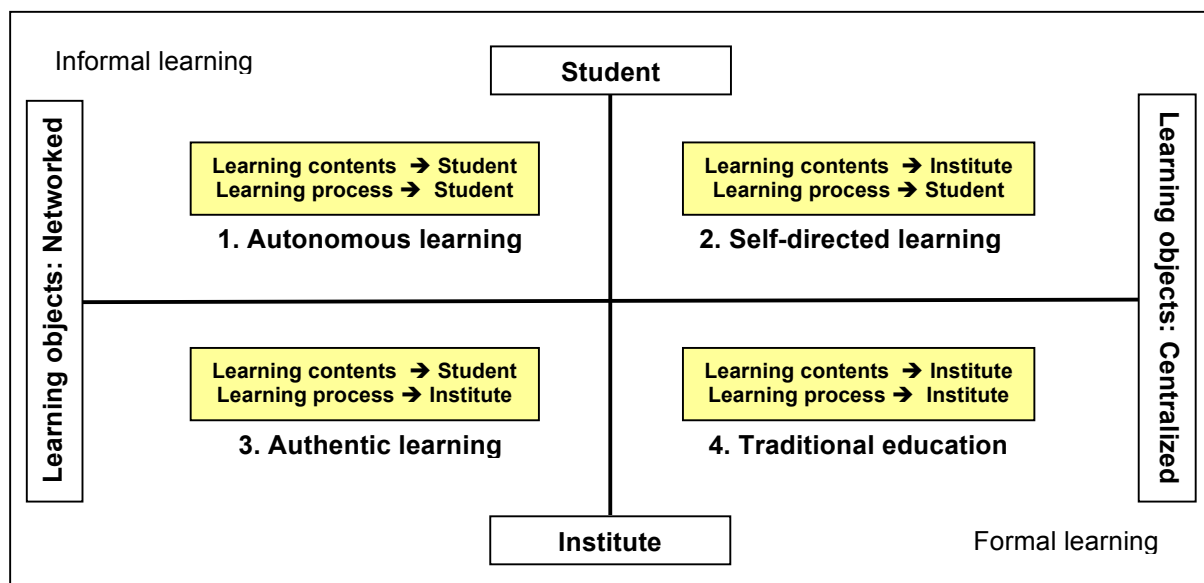


Figure 1. Development process and network framework of learning contents and design of learning processes from a 'locus of control' perspective (Fransen, 2006).

Rationale for the Research

Central theme through all the research in Students' Voices is the belief that the main importance is listening carefully to the learner when creating learning environments, as it has become evident that listening to the experiences and ideas of students and pupils effect into positive results in various outcomes. Generally spoken, the input of young people provides valuable aspects which may lead into educational improvements. Furthermore, evidence has been found that a learner tends to approach his own learning strategy in a more effective and motivated way when he is asked to consider the learning practice from the perspective of his role as reflective learner, hence offering the learner the experience of joint responsibility for the learning process.

Taking young people seriously does imply the acceptance of the participation in a shared conduct of learning processes at the educational institutions. The concept of shared conduct in these learning practices implies that students and pupils on the one hand, and the educational institute and teachers on the other hand have a joint responsibility for the learning contents and process, and for developing intrinsic and fundamental connections between formal and informal learning environments. However, the circumstances contributing to this process have to be constructive in such a way to enhance 'co-creation' and 'co-production', eventually resulting in an experience of 'co-ownership'. Yet the question remains of which factors are instrumental in contributing to such a favourable environment?

The effective implementation of ICT, especially the Web 2.0 applications, is considered to be of vital importance in realizing these learning practises. However, these applications, also referred to as the Social Web with major key words such as 'openness', 'sharing' and 'creativity', are mainly used in personal environments and seldom used in learning environments brought forward by educational institutes. This research investigates possible matches between these informal and formal learning processes in learning and teaching.

Research Question

The main research question for the Students' Voices II research project may be formulated as:

Which characteristics in successful learning practices implementing the Web 2.0 technology may serve as leading principles for redesigning learning environments in similar contexts?

Insight into the characteristics of a given learning practice adding to a successful outcome may be found in the following descriptive distinctions:

- Motivation and ownership of all participants involved
- Characteristics of the learning context
- Contents of the learning practice
- Choices in didactical strategies
- Options in media and communications
- Characteristics of the learners and other people involved
- Design of the learning environment
- Other conditions contributing to the success of the practice.

Research Methodology

The research will be conducted in several phases:

1. Consulting experts in order to give examples of successful learning practices;
2. A literature survey exploring the research on innovative learning practices with Web 2.0;
3. Analysis and evaluation of the selected learning practices through observation, documentary analysis, and interviewing participants and stakeholders;
4. Producing video footage of the learning practice showing the characteristics and major success.

The approach will be as follows: A number of experts in the field of education and eLearning will be interviewed with the purpose of generating examples of innovative learning practices, complemented with desk research on a given example previously recorded. The consultation of experts will provide a long-list of possible interesting practices for the field research. Based upon set criteria a selection will be made from this list, preferably with a clear dispersion in various educational sectors. The shortlist will be the keynote for contacting the institutions for participation in describing the case studies.

The literature survey will result in a conceptual framework for the research in order to develop criteria for the interview protocols and for analysing the data. The conceptual framework will also be the basis for the interpretation of the results and the evaluation of the learning practices that were investigated. Based upon the provided information all variables and conditions, including aspects characteristic for a given learning practice, will be described.

An analysis will reveal factors which are context-specific within a learning practice which may not be expected to be found in other educational contexts, as well as factors that may be transformed into conditions feasible in other contexts. The research will result in evaluating the learning practices on the basis of the characteristics regarding aspects of 'co-production' and 'co-creation', as well as on aspects of 'formal learning' and informal learning'. The learning practices should all include some kind of shared conduct and an effective implementation of Web 2.0 technology, but a distinction will be made between the learning practices with 'co-production' in contents and the learning practices with 'co-creation', which involves shared conduct in both learning content development and the learning process. The fact that students participate in the production of contents implies a network nature of the learning contents.

The Students' Voices research project is labelled as a multiple case study with a cross-case analysis. In order to evaluate the innovative learning practices and to compare results from all cases, a protocol for carrying out these case studies will be developed. Also, a protocol for the development of the video vignettes will be provided for.

Publication of the Results

Both the results of the research into the individual learning practices and the appropriate video footage will be published on the Students' Voices **website**: <http://www.studentsvoices.org>



STUDENTS' VOICES
LISTENING TO STUDENTS' VIEWS OF LEARNING WITH TECHNOLOGIES

This project aims to prepare a **Handbook** of edited research publications gathered from around the world, about students' views and expectations of learning with technologies. The aim of this Handbook is for each chapter to answer the question: 'What do students say about learning with technologies?' In addressing this question authors will report, critically analyze, and discuss the research that has collected data directly from students from different levels of education and training (i.e. from students in primary and secondary schools, students undertaking vocational training, and from students in universities). Chapters may focus on one cohort or multiple cohorts of students. Our goal is to gain insights into students' views of successful pedagogical practices with the aim of gaining insights into the aspects of learning that contribute to successful results.

Confirmation of willingness to contribute a chapter to this publication is required by 21 February 2010.