FISh - collaborative inquiry into the scenario

Topic 1: Online participation and digital literacies (4 – 17 Mar)

Scenario

"I have just signed up to do an online course and I am excited to be there. But I have little experience of online courses and it feels really challenging to get started to connect and find my way with all these new sites and tools. I guess that other participants will be more experienced than me and I feel stupid asking about things. We are asked to create a Learning blog on the web; it feels a bit scary to do this. I do share things on Facebook with friends, but here, in the open? I want to keep my private life separate from my professional life. But on the other hand, my students seem to share and discuss all sorts of things in social media and use all kinds of tools and resources."

Meeting Recording:
Meeting 1: https://arcada.zoom.us/recording/play/H0RSdgAb6gHHzPXfejNU5woagefJd_V75sRpmUA3IZMK4gRvEMfnFcfhmwY2D2sL?autoplay=true

Access Password: onl191
Here's the notes

Meeting 2
https://arcada.zoom.us/recording/play/ocS8gXVwoDmb0onslcdTZ3yenBR6d9jP8v4x3p_GbT6c3EbaNl9yg3wWzfH3emEI?autoplay=true

Meeting 3
https://arcada.zoom.us/recording/play/O-v2rC60xhtelfh0cJKc2jT5F2d9mK-Y8icOI8SdhFt0nshhznNC7QIJ2YJeZtAA
Presentation: https://coggle.it/diagram/XH0Dg39tHW3nbaNS/t/onl-191-group-8-topic-1
Notes:
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1yQXPpFvdI5cF-iaKQnyMop8eJxxM-I7hfTTwgpbC5Ac/edit

Focus

- Fear of mistakes (Fear of lack of knowledge, feeling uncomfortable with a new tool)
- Fear of limited knowledge
- Vulnerability (Risk of our level of knowledge will be exposed)
- Private life vs professional life
- Digital footprints
- Tendency of comparison (Teacher vs students level, may be students know more than the teacher/ how different are we to our students?)
- Centrality of making assumptions: the kinds of assumptions we make about each other and learners' digital literacies = key determinant of success

Investigate

These three questions we would like to investigate

1. What are the barriers for students that are studying in an online course? - **Philip, Scott, Kavisha**
    a. In the context of diverse digital literacies, what are the relevant barriers that students face in studying an online course?
2. How can we help students overcome the barriers? - **Scott**,
3. Barriers/fear to contribute while being assessed in an academic context
    a. What learning and participation barriers/motivators are common among online learners in higher education?
    b. What are the common triggers of emotions in an online higher education environment? (Emotions such as excitement, anxiety, fear, frustration etc)
    c. what strategies do students (and faculty alike) use to deal with emotions in an online environment?

Share with the group

Traditional writing can be a personal endeavor, digital writing is generally intended to be communicated with others.

I found this information by Murray (2017) useful http://www.teachhub.com/technology-classroom-what-digital-literacy Accessed 05 March 2019.

Top 8 E-learning Barriers by Pappas (2016)
https://elearningindustry.com/top-elearning-barriers-that-inhibit-online-learners-engagement-elearning-content

Just a little food for thought by the students.
https://onlinelearninginsights.wordpress.com/tag/barriers-to-student-participation-in-online-learning/

Just a few important points mentioned by Martha Malete
http://moocs.org.za/barriers-of-effective-online-learning-in-south-africa/

This article had a few barriers: I'm not sure if it's a 1998 or 2015 article.
https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Zane_Berge/publication/265525982_Barriers_To_Online_Teaching_In_Post-Secondary_Institutions_Can_Policy_Changes_Fix_It/links/54a6d5520cf257a6360aa187/Barriers-To-Online-Teaching-In-Post-Secondary-Institutions-Can-Policy-Changes-Fix-It.pdf.

On p. 42 you find "factors influencing student retention":
Weller, Martin; van Ameijde, Jitse and Cross, Simon (2018). Learning Design for Student Retention. *Journal of Perspectives in Applied Academic Practice*, 6(2)

Recommended readings
http://www.inspiration.com/sites/default/files/documents/How_Digital_Tools_Prepare_Students_for_the_21st_Century.pdf Accessed 05 March 2019.

More links about digital literacy:

- DigComp 2.1 - https://is.gd/afSWOQ
- DigCompEdu (for educators) - http://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/bitstream/JRC107466/pdf_digcomedu_a4_final.pdf
- Develop digital literacy (from Jisc) - https://is.gd/ptC0u9

I found this book about teaching in digital age:
https://opentextbc.ca/teachinginadigitalage/
It includes some information about what a teacher should think about when planning for teaching online.

This study is a bit old, but the barriers are interesting.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/247662298_Student_Barriers_to_Online_Learning_A_Factor_Analytic_Study

Barrier factors (n = 1,056)	Means	*SD*
Social interactions	2.36	1.07
Administrative/instructor issues	2.05	0.80
Time and support for studies	1.91	0.79
Learner motivation	1.91	0.93
Technical problems	1.70	0.73
Cost and access to the Internet	1.60	0.73
Technical skills	1.30	0.50
Academic skills	1.22	0.50

1: What are the barriers for learners in an online learning environment?

The reading that we have been exposed to in this course reflects significant development in ideas around what the major barriers are to online learning. Early thinking on this matter divided learners on the basis of age. Old and young were constructed as fundamentally different types of learners thanks to having grown up in a world saturated with digital technology (Prensky, 2001). The dawn of the Internet was understood as representing a discontinuity, or singularity, so that today "students *think and process information fundamentally differently* from their predecessors" (Prensky, 2001, p. 1). This way of thinking posits that people's brains become wired differently: they are raised to understand the digital world as their 'native' tongue, while older people who try to teach them are 'immigrants' "who speak an outdated language (that of the pre-digital age), are struggling to teach a population that speaks an entirely new language" (Prensky, 2001, p. 2).

This model has been largely superseded as reductive and simplistic. Rather than in-born abilties that mark as proficient or deficient for life, our digital literacies have been considered as attaching to the purposes for which we use online and digital tools (i.e. as 'visitors' or as 'residents' (White, 2014a; White & Le Cornu, 2011)) as well as the contexts in which we use those tools – institutional, or personal (White, 2014b). The context for use and for content are determining factors of a plethora of different types of literacies (Belshaw, 2012). Use of specific platforms and our engagement with them are determined by a number of factors, including our institutional base, our level of prior education, our access to technology, etc., rather than just our age, and our resistance or enthusiasm about using different platforms must therefore be complicated.

The U.K.-based educational project Jisc divides these literacies into seven elements, each of which are in turn influences by a variety of different underlying factors (Jisc, no date):

1. Media literacy: critical reading and production professional communication in a variety of media;

2. Communications and collaboration: Participate in digital networks for learning and research;

3. Career and identity management: Manage digital reputation and online identity;

4. ICT literacy: Adopt, adapt, and use digital devices, applications and services;

5. Learning skills: Study and learn effectively in technology-rich environments, formal and informal;

6. Digital scholarship: Participate in emerging academic, professional and research practices that depend on digital systems;

7. Information literacy: Find, interpret, evaluate, manage and share information.

In terms of the specific barriers that apply to participation in an online learning environment, these can be divided into five main domains:

STRUCTURAL

Learners may lack internet access altogether (Malete, 2015) or experience restrictions on the bandwidth they can consume (Morrison, 2014). In certain institutional and national environments, specific sites are blocked. Some places will experience a lack of power supply (Malete, 2015). Internet access and availability of technology are constant supportive factors for online learning that need to be taken into account (Muilenburg & Berge, 2005). The institutional setting of the online learning experience – both in terms of the hosting and the students who participate in it – is another factor that should be taken into account. Underprepared institutions lack infrastructure and allowances for this kind of learning (Malete, 2015). Inadequate support from teachers there to help and guide the process has a negative effect on the learning experience (Muilenburg & Berge, 2005; Pappas, 2016). Learners cite not being able to get in touch with actual people as being a demotivating factor, as well as the absence of timely feedback (Muilenburg & Berge, 2005).

TEACHER COMPETENCE

Teachers who are underprepared (Malete, 2015)who lack the appropriate skills to teach in the online (Muilenburg & Berge, 2005)environment can have a negative impact on the learning experience. Students cite a lack of clear expectations and instructions (Muilenburg & Berge, 2005)as being a specific factor that presents a barrier to learning.

LEARNER COMPETENCE

Learners with limited experience of technology will struggle to participate in a learning experience where a high level of competence is assumed (Pappas, 2016). Related skills such as language, typing, reading, writing, and general communication, as well as the confidence to put these skills into action, also affects the online learning experience (Muilenburg & Berge, 2005).

LEARNER MOTIVATION/FEAR

Some learners report a lack of personal motivation to get going on a online course: they feel they just can't get started (Muilenburg & Berge, 2005). Other report being scared: they fear new tools, they fear computers and technology, and they fear that their lack of skills will be shown up in the online environment (Muilenburg & Berge, 2005). Some people feel isolated in the online learning environment, and crave engagement with a community (Pappas, 2016) For these learners the lack of interaction or communication between students make online learning feel impersonal. Learners report a lack of social context cues, a lack of collaboration, and a preference to learn in person as factors affecting their engagement (Muilenburg & Berge, 2005).

USABILITY AND COURSE DESIGN

Finally, usability and course design are important factors in determining whether or not students will thrive in online learning environments. Repetitive posts and conversations that go nowhere are frequently encountered in online learning environments (Morrison, 2014). Designers will often bore their learners by being too easy, or overwhelm and confuse learners with intricate and complicated design features (Pappas, 2016). Learners are frequently frustrated either by not having the correct materials accessible when they are needed, or the poor quality of some of the materials that are available (Muilenburg & Berge, 2005).

2: How can we help students overcome these barriers?

In focusing on how to overcome these barriers, the final barrier (usability and course design) is especially valuable to think through. Many online educators suggest that doing research into the specific skills profile of the learners who are to participate in the course, and designing in response to them, is a good place to start (e.g. Pappas, 2016). Meta-analysis of a number of the factors that affect student participation in online environments yielded the ICEBERG model (Weller, van Ameijde, & Cross, 2018, pp. 46–48) which proposes that online courses focus on the following factors:

- **Integrated** between activities and outcomes but also minimize usage complexity caused by media switching, having to search for various resources on curriculum; constructive alignment between parts of course; skills development integrated into materials

- **Collaborative:**where appropriate, meaningful collaboration, development of a supportive community of learners; clear ground rules; well-structured activities that avoid potential frustration students due to non-participation or studying at different pace

- **Engaging:** different types of activities, connection to academic team/voice, aligned with educational and career aspirations, enthusiastic engaging & positive tone

- **Balanced:** manageable workload, kept even along pathway, planning and organizational skills, expectations very clear on a week-by-week basis.

- **Economical:** Prioritise key concepts and outcomes to be achieved; content clearly linked to learning and assessment aims; students not overwhelmed but focused on key learning outcomes.

- **Reflective:** able to reflect on learning – regular summaries; self-assessment opportunities; time built in for revision, reflection, and self-directed learning

- **Gradual:** a manageable gradient; increasingly complex tasks; builds up confidence and skills; provides scaffolding for current and next level of study; students progress from directed to independent learning

That skilled personnel should be enlisted to design the courses (Malete, 2015)is quite clear, and that these skills be transferred in the process of the online course through online tutorials and personalized support, creating demos, and conducting webinars (Pappas, 2016)was another solution that is suggested. Design factors such as remembering to make available and then instruct learners on how to follow specific posts in an online discussion so that they get notified (Morrison, 2014), gamification, acknowledging and evaluating pre-existing cognitive blocks among learners (Pappas, 2016), and engaging the target group of the course in its design (Jisc, no date)are other specific suggestions for making courses more engaging.

Resources should be accessible, and teachers and designers should know the profile of learners in order to include them, differentiate and personalize them, and thus more actively engage them (Redecker & Punie, 2017, p. 22). The idea is ultimately to move people up the “8 proficiency levels” (Carretero, Vuorikari, & Punie, 2017)of digital competence.

Works cited

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Share with the ONL 191 community

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Reflect

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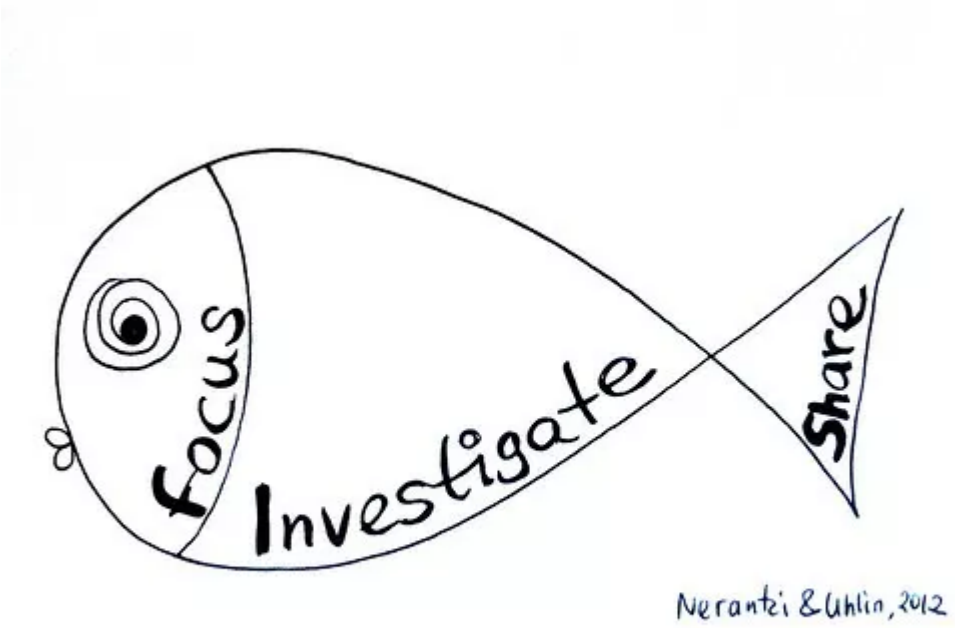

Archive

- How can we help students to face their fear/annoyance/obstacle/ of mistakes [What were the tools used a decade ago, are we afraid of change or being embarrassed by not knowing how to use a tool]?
- barriers - potential feelings
- Digital footprints
- GDPR
- Fake life (Students who try to post modified images on social media)
- Gamification
- Another important part [How different are we [Teachers] to Students when it comes to digital literacy.