

My involvement in the Open Learning Course (week 3)

Norman Jackson



As a result of participating in the course I'm changing my understanding of what is important in the technology infrastructure.

After three weeks this version of the technologies roadmap emphasizes the group space & group g+ hangout for conversation together with the posts in the community and the links that participants provide to their portfolios or blogs, and my own space for

contributions and reflection.

This week the people involved in the Group Hangout agreed that we would keep a log of our activity and use this as a resource to reflect on our involvement. I provided some prompts to encourage development of particular perspectives..

1) How have I engaged in the open learning experience? What sort of contributions have I made?

I spent at least an hour a day involved in reading and commenting on posts and portfolios, and sometimes following links to resources provided by participants. Also writing. I got into the habit of looking at the list of posts before I looked at the new posts. I also got more systematic about tagging posts with names having observed others doing this.

My contributions were of four types:

- General comments showing participants that I had read and valued their contribution usually picking out something that was clearly of significance to the person making the post and or appealed to me about the post.
- Participating in a conversational stream - where a conversation was unfolding
- Making my own contribution which was usually to pick up on something in a post and add something (usually codified and conceptual knowledge) and links
- Administrative - to try to keep the group activity progressing. I am also interacting with the course organiser via facebook and making occasional posts via twitter.

I have not myself engaged with the course activities, although I have read the blog posts that participants who have engaged wrote. Over the week my own contributions were mainly conceptual offering tools to aid thinking about creativity.

2) What am I learning and how am I using this learning? Am I changing my understandings of creativity in learning through this process?

I am mainly learning contextual-situational knowledge, and some pedagogical knowledge

- 1) How this open learning process works and how my own involvement contributes to its workings. The process and my involvement is making me think and find out about the dynamics of these platforms.
- 2) About the people who share their situations and perspectives
- 3) How people respond to the programmed activities
- 4) How people respond to more general topics of conversation

3) How have emotions influenced and emerged from my engagement?

EMOTION1 Obligation and sense of duty (as named facilitator)

Whenever people share their own resources, for example an article that they have written, I feel an obligation to read it and let them know that I have valued what they have shared. I am particularly motivated by this because I do the same thing. I share my writing and invite feedback and I'm disappointed when I don't get any feedback..

EMOTION 2 Interest, curiosity, joy

Hi M I really enjoyed reading the article you reviewed on connected learning. It provides an interesting and rich case study of the way people interact in free choice learning spaces.. and I can see how I might draw on your ideas in my future work. I like the term you use 'free choice learning' and I wondered how you would interpret the free choice environment of this open learning course...

It's easy to be infected by the inspiring posts of other participants

I was struck by what Panagiotis said in his post, "My purpose and my effort is to try to illuminate students with the available knowledge. My personal joy is when students find their way on their own and come to a conclusion by themselves with my minimum guidance."

I also felt humbled by the courage of some participants as they shared their thoughts and what they had done..

EMOTION 3 Trust, respect, empathy

These sorts of feeling emerge when you engage in sustained conversation and the person in dialogue is prepared to share something of themselves.. It happened 3 or 4 times during the week.

EMOTION 4 Feelings of dissatisfaction - that more could be gained from the opportunity and the desire to engage more people in the process of sharing

I noted that most of the posts are related to the activities being undertaken by the students - but there is little for other members of the community who are not participating in the course -based activities who are interested in discussions around creativity.. So I wrote a blog post on the 4C model of creativity to encourage more people who are interested in sharing perspectives on creativity to share the conceptual tools that they have found to be useful.

4) What sort of relationships are forming as a result of interaction? What does relationship mean in this context?

I'm defining relationship as an exchange of information, ideas and possible emotions that leads to the sharing of personal knowledge either as a one-off transaction or and evolving discussion.

At the strong and positive end of this relational spectrum there is an expectation of conversation and a sharing of someone's personal beliefs and life, so you feel you

get to know them and their life circumstances a little. This type of revealing leads to feelings of empathy and connectivity, particularly if you recognises parallels in your own life. Its only through these sorts of conversations that trust and a set of emotions that encourage us to carry on the conversation and seek opportunities for conversation on other topics. When a strong relationship exists it almost doesn't matter what the topic is because there is potential for conversation and the exchange even in the most mundane of ideas. Whereas a weak relationship would not bother. This then is the condition which provides a foundation for collaboration which holds potential for co-creation.

I might characterise my relationships as:

- 1) none existent - for people I haven't engaged with including people who are not actively participating
- 2) weak - for simple exchanges that simply acknowledge someone's contribution but do not extend beyond this
- 3) moderate - where there are several exchanges around a topic/idea eg a conversation involving 2 or 3 exchanges
- 4) strong - where there have been repeated exchanges on a number of topics and a willingness to collaborate by sharing perspectives and engaging in group conversation

While searching for something I found a very good article by Caroline Haythornthwaite 'Learning relations in networks in web-based communities' http://www.researchgate.net/publication/220131811_Learning_relations_and_networks_in_web-based_communities and my experience made sense in respect of the research she reported and the concepts she discussed. The illustration provides a visualisation of my relationships with participants in the #creativeHE so far..



5) Our perceptions of what is creative about our own involvement, the involvement of others and the community as a whole?

I'm not sure I have done anything that creative.. I can see that some people have used their imaginations in the representations they have used in their posts. I have played safe reproducing thinking I have done before.