Building academic literacies in Web 2.0 spaces PhD Research Project

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Outline

1. What my PhD is about (hopefully)

- Academic literacies
- Learning theories
- Web 2.0 (Values Exchange)
- 2. The design of my PhD
 - Diagnostic tool for academic literacies
- 3. The 'oh my' moments thus far
 - Ethical ups and downs

1. What my PhD is about (hopefully)

Research Aim

 identify Web 2.0 based learning tasks that facilitate academic literacies learning embedded into course content



'compulsory enthusiasm' for technology (Njenga & Fourie, 2010)

learning occurs in a community of practice where novices and experts collaborate (Brown & Adler, 2008)

spaces for social

networking and

participation

(O'Reilly, 2005)

learner-centred curricula "social, participatory and supported by rich media" (McLoughlin & Lee, 2010, p. 28) "technology 'can and will' rather than 'has and does'" (Robertson, 2003, p. 280)

technology to facilitate collaborative learning does not necessarily result in social interaction (Krejins, Kirschner, & Jochems, 2003)

Importance of this topic

 learning and teaching in an increasingly digital landscape

rhetoric:

- educational benefits of Web 2.0
- virtues of collaborative and networked learning

complexity:

 academic literacies learning embedded into subject content







Lecturers and institutions employ:

Duffy, 2011 McCarthy, 2013

Cochrane, 2012 Conole, 2010 McLoughlin & Lee, 2010

Siemens, 2004



Academic Literacies

- academic literacy not definable in a singular form
- not the same for individual students
- influenced by their own background, specific subject they are studying and the institutional context (Lea & Street, 1997, 1998, 2006).



Embedded academic literacies learning

Embedded practices which intertwine discipline-specific content and discipline-specific literacy more effective than generic study skills.

(Allan & Clarke, 2007; Baik & Greig, 2009; de Graaff, Koopman, Anikina & Westhoff, 2007; Harklau, 1994; Hicks, Reid & George, 2001; Pantelides; 1999; Seligmann, 2012; Walters, Nikolay, Silva, & Broederlow, 2015)



Theories of Learning



Constructivist

Social constructivism

- learning is active
- learners construct meaning
- student-centred teaching
 - collaboration
 - scaffolds

AWESOME Dissertation Environment

Academic Writing Empowered by Social Online Mediated Environments (wiki)

- discipline-specific online community of learners
- students could:
 - ask and answer questions
 - share ideas, articles and readings
 - personally structure the learning environment
- students provided no guidance on how to use the wiki "to replicate the exploratory nature of social software" (Bajanki et al., 2009, p. 361)

Ally, 2008

Brown & Adler; 2008

Conole, 2010

Web 2.0 theory of choice

McLoughlin & Lee, 2010

Cochrane, 2012

Roder & Hunt, 2008

Yelland, 2011

Cognitivist perspective: "Minimally guided instruction appears to proceed with no reference to the characteristics of working memory, long-term memory, or the intricate relations between them" (Kirschner, Sweller, & Clark, 2006, p. 76).

Theories of Learning



Connectivist

Distributed knowledge (Downes, 2006)

- knowledge construction occurs in networks between individuals (Siemens, 2004)
- learning a process of connecting specialised nodes

Storify

Cochrane worked with Journalism lecturers to shift assessment practices (Cochrane, Antonczak, Gordon, Sissons & Withell, 2012).

- students used Storify to collate comments from social media on a current news item
- used mobile devices to provide critique of the social media comments
- compared with traditional essays, student work demonstrated more critique and creativity

Communities of practice (Wenger, 1998)

Connectivism not really a learning theory, but more of a guide for online pedagogy and existing theories can be be adapted to sufficiently explain learning in a digital age (Ally, 2008; Kop & Hill, 2008; Verhagen, 2006).

2. The design of my PhD

Multiple Case Studies



AUT Health Science Bachelor's programme

Health Care Ethics Paper

academic literacies development embedded

constructivist/ connectivist blended learning environment

Individual Students

academic literacy test

f2f interviews

writing samples – off and online

Vx VALUES exchange

- Web 2.0 space for paper
- allows for range of pedagogies:
 - teacher generated content
 - student generated content
 - heutagogical attributes
- based on Socratic method of questioning to facilitate critical ethical analysis of practicebased scenarios (Godbold & Lees, 2013, 2015; Lees, 2011; Lees & Godbold, 2012; Robb, Wells & Goodyear-Smith, 2012)

How can it be used for academic literacies development?

learning through Web 2.0 occurs in a community of practice where novices and experts collaborate (Brown & Adler, 2008)

Web 2.0

E



learner-centred curricula which are "social, participatory and supported by rich media"(McLoughlin & Lee, 2010, p. 28)

Participants

- Undergraduate
- 12 case study participants preferred
 - enables rich data collection from and about each participant
 - keeps project manageable
- Plus remainder of cohort (n=250) ideal
 - enables analysis of online activity of case study pariticipants to be contextualised

Case study participants (n=12)

Non-case study participants (n=250)



Data Collection

5 sources:

- Literature review
- Diagnostic tool
- Interviews
- Written assignments
- Online contributions

Measuring the Academic Skills of University Students (MASUS)

- diagnostic academic literacy test
- valid and reliable process for learning advisors to design subject specific diagnostic tests of academic literacy in collaboration with faculty teaching staff (Bonanno & Jones, 2007)
- rooted in Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) (Halliday, 1985)
 - language a resource for making meaning, rather than a set of discrete grammatical forms and structural patterns learnt in isolation

SFL

(texts in context)



MASUS - Assessment criteria



Criteria A-D rated 1-4

appropriate

• excellent / no problems / accurate / very appropriate

appropriate

- good / minor problems / mainly accurate / largely appropriate
 - 2

4

not appropriate

 only fair / some problems / often inaccurate / often inappropriate

not appropriate

poor / major problems / inaccurate / inappropriate

Criterion E Appropriate / Not Appropriate

Semi-Structured Interviews

- two rounds:
 - after first MASUS test
 - after completion of paper
- some questions will be guided by the specific academic literacies that individuals may need to develop as identified by the MASUS test

Student online activity and responses to Summative Assessments

Vx VALUES exchange	Portfolio 1	Portfolio 2
	 Practice assessment Student posts in Vx	Practice assessmentStudent posts in Vx



Expected outcomes:

- sound, theory driven Web 2.0based learning tasks that effectively assist students in the development of their academic literacies;
- a robust blueprint for further research into how these tasks could be adapted for use with other student cohorts in a variety of disciplines



3. 'Oh my' moments from the journey thus far...



It took four years to find out what my topic is (hopefully)

What You Know vs How much you know about it



ii Ethical Issues

Research involving students in online learning communities is fraught with privacy/confidentiality issues.



"The biggest risk in **this** study is just reading the consent form!"

- cohort size potentially 250
- preferred number of case studies only 12
- ideal to be able to view case study participants' online activity in context, ie, the whole cohort give permission to have their online activity viewed
- likely that not all students will agree
- only the online activity of the participants will be included in the data analysis
- online activity of non-participating students will be excluded
- synchronous observation not possible
- need for transcription
- again, privacy issues transcriber must not be an outsider, but must also not be the lecturer/marker

iii Recruitment constraints

1st attempt: Semester 2, 2016

- Direct approach not permitted
- One flyer online, 5 minute f2f presentation, 2 follow up postings in LMS
- CFs had to be printed, scanned, and emailed back to researcher (so much hard work!)

2nd attempt: Semester 1, 2017

- Direct approach negotiated
- Video and flyer online, 2 f2f presentations, follow up postings in LMS
- Multiple options for return of CFs in class (once), drop box, email





iv The right people make all the difference

- Supervisors
 - soundboarding
 - pushing and pulling
- Faculty champion



Discussion



Thank you

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