Patchworking as a Metaphor for Learning - Understanding youth, learning and technology

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Outline

Two strands

• An intense and detailed study of young people working with project pedagogy in a technology and media-rich setting
  • Introducing patchworking as a metaphor for learning
• Web 2.0 and social media - emerging media landscapes and socio-technical trends
  • Web 2.0 and youth culture / participatory culture
• Can we create good, deep, critical learning in technology and media rich settings (the case suggest we can :-)

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Background of the study

- Empirical study conducted in relation to the “Power Users of Technology” project
  - One activity – “The Power Users of Technology symposium” in CR
- Selecting six teams of young ‘Power Users’ to work with open-ended learning challenges (related to UN-millennium goals)
- Bringing the teams to Costa Rica to continue their work and present their results
- We were in charge of the Nordic Team (all Danes)
  - We: Researchers, facilitators/chaperones (5-6 persons)
- Nordic Team: 4 from Aalborg, 4 from Copenhagen (13-16 years old)
  - Knew each other in pairs
- Their challenge ‘how to reduce poverty in the world through the use of technology’
- Worked for 2½ days before presenting their findings to grown-up audience
Methodology

- Qualitative research:
  - Explorative study, rather than controlled experiment
  - Participant observation – quick-and-dirty ethnography
  - Document collection
  - Video data (app. 20 hours)
  - Interviews

- How to approach the data
  - Between ethnographical accounts and microanalysis of interaction
  - Analysing in some detail excerpts of actual interaction to ground and develop the analytic concepts and theoretical discussions
  - Main interest in the development and changes of their ideas and knowledge – the flow of events
Our pedagogical approach

Based on the Aalborg PBL model

- Problem Orientation/formulation (in contrast to Problem Solving)
- Group Work
- Our role: Supervisors and facilitators
- A frame or setting for their learning – arranging learning opportunities
Video

Let’s watch a video of their work and presentation – 4 minutes

“Here comes two”
Presentation

Music playing: Eric Clapton's "Tears in Heaven"

Screen Two: Slideshow

How can we improve a poor society?

Costa Rica's succes

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Presentation

Conclusion

It's important that everyone has access to health care.

This money used on war and weapons should be used on education for everybody.

These are very important, and the governments need to use the civilians' money properly.

It's important that the student learns about politics, so that they understand the importance of it.

Transcript:

1. Introduction
2. Importance of Education
3. Access to Health Care
4. Role of Governments
5. Student Education
6. Conclusion

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Their presentation as a patchwork

- The presentation is heavily multi-modal and combining many different mediational means and resources:
  - Animation, video, pictures, texts, language, music, computers, paper, projectors, chairs, stage, bodily posture, movement and much more.

- Conceptual patchwork as well:
  - Information, facts, discussions and ideas from many different sources.
Entering the process of patchworking

Patchwork of many different sources, means and media that were assembled to convey their conceptualisation of poverty and how to address this issue

- Some graphs came from a presentation of an expert, which had even ripped some from an UN webpage
- Facts and information came from various web pages and books
- Ideas came from interviews, a bus conversation and other sources
- They made four different interviews which were video-taped, edited (some subtitled) and made part of the presentation.
- Music was carried on the computer from home
- Poor people’s pictures through Google image search
- Pictures in animation were hand-drawn and animated in PowerPoint
- Their stage show was choreographed and practised the night before

Where did all these elements and concepts come from?

- Tracking back in time to find origin, while moving forward to follow their development
Focus of the study

- Following the trajectory and development of ideas – (threads)
  - How did their conceptual understanding develop?
  - How did particular ideas develop, disappear or emerge?
  - How did they manage and master the entire work process?

- How different ‘patches and pieces’ were assembled, negotiated, critically reviewed and made part of the overall narrative/argument

- Critical questions – was it:
  - A mindless exercise of copy-paste or a creative, innovative and challenging learning process?
  - A process of knowledge construction and not merely re-production?
Development of threads/ideas

• Threads/ideas develop and grow thicker through the ‘foraging and gathering’ of different ‘patches and pieces’ that form small provisional patchworks

• From this a ‘conceptual blueprint’ of an overall argument and the relations between threads and the various small patchworks start to emerge

• Two prominent threads (education and taxes):
  • ‘Education is important’ → ‘education can be statistically shown to have a major impact on poverty. Furthermore it is a key condition for civic engagement and democratic participation in a society’.
  • ’Taxes of course!!’ (moral blueprint) → taxes require high level of trust between government and people, civic engagement (corruption a problem); also it is a highly ’scandi-centric’ perspective.
“Less than one percent of the money spend on weapons each year can give every children in world access to school”

Corruption is a problem – we also need to make people trust the government

Club House has changed the trajectory of my life – from crime to education

How about tourism or property tax?

Brain-Drain Trade agreements

Clapton – tears in heaven

UNICEF.ORG
WIKIPEDIA.ORG
LEKSIKON.ORG

WEB
TEXT

IDEA

ARGUMENT

GRAPH

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Plagiarism or Creative reappropriation

Copy-catting and plagiarism or creative reappropriation?

We need to pay close analytic attention to how and why patches and pieces are woven into the patchworks.
Slides

Foraging and gathering – no no – we want it NOW! – E-mail won’t do!!!
Interview

Preparing questions, brainstorming in small groups

Finding focus/problem – agreeing on interview guide – create and translate

Carry out four interviews

Making sense of interviews – how can they be used

Reviewing, understanding, choosing, editing, subtitling

Performing

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Flows of activity – the fluidity of digital and non-digital resources

- How different ‘patches and pieces’ (resources, persons) are embedded in the flow:
  - How their meaning is negotiated
  - How they are transformed
  - How they disturb or corroborate currently held ideas
  - How they alter existing ideas and shape the overall ‘argument’, ‘narrative’

Such processes are what is meant by flows of activity. In such flows the ‘connections’ and ‘resources’ are embedded, transformed and become part of the learning process and construction of knowledge.
- Studying closely the entire flow and ‘events’ where ‘patches and pieces’ are embedded in the flow
Patchworking as a metaphor for learning

An overarching description of the metaphor:

- *Something old, something new
  Something borrowed, something blue*

- Learning as processes of stitching and weaving together different ‘patches and pieces’ into something new.

- Different from viewing learning as transfer or acquisition of ‘facts’

- Knowledge and learning as active, creative, constructive or productive processes
  - Creatively re-appropriating, re-using, remixing various resources, media and ideas into new patchworks
  - Young ‘power users’ master such productive learning processes – but more than mere ‘technological’ skills
  - Abilities to communicate, collaborate, construct narratives and arguments (equally music, fan-fiction)
Web 2.0 - Social media – Emerging media landscapes and socio-technical trends
Social Media core point

In general the new generation of internet services have made it easier to:

- Communicate anytime/anywhere (sms, mms, skype, IM, webmail)
- Find, download, exchange and share media/content (Google/Yahoo, Deezer, Last.FM, Youtube, Flickr, Picasa)
- Produce and edit media (Moviemaker, Youtube, Flowgram) – and then share one’s creation
- Maintaining a public profile and connecting to ‘friends’
- Creating a personalised entrance to the web – web-desktop (Igoogle, Netvibes)
- Following multiple streams of information (Web-desktops, RSS readers, blogs, del.icio.us friends, microblogging, Twitter, Facebook)
- Making more complex mashups of services (findvej.dk, Keyboardr)

Popular services

- Social network sites (myspace, facebook, del.icio.us, youtube)
  - Ego-centric – personal networks around profiles
  - Object-centric – networks around shared material
- Personalised resource centers (Igoogle, Live-servies, Yahoo 360)
  - Aggregation of media, ressources and ‘news’
Youtube – User Generated Content

Most popular example of user generated content
- Object centric but also profile based
- Genre mix, creativity, comments
- Typical features, one can embed videos other places, easily share, have a list of personal favourites and playlist – user ratings
Connections and relations become visible

- Relations btw “friends”
- Connections to “groups”
- Comments and ‘testimonials’ - continuum of intimate/personal to neutral/professional
- Connections to content/data (RSS) – updates from others (status, content, location)
  - Plazes.com, Twitter
  - Events on FB
- Personalised and self-chosen streams of information/data
Easier exchange of content – RSS, mashups, widgets

Through various standards and technologies it has become easier to exchange ‘content’ between different systems:

- RSS-feeds (subscribe to what others bookmark, new videos, news etc.)
- E.g. Youtube videos can be embedded elsewhere
- Facebook can get info from Friendfeed, Delicious etc.
- One can easily integrate widgets and mashups on a page

“Open” standards, Open APIs give way for WIDGETS – MASHUP
Lifestreaming, Microblogging

- Microblogging, livestreaming (facebook status updates on steroids)
- Focus on collecting streams (new FB strategy) – friendfeed, sweetcron mfl.
  - Own and others' streams
- Social phenomenon – network comments, awareness
- Business– FB walled garden – takes in loads of data...little comes out!
Sharing across different social constellations

Strength of tie

Homebase(s) – profile PLE

Own content

Groups’ content

Friends’ content

Shared fields of interest – imagined communities

Collectives’ content – aggregated other

Glued together by RSS, Widgets, ‘open standards’, open APIs – Streams of continuously evolving ‘data’ and ‘information’ that can be somewhat easily manipulated

We all become entrance points into complex (overlapping) networks
Trends, challenges and what we all need to learn

From text to multimodality (incl text)
- Increasingly youth (and all of us) are relying on multiple media in knowledge production – creating useful, professional resources.

From consumer to co-producer
- Not just reading, but ‘writing’ and sharing various content – sharing and contributing relevant, good and subject-related resources

24/7 connectedness and potential communication / networking
- Being able to create and sustain good professional, intellectual networks or hubs to follow / contribute to

Visible and transparent vs forgotten and non-existing
- Learning how to be public in a meaningful, intelligent way that enhances credibility and visibility

From copyright to copyleft – fighting for an open culture of remix and patchworking (fight the power – culture wars!)
- Kids and media use portrayed as terrorism, piracy and something we are at war with (seriously…these are our kids)
- No focus on fair use and creative re-appropriation – hindering creativity (teachers are scared to break regulations)
- Supporting creativecommons.org, open access
Challenges

- While kids and young people are often familiar with many of the technologies and use them quite a lot, they use them differently – **not a uniform generation**:
  - Unfortunately – much creative use of technology happens outside schools
  - Pass-time vs Geeking out
  - Friend-driven (social) networks vs Interest driven
    - Learning outcomes:
      - being / becoming young teen, identity, peer learning of some tech skills, networking
      - highly specialised and academised skills (fan-fiction, fan-subbing, media-production) (often working across generations)
    - Consuming vs. creative production
    - Entertainment vs Education (search, information, activities)

- **Tendency/Tension**: socio-economic class is reproducing itself in these patterns – at the same time evident that many weaker students favour from other modalities and ‘genres’

- **As research and educational institution we have a great responsibility**:
  - Ensure that all students can make critical, meaningful, subject-related intelligent use of the technologies
  - Recognising and capitalising on the new skills and literacies the students bring

- **Critical, Intellectual and subject-related skills** are needed to translate technology into meaningful use within a domain – however, this also requires socio-technical skills in understanding the particular service / technology
  - E.g. One needs to understand the potentials and pitfalls of SNS culture to use it in classroom
There are great potentials

- In creating exciting learning environment as the one in the Power Users case
- Scary:
  - “That is what was so different in children’s learning at home; their learning was authentic in that it was involved, albeit in different degrees, with knowledge creation.” (Facer et al., 2003, p. 139)
  - …apparently they are not in school?
- Kids and youth as producers of knowledge, working as researchers
- Open ended, problem oriented / based projects
- Opening for multiple modalities
- Becoming ourselves frontrunners who engage with the ‘younger’ people in co-creating such learning environment
  - Recognising that there are horizontal learning patterns and that we can learn from our students – as well as they can certainly still learn from us