
Reflections on pedagogy: Understanding adult learners' experiences of weblogs

This paper presents initial results from my PhD study that investigated the variation in adult learners' experiences of developing personalised, collective learning networks using weblog technologies. A pedagogical framework developed from practice underpinned the research which was designed to test the original model. The qualitatively different ways of experiencing weblogs is described by categories of description which highlight critical aspects of learning that can inform further expansion of pedagogical strategies.

The research contends that learning through self-publishing in a collective learning network has the potential to produce a deep approach to learning that enhances reflective, meta-cognitive, and critical writing skills.

"Teaching is more difficult than learning because what teaching calls for is this: to let learn."

Hiedegger, 1968, p.15

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Introduction

In educational contexts, as weblog technologies have evolved in both sophistication and ease of use, the adoption rates have increased with a growing number of supporters claiming the weblog and associated technologies are the most significant technological development in online learning since the introduction of enterprise level Learning Management Systems (LMS) (Downes, 2004).

Since 2001, weblogs have been embedded into my pedagogical strategies, a time when my practice was considered little more than a novelty by Faculty. Now, in 2006, weblogs have been launched into mainstream teaching and learning at my institution with the inclusion of "blog like" journals into UTSONline, the University's Learner Management System powered by Blackboard.

During this time, journal articles have become abundant, together with conference papers, and informal scholarly communication through personal weblogs that provide alternative resources to report and collaborate on practice. Evidence is drawn predominantly from opinion-based, small scale case study analysis or hypothetical scenarios, using comments and feedback from students, and observations of learner behaviour to substantiate the use of weblogs as a pedagogical strategy. There remains, however, limited published research on the systematic study of learners' experiences and processes for using weblogs in the development of their learning.

This paper will present initial results from my PhD research study that indicates the development of learning through self-publishing in a collective learning network has the potential to produce a deep approach to learning that enhances reflective, meta-cognitive, and critical writing skills.

Research Background

The purpose of the research project was to investigate the variation in adult learners' experiences of developing personalised, collective learning networks of integrated communication that extends the learning beyond the physical boundaries and opinions of the classroom context through the use of weblogs and self-publishing on the internet. A pedagogical framework developed from five years of practice underpinned the research which was designed to test the original model.

The study applied a phenomenographic research approach to determine the qualitatively different ways that learners' experience the use of weblogs. Categories of description highlight the educationally critical differences in the ways learners experience the process, which will enable the refinement of the pedagogical framework to specifically address the aspects that can lead to a deep approach to learning.

In the study, weblog software and its subsequent web publishing functions have been viewed as more than a tool in the process that was investigated. The software was the enabler; however, the focus of the research was not on the software or the technology that supports weblogs, but on the social aspects of the learning process.

The social aspect of weblogging was studied from two perspectives: the individual and the network or collective perspective.

Individual perspective:

- **Creation** – the publishing of content selected by the individual as significant or relevant and with a personal voice
- **Collection** – the managing of personal content in a searchable, categorised archive of posts
- **Context** – applying commentary to the content that is published and managed

Networking perspective:

- **Connection** – the discovery of others with similar interests
- **Conversation** – engaging in dialogues across the internet
- **Community** – building collective networks around shared themes
- **Collaboration** – sharing ideas and building knowledge

Acknowledging the communicative and social attributes of weblogs, other reported projects in the educational context have utilized different functions which have both extended and in some instances replaced existing online communication tools, like asynchronous discussion boards. These have been implemented in an attempt to connect different faculties and communicate more effectively across a diverse university context (Winer, 2003), instead of bulletin boards (Wise, 2005), as publication tools for critiques (Cooper & Boddington, 2005), as the primary tool for online communication (Gibson, 2004) and as independent learning and design journals or ePortfolios (MacColl, et al. 2005).

Perhaps a significant indicator of the recognition of the weblog as an educational technology of note has been highlighted by the recent inclusion of weblog like journals within the selection of features in the dominant LMS products in higher education institutions, such as Blackboard and WebCT. However, this research project contends that the LMS is a closed entity, constrained within the boundaries of the subject, the classroom, and the institution; whereas, weblog publishing is dynamic, open, personal, publicly published, collaborative, and facilitates the learners to consolidate their writing skills by exposing them to a broader audience and hence a diverse range of opinions.

Although most studies in education have reported relatively positive outcomes in terms of results, there have been areas in which no significant difference or negative outcomes have been noted. Specifically, these educators have struggled with learner participation, getting learners to engage in the weblogging environment, conducting collaborative tasks using weblogs, and the challenges of renegotiating private reflective tasks into the public internet space (Gibson, 2004; Krause, 2004; MacColl et al 2005).

In these cited cases, the educators have examined the negative issues reported and attributed them to the functionality and selection of weblog software options. None have considered the results from a pedagogical perspective and critically evaluated their strategies. To this end, the outcomes from the current research project are expected to provide pedagogical strategies to address the lack of learner engagement, participation, and reflecting writing.

Pedagogical Framework

The pedagogical framework developed from practice has been the inspiration for my PhD research in an attempt to determine the learners' experience and test the adequacy and processes contained in the model. By investigating the learners' experience, it is expected to reveal areas that require further pedagogical attention to address the needs of the learners'.

The objective of the pedagogical framework is to facilitate the development of independent learners allowing them to become proficient in the development of collective learning networks using weblogs and associated social software technologies. The framework can be viewed as an enabler where multi-linear pathways draw the focus not on the software or technology selected by the educator to create the learning environment, but on the social aspects of the learning process and strategies to support the learning experience. The progression through the pathways can occur at differing levels and allows for the learner to self-manage the processes.

The framework has been used in my practice across both higher education and organisational learning sectors without the need for modifying the pathways or processes. It is intended that the framework has the flexibility as scaffolding that will allow educators to tailor the content to address any subject, discipline or specific learning context.

A detailed explanation of the content addressed at each stage and the strategies employed will not be included in this paper. Refer to Figure 1 for a graphical representation.

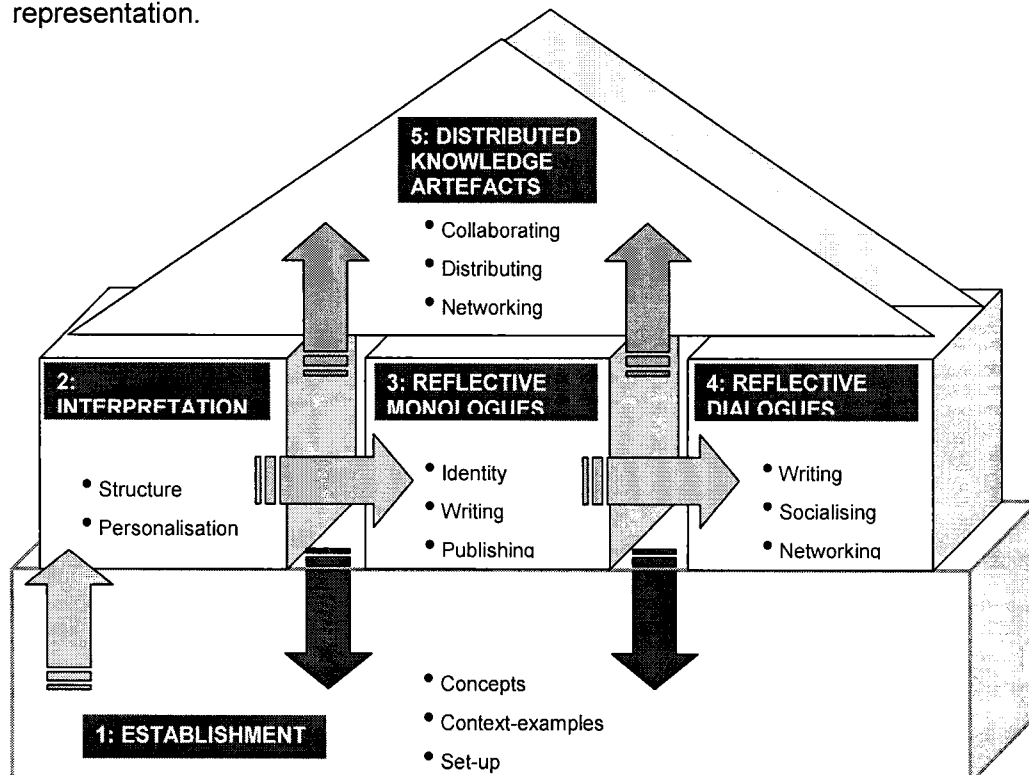


Figure 1: 5 Pathways to develop learning networks – a pedagogical framework

Research Methodology

Determining a research methodology has been one of the most challenging, yet rewarding aspects of the research project to date. The limited number of research projects in the field of weblogs and the internet, particularly in the education field, has resulted in attempts to transfer research methodologies designed for physical environments, into the virtuality of online environments.

Predominantly, other research projects in the educational setting have focused on asynchronous discussion forums, or the use of other e-Learning technologies (LMS, multimedia products etc.) and accompanying pedagogical strategies. Many are small projects, not at doctoral level, and have used a blended qualitative and quantitative methodology. Mostly, the study of weblogs in education has been the reporting of practice with observations and conclusions drawn from the educators' experiences. Quantitative statistical analysis of the uptake of blogs within the classroom setting, the number of posts during a subject, and basic survey questions asking participants if they liked the process or not have been popular case study based methodologies.

The intention of my research, to investigate the learners' experiences, meant that it was important to work with a methodology that foregrounded the learners and focused on the group as a collective set of experiences, rather than investigating the individual's experience.

This led me to select a research perspective, situated in the qualitative interpretive paradigm, and using a developmental phenomenography methodology to inform the development of research questions, gathering and analysis of data.

An interpretive perspective is underpinned by the assumption that reality is developed through social constructions such as language, consciousness, and shared meanings where the studies attempt to understand the phenomena being researched through the meanings assigned by the participants.

From this interpretive stance, the phenomenographic method for mapping the qualitative data that categorises and describes the variation in ways a group of people experience and understand various aspects of a phenomenon in their specific context was used.

One of the core epistemological assumptions underpinning phenomenography is the relational view of the world from a non-dualist stance. The focus of the research is not on the cognitive structures and the separation between an inner and outer world, it is the constituted internal relation between them, where "...there is only one world, but it is a world we experience, a world in which we live, a world that is ours." (Marton & Booth, 1997, p.13) where the research object is not the phenomenon being studied, but rather the relation between the research subjects and that phenomenon (Bowden, 2005).

By determining the manner in which people experience aspects of the phenomenon, a number of qualitatively different ways or aspects can be discerned and attributed to an awareness of the phenomenon. More complex ways of experiencing something can be considered as more advanced in terms of awareness, or in my project's terms deeper levels of learning and aspects of how the phenomenon is experienced (Marton and Booth, 1997).

The aspects being described as a focal point of awareness will provide a dimension of variation through the differences in how the learners' are experiencing the learning process.

The primary method for collecting data in a phenomenographic study has been the structured interview where each participant is asked the same set of questions. However, other sources of data have been acknowledged as staying true to this process and Mann & Stewart (2002) have noted that the internet form of writing is a hybrid form of language lying between the spoken and written styles of communication. The data collected for this research project used structured questions where the participants responded on their weblogs.

The focus of the questions was to elicit the participants' awareness or understanding of what was the nature of their experience, and how they developed learning networks using weblog technologies. Accordingly, rather than collecting examples of practices, the questions were used to elicit what the participants thought the examples illustrated and how it related to the processes they were using.

The outcomes from the data analysis in phenomenography are called 'outcome spaces' which are represented by a number of 'categories of description' or ways of experiencing the phenomenon and generally include a structural relationship linking the different categories. The structural relationship is typically associated with a hierarchical link to the differing approaches of the learners to the ways of experiencing the phenomenon (Marton & Booth, 1997).

The outcome space signifies the collective experience of the research participants' and how the phenomenon being studied is experienced differently, by different people, in relation to their context. The emphasis is a range of meanings and perceptions as a group, not a range of meanings for an individual within the group. This approach is particularly significant for analysing the experiences of the collective learning networks by acknowledging the collective and distributed experience of the many, not the individual.

Marton & Booth (1997) depict three criteria for determining quality categories of description:

1. that each category conveys something distinct about a way of experiencing the phenomenon;
2. that the categories are logically and structurally related, frequently in a hierarchical manner; and
3. that the categories are prudent – that is as few categories as is reasonable are used to represent the critical aspects of variation in the data.

Inevitably, there is a tension between the researcher's perspective of the phenomenon and the interpretation of the data as categories of description are initially developed. Akerlind (2005) describes the need for the researcher to remain open-minded while trying to minimise any predetermined views, and to maintain a focus on the data as a whole rather than an individual transcript by being willing to reflect upon the new perspectives that may be emerging. As the lecturer and researcher in the study, my role is inextricably embedded in the process. The influence of my role cannot be fully determined, but acknowledged in the evaluation of data and subsequent conclusions made from the results.

Criticisms and debates regarding the validity and reliability of phenomenographic research methods have been rationalized by phenomenographic researchers as relating to the lack of published works that discuss the nature of variation, the methods employed to collect data, and the data analysis process (Frances, 1996; Webb, 1997). These issues will not be addressed in this paper, as further riposte is being developed as I complete the data analysis and an expanded research into articles that critique the process.

Research Questions:

The research project, informed by Marton and Booth (1997) considered learning in terms of the experience of learning or how we come to experience the world in different ways, which involves the way we go about a learning task, the 'how' aspect of learning, and the object of learning, the 'what' aspect of learning. These aspects of learning have been identified as having two dimensions: a temporal and depth dimension (Säljö, 1982; Marton et al. 1993) or more commonly referred to as a surface or deep approach to learning. To discover the learners' approaches to the task of establishing a collective learning network (the how aspect) and their conception of the process (the what aspect) and the variations in experience and dimensions of learning, the following questions were applied to the research project:

1. How did the participants approach the task of developing a collective learning network?
2. What were the participants' experiences of the process of learning in a network?
3. What were the participants' conceptions of their learning from online self-publishing?

Expected Outcomes:

A comprehensive insight of the learners' variation in experiencing the use of weblogs is expected to highlight the critical differences in approaches to the development of collective learning networks and provide the opportunity to further refine the pedagogical model being tested to provide strategies that support a deep approach to the learning activities inclusive of critical thinking, meta-cognitive, and reflective practices.

The refinement of the pedagogical model is expected to provide educators across a diverse range of learning contexts, a strategy to enhance learners' skills, attitudes and knowledge with an increased capability to self-organise, effectively collaborate and manage learning in a complex distributed environment.

Research Design:

Participants were either enrolled students or short course participants in subjects in the Faculty of Education, UTS, for the autumn semester in 2005. See Table 1 for full participant details.

All subjects required participants to complete learning tasks utilising a weblog as a form of journal for recording and managing their learning, publishing their work and

contributing to collective learning networks, regardless of assessment requirements of the subjects or modules.

The weblog (using WordPress software) was used like a published paper-based journal or magazine, where the author (student/research participant) was also the editor and main contributor. Each article (or post) had a section for comments where readers could voice their opinions, however, these were moderated to ensure no spam or inappropriate material was published. Students were advised how to adhere to normal “rules” of publication – copyright, plagiarism, privacy and defamation and developed their own code for responsible publishing. Categories and tagging provided the students with content management for posts and lists of useful URLs, including other weblogs within their network. Readership was developed individually within a selected network of weblog/journals that reflected a connection to the main topic or focus of their journal. RSS provided interested readers with notification when a new article or post was published.

The multi-linear pedagogical framework was followed to develop learning activities relevant to the subject topics and context of the learners’.

All students and short course participants were invited to participate in the research study on a voluntary basis. The completed weblogs of those participants who agreed to participate in the research is the primary source of data and are being analysed, using phenomenographic methods, to discover the groups’ common experiences and perceptions in an attempt to gather a collective understanding of both the process of learning and the outcome of using weblogs to develop collective learning networks.

Research Participants:

The participants in the research project were drawn from students enrolled in two undergraduate degrees at UTS in the Faculty of Education, and another group were corporate trainers enrolled a vocational qualification through Training and Development Services, in the Faculty of Education at UTS.

60 participants dispersed across the groups described below in Table 1, consented to be part of the research project. This number represents approximately two thirds of the possible total number of enrolled students.

The participants’ demographics have been divided into four groups, based on the subjects they were enrolled in at the time the data collection took place.

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4
Course:	Bachelor of Arts in Organisational Learning 2 nd year students	Bachelor of Education in Adult Education	Bachelor of Arts in Organisational Learning 3 rd year students	Diploma of e-Learning – vocational qualification
Age:	School leavers – 20 – 25 years	Mid 20 – 40.	School leavers – 20 – 25 years	Unknown – above 20 – under 55 years
Gender:	Predominantly female	Predominantly female	Predominantly female	Equally mixed
Subject:	e-Learning Experiences - first of 4 core e-Learning subjects	e-Learning Experiences – an elective subject	e-Learning Technologies – third of four core e-Learning subjects	Multimedia Design – 6 units of competence
Attendance:	Weekly 3 hour classes for 13 week semester	Block – 3 x 7 hour sessions on Saturdays over 13 week semester	Weekly 3 hour classes for 13 week semester	5 x 1 day classroom session over 4 months, with online asynchronous participation between sessions.
Assessment:	All required tasks were published on their weblogs	All required tasks were published on their weblogs	All required tasks were published on their weblogs	Not compulsory – some tasks were presented on weblogs
Work Experience:	Little or no experience in the organisational learning field	More than 5 years experience in training and development roles	Little or no experience in the organisational learning field	Varied – all had current roles as front line organisational learning professionals.

Table 1: Participant Demographics

There was no additional workload or time commitment for the students who participated in the research project as the process under investigation was part of the content of the subjects being completed.

In some instances, as their lecturer, there was an existing relationship with research participants. Some students, in groups 2 - 4, may have studied in previous subjects where I was the lecturer or trainer. This issue was not considered significant due to the fact that I did not know which students had agreed to participate in the research project and therefore did not affect the students' performance in the subject or the lecturer/student relationship. Participants were able to withdraw their consent at any point throughout the subject by contacting the Course Co-ordinator; again I was not informed if any students requested to withdraw. In addition, approval from the Dean of the Faculty of Education was required for the Ethics Submission in acknowledgement of the participation of students in the Faculty and the consent processes outlined.

Early Findings:

The results outlined in this paper represent the initial analysis of data. The logical relationship between the categories of description focuses on the structure indicated in the data and my professional judgement as a researcher. The emphasis at this early stage of analysis needs to re-iterate that the transcripts are treated as a collective experience, notwithstanding that individuals have perceived and reported their experience as different to another person's experience.

The categories determined to date do not attempt to signify every nuance of experience recorded in the transcripts; rather they represent the critical aspects that have influenced the collective which can be used to inform further pedagogical practices.

Categories of Description:

The initial analysis of weblog transcripts has revealed five categories of description for the ways the students experienced the development of collective learning networks. They are hierarchically related through the acts and objects of development and participation and are represented below in order from simplest to most complex:

- Category A:** Developing networks is constrained by what the technology can do and how it is used.
- Category B:** Developing networks is conditional to creating an engaging online identity.
- Category C:** Developing networks is reliant upon proficient writing – having opinions and being able to articulate them.
- Category D:** Developing networks is about discovering others in similar fields of interest.
- Category E:** Developing networks is about active participation, reading, writing and exchanging opinions.

Outlined below is an explanation for each category illustrated with quotes from the research participants' weblogs.

Category A: Developing networks is constrained by what the technology can do and how it is used.

In this category, learning and developing networks is described by focusing on the technology and the learners' ability to use and incorporate the functionality of the software.

The technology was portrayed as being in control and the ability to understand the structural concepts and gain proficiency dominated the learners' descriptions.

"I think the weblog has held me back in some ways, I was unable to develop a network until the last week and so felt frustrated by the system for some time - I also had many little technical problems with the weblog, which further frustrated me and put me off over the semester."

"..when I went to try to comment it would not let me and I could not see anywhere to comment on his site. So although I understand the concept of networks, which is where you are in a network with other, people and you make comments and reference to other peoples weblogs and they comment or reference back. I was unable to join a network, as I do not understand how to ping or backtrack -. I just do not understand the concept of pinging and backtracking."

The object of learning is expressed as being directed towards completion of activities as assessable tasks with a focus of learning as reproducing or applying processes indicating a surface approach.

Category B: Developing networks is conditional to creating an engaging online identity.

In contrast to category A that relates the developing of networks to an external object, in this category the learners' identity is depicted as a pivotal means of developing a readership, that will then lead to the development of a personalised network.

Self-representation was illustrated by the selection of themes and graphics on the weblogs supported by descriptions on their "About Me" pages.

Learners in this category portrayed themselves as "only students" and described a lack of confidence in being able to contribute adequately to networks where they were less informed or qualified to contribute than others.

"Reading the person's 'About Me' page assisted in determining how I should communicate within their network. Initially I found this to be a daunting concept as it involved commenting on peoples' weblogs I had not previously had contact with. I was concerned about how to structure my comments and what they might think of me..."

Others referred to successful networkers in terms of "fan club" style readerships, asserting that their attempts to develop networks were related to their inability to be an engaging identity.

"...it does appear that the regular bloggers have some of their "fan club" listed as links on their website. They do not appear to use the trackback function and use their networks for commenting on each others weblogs, sort of like an online support group. I have made comments and tried to become a "fan" of some of these blogs. I have also formally requested to join two weblog hosts – I'm waiting to hear the outcome."

The object of learning continues to be expressed as a task to be completed, although an awareness of other approaches indicates an understanding of the process beyond the surface approach of simply reproducing content.

Category C: Developing networks is reliant upon proficient writing – having opinions and being able to articulate them.

Category C is very closely linked to category B and may, with further data analysis merge into one category covering identity and writing descriptions. In this category the learners' are expressing apprehension about their writing skills, in particular the fear of publicly publishing opinions when they do not perceive themselves to be the expert on the topic or in the field of study.

"I found it to be a bit scary and intimidating leaving comments and attempting to initiate conversation with others outside the classroom. I just thought that they'd think that I was intellectually inferior, and that my comments were useless and idle. However, I left comments all the same, because I had something to say, and a point to make."

"I also found it hard to have things to write about, I didn't come across huge amounts of content that I found interesting to write about.."

"I felt that I had advice to give the author although I was frightened because I felt that I am was not professional enough or it is not my place to comment on his blog because I am not an expert in the subject. It feels weird to even comment on someone else's blog. This is an awesome experience."

The act of writing is described as a crucial element in development of their learning and subsequent capacity to engage in learning networks.

"I still feel a little reserved about adding comments... incase the others do not like what I say and or what I say was pointless or of little value to the project. I have to learn to get my head around this and not care what others will think, to an extent."

The object of the learning can be related to a self-awareness that indicates a level of understanding in an attempt to consciously change their attitude towards publicly writing. There is an indication at this category of reflection and movement towards a deeper approach to the learning processes.

Category D: Developing networks is about discovering others in similar fields of interest.

This category is distinguished by the learners shifting their focus beyond the development of their own weblogs to an external framework and awareness of others. There is evidence that the initial awareness is focused within the class confines, but can expand quickly outside the confines of the institution as the learners identify a strategy for locating weblogs and follow classmates' patterns of behaviour.

"My initial searches on google and vivisimo lead me to various search engines and traditional research papers such as the Masie centre and the IBM learning centre. With the progression through the subject my networks moved to other students weblogs, mainly to see what they were doing..."

However, there is a dimension expressed by frustration in relation to their ability to search and discover other weblogs in their field of interest, beyond the boundaries of the classroom which can significantly inhibit further attempts to network beyond the classroom.

"... I came across Bloghub.com it is a directory where people can exchange their ideas. I thought this would be an excellent site to investigate e-learning strategies in Adult learning. The first problem I encountered whilst utilising the network was that the initial network pages had links to other people's names. I felt frustrated because, how are you supposed to know what the link is about? However, I found it troublesome to overcome the issue that I could only see links that were just names. In addition, I wasted my time clicking on a name to go to the other blog to find that it wasn't what I was after."

On the one hand some learners describe their awareness of the relationship between actively writing and publishing information, but seem to expect a readership and network to naturally occur without further action on their behalf. While others describe the use of searching techniques that do not produce any results other than reference resources.

This category contains multifaceted issues that emerge in the descriptions as digital or information literacy, rather than self-publishing concerns depicted in categories B and C. There is a structural connection to category A which may result in this category being hierarchically demoted.

Category E: Developing networks is about active participation, reading, writing and exchanging opinions.

In this category learners portray the process of developing collective learning networks as a detailed series of activities that remain interrelated to continued engagement within their network.

In contrast to category A, learners that described the functions and capabilities of the technology in a positive manner related their success of developing networks as a direct result of the technology as the enabler.

"When beginning to establish networks, I could not have predicted how much I enjoyed this process and the amount of knowledge that was gained."

"...the learning that is related to a network is very powerful. I have learnt that you can get direct responses with many different opinions whether they are from an academic or a person that is really interested in the subject. There are so many different people with so many different opinions and advice that I am hooked."

The descriptions represent the process as a whole indicating the awareness of relations between the parts and the acts of participating in networks.

"The use of a weblog during this semester has definitely proved to be a wonderful tool for learning. It enabled me to develop my learning at different levels. Firstly my weblog assisted me in understanding how to research the web in a structured way. I have learnt through my weblog that e-learning can take on different forms and provides new ways of working with each other. I have learnt how to communicate in a relevant way and how important collaboration is. I have learnt to direct my focus and manage my thoughts while benefiting from other's work. Webloggers have helped me a lot because reading them made me think and then react. It has been hard at the beginning but so challenging. And getting comments has been such a reward on myself. Thirdly this blog has provided me a good basis for the future. I will definitely benefit from this experience in the continuation of my studies. My weblog enabled to go over my fears and I am now ready to engage and get involved. I have personally and professionally improved because I have learnt to appreciate this new material. I have learnt how to use other people works and refer to them and build up my understanding..."

The object of learning in this category indicates a shift in the learners' ways of seeing and experiencing the learning processes, illustrating a deep approach to learning.

Reflections and implications for pedagogical practices:

Reflecting upon my pedagogical strategies, and relating the early findings to the multi-linear pathways framework (refer to Figure 1), there is evidence in the data analysis to support the fundamental structure of the framework and additionally, evidence to support the need to refine some of the activities within the stages of the framework to address the critical aspects of learning to facilitate the development of learner capabilities.

The initial categories of description have revealed areas where learners are describing surface approaches to the learning processes. In particular, issues that are evident in each category can highlight areas for further pedagogical attention:

- Category A: Concepts that relate to the structure and uses of technology
- Category B: Concepts of identity
- Category C: Concepts of publicly writing and publishing
- Category D: Concepts of making connections with others and exploring shared interests

Pedagogical implications from category A can be directly related to strategies that address the learners' capabilities from a technological perspective. The concepts that arose here appear to be related to the learners' mastery of the software functionality and their ability to grasp previously abstract tasks, suggesting additional activities that focus upon providing context-based examples that are reinforced with practice tasks.

It is apparent from the initial data analysis that the issues reported in category A restrict further development to a greater degree than any of the subsequent issues reported in the other categories. Consequently, this indicates that a larger proportion of attention and continued monitoring from the educator will be required to support the learners with critical aspects that are related to technology proficiency.

Concepts identified in category B & C, after further iterations of the data, may result in these categories merging into one that addresses the issues of creating identity, and writing publicly. The pedagogical framework provides activities across three pathways in these concepts, however more significance may be considered valuable to enable learners build their capabilities.

In contrast to category E, where the concept of making connections with others occurred at anytime throughout the process, in category D the learners indicated a shift in focus as they became relaxed with the functionality of the technology to a more external frame of awareness. The critical aspect here appears to relate to information literacy and searching techniques. A recommended addition to existing pedagogical strategies would be to enlist the active participation of learners in category E to provide modeling of behaviours and assistance to their peers.

Demoting category D, to accompany or align with category A may also be a consideration after continued analysis. The critical learning aspects related to digital and information literacy may be more valuable preceding pedagogical strategies that address issues of identity and publicly writing.

As I continue the data analysis process, the critical aspects of each category will be highlighted and the relations between the categories will be expanded further. The aim

will be to identify areas in the pedagogical framework that will inform strategies to augment the learners' experiences when developing and sustaining collective learning networks.

Conclusion:

This paper, in presenting early findings from my PhD research, has intended to provide insights into the experiences of adult learners. The potential for educators is to re-frame their pedagogical strategies to allow the creation of collective learning networks that facilitate a deep approach to learning.

It is timely, to reflect on these issues as our educational institutions and organisations espouse the values of informal learning and prioritise practices of collaboration, reflection, personalisation, knowledge sharing and networks into vision statements and strategic planning documents. Notwithstanding the importance of emergent technologies as the enabler in these processes, without re-framing our practice and becoming aware of the critical aspects described by the qualitatively different ways adult learners experience the use of self-publishing weblogs, educators are not likely to realise the opportunity to incorporate weblogs and integrated communication networks that extends the learning beyond the physical boundaries and opinions of the classroom context.

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