

Chapter 16

Experiential Space

Chris Cheers

Holmesglen Institute, Australia

Chen Swee Eng

Holmesglen Institute, Australia

Glen Postle

University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba, Australia

ABSTRACT

The description of learning environments as physical or virtual spaces focuses on the tools and infrastructure that support learning as opposed to the learning interactions. The authors of this chapter advocate the view that to maximise the potential of any learning environment, educators need to understand how students learn in the first instance and then design the learning environment based on these insights. Throughout this chapter, formal learning is conceived as an individualised experience within an organised learning community, and as such, it is suggested that this learning environment is described as an experiential space. Within this chapter, an approach to designing an experiential space that uses problem based learning to engage students and facilitate their active construction of knowledge is described. The Holmesglen built environment degree program is used as a case study to illustrate a particular solution to designing an experiential learning space.

INTRODUCTION

We live in a world that has been described as a ‘digital ecosystem’ where the physical and the virtual are fully intertwined and functioning through well-designed, well-integrated social and technical architecture working together in a wireless mesh that is persistent, pervasive, and mobile. This digital ecosystem can, and has, enhanced

our abilities to connect with other people, share ideas, work collaboratively and form communities (Suter et al., 2005). There is growing evidence to suggest that educational approaches that leverage on the strengths of this digital ecosystem can provide alternative educational experiences that challenge the legitimacy of location-based models as the best way to deliver quality education (JISC Web 2.0 Report, 2009). Quality learning can be undertaken independent of time and distance, no longer constrained by administrative requirements

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-60960-114-0.ch016

Table 1. (Adapted from Kimball, 2002)

From	To
Face-to-face learning and teaching is the ideal environment for learning and other modes represent a compromise.	Diverse learning environments utilised in a pedagogically appropriate way can support high quality learning.
Learning only occurs when teachers interact with students at a fixed time and space.	Learning is ongoing and boundary-less and is most successful when learners take ownership of their own learning.
Managing online learning is about learning how to use the latest technology.	Managing online learning requires greater understanding about the learning process.

surrounding the use of lecture/tutorial structures and their associated timetables. Interactive elements of learning can be recorded and archived and thus allow the student to utilise a diverse range of resources that can be revisited, reflected upon, modified, and challenged. This promotes a view of learning that is non-linear and fluid and more in tune with what is known about learning.

These digital technologies provide us with increased opportunities to promote exemplary learning and teaching strategies. Ideas such as personalised (individualised) learning, situated (authentic) learning and problem-based learning have been educational ideals for many years due to the fact that these approaches engage the student in deep, authentic and contextualised learning. Unfortunately, the dominance of the transmission model (reinforced by widespread use of instructivist teaching approaches and top-down management structures) has prevailed (Laurillard, 2006). Instructivism has inappropriately installed location-based education as the traditional mode of learning and teaching, which is a premise that needs to be challenged. Although, the digital age has provided technologies with the potential to challenge this notion, there is still a need to ensure that instructivism in digital environments is not being perpetuated.

If used appropriately, these technologies have the potential to radically improve the way students engage with knowledge and negotiate ideas. However, this potential will only be realised if educators begin with an understanding of how students learn, and design the use of learning

technologies and learning environments from this standpoint (Laurillard, 2002). Virtual learning environments and social networking solutions have the capacity to cater for a diverse range of learner initiatives and learner interactions. The learner is provided with opportunities to interact with the tutor, other learners, course content (readings and other resources), and external experts. Learners therefore, have access to a rich socio-cultural context. Unfortunately, the adoption of these technologies seems to have been more about the preservation of the status quo than any paradigm shift. Kimball (2002) argues that it is now not a question of how we can engage learners via learning technologies but rather a question of how we can engage learners in more meaningful learning activities. To make the most of the opportunities provided by our world's digital ecosystem we need to support new learning dynamics in an integrated manner across physical and virtual spaces. We need to shift our thinking as educators ...

Today's learners increasingly have access to, and use a broad range of social networking tools and technologies that provide a constantly evolving multiplicity of interactive resources for information and communication. As such learners will expect to see this diversity reflected in their educational experiences. They will increasingly have little patience with learning and teaching approaches which are modelled only on location-based approaches and without the blending of digital technologies. There is a need to conceive of learning as an experience, and therefore rather than defining the learning space in terms of a

10 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:

www.igi-global.com/chapter/experiential-space/56054

Related Content

Learner Acceptance of Using Virtual Patient Encounters to Train Foreign Healthcare Professionals in Swedish

Uno G. H. Forsand Olivier Courteille (2014). *International Journal of Virtual and Personal Learning Environments* (pp. 18-32).

www.irma-international.org/article/learner-acceptance-of-using-virtual-patient-encounters-to-train-foreign-healthcare-professionals-in-swedish/132855

Music Matters: A Unique Distance Education Opportunity for the Humanities

Rebecca Gouldand Elizabeth Unger (2010). *Cases on Collaboration in Virtual Learning Environments: Processes and Interactions* (pp. 42-56).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/music-matters-unique-distance-education/37974

Online Metacognitive Reading Strategies by Internal and External Locus of Control

Mitra Mesgarand Dara Tafazoli (2018). *International Journal of Virtual and Personal Learning Environments* (pp. 38-50).

www.irma-international.org/article/online-metacognitive-reading-strategies-by-internal-and-external-locus-of-control/210434

Digital Dome versus Desktop Display in an Educational Game: Gates of Horus

Jeffrey Jacobson (2013). *Design, Utilization, and Analysis of Simulations and Game-Based Educational Worlds* (pp. 13-34).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/digital-dome-versus-desktop-display/75722

Assessing Spatial Design in Virtual Environments

Andrew Cram, Russell Loweand Katy Lumkin (2014). *Cases on the Assessment of Scenario and Game-Based Virtual Worlds in Higher Education* (pp. 74-123).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/assessing-spatial-design-in-virtual-environments/109265