

Chapter 13

The Scholarship of Engagement and Generative Learning Communities: Preparing EFL Leaders for Authentic Practice at the American Spaces Philippines

Gianina O Cabanilla

University of the Philippines Diliman, Philippines

ABSTRACT

The Regional English language learning (ELL) project in the American Spaces Philippines was established at the US Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) and Bureau of International Information Programs (IIP) in the fiscal year 2013 as a response to a study which showed the modest state of English language teaching and learning in the country. The project, a cooperation between English as a Foreign Language (EFL) educators and administrators at partner schools, universities, and American spaces in the archipelago counterparts and funded by the US Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) and Bureau of International Information Programs (IIP), was aimed at assisting with the production of more and better-qualified English as a Foreign Language (EFL) educators and administrators.

INTRODUCTION

Today's students, an expression used by Marc Prensky in his paper “*Digital natives, digital immigrants*” back in 2001 represent the Net generation having grown up within digital technology. To use his own words, Prensky said for them *they have spent their entire lives surrounded by and using computers, videogames, digital music players, video cams, cell phones, and all the other toys and tools of the digital*

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age [...]. Computer games, email, the Internet, cell phones and instant messaging are integral parts of their lives.

Hence, students of the *Net Generation (Net Gen)* need a greater flexibility in their studies and studies strongly connected with current technologies. These needs of students today lead to the increasing importance of redefining educational physical & online space. On the other hand Universities are facing the experiment to make the shift from face-to-face learning in the campus to a blended environment of combining face-to-face and online activities.

The paper proposes the use of a *Learning Management System (LMS)* to support *Learning Spaces* in Universities and illustrate a guide to design and develop collaborative sequences of learning activities as a catalyst to enhance the learning process. Students implementing the sequences on their own or in *Campus* supporting by facilitators can accomplish specific educational goals in a flexible educational setting. A case study in the *Hellenic Open University* regarding the development of a learning sequence on the topic “*Implementing essays*” highlights the advantages, the requirements and the relevant constraints. The case study can be extended in all activities of supporting learning at a distance both in Open and in conventional Universities optimizing the experience in distance education, which Open Universities have conquered until now.

In particular this paper emphasizes in the development of electronic collaborative experiences at Universities based on Learning Spaces and LMS to support both students and educators in their complex work. The second unit presents the methodology and also the experience gained by Open Universities so far to support electronic collaborative experiences. The third unit defines and approaches the concept of *Learning Spaces* and how they can contribute to support e-collaboration. Next, in the fourth unit the *Learning Activity Management System (LAMS)* is proposed as an appropriate open *Learning Management System* which serves the adopted pedagogical framework. A Repository of LAMS-sequences has the potential to become an innovative Learning Space (*e-Campus-LS*) combining students’ work inside and outside the Campus. The fifth unit describes an exemplar LAMS sequence aiming at supporting students who are implementing an essay as a case study in the Hellenic Open University and presents the preliminary findings from evaluating the sequence. Furthermore, the sixth unit proposes two levels of extension of the case study towards a methodology of developing collaborative sequences using *LMSs* in Open and conventional Universities too. Finally, the paper highlights discussion themes raised by working with Learning Spaces in Higher Education. Proposals for further use of Learning Spaces and conclusions are drawn and commented.

SUPPORTING ELECTRONIC COLLABORATIVE EXPERIENCES

Supporting Students at a Distance

The integration of the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) has changed radically learning and transforms education. Advanced technologies support learning in the 21st century following all three generations of pedagogy: behaviorism, constructivism and connectivism. Universities today approach more and more distance and flexible forms of education since learning is possible to happen in areas outside the traditional campus, occurring anytime and anywhere.

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