Chapter 3

Learning in Video-Mediated Classes

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ABSTRACT

Modern technology and improved video technology have widened the possibilities of offering young people in peripheral regions of countries education, and in recent years, several innovation projects using video-mediated teaching have been implemented in Denmark and in the Nordic countries. In the Danish region, a comprehensive innovation project including video-mediated simultaneous teaching at two locations was implemented in 2008-2010 for students at a General Adult Education Centre. Drawing on Etienne Wenger’s (2004) theory about learning and communities of practice and on theoretical perspectives from architecture on space and learning, the chapter discusses results from the dialogue research related to the project. Results indicate that video-mediated teaching has a significant impact on student participation and that it appears to be demanding for some students, especially students with social or academic problems.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents an analysis and discussion of results from a dialogical approach to research in an adult education project on video-mediated teaching and learning. Based on results from research in peripheral regions of Denmark and using Etienne Wenger’s theory about learning in communities of practice, the chapter discusses potentials and challenges of video-mediated education as a context for studying student learning. Wenger’s theory represents one of the recent strands in sociocultural theories and activity theory.

During the 1980s, video technology began to reveal its potential in various educational purposes (Lawson et al., 2010), for example parallel teaching, which is video-mediated simultaneous teaching of classes of students at different locations. Teaching is usually conducted by one teacher at one of the locations and organized as either one-to-many or many-to-many settings (Lawson, 2010, p. 3). The teacher may alternate between
the rooms. The teacher may also be supplemented by an assistant in another room. The underlying premise is that it is economically viable to teach small classes and the described arrangement enables for teaching a class with few participants with a larger class (Andreasen & Rasmussen, 2013; Andreasen & Hviid, 2011; Gynther, 2009; Hedestig & Kaptelinin, 2005).

Interest in video-mediated teaching and learning has grown as a result of societal demands on educated labour and opportunities for lifelong learning. Several projects on video-mediated teaching in education have been carried out. However, video-mediated teaching remains at an early stage (Lawson, 2010, p. 307) as a research area. More specifically, research on the impact of contextual factors in student learning seems to be missing (Lawson, 2010, p. 295; Lögdlund, 2010). Complementary research on student identity and participation by and teaching of students with social and academic problems is needed (Lawson, 2010; Lögdlund, 2010). Our research specifically addresses contextual influences and provides analysis and discussion of results from dialogue research following one innovation project in peripheral regions of Denmark. The students are mainly young adults of which a majority has either social or academic problems, or both, and the project includes studies in several classes. Analysis focuses on student identities and participation.

BACKGROUND

From 2009-2011, VUC Northern Jutland carried out a large Danish innovation project with parallel teaching at General Adult Education Centres, i.e. video-mediated simultaneous teaching of two classes at two different locations (Andreasen & Rasmussen, 2013; Andreasen, 2012). General Adult Education (AVU) offers school subjects as single courses at 8th, 9th or 10th grade level to adults. The majority of the course participants have experienced difficulties in primary and lower secondary school (Danmarks Evalueringsinstitut, 2011; Katznelson, 2010; Pless & Hansen, 2010). The teaching is adapted to the students’ backgrounds, for instance by matching assignments and academic level to the students’ level of earlier schooling, and by allocating extensive time for individual guidance by teachers and professionals at the school. AVU is generally considered to be a success in ordinary classes, but without use of video technology (Katznelson et al. 2009; Katznelson et al. 2010). The majority of the course participants are young adults under 30. They have either dropped out of school without an exam or they would like to improve their results. A few students attend the course subject purely out of interest (Damvad, 2013; Danmarks Statistik, 2013). Course participants who live in peripheral areas may be unable to take courses in specific subjects. Also if there are just a few students, parallel video-based teaching will make simultaneous teaching of two groups possible, either in many-to-many settings or in few-to-many settings (Lawson, 2010). Experimental projects have been conducted in several locations and educational contexts, including other AVU centres (Andreasen & Hviid, 2011). However, conducting this type of teaching for precisely this group of students involves challenges for teachers and students. The students are young people, many of whom need professional or social support. They suffer from low self-esteem regarding their academic resources (Katznelson, 2010; Katznelson, 2009) due to negative experiences in terms of feeling accepted in these contexts. Reaching this group of young people with a teaching design that suits their special experiences and preconditions is important, as the video-mediated approach could help them gain access to further education.

MAIN FOCUS OF THE CHAPTER

The chapter focuses on the described problem and includes analysis and discussion of the special
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