Chapter 18

A ‘Video Trigger,’ but no Silver Bullet: An Actor–Network Analysis of an E–Learning Tool in Health Science Education

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ABSTRACT

This chapter analyses the design and implementation of a video trigger as a pedagogical tool to facilitate interprofessional understanding in several professional Bachelor courses at a faculty of Health Sciences. It uses actor-network theory as an analytical tool to uncover the main human and non-human actants that are involved in the processes of planning, designing, implementing and using the video trigger. It also attempts to bring to light the various types of interconnections that exist between those actants. The data that forms the basis of the analysis is qualitative, and includes meeting minutes and field notes. The analysis reveals the existence of a dichotomous relationship between technology and pedagogy, which is at the source of major challenges in the design and use of a video trigger as a pedagogical tool.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter reports on the issues associated with developing video triggers for case-based learning for use on an interprofessional module, in particular the difficult relationship between technological concerns and pedagogic concerns. It is based on a study of one of three compulsory interprofessional modules that are common to seven different bachelor programmes at the Faculty of Health Sciences in a Scandinavian institution of Higher Education. The study investigates the design and subsequent use of video triggers as a pedagogical tool aimed to further interprofessional understanding, using actor network theory as an analytical lens. The chapter provides an outline of the rationale behind using video triggers, a description of the processes of design and implementation of those triggers,
and an overview of the main pitfalls encountered. It then presents an evaluation those processes in the light of the purposes intended by the Faculty and suggests some insights that may be useful to others who seek to develop similar initiatives.

The module in question, “Health clients and health workers: reflections on practice”, was a compulsory module for all the students at the Faculty of Health Science, and was meant to foster interprofessional thinking and practice. In particular, it was to establish long-lasting bridges between the various professions that were represented at the Faculty of Health Science. To that end, it aimed to provide the students with insights into other health professions in order to make interprofessional cooperation a natural part of professional practice after graduation. The module offered the students a common platform for discussion around relevant themes, in particular issues related to communication and ethical dilemmas that arise within the realm of the interaction between health workers and their clients. About 450 students from 8 different bachelor programmes (medical laboratory science, dental technology, occupational therapy, pharmacy, physiotherapy, Mensendieck physiotherapy, prosthetics and orthotics, and radiography) took the module each year. Most of them were in their second year of a three-year bachelor programme, with a small number of third-year students in their ranks. All the students took on-campus programmes and all were based on the same physical site.

Case-based learning has a century-long tradition as a pedagogical approach for professional training (Herreid, 2006; Barnes, Christensen & Hansen, 1994). In recent years, case-based learning has been used to support interprofessional education (Lindqvist, Duncan, Shepstone, Watts, & Pearce, 2005). Case-based instruction aims to provide students with a way to bridge the gap between theory and practice (Heitzmann, 2008; Mayo, 2004; Wright, 1996). Cases are also used in order to allow students to grasp the complexity and the ill-structured nature of real-life situations (Choi & Lee, 2009; Silverman, Welty & Lyon, 1996; Boyce, 1992; Pomeroy & Philip, 1994), as well as the “contextual, local and situated” character of professional practice (Shulman, 1992, p. 28).

Although the case methodology has traditionally made use of written text as its main medium, newer technological advances have allowed for the development of so-called video cases or video triggers. Video cases have been described as providing rich and authentic insights into aspects of professional practice that are of direct relevance to the students of professional courses (Yadav & Koehler, 2007). They are also considered appropriate tools to promote the students’ reflection and dialogue (Rowley & Hart, 1996). Much of the literature on video cases focuses on their use as a pedagogical tool. However, some works have also attempted to shed light on the very process of creating video cases (Kurz, Llama & Savenye, 2005).

Video cases are part of a wider array of online pedagogical tools that fall under a number of umbrella designations such as “e-learning”, “online learning”, “technology-supported learning” or “web-based learning”. E-learning tools have been used to support interprofessional education. Typically, e-learning has been chosen in interprofessional education programmes to provide pedagogical flexibility, in particular in terms of time and space (Juntunen & Heikkinen, 2004). Also, the use e-learning platforms such as virtual learning environments can facilitate the inter-institutional delivery of courses (Skorga, 2002), and collaborative learning across geographically dispersed sites (Quinney, Hutchings & Scammell, 2008), both of which are often crucial elements in interprofessional education. In addition, online environments allowing for asynchronous communication have been described as bringing greater fluidity to the process of enquiry-based learning (Hughes, Ventura & Dando, 2004), which plays a significant part in many interprofessional courses.
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