

Learning Communities

Section 3



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Learning Communities

Communities are sense making entities: they sort and filter information, provide us with challenge and feedback, help us to maintain momentum, connect us to new sources of knowledge, challenge our preconceptions, turn to us for help, and are there when we need them. We are highly connected, part of multiple communities in our daily lives. Each community we are part of has a different purpose, and our role within each community is different as well.

Technology facilitates and opens space for communities to grow, but technology alone cannot guarantee that communities will emerge and flourish. Registering people on a system results in a collection of people. In order for that collection of people to become a learning community, you need both a level of trust between participants and good learning design. In Scaffolded Social Learning, groups of learners form learning communities, are guided through the skills and attitudes that contribute to the learning community and finally narrate their experience. In order to fully benefit from the social learning opportunity, learners will need to be coached in storytelling, collaborative and feedback skills, gaining experience in how to learn with and from others. The skills developed as a learning community, while deepening their understanding of a particular humanitarian topic in a safe, low consequence space, will transfer to and be useful for forming and participating in a Community of Practice.

Forming, Guiding and Narrating play an essential part in supporting a healthy learning community. If we create the right space, a community will form and occupy it, but to make the space right we will need to give up some control and empower the community to own the space.

Moblitz – supporting generative learning communities with social media

Description:

What was the challenge? / What happened?

The web is widely recognised as the greatest learning tool in human history, giving us the ability to share knowledge more broadly and more quickly than ever before. Learning online is often informal, and many – possibly most – of these informal learning ‘resources’ are circulated on social media, where people share images, experiences and learning resources with those with whom they are connected.

Solution: How did we approach it? What did we do?

Moblitz lets you create your own media channels, called ‘moblitz.’ Anyone with the code to your moblitz can contribute. The name of the application is based on a combination of three words:
 mob [mob]:

- a crowd of people or a collection of things mobile [moh-buhl];
- easily changing in expression, mood or purpose blitz [blits];
- an overwhelming, vigorous, and all-out birage

The purpose of this application is to create a structure that allows meaning to be co-created by sharing media. It allows people to create or contribute to themes in a controlled environment, making it easier to extrapolate data. For example: if someone shared an image of how they are distributing water during a crisis, other people could add to their ‘moblitz’ and soon we would have a visual representation of how water distribution is managed. Allowing people to create their own themes lets patterns and themes emerge from a group.



Conclusion: How did it work? / What are lessons learned? How does it relate to broader context?

While educators have harnessed the web to develop formal elearning platforms, many are struggling to unleash the power of social media to support learning. In part this is because the web is unstructured and unpredictable, and it can be hard to reliably integrate people’s online interactions into highly structured learning environments. However, as chaotic as social media can seem on the surface, there are identifiable and predictable patterns of interactions underneath. Studying these can help us with learning design. Moblitz is an attempt to build a social media-based learning application that makes use of this research.

Lewis, S., Pea, and R., Rosen, J. (2010). Beyond participation to co-creation of meaning: mobile social media in generative learning communities.

<http://bit.ly/BeyondParticipation> An article considering the interactive structures of the web, and proposing that theories of social learning and action could greatly inform their design

