humanitarian
leadership
academy

Thinking

Section 1 Scaffolded Social Learning

Resources:

Bersin.com. (2017). Newsletter Details.

http://bit.ly/NewsletterDetails An example of a structured, video-based Social Learning at the Cheesecake Factory

Find out more at
bit.ly/AcademyLearningArchitecture

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What is Social Learning?

Formal learning experience

Formal learning is what we do in classrooms, in e-Learning modules, in workbooks.

This is the story the organisation tells

Social Learning is about the conversations that surround formal learning.

Social Learning is about helping each other, building learning networks, solving problems together and sharing stories.

These are co-created, sense making, social stories from the community.

Tribal wisdom

Sense making conversations

These are example elements of Social Learning.

Social knowledge

Tacit knowledge

A Scaffolded Social Learning Experience

A Scaffolded Social Learning Experience is one where we create a series of spaces and assets that the community uses in a structured way. So there is still a structure, a curriculum, but there is also space to co-create.

By combining Formal and Social we create a Scaffolded Social Learning Experience

Formal learning

Social space

Example activity:
• Co-created group narrative

Example resources:
• Formal narrative
• Accreditation gateway
• Knowledge check

Formal learning

Social space

Example activity:
• Sense making conversations

To ensure your Scaffolded Social Learning courses are a success:

1. Strong choreography – make sure everyone knows what is meant to happen when, and what their role in each piece will be.
2. Support your learners as they co-create their stories. This requires skills that may be new to your learners.

Formal learning

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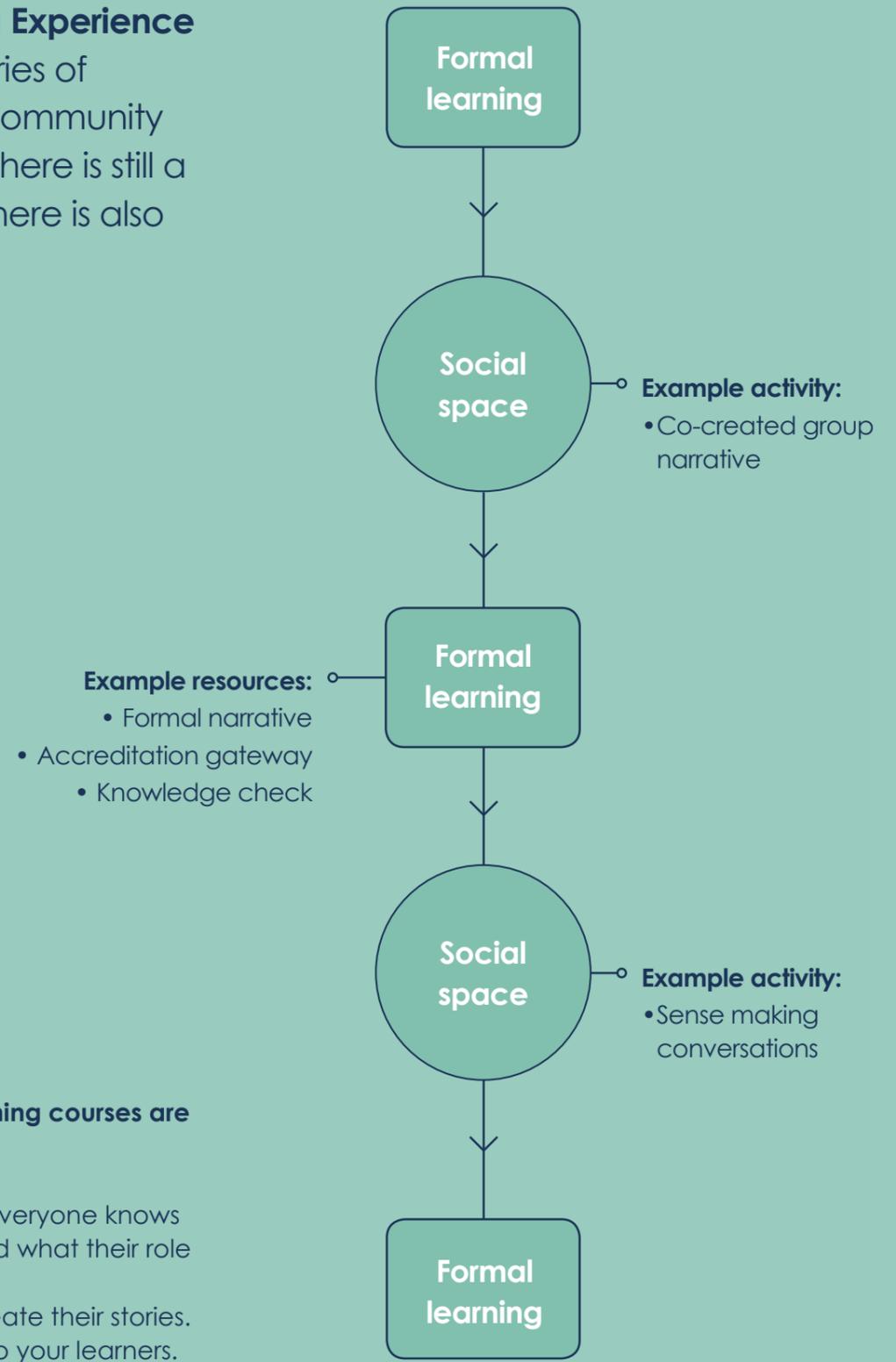
Scaffolding Social Learning with opportunities for storytelling and co-creation

Scaffolded Social Learning is a way of designing learning using both formal* and social elements. It creates learning opportunities that are delivered by an organisation, but where the learners are the ultimate source of knowledge. Learners gather content and present it to each other and tell stories of their own experiences. Together, they make sense of these stories and create a shared understanding. Social learning also include self-guided learning (learning 'on your own'), but it is balanced with structured and supported learning, where learners are guided through a topic using exploration, discussion and storytelling. This could all take place online, or a mixture of online and in-person.

The kind of learning you design depends on your topic and target audience, however Scaffolded Social Learning design is appropriate for the humanitarian sector because it fosters purpose driven learning communities of learners that can be pre-cursors for communities of practice. The design consists of weaving learning experiences through three main components: content, learning communities and co-creation. With Scaffolded Social Learning, you are designing a learning programme that creates opportunities for learners to interact with content, be part of and build a purposeful learning community through sharing their learning, knowledge and experience stories, and finally to learn through co-creation, the opportunity to engage with other learners in a meaningful context, challenging, providing feedback and question understanding. At the end of a Scaffolded Social Learning programme, learners feel more confident in sharing, curation and storytelling, all skills that are needed for informal, social learning that supports performance.

Scaffolded Social Learning uses tools that present formal content or information as well as encourage learners to collaborate and learn

from each other, learning from their experience by co-creating what they will need to successfully apply their learning in their everyday reality. When designing social learning, you focus on creating opportunities for discussion, reflection and exploration, rather than just delivering formal content. Formal content provides structure and purpose, the scaffolding, for social learning: rather than free-form, ranging discussions, formal content gives learners something to focus on and explore. In turn, the social parts of the course allow learners to place their own context onto the formal learning.

A very simple example could be: First the learners take a module introducing a particular way of working. They take it on their own, in their own time. Then they come together to discuss the module, telling stories of their own experiences with the ways of working discussed. They listen to each other, and hear some stories that agree with their own experiences, and others that are different. Lastly, the group works together to create a second piece of learning that tells their stories and the lessons they have learnt from each other.

The next time the course is run, the new learning is used to guide the discussions that the group has, and they work together to build on it themselves. This work will then be used by the group that follows them.

Of course, you could add many more sections to this example. In formal learning – even when it is designed to the highest quality – learners are mostly passive. They receive information, and they receive it in the way the designer wants them to receive it. In social learning, people are more involved: they express their own thoughts and opinions, and can shape the way the course progresses. Learners have agency[†] and are not passive receivers of information but active participants in their own learning.

There are two things you must make sure of to ensure your Scaffolded Social Learning courses are a success:

1. Strong choreography – does everyone know what is meant to happen when, and what their role in each piece will be?
2. Support your learners as they co-create their stories. This requires skills that may be new to your learners in this context – skills of curation (choosing the right story and how to tell it), reflection, critique, challenge, sense making**, and comparison. Of these 'sense making' may be new to you; it is defined below.

Your role as a learning designer is to experiment and test the activities and behaviours that help you with co-creation, so that you can build your own skills and provide a model for your learners. This will also help you create a culture of social learning the programmes you design and run.

When designing a Scaffolded Social Learning programme, you will first plan the learner experience, before you start thinking about how you will actually deliver the learning. This can be difficult at first, but it quickly becomes easier. You have already made a start, with the Information Architecture and Context Statement that you wrote in the Learning Methodology section 2.

Next, in the Storytelling section 4 you will create the Learner Journey, an overview of the learner's experience based on the Learning Methodology. Finally, in Choreography section 5, we will build the Running Order that details the actions, people and materials needed to deliver the Learner Journey. In this section, we will explore the Tools that support Social Learning.

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* Formal & Social: Formal refers to content that you provide or create as part of the learning pathway. This is content that backs up the Core Story. Social spaces are opportunities for the learners to interact with formal content or each other, telling personal stories and co-created stories.

** Sense making: Sense making is the process by which people give meaning to experience. It is a social activity where plausible stories are preserved, retained or shared. The narratives are 'both individual and shared...an evolving product of conversations with ourselves and with others' (https://Wikipedia.org).

† Agency: Agency refers to the thoughts and actions taken by people that express their individual power. (https://ThoughtCo.com/)