Perspectives on identity within networked learning:

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Introduction

Identity has long been referenced, within research into networked learning communities, as the image of the student, self-constructed and presented as product of ongoing participation in the learning community and engagement with its histories, behaviours and artefacts. Such research has often been reliant on the dialogic analysis of engagement within a formal bounded learning space. Papers presented in this symposium suggest that the closely bounded, two-dimensional nature of such portrayal requires further consideration. This symposium presents three different perspectives which range from an exploration of dimensions of identity and their impact on the networked learning experience, consideration of the nature of identity as networked learning communities extend beyond the formal learning place and embrace the potential opportunities of open online spaces, and an exploration of digital identity through social curation.

Participants will be invited to consider the positions presented within the papers and will then be encouraged to participate in post-presentation discussion and a mapping activity that encourages reflexive consideration of issues of identity as they impact on their own learning and/or that of students with whom they engage within networked learning communities.

Dimensions of identity and the student experience of networked learning

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The focus of this paper is the conceptualisation of the student identity standard and its potential to impact on the way in which, and the extent to which, non-traditional students engage with learning architectures, particularly those of networked learning communities. It makes a case that often unseen, unperceived, and therefore invisible dimensions of identity, both within and outside the learning community impact on the way that non-traditional students engage with roles within the community and the opportunities afforded through such engagement. The paper briefly introduces the strategic drivers that emphasised the need for increased adoption of technology enhanced learning within higher education and the associated political backdrop as the widening participation agenda was promoted by the Department for Education and Science. It reports the political promotion of flexible learning and the way in which higher education has adapted to an increasing breadth of student backgrounds and life-experiences without necessarily querying the nature of the student role identity. The paper then moves to consider the way in which student identity is of relevance to the learning experience, drawing attention to the concept of role identity (Stryker, 2002) and the individual construction of identity standards (Burke & Stets, 2009). The paper then considers the way in which differing concepts of identity have been explored and addressed in the literature that surrounds networked learning. The paper introduces Cantwell's conceptualisation of dimensions of student identity (2007) and proceeds to ask the reader to reflect upon on such dimensions of the individually constructed student role identity that are often imperceptible to tutors, peers, and sometimes to the student themselves, and the impact of these dimensions on the networked learning experiences of non-traditional undergraduates. The paper then suggests consideration of the way in which the dynamic and temporal nature of role identities is associated with the concept of affordance and implications for the development and facilitation of learning communities.

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Networked Learning and Identity development in open online spaces

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Higher education is responding to multiple challenges in the current context of mobile networking, openness, and participatory culture. This paper explores emerging open education practices in higher education. The affordances of open online spaces are compared with those of physical classrooms and bounded online spaces. It is argued that open online spaces can be considered a Third Space in which students can construct their identities and develop their networks, integrating formal and informal learning, and developing literacies for lifelong learning.

Curate me! Exploring online identity through social curation in networked learning

Joyce Seitzinger

Academic Tribe

Networked learning theory and the related literature express the importance of access to resources or content, but there is no singular way of discussing these information management processes. On the web, the rise in information abundance has seen the terms curation, digital curation, content curation, and social curation gain in popularity to describe how individual users manage their information intake, processing and sharing. This paper attempts to distinguish between these overlapping terms and argues that the term social curation could describe the information management processes required of networked educators and learners. In addition it proposes a terminology for phases of the social curation process, which may aid networked learners and educators in the adoption and scaffolding of social curation processes for learning. This paper further explores the distinctive opportunities social curation offers for online identity expression and construction for circumventing known issues such as collapsed contexts and role conflict that occur in other social media sites.