Learning in School-University Partnership
Sociocultural Perspectives

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Social Theory of Learning

Learning is a fundamentally social process and an inevitable part of everyday life. Learning is not a reified time-bound activity separate from everyday activities, but rather “the very process of being engaged in, and participating in developing, an ongoing practice” (Wenger, 1998, p. 95).

“Learning is … distributed among co-participants, not a one-person act” (Hanks, 1991, p. 15).

What kinds of cognitive processes individuals are engaged in and what kinds of cognitive structures they acquire and how? → What kinds of participation will bring about what kind of learning?
Social Theory of Learning: Community of Practice

- Learning as a social process of participation
- Key components of a social theory of learning: Community, Practice, Identity and Meaning
- Community of Practice: a community in which coherence is achieved by “practice”
- Practice: doing and knowing, both practical and theoretical side of doing.
Social Theory of Learning: Community of Practice

- Key features of a community of practice as a social learning system (Wenger 1998)
  - mutual engagement
  - negotiation of a joint enterprise
  - participation in the negotiation of the meanings of a shared repertoire
Forms of Participation & Legitimate Peripheral Participation

- Learning of apprentices and novices
- Legitimacy of access to Practice
- Legitimacy to participate peripherally
- Peripheral $\rightarrow$ full participation
- Peripheral vs marginal participation
Participation & Reification

- Participation is central to learning
- Participation in CoP shapes our experience; it also shapes the community of which we are a part
- Participation is *a source of identity*: we become members of a community through participation and through negotiation of meanings with other members of the community
- Reification: meanings produced by our experiences are projected and concretized into “objects” – concrete or abstract
- Participation and reification are complementary
Identity Formation

- “Identity consists of negotiating the meanings of our experience of membership in social communities.” (Wenger, 1998, p. 145)
- Identity formation: acquiring competence that is historically and socially defined in a community of practice.
- Competence: sufficient understanding of the joint enterprise to be able to contribute to it, knowing how to engage mutually with other members of the community and gaining access to the shared repertoire of communal resources and acquiring the ability to use it effectively.
Identity & Power

- Identity formation is both experiential and relational, both subjective and collective
- Construction of identity: modes of participation; membership, power relationships, ownership of meaning and modes of belonging
- A joint enterprise brings together a community, the meanings of that enterprise and the meanings of its shared practice are subject to negotiation. Claiming ownership of meaning becomes a locus of power struggle because it is a source of identification.
- Economies of meaning: whose meaning carries higher currency are reflective of power relationship
Community Boundaries & Boundary Crossing

- Individuals necessarily engage in numerous communities
- Participation and reification mark community boundaries: they can be sources of discontinuity as well as connection
- Boundary objects
- Boundary brokering
Figure 4 Boundary-crossing, brokering and boundary object.
(adapted from Wenger, 1998, p 105.)
Tripartite Conferencing

- The value of tripartite conferences and any problematic aspects,
- Comparison of tripartite and dual conferences; advantages and disadvantages of each,
- Perception of roles in tripartite conferences compared to dual conferences,
- The distribution of contributions of each participant to tripartite conferences.
For detailed discussions of cases and slides not covered in the presentation, please see