Investigating Interpersonal Communication Space In A Technology-Supported Learning Organization

Abstract: Learning is a social activity. The study followed the same group of participants for a year, the finding shows that in the deep learning cycle, regardless the widely acceptance of asynchronous learning system, learners still firmly expressed that they will choose face-to-face contact as the first priority in learning. Furthermore, if a solid relationship among peers and tutor is built, self confidence are built along with the learners’ attitude and belief of learning IT is positively changed. The paper would like to bring the interpersonal communication as one of the most important factors that affect students’ learning in a learning organization. Gaps between learners and experts’ views of educational technologies are revealed, and the education experts are suggested to focus back on the human factors of learning and teaching.

Case study
The study is a one-year longitudinal study to the same group of participants. The participants were a group of in-service teachers who are the experienced and high position supervisors, principals or senior teachers from different early childhood sectors; nursery or kindergarten, and they are studying the 2-year Part Time Certificate of Early Childhood Education in the Hong Kong Institute of Education. They are capable in school administration but with low computer competence in applying information technology in teaching and learning. In order to enhance the students IT competence, the program required the participants to take two to three computer modules. The author was assigned to teach the same group of students for both modules. Naturally, the students are worried of using IT to finish the assignments so the project work is deliberately designed in a group supported format. Instead of skill teaching, Jonassen's (1999) model for a constructivist learning environment was setup as a supporting framework for the participants to work out their multimedia projects. Current cases or exemplars were demonstrated and critiqued by the students, which can provide deeper insights into processes and practices by engagement with meaningful real world tasks and expert coaching (Jonassen, 1993).

![Figure 1 Jonassen's model for a constructivist learning environment (Jonassen, 1999)](image)

The study made use of a web-based learning and teaching platform to support learning community discussion. This allowed for individual discussion, inter-group, and intra-group discussion as well as lecturer input. Students could access the forum either from home, or anywhere that has computer online to the Internet. It provides a virtual learning community approach to enhance flexibility, connectivity, interactivity and initiative of the learners.
Inquiry process was adopted in the study to reveal an enduring development of IT skills and capabilities; awareness and sensibilities of the role of IT in learning and teaching; and together with the change of participants’ attitudes and belief of using IT; formed a deep learning cycle in the module setting. Two questionnaires were then allocated at two different stages to investigate the participants’ changing views on mental models towards the role of IT in learning and teaching after they have taken computer modules. The paper will discuss two main questions:
1. How did the participants’ view of CMC in learning and teaching?
2. What are the mental models support the participants learning and teaching effectively with IT?
Several questions were designed to look at the result of the above questions; Likert scale was used in the survey for participants to indicate their preference. Furthermore, on question 2, participants were required to rank the priorities of factors affecting effective teaching and learning.

Reference