

# Enculturation in Action: Developing Understanding about Technology- Enhanced Classroom Learning Communities (Poster)

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## **Abstract**

This case study describes, analyzes, and elucidates students' developing understanding of technology-enhanced classroom learning communities (TCLCs). Recognizing that an important aspect of students' developing understanding is enculturation, where students transform their participation to build competency within the TCLC culture, this research also examines the emergent social norms of communities within a classroom. The importance that the learning sciences have assigned to learning communities and the growing trend of technology-enhanced learning in educational practice, provide the grounds for this study's importance and relevance. Until now, research on TCLCs has focused more on their design and outcomes and little on how students' understanding of what they are actually emerges and develops. This research has drawn on data from a semester-long course that is both designed as a TCLC and teaches about TCLCs, by integrating unique reflection sessions and online collaborative activities with relevant content from the learning sciences. Data collected from classroom observations, interviews, and writing in an online Wiki collaborative editing environment are the basis for an interpretive micro-analysis to develop a more theoretically-based framework of students' changing understandings of TCLCs. Educational implications are guidelines for the design of future TCLCs

**Keywords:** Enculturation, group social norms, classroom learning communities, reflection, understanding.

## **Introduction**

This poster represents the main theoretical ideas underlying our research. It is based upon previous research on how people develop their ideas of learning communities (LCs). Novel in this study is that it examines a technological component to support learning in communities, as well as other distinctive course design components. Also, it examines the view that learning is a process of transforming participation (Rogoff, 1994) through a new lens, that of emergent group social norms.

## **Technology-enhanced classroom learning communities**

A general definition of LCs that is used here to frame discussion is based on Beilaczyc and Collins' (1999) synthesis and comparison of various such communities. Moreover, since this research is limited to classroom settings that employ technology to support collaboration, their definition is further narrowed preliminarily to be the following: A TCLC is a classroom that demonstrates a culture of learning in which participants are actively involved in a collective effort of understanding and where technology is involved meaningfully in supporting the learning process towards these ends. This research uses LC design principles that have been collected from the previous two decades of research (e.g. Brown and Campione, 1994) as a

preliminary basis for determining the content of students' developing understanding of TLCs. The different ways in which the principles are understood, as well as the order, relative importance, and omissions or additions are part of what this research may contribute to the learning sciences.

### **Theoretical roots of TLCs**

This research is based in the situated perspective, viewing learning as a transformational process of participation (Rogoff, 1994), or otherwise, enculturation (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989). Enculturation is the development of competencies, such as language, rituals, and values, of a person who is immersed in a particular culture (Barry, 2007). Social norms, an important regulator of social behavior (Hechter & Opp, 2001), can be investigated to describe this. This research uses an exploratory framework of individual and shared understanding to demonstrate the negotiation of social norms and, more broadly, the development of understanding of TLCs.

### **Research Questions**

Primary Research Question: How does understanding of TLCs develop?

1. What are students' initial understandings of TLCs?
2. What are the changes in students' understandings of TLCs as they actively participate in one?
3. Under what circumstances do students' understandings of TLCs develop?
4. How do emergent group social norms relate to students' understandings of TLCs?

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