The Development of Norms in a Technology-Enhanced Classroom Learning Community (TCLC) (Poster)

Jacqueline Basil-Shachar
University of Haifa
jacqui.shachar@edtech.haifa.ac.il

Dani Ben- Zvi
University of Haifa
dbenzvi@univ.haifa.ac.il

Yotam Hod
University of Haifa
yotamhod24@gmail.com

Abstract

This poster presents the theoretical ideas of our research on norm development within a Technology-enhanced Classroom Learning Community (TCLC). Working within a socio-constructivist paradigm of learning, we are investigating the process of norm development in a newly formed group. The subjects of our study are graduate students in a semester long designed TCLC. We are conducting a micro-analysis of data collected from classroom observations, interviews and writing in an online Wiki collaborative editing environment. Our study hopes to contribute to what is known about developing norms in TCLCs.

TCLC's rely on collaborative forms of learning that result in the co-creation of knowledge and artefacts through inquiry, discussion and sharing of knowledge and expertise. These activities, which aim to bring about meaningful learning, require an atmosphere of trust and support within the classroom (Bielaczyc & Collins, 1999). For this reason, examining group dynamics in a TCLC is justified. One aspect of successful group dynamics in a TCLC is the ability to work fruitfully together by forming collaborative norms. The processes of norm emergence and development reflect the negotiations between the individual and the group and can reveal socio-emotional challenges individuals experience in a TCLC.

A norm is a sociological construct. Hechter and Dieter-Opp (2001) define norms as rules which have come about through a certain degree of consensus and are enforced through social sanctions. However, our understanding of norms is not so much as 'rules' but rather a collective notion of expectations and obligations of behaviour that are formed in a classroom. Norms can also be defined as frameworks in which individuals interpret a given situation and make decisions about that situation (Fine, 2001). Yackel and Cobb (1996) have categorized norms into those that are 'taken-as-shared' or regular classroom norms and sociomathematical norms which are practices and performances specific to the mathematics classroom. In the same way, a learning community would demonstrate specific norms for reflective conversations, reflective writing, inquiry, sharing of knowledge and working together to build knowledge.

TCLCs are classrooms in which technology is used in a meaningful way. The social affordances of technology allow for productive collaboration to support the learning process. Learning communities demand high levels of social interaction that allow members to learn from and with each other. Therefore diversity of expertise, opinions and perspectives are valued (Brown & Campione, 1994; Bielaczyc & Collins, 1999). However, the expression of these diversities is debilitated when there is no group cohesion (Salomon &

Globerson, 1989). For this reason there must be frameworks for emerging and developing norms.

Our research questions are: How do norms emerge and develop within a TCLC? How can norms address socio-emotional challenges that arise in TCLC?

Keywords: norm development, group social norms, classroom learning communities, technology-enhanced learning, collaborative learning.

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