From Blended Learning to "Coached" Learning:
Solving Constraints in Complex Learning Contexts

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Abstract

The development of the Internet led to an explosion of learning/teaching strategies and opened the way to distance learning (DL). People dreamt of full distance learning systems. But those dreams were rapidly replaced by more rational blended learning scenarios (1). This evolution was quite normal if we admit that DL creates new constraints (loneliness, lack of motivation…) by removing another important ones (physical distance, scheduling…). In addition, DL doesn't allow, as face-to-face learning, a great variety of interaction techniques and a communication that makes use of almost all the human senses.

So what we suggest is to evolve from a blended learning to a « coached » learning to exploit any resource: human, material, organizational or educational resources, on the condition to act for the learner's good.

Main constraints impossible to overcome in a blended learning context will possibly be avoided thanks to a coached learning. Two important concepts should be taken into account to succeed: the coach and the community of practice (CoP) (2).

A coach is quite different from a tutor. First of all, he works in face-to-face with the learner, while the tutor acts at a distance. Then, he is not necessarily an expert even though he is intended to « know the score ». His role is to stimulate, to prompt, to encourage, to suggest trails… The coach must be able to imagine a customized educational system to each of his coachees.

In such a context, the coach's practice is emerging, complex and, as a consequence, far to be reified. A CoP is a convenient support to provide coaches with a mean to share and capitalize about this practice. Sharing strategies and collaboration may bring a larger flexibility to the learning structure.

Flexibility must also be reflected in the organizational autonomy of the learner. Learning activities must constantly stimulate the learners to become motivated to learn and interact. Even if the coach is a powerful instigator, learners are regularly alone in front of their screen. In this context, we were interested in all the elements that contribute to maintaining motivation: psychopedagogy (3), ergonomics of human-machine interfaces (4, 5) and didactics of the discipline.

The « visaTICE » project (6) sets up a « coached » learning and takes into account all the motivational aspects described above. Through this project, we can develop learning strategies where the constraints appear as obstacles to avoid and not to overcome.

References

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