Original Paper

The Contribution of Collaborative Tasks to the Development of Mediation Competencies through Learning Management Systems

Euphrosyne Efthimiadou[1*]

[1] Department of Aeronautical Sciences, Hellenic Air Force Academy, Dekeleia, Greece

[*] Euphrosyne Efthimiadou, E-mail : efrosin13@yahoo.com

Abstract

In our digital era the adoption of innovative pedagogical approaches is based on the active involvement through collaborative tasks of the participants in the pedagogical process. In this context, mediation skills in the process of cultivating learning strategies play an essential role to the educational process and upgrade the contribution of the mentor-teacher, since the socio-emotional dimension of interpersonal relationships positively contributes to awareness and self-awareness. In addition, in an action-oriented approach, the creation of pedagogical scenarios through Learning Management Systems focuses on mediation skills through the exchange of experiences, skills and good practices, enabling each participant to exploit the group's potential and to create strategic partnerships, which bring added value to the dynamic integration of the learners in social and professional frameworks.

Keywords

mediation competencies, collaborative tasks, action-oriented approach, socio affective strategies, mentoring, Learning Management Systems

1. Introduction

At the threshold of the 21st century, the development of new technological tools increasingly manifests the need for communication and interaction between people by cultivating their digital skills. More specifically, in the pedagogical context, the adoption of views and attitudes is influenced by the degree of awareness of the participants and their active presence through collaborative actions, in order to cultivate mediation skills with the support of new IT systems. On the one hand, communication skills

and above all, the development of mediation skills such as the socio-emotional one, aims at raising awareness and cultivating learning strategies, beyond acquiring knowledge. On the other hand, the contribution of collaborative activities can lead to the acquisition of good practices and experiences and upgrade not only the cognitive and socio-emotional level of the participants but also modify behaviors and attitudes, by integrating and adopting Learning Management Systems in the teaching and learning process.

2. The Contribution of Collaborative Actions to the Development of Mediation Skills

In recent years, the new pedagogical methodology which is based on action-oriented approach, suggesting a holistic method focusing on participatory models and dynamic interventions to upgrade learning, has enabled educators and learners to actively participate in the pedagogical process by developing collaborative tasks, which not only highlight the acquisition of more knowledge but also underline the socio-emotional dimension of interpersonal relationships through the two-way relationship that is created, allowing the diffusion of ideas, beliefs and attitudes towards cultivating mediation skills and bridge differences in mindset by broadening reflexion and frames of mind.

2.1 The Importance of Mediation through the Development of Collaborative Tasks in an Action-Oriented Approach

The adoption of the actional approach enables the activation of micro- and macro-commands in micro- & macro-tasks by cultivating communication skills, in order to respond effectively to the social and professional reality. In this context, learners act and co-act to give themselves the opportunity to carry out micro-expertises through simple and/or complex tasks while attributing a praxeological dimension to the act of learning.

According to Puren (2004, p. 21), the social action focuses on adapting learners to the environment and on the teacher's choices of a certain teaching/learning method which intervenes through combined or articulated tasks to optimize mutual expectations. In this way, flexibility is achieved at the level of the perception of the individual involved in collaborative actions and an opportunity is given to him/her to invest in the pedagogical process since, at an individual level, he/she would not have the courage to take initiative to implement original ideas and intervention plans by engaging in new actions. In addition, he/she can meet co-learners who, would appear reserved or even characterized by distancing in a traditional learning framework. As Efthimiadou puts it, "In this way, communication is constructive because learners are gradually trained through tasks that encourage information management but also controlling attitudes, which allow to cultivate emotional and behavioral values without neglecting the pluralistic interpretations of the learners" (Efthimiadou, April 2018, p. 637).

The ultimate goal of cultivating mediation skills is to address the new challenges of modern societies by better managing uncontrolled situations and adopting strategies to eliminate differences by transferring collaborative actions in a pedagogical learning environment. In this context, the cultivation of mediation skills requires, in addition to acquiring knowledge, the development of awareness and

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mutual understanding in interpersonal relationships developed by a collaborative action plan. As a result, the cultivation of mediation techniques aims to increase the capabilities of the learners by supporting the participants at each stage of the intervention plan. It is underlined that proper information management, dynamic cooperation and problem-solving process allows participants to:

a. invest in the Action Plan by positively negotiating the challenges that are being raised;

b. self-control and increase confidence not only in themselves but also in all group members by increasing the dynamics of everyone involved; and

c. perform creative actions daring to make decisions characterized by divergence and originality.

For this reason, the action-oriented approach is defined as a multidimensional and holistic approach, which aims to cultivate the physical and emotional aspect but also the mental and psychological state of the participants in the pedagogical process. According to the action-based approach, group interactions give a cognitive, socio-emotional and behavioural dimension to the implementation of collaborative tasks linking conviviality and pragmatism (Efthimiadou, 2017, p. 178).

2.2 The Role of Mentor in the Development of the Socio-Emotional Dimension of Mediation Skills

It is understandable that the cultivation of mediation allows the development of a certain degree of awareness to all those involved in the learning process because the development of mediation skills has as its ultimate goal the ability to interpret and associate attitudes and behaviors adopted in forms of modern and asynchronous education at the same time. It is notable that Oxford, R. (2011) uses emotional strategies to combat blockages and work on problem solving by reporting 1) activation of supportive emotions, beliefs and attitudes and 2) generating and maintaining motivation.

In this respect, the role of mentor-teacher is considered a catalyst because it strengthens mutual trust between members of the educational community by contributing to reciprocal understanding and mutual respect, aiming to systematically guide and prepare the target group for the new challenges that arise in the social and professional surroundings. As Efthimiadou notes,

"In this case, the mentor takes on a mediating role, which will allow people in training to develop their professional skills and take care of themselves continuously to acquire new skills, in order to guarantee the self-confidence and energy necessary to fight against any potential failure" (Efthimiadou, 2019, p. 41).

In addition, the contribution of the mentor-educator facilitates the cooperation of the members of the target group towards the proper transmission and processing of information, in order to guide those involved in the management of data through collective thinking by regulating the emotional behavior of the learners. Furthermore, Lasnier (2000) proposes a taxonomy where emotional strategies such as reception, motivation, anxiety management, cooperation and conflict resolution remain linked to time, material resources, human resources and environmental management strategies.

In fact, it is important to note the research conducted since 1950 by Gregory Bateson—founder of the Mental Research Institute in Palo Alto, California in the 1960s and 1970s—which explores the

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systemic interactional approach to studying human behaviour and especially the interactions that are being forged in his/her surroundings. Currently the Gregory Bateson Institute, founded in 1987 for French-speaking Europe, is extending innovative research into the strategic systemic approach to study human behaviour and possible interactions of people within the system while respecting their worldview (Efthimiadou, 2018).

3. The Importance of Mediating Skills in a Modern and Asynchronous Environment through Learning Management Systems

Nowadays, taking into account the fact that digital skills for using computer systems have already been integrated into the schools' curricula, as well as in social and professional contexts, we must ask ourselves how the mediating skills can raise awareness among those involved, by promoting an active pedagogical approach. In this way collaborative tasks through Learning Management Systems allow participants to act by themselves by adopting techniques as well as to aim at the development of learning strategies.

3.1 Mediation Skills and Harmonisation with Contemporary Requirements through the Development of Digital Skills

Due to globalisation it would be interesting to focus on a broader framework of exchanging ideas and sharing values in order to develop the communication channels for understanding, processing and producing new information in a demanding environment of modern and asynchronous education. It is important that groups of individuals who will be engaged in the process of mediation understand more and more the processes of continuous change, when they communicate either live or online in a modern and asynchronous form of education using innovative communication tools, such as discussion forums, blogs and chat rooms, which promote mediation skills and thus the cooperation of group members.

One of the primary objectives in a digital learning environment is to take strategic decisions when designing good practices and effective tasks, encouraging the active participation of the target group through multiple channels of communication and the establishment of harmonious relations between members.

Online training offers the opportunity to combine flexible communication tools with applications to be managed easily such as forums, e-mails, video conferencing, virtual classes (e-class). In addition, it is possible to offer collaborative interactive activities enriched through the use of wikis or blogs but also by sharing information and communicating online to develop simulations or even online educational scenarios (Efthimiadou, 2019, pp. 45-46).

The exchange of experiences and good practices lays on the group's potential to perform complex commands by developing a sense of responsibility and professionalism. The implementation of Learning Management Systems either in a mixed learning model context or in a context of open and distance learning plays an essential role in the personal level of developing learning strategies and at the collective level of cultivating professional skills of learners. It is certain that the involvement of the

learners in multiple collaborative tasks stimulates coherence and solidarity between them and at the same time emphasis is placed on the importance of mediation skills through the cultivation of team spirit in the design and development of complex commands through Learning Management Systems.

3.2 Learning Management Systems: The Development of Project Pedagogy and the Creation of Digital Pedagogical Scenarios

In an action-oriented approach, the subjects assume their responsibilities as agents in a social contract while taking part in a cooperative action project. "In that case the global simulations are defined as a technique that allows, on the one hand, to promote the development of ideas by evidence of divergence in the dramatization of more or less fictitious situations while, on the other hand, to create links in balance with the other members towards the realization of the collaborative tasks." (Efthimiadou, April 2018, p. 638)

Collaborative learning based on Information and Communication Technologies provides participants with digital resources to design and mediatize educational scenarios. The use of the Moodle collaborative platform makes dynamic and effective scenarios implemented because the members of the class group are psychologically involved in achieving the progressive stages where their level of motivation is strengthened thanks to the cooperative spirit and positive interdependence among participants. (Efthimiadou, 2017, p. 184).

To support collaborative projects, the learning environment incorporates awareness tools that help learners become aware of their activity and that of their partners. The tools to make this diagnosis are often referred to as "dashboard". They inform the subjects about the state of their actions and interactions within the group through a series of indicators (Janssen et al., 2011). In the learning environment, it gives them the opportunity to visualize, in graphic and encrypted form, information about how they collaborate within their team (Temperman, G. Hare, & B. De Stercke, 2012, p. 322).

In the digital era new computer tools, multimodal and open approaches can facilitate exchanges about different topics putting into practice actual time learning methods and ensuring new training requirements through the adoption of good educational practices that cultivate a knowledge-based acting focused on creative potential. Finally, the adoption of tactics to perform strategic experiential training encourages the class group to assume its responsibilities to interact in a climate of collaboration and development (Efthimiadou, 2017, pp. 185-186).

4. Discussion

The ultimate goal is to address the new challenges of modern societies by better managing uncontrolled situations and adopt strategies to eliminate any differences in divergences in terms of understanding and undertaking targeted actions to effectively integrate all those involved in the learning process in the socio-professional environment. In this way, a two-way interaction is implemented to active and conscious citizens who become aware of their personal attitude and behaviour and as a result, they take initiative or even act through coordinated collaborative tasks eliminating negative attitudes, by

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selecting the appropriate emotional response and dynamic involvement of any student through learning management systems which act as regulators.

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