C is for Collaboration: A Developmental Perspective

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Overview

- What do we understand by Collaboration?
- What are the benefits of Collaboration?
- Computer Mediated Interaction
- A Helical Development Model
- Levels of Interaction
- Conclusions
What do we understand by Collaboration?

- There would appear to be no commonly agreed definition for collaboration in the educational literature.
- In fact cooperation and collaboration are often used interchangeably and indistinguishably.
- We would argue for collaboration to be reserved for describing activities in which there is a significant degree of genuine interdependence, both of activities undertaken and deliverables produced.
- Collaboration is the antithesis of Competition and hence not a major component of traditional higher education!
What are the benefits of Collaboration?

• Students build their own knowledge through active personal engagement
• Students develop interpersonal and teamwork skills needed in the workplace
• Students develop an understanding of the multiple perspectives needed for living in a multicultural society
• Students engage in the appropriate professional discourse for their discipline
• Students share their skills and experience to solve more complex problems than they could handle as individuals
Computer Mediated Interaction

- Computer Mediated Interaction – students working together in a shared virtual environment (not necessarily at a distance) - is potentially the most radical, innovative, feature of technology enhanced learning

- However we cannot assume that the Web 2.0 generation will enter university with appropriate online experience – we need to systematically develop appropriate Collaborative Competencies

- We should also bear in mind Lipnack and Stamps’ maxim that online collaboration is only 10% about technology and 90% about people!
A Helical Development Model

Existing models for learning, both online and offline, individual and collaborative, do not adequately capture or represent the progressive nature of collaborative experiences over time.

In developing and delivering our virtual teamworking course at the UK Open University we felt the need for a new model which explicitly represented the developmental dimension.
1: The teamworking cycle

- Our initial concern was to visualize the *iterative* sequence of activities taking place within any major collaborative experience, including an element of reflection.
- We modified Kolb’s model to represent the essential elements of collaboration.
Activities in the teamworking cycle

**Define:** Identify and clarify the problem, discuss the approach to be taken, and decide on the rules of operation for the team.

**Distribute:** Share out the identified roles, responsibilities and tasks amongst the team members, and specify the required interactions and delivery schedules for the products of the current cycle.

**Deliver:** Complete and deliver the individual products and combine these into the required team products for the current cycle.

**Debrief:** Reflect, as a team and as individuals, on the process undergone and the products delivered, in preparation for progressing to the next cycle of activity.
2: The developmental helix

- Our other major concern was to visualize the essentially incremental, developmental nature of students’ collaborative experiences over time and over a succession of activities / courses.
- For this purpose we used a helix to represent the development dimension.
3: The helical teamworking model

• Combining these two concepts - of an iterative cycle and incremental development - gave us a new helical model for (online) collaboration.

• The knowledge, skills and behaviours acquired in one cycle need to be explicitly applied and developed in subsequent cycles.
### Levels of Interaction

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 1: Connectedness</th>
<th>Level 2: Communication</th>
<th>Level 3: Cooperation</th>
<th>Level 4: Collaboration</th>
<th>Level 5: Collectiveness</th>
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- We also need to incorporate increasing levels of interaction into the successive cycles of activity, in terms of the complexity of the tasks undertaken, the decisions made, the tools used, the artefacts delivered...
Rising C - levels

• **Level 1. Connectedness:** Contributing, Chatting, Comfort

• **Level 2. Communication:** Commenting on Content, Correcting, Community, Constructive Criticism

• **Level 3. Cooperation:** Critical Thinking, Collation, Coherence, Consistency, Cultural Differences, Contradiction
C - levels

- Level 4. Collaboration: Complexity, Consensus, Co-authoring, Conventions, Coordination, Collective Decision Making, Conflict Resolution, Crisis Management, Commitment, Constraints, Control, Consideration, Conciliation, Construction of Shared Meaning, Common Culture, Community, Collegiality, Contemplation
C - levels

- Level 5. Collectiveness: Culmination, Cumulative Skills Set, Constructive Use, Closure, Celebration
Conclusions

• All students should engage in online collaborative activities.
• These activities need to be carefully structured and managed.
• There should be an explicit developmental dimension to students’ collaborative experiences.
• The Helical Model provides a focus for the design and delivery of such experiences.
Acknowledgement

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Appendix: All the Cs (1)

- Collaboration
- Cooperation
- Competition
- Confrontation
- Conflict
- Coercion
- Consensus
- Continuity
- Challenge
- Community of Practice
- Computer Mediated Interaction
- Co-authoring
- Competencies
- Cycles
- Constructive engagement

- Connection
- Comfort
- Chatting
- Contributing
- Communication
- Content
- Comment
- Constructive Criticism
- Cooperation
- Critical Thinking
- Collation
- Consistency
- Coherence
- Cultural Differences
- Contradiction
Appendix: All the Cs (2)

- Collaboration
- Complexity
- Collective Response
- Consensus
- Consent to Common Criteria
- Common Values
- Collective Goals
- Conventions
- Coordination
- Conferencing
- Calendars
- Collective Decision Making
- Conflict Resolution
- Crisis Management
- Commitment
- Context
- Constraints
- (Consideration)
- (Concilation)
- Ceding Control
- Construction of Shared Meaning
- Common Culture
- Community
- Collegiality
- Contemplation
- Collectiveness
- Culmination
- Cumulative Skill Set
- Constructive Use
- Closure
- Celebration