Examining Learning Experiences in and out of School: The Bridging Learning Experiences Project

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Abstract

According to a sociocultural approach to education, learning happens through participation in formal community events and informal community activities (Esteban-Guitart, in press; Ito, Gutiérrez, Livingstone et al., 2013; Moll, 2014). However, learning activities that take place in and out of school are often not mutually recognized (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014; González, Moll & Amanti, 2005). Indeed, our education systems were built for a world that no longer exists. In that regard, the crisis of our times impacts on the sense of schooling and learning. Ultimately, there is broad agreement that we need new outlooks on learning (rethinking where, when and how learning takes place) and new models of formal education that are better suited to the network society in the digital age. The Bridging Learning Experiences − BLE − project focuses on the analysis of the learning experiences of young people across contexts and activities to which they access and where they participate. The general purpose is to understand how we construct ourselves as learners (the processes of Learner Identity (LI) construction –Coll & Falsafi, 2010–) from participation in and out of school activities. In doing so, the project is organized in three concatenated steps: 1) focus group interviews with children and adolescents at primary and secondary school aged 10, 13, and 16 and their parents and teachers to identify and describe the activities in which they usually take part of school, the socio-institutional contexts in which these activities take place, the role of digital media in these activities and the learning experiences that are linked to these activities; 2) questionnaires with children and adolescents aged 10, 13 and 16 to explore the frequency and width of the children's and adolescents' participation in socio-institutional contexts and activities identified in step 1; and 3) individual interviews to children and adolescents (aged 10, 13, 16), their teachers and parents to deep exploration of the impact of the most relevant learning experiences reported by the participants in the meaning construction about themselves as learners, including the cultural schemata used in this construction and its relationship to other identities.

Keywords: Learning experiences, learner identity, digital age, formal education, crisis