

CO-CREATION OF LEARNING AS AN ENGAGING PRACTICE

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Abstract. *The paper focuses on the co-creation of learning as a contemporary approach to engage learners. Today researchers discuss different engaging practices based on the learner-centred strategies, trying to respond to variety of personal learning needs, requirements and interests. By having a central role in the process, learners can decide how to organize their learning based on their abilities and stay actively engaged in the process. The idea of learners as change agents, active partners, producers and co-creators of their own learning has been a topic of increased interest in recent years. Development of student-led, collaborative initiatives leads educational institutions towards promoting co-creating of learning processes and co-created learning outputs.*

Keywords: *co-creation of learning, personalised learning, students' engagement*

Introduction

The recent researches indicate that students are valuable, yet still undiscovered resource in the learning and teaching process (Gärdebo & Wigberg, 2012). Students bring to the classroom new experiences and knowledge which, if properly, exploited, can contribute to the development of new knowledge with significant benefit to both parties. Co-creation of learning is still under-investigated phenomenon as well as teachers-students' partnerships are not common in the school practices. Bovill, Cook-Sather, Felten, Millard and Moore-Cherry (2015) define co-creation process as collaborative work of teachers and students to create components of curricula and/or pedagogical approaches.

Co-creation expands the scope of knowledge, as it promotes from both sides (students and teachers) to research more into subject and transforms learning experience into something that adds value for learners, who become active agents of the process (Fraser & Bosanquet, 2006). Learners' engagement in co-creation of learning process is a requirement for and an outcome of mutual partnership. However, the key question remains whether this partnership is based on equal contribution from both sides. If we look at the tertiary level, when learners are more mature and motivated, the idea of learning co-creation looks feasible enough

to be realised in practice. A different situation is observed in secondary level, where the curricular implementation traditionally falls on the teachers' side. Thus, the problem arises whether co-creation of learning is possible at secondary, whether it is realised through the partnership of teachers and students. This partnership is realised in a complex process of involvement, and the learners are required to demonstrate high intellectual and intensive emotional investment within a classroom or task and assignment (Dunne & Zandstra, 2011).

The paper aims to investigate prerequisites for co-creation of learning at secondary education level. For reaching this aim, the following objectives were defined:

- 1) Define learning co-creation concept and its main characteristics.
- 2) Develop a theoretical framework of learning co-creation at secondary education level.
- 3) Discuss teaching strategies and methods which support co-creation activities.

The paper is based on literature review, trying to systemise current theoretical and practical approaches of co-creation of learning with a special focus on secondary education level, trying to define roles of teachers and learners as well as to name benefits of this practice. The authors referred to the theory of curriculum (Kelly, 2004), viewing curriculum not only as a content and a product but also as a process and a development through partnership. This theory and results of literature review were used to develop a theoretical framework of learning co-creation at secondary education level.

Literature review

Contemporary education refers to the importance of the learner, which maintains informal and active role in the learning process. Learners ask teachers for more ways of learner-centred approaches, fitting their personal learning requirements and interests (Loyens & Gijbels, 2008). The idea of learners as change agents, active partners, producers and co-creators of their own learning has been a topic of increased interest in recent years (Carey, 2013). Development of student-led, collaborative initiatives leads educational institutions towards promoting co-creating of learning processes and co-created learning outputs. Co-creation of learning stimulates the development of a meta-cognitive awareness about what is being learned (Cook-Sather, Bovill, & Felten, 2014).

Learner's engagement in co-creation of learning process can be achieved through the mutual partnership. The key challenge for secondary level students is to get involved into the complex process and take not very typical roles. In higher education institutions, according to Bovill et al. (2005), collaboration may be realised in diverse ways: both students and teachers can evaluate course content

and learning and teaching processes; students can contribute to the (re)design of the content of courses; students can collaborate in research learning and teaching; undertake disciplinary research; teachers and students can collaboratively design assessment tools and methods, agree upon assessment criteria. Bovill et al. (2015) identified four roles students often assume in co-creating learning and teaching:

- (1) consultant teaching;
- (2) co-researcher;
- (3) pedagogical co-designer;
- (4) representative.

According to Bray and McClaskey (2015), learning co-creation (collaboration) is considered one of the principles of personalised learning. Bearing in mind that currently there are a lot of debates how differentiation, individualisation and personalisation is ensured and developed in education institutions, it is worth analysing the essential characteristics of personalised learning. Accepting learning co-creation as a core approach in personalised learning, allows empower learners to take real ownership on learning, identify themselves as the meaningful part of the process, have dynamic connection with teacher, who recognizes variety of cognitive and behavioural abilities and supports their integration in the acquisition of learning (Grant & Basye, 2014).

Table 1 Characteristics of Personalized Learning (adapted from Bray & McClaskey, 2015)

Dimension	Characteristics
STANDARDS AND LEARNING GOALS	Learning core list with optional knowledge, corresponding students interests and abilities.
DEMONSTRATION OF LEARNING	Learning based on teachers' recommendation, involving students' interests and skills.
LEARNING PROCESS	Making choice what and how to learn in flexible set of activities. Having freedom of choice.
ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING	Experience formative assessments from teacher, self and peers based on learning unit and summative assessment.
ROLE OF COLLABORATION	Collaboration as a critical element of learning process.
ROLE OF SELF-DIRECTION	Making own decisions about how to demonstrate knowledge or plan and organize activities. Learning self-assessment and effective usage of resources.

Discussing the proposed learners' roles by Bovill et al. (2015) in the context of a secondary education level, it is useful to discuss how co-creation of learning takes place in the educational process from the perspective of curriculum as a cyclic process. Kelly (2004) argues that curriculum theory might look at curriculum as a content and a product as well as a process and a development. So,

if we look at different steps of curriculum as a cyclic process where curriculum is developed in partnership, we can identify such stages as planning (setting educational (learning and teaching) goals), implementation of the educational process, assessment and feedback including reflection (Figure 1).

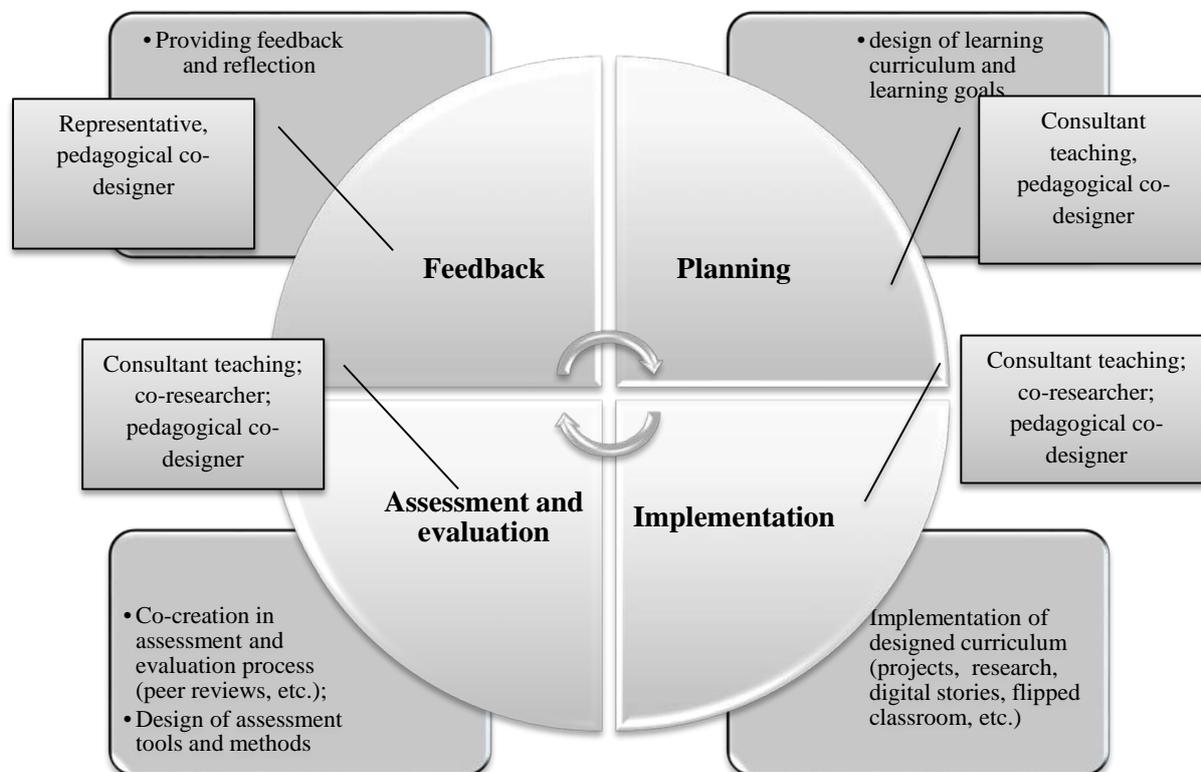


Figure 1 Areas of learning co-creation

Nowadays, most of the educational institutions share understanding that curriculum development is not a rigid process, rather than flexible one, which involves collaborative process of learning, where the teacher and the student are acting as constructors of knowledge (Jarvis, 2016). Conceptualizing curriculum in this way aligns with the idea that learning is an emergent and social process, which requires on-going reflection and action from both parts: educators and learners. Such kind of collaborative approach rejects the idea of positioning only one part as a producer and the other one as a receiver (King & Felten, 2012). The latter approach is in line what Brundrett and Silcock (2002) say about co-constructive teaching. These authors claim that co-constructive teaching gives parity to both – the teacher and the learner.

Starting from the first, planning phase, teachers define learning goals and objectives. The challenge is how learners can contribute to this process and what strategies could be taken. Normally, advanced learners are capable to define their

individual learning goals while aligning them to the learning objectives presented by teachers. However, co-creation of learning is not focused only to advanced learners. Learners which need a more individual approach and longer learning time may also contribute to defining learning objectives. Particularly for such learners it is very important to realise that teachers consider diverse and specific needs. Referring to learners' roles by Bovill et al. (2015), students may take the role of a teacher consultant, a pedagogical co-designer. The methods for implementing general and personal goals could be a case analysis, a project, roles' play, digital story telling. Particularly the latter method could be more explored by practitioners and applied as an effective tool for engaging students. Based on constructivist and constructionist paradigms, digital story telling involves learners into co-creation process from the idea generation to realisation.

According to Green, Dillon and Humphreys (2005), digital story telling enables learning co-creation through fostering four key areas with the help of ICT:

- Ensuring learner's capacity of making informed and efficient educational decisions;
- Diversifying and recognizing variety forms of abilities and knowledge while applying ICT;
- Creating and promoting diversity in learning environment through different tools;
- Keeping learners in the focus of the whole process.

By encouraging students to organize their own ideas into individual stories digital storytelling works as a vehicle, which combines interactive digital media and tools with new practices of pedagogy, enabling learners to take part in creation of learning value. Technology enhancement in learning process brings student's excitement of acquiring knowledge on new level, thus encourages them to take lead on what they are learning and how they are learning (Lee & McLoughlin, 2010). Meanwhile, teachers keep learners on track by assessing their interaction with ICT tools and how they create their own learning scenarios. Such environments promote constructivist innovation, which stands for providing more authentic and reflective learning values, where students get opportunity to position their own ideas, convert them into stories and share it with others. Digital storytelling encourages additional educational outcomes by enhancing motivation and creativity, increasing collaboration and co-creation among learners and teachers (Kreps, 1998). It supports higher order thinking and better accessibility of curriculum for each learner, thus enables them to bring personal contribution towards content creation. This pedagogical approach emphasizes the importance of accumulating knowledge, rather than simply memorizing facts and is linked with the concept of personalization and theory of constructivism, which suggests that learners construct knowledge out of their experiences and promotes active learning, or co-learning and co-creation, by engagement and collaboration.

At the implementation phase students may become co-researchers while working collaboratively on a project, a specific assignment, experiment and similar. As application of knowledge takes over the accumulation of the knowledge, educators seek more ways of expanding teaching and learning tools, more ways to keep learners engaged in their own learning process from the very first days of schooling. 21st century ICT innovations in education showcase that students not only learn how to use technologies but also are able to leverage it effectively to create their own learning experiences and improve the level of interaction. One of the good examples of personalization through learning co-creation is a flipped classroom model. The flipped classroom has two defining components: moving the lesson outside of class, usually delivered through some electronic means, and moving the practical application assignments into the classroom (Educause, 2012). Emphasizing the strengths of the flipped model includes efficient usage of class time, more active learning opportunities, student responsibility and creation for own learning scenarios, increased one-on one interaction between educator and learner (Cole & Kritzer, 2017). This enables learners to ingest topic independently, explore and create content around it and then discuss it in the classroom. Meanwhile teacher seizes control of the classroom by freeing up time for in-depth discussions and personalized teaching.

An important co-creative process takes at the assessment phase. One of the best practices is a peer review which involves all learners and allows them realising how the defined criteria can be applied in the assessment process. Feedback from learners is crucial for both sides – teachers and students – to improve the educational practice as well as stimulates metacognitive experiences.

Working collaboratively on teaching and learning process provides significant benefits for both sides, as co-created initiatives enable experiential, problem-based and active learning. Co-creation of learning between educators and learners can significantly impact sense of learning community and enhance collaborative and flexible learning experiences. As co-creation of learning enables experiential learning, learners become key indicators of learning environment. Through co-creation of learning process, educational institutions can provide better teaching and classroom experiences, enhanced engagement, enhanced meta-cognitive awareness and stronger sense of identity among learners (Cook-Sather et al., 2014).

Co-creation of learning also rejects traditional way of teacher simply controlling and conducting lesson by standing at the front of the class and imparting knowledge. It provides more ways for better empowerment of learners. Co-creation of learning promotes shift of roles inside the learning environment by implementing crucial innovative pedagogical approaches, where students get opportunity to participate in project-based, ICT-enhanced or outdoor, real-world

classrooms. These approaches require putting learners in control of their own learning, as learning is based on exploration, leadership and self-driven activities.

Student engagement is considered as a key factor to student success, as adoption of active role enhances learning activities by adding personal role and value on it. It is mostly associated with metacognitive awareness about what is being created as a learning value. Such an approach makes learners more likely to develop deep and complex attitudes towards learning, as they 'become adaptive experts who both recognize and even relish the opportunity and necessity for breaking with traditional approaches and inventing new ones' (Bain & Zimmerman, 2009, p. 10). Respectively, today's learning environment should promote the development of student's critical thinking skills; foster their personal contribution, support enthusiasm and engagement as key dispositions in their learning. These characteristics will only be nurtured if learners get possibility to remain actively engaged in educational activities while conducting some autonomous investigations or contributing towards value creation process. By reflecting more complexity, curiosity and clear instruction, learners' engagement becomes more efficient. A rich and supportive learning environment provides activities that encourages student's interests, promotes purposeful engagement and cooperation, and facilitates learning within and across all developmental domains cognitive, physical or social.

Conclusions

In this paper, co-creation of learning as a contemporary approach in education is framed as a process of enhanced student engagement. This approach is more dynamic rather than a simply achieved state or result, which offers the potential for a more authentic and genuine transformation of learning for all involved. Reciprocity of the relationship between educators and learners, interdependence and learner-centred methodologies are ground qualities for learning co-creation.

As 21st century learners have begun to show interest in adopting active and participatory roles throughout learning acquisition, educators are being encouraged to interact and work in collaboration together with them through value creation. Co-creation is understood as a complex interaction between the learner and the teacher, which takes way through planning, implementing, evaluating and feedbacking educational content. If integrating learners' intellectual capabilities and personal traits alongside the other institutional resources, it can provide mutual and added value for both, students and teachers.

Involving learners to design their own educational experiences enhances ownership and sense of responsibility, respectively it provides significant step in deepening learning experiences.

Engaging students in learning creation is a complex task, however it leads towards more authentic, meaningful and personalized learning scenarios, which directly correspond to the learner's needs, who no longer take any passive role in learning process. Students can take an important part by providing accurate information about how learning should take place and which technologies and learning environments best meet their needs.

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