

Abstract

Here, a group of peers practice anticipatory learning together, drawing on their experience in peeragogical learning environments. Peeragogy is their method for active learning with colleagues, a term to describe how people generate, exchange, negotiate, and apply knowledge together. The goal of anticipatory learning “is not to be well adapted but to adapt well” (Downing 2007, quoted in Tschakert and Dietrich, 2010). These peers work towards that goal peeragogically in a work of design fiction grounded in the present but beginning to explore a possible future of learning.

A Fictional Peeragogical Anticipatory Learning Exploration

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In a room walled by full bookcases and dotted with lush plants, a wise woman sat facing a group of her peers and said, "I brought you here to reflect on our work together, to think about what anticipatory learning is, and try to understand how it happens."

"Well, let's see how it relates to what we've learned about peer learning," a peer said, "We've been exploring the value of interaction and the new connections it brings. We had all learned, at an early age, that $1 + 1 = 2$. But when we collaborate, we sometimes find that $1 + 1 = 3$ or $1 + 1 = 4$."

"Would you mind going over that math again, please?" the wise woman asked.

"Take two people and a couch. Individually they cannot move the couch on their own. Only when they work together can they move the couch. If they work together well, they will be able to move the couch effectively and efficiently. So, when you have two people who work well together, you have the benefit of both of their talents separately and you have the benefit (plus alpha) of things that they can do together that they could never do on their own. In a very real sense, $1 + 1 = 3$ or $= 4$ or, even, $= 5$."

Smiling, the wise woman said, "Gracias!"

The peer replied, "You're welcome! We can't measure the value of collaboration with a yardstick, nor can we be sure in advance what we're going to get out of it, but on a whole we see tangible benefits from working together. This is very different from more individualized, instrumental, ways of doing things. If you think about it, collaboration is an act of faith."

“At my university, when someone asks a question, or help with a problem that needs to be solved, usually a very complex one, they begin the email referring to the group as their ‘hive mind’. It is a powerful phrase to define *collective intelligence*, the ability to think together or ask for help,” a peer across the room said, “a way to achieve desirable outcomes that might not have been possible otherwise. leapfrogging hierarchical processes.”

“And let’s not forget that this is an embodied process,” someone commented. “Recall Owen (1992):

- ‘Whoever come are the right people’,
- ‘Whenever it starts is the right time’,
- ‘Whatever happens is the only thing that could have’, and
- ‘When it’s over it’s over’.

In our work, people have come and gone, and sometimes they have come back again. Similarly, any edit made to our shared work is probably an improvement, or at least we trust that it aims to be one. So we ideally we will learn something from each change that takes place.”

“I am reminded of a Serendipitous Learning Roundtable that I participated in years ago (Wilkoff, 2014). I have reconnected with individuals from that roundtable to complete multiple projects. It is often not until a new round of introductions are made that we remember that we know each other because of our participation in that original serendipitous event. This makes me believe that the patterns of learning, working and collaborating together, are indeed the ones that are meant to be. When we prepare to learn, we must be ready to expect the unexpected.”

The wise woman next asked “How are we to better learn today for sustainable tomorrows?”

“Can we make a roadmap?” someone responded.

A fellow peer was not immediately convinced, and said, “Perhaps the idea of a roadmap, even a ‘distributed’ or ‘emergent’ one, is too prescriptive in this case.”

Another argued, “I think a roadmap is a good start for every project. It makes clear the initial visions, expectations and commitments of the group. At the same time, it must be adaptable and open to new and previously unforeseeable paths. Learning is not a linear process, and it doesn’t happen in a vacuum. Our goal is to build a deeper understanding of situations that were not visible or clear at the beginning. That involves looking forward as well as looking backward.”

“OK, but maybe it’s not a roadmap anymore. Maybe it’s a story.”

The wise woman then said, “What lessons should we not repeat and how so?”

“We should stop recreating the wheel,” a peer replied.

With a look of acknowledgement another peer said, “There are indeed lots of resources out there, and much to be gained by bringing together people with different perspectives and backgrounds. This can help ensure that nothing is missed.”

“It seems like we are continually working out how to do this more effectively. In principle, there’s no limit to humans can achieve. In practice, there are lots of problems in the world. What’s our specific contribution?” asked someone else.

“Enlightened self interest can be an effective glue, whether it’s about personal satisfaction or group survival. So one thing we can do is work to create dialogues between

parties who are seriously concerned about specific problems, so we all learn from each other." another peer replied.

Smiling wryly, a peer remarked, "We can't beat evolution, so let's join it!"

With a face that looked like she had her own ideas about the question, the wise woman asked, "How does this relate to the themes of learning through informal, provocative, and unexpected practices, and by 'hacking'?"

"A continually revised guide book is one hack for this process. Maybe there is no way around the fact that keeping it up to date and improving it is a difficult and time consuming endeavor, but the good news is that this work has many rewards, as we've seen with the '*Peeragogy Handbook*' (2016)."

The wise woman smiled, "It seems that the bonds of friendship are what have made this project sustainable over the long term. We have created a space where we can take some risks, and thereby, learn together. Extending that safe space and those friendships will help enable more people to practice, learn, and adapt together."

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