Playtesting "The Sausage Factory"

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"Laws are like sausages; it is better not to see them being made" – Otto Von Bismarck

While ASCILITE aims to enable and share "high quality research, innovation and evidence-based technology-enhanced practices in tertiary education" (ASCILITE, n.d.), this frequently takes the form of evaluations and discussions of the pedagogical impact of Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) and commonly addresses the perspectives of the teaching and researching academic (Bayerlein & McGrath, 2018). We rarely explore the perspectives and practices of the institutional staff tasked with practically implementing and integrating education technologies in increasingly complex educational ecosystems (Ellis & Goodyear, 2019), the education technologists and ICT teams. Perhaps there is a perception that, like laws, it is better not to see education technology implementations being made. Given the frustrations frequently expressed about the speed and cost of these implementations however, understanding more about the finer details of how they work - the "sausage factory" - would seem beneficial to people working with TEL in many areas.

The goal of the session and how it will operate:

This experimental session will enable attendees to participate in a 'playtest' of a branching scenario-based interactive video game called "The Sausage Factory" that is currently being developed by the Monash Education Innovation team in conjunction with the ASCILITE TELedvisors SIG. The purpose of the game is to increase understanding of the complexity of education technology implementations by guiding players through key decision points in the process from product identification to the start of piloting (Wang & Paper, 2005). This will, hopefully, in turn lead to more beneficial collaborations and more effective project planning by providing deeper understanding of the factors that influence these projects. This session would be best suited to a 50 min period to encourage discussion.

The playtest will involve having participants play the game collectively, by voting on decisions raised in short multi-media scenarios involving two or three key stakeholders addressing a key issue or factor in an education technology implementation. These include compatibility with existing enterprise systems, planning for support, network and security issues, privacy, intellectual property, budgetary priorities and licensing, to name but a few (Kenny, 2004). Participants will use an online polling tool to vote for the best decision at the end of the scenario after being given an opportunity to ask questions. These questions will replicate the availability of links to additional information in the game. Decisions made by participants will have an immediate impact on the project in the game by determining the next scenario shown, as well as affecting scores relating to cost, time taken, reputational impact, pedagogical impact and project engagement.

At the end of the game, the facilitators of the session will foster discussion of the themes and issues raised in the game, as well as gathering feedback on the effectiveness of the scenarios and the gameplay that will be used to develop further iterations.

When completed, the game will be released freely under a Creative Commons By Attribution, Non-Commercial licence.

How the session fits the ASCILITE 2019 theme:

While this session and game is centered around the activities of the people who implement and support the education technologies used in institutions, it is worth remembering that their ultimate goal is to provide students with the best possible learning experience, which aligns with the overall theme of ASCILITE 2019. There are many secondary factors that shape how this is achieved and this session aims to shed some light on some that are less well understood.

In terms of the specific conference streams, it would sit well in Stream 2: Practices and Challenges in Technology Enhanced Learning, as it will help raise understanding of the technological factors that influence the ways that TEL takes "root in a meaningful, scaled or sustainable manner"

Who the session is aimed at:

The primary audience for this session is people working in roles that don't ordinarily have much to do with the behind the scenes decision making involved in making education technology available in an institution. These would mainly be academics involved in TEL research and using TEL in teaching, learning designers and leaders of TEL support units. It would be useful to also have learning technologists and IT people in the session to bring their particular insights to assist in developing the game.

What attendees will get out of your session:

Attendees should get two things from the session: a deeper understanding of the complex factors that influence the implementation of education technology in an institution and an opportunity to share their thoughts about the strengths and weaknesses in this process.

Session organisers

Colin Simpson, Monash – Educational Technologist

Colin Simpson is a Senior Education Technologist in the Monash Education Innovation team at Monash University. He has worked as a Learning Technologist, Education Designer and Academic Developer since 2003 at the Canberra Institute of Technology, ANU, Swinburne University and has been at Monash since May 2019. Colin is a TELedvisors SIG co-convener and is a PhD candidate in Education at the University of Sydney.

Kate Mitchell, Victoria University – Learning Designer

Kate has worked as a learning designer and previously was responsible for La Trobe's digital learning strategy. Her most recent research was a Master of Education examining vocational educators' perceptions of eLearning, its barriers and its enablers. Kate is a TELedvisors SIG co-convener and co-founder and runs the journal club for the SIG.

Wendy Taleo, Charles Darwin University – Learning Technologist

Wendy completed her Master of Arts in Online and Distance Education this year. She supports academics in developing their teaching practice with technology and is part of the LMS team providing administrative support, user acceptance and testing and blended training on new products and features. Her research interests lie in multimodality of student-created work and TEL assessment design. She has been involved with TELedvisors since its inception and a SIG leader for the past year.

References

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