ABSTRACT

Questioning gender in E-learning

Cecile K. M. Crutzen

Gender and Power in the New Europe, the 5th European Feminist Research Conference
August 20-24, 2003 Lund University, Sweden

In the nineties, in the computer discipline a focus shift took place. „Information“ is was not
the main theme anymore but „Interaction“.
„Interaction“ can be seen as an exchange of representations between actors. Speaking,
writing, making, designing are doings in which an actor presents herself to other actors:
human and not human. All acting of an actor is a representation of herself in a world of
other actors and at the same time an interpretation of that world. In such worlds of
interaction the potential of all meaning constructing processes that may emerge, depends on
the participating actors and the exchanged and ready-made representations. This potential
will determine the learning possibilities of the individual actors.
Through learning in interaction worlds actors develop habits and routines. Acquiring habits
out of experiences is the power to develop dispositions, to cope with difficulties of a later
situation to represent an acquaintance with the world of actors, materials and equipment to
which action is applied.

Interaction concepts used in the design of ICT-products such as e-mail, groupware,
workflow systems and Internet services, are based on formal and planned interaction. Using
these products humans will change their interaction options and thus the character and
content of interaction itself will change. The rich potential and variety of human
interaction, which should be included in learning processes, are problematic because the
ready made electronic interactions are mostly habituated in the interaction potentials of
technical objects and syntactical data processing. Habits tend to transform into frozen
routines.

„Questioning gender“ is an instrument for analysing the influences of the disciplines that
are dominant in the creation of E-learning. „Questioning gender in E-learning“ will also be
presented as a strategy to disrupt closed learning environments in which the learning
process is reduced to a procedure of formal and planned acting of learners. Learners are
seen in such environment types as objects with predictable behaviour.
„Questioning gender“ is also a source of inspiration to create E-learning environments as
open critical transformative rooms. The interaction potential of E-learning environments
should be as diverse as possible and should not determine the acting of the learners and their
tutors.

In the presentation will be given examples of learning environments. Further there will be
given recommendations for and reflections on the design and development of team oriented,
competence based online learning: An educational setting which could be adequate for
acquiring professional expertise because it opens up negotiation possibilities on learning
and working tasks which are comparable with the complexity and dynamics of authentic
work settings. Competence based online learning articulates the underlying constructivist instructional design principles of participation and cooperation.

Dr. C.K.M. Crutzen
School of Informatics
Open University of the Netherlands
P.O. Box 2960, 6401 DL Heerlen, The Netherlands
Tel: +31 45 576 2572
Fax: +31 45 576 2115
E-mail: cecile.crutzen@ou.nl