Boundaries of unfamiliar learning experiences in the innovation journey in business management education

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Overview

Introduction and context
Theoretical framing and methodological underpinning
Reframing the ‘unfamiliar’ into the ‘new familiar’
Final thoughts and questions
Introduction and context

- Capacity of mock-ups to help business learners traverse disciplinary and conceptual boundaries in order to seek out innovative solutions.

- A means of mediating collaborative interaction within innovation process enabling learners to encounter the unfamiliar and incorporate it into their learning experiences.
Learners’ innovation journey

- One term-long project with four way-points

- Pedagogical approaches:
  (1) learners given free rein to choose the customer,
  (2) learners given a broad archetype to offer a starting point for their development

- The mock-up is a platform for
  (1) testing new ideas, (2) foster collaborative interactions, (3) offer critique, and (4) further dialogue on tackling the unfamiliar.
Theoretical framing

- The four main functions that are seen as being performed by artefacts in innovation process are: (1) inspiration, (2) individual evaluation and refinement, (3) internal sharing, and (4) external alignment (Stigliani, 2008).

- Representational methods [like mock-ups], which apply manual toolkit-based modelling in a goal-oriented but playful way foster the emergence of innovation in heterogeneous groups (Schulz et al., 2015).

- The process of design prototyping as a means of creating transformative learning environment and ‘problem-posing’ education (Friere, 1986).
Methodological underpinning

- Participatory action research: focuses on solving a practical problem, namely helping learners to reframe the boundaries of the ‘unfamiliar’ learning experiences to create ‘new familiar’

- 134 learners

- Learners were in their final year of undergraduate study on a BA (Hons) Global Management degree

- Early 20s and represented a wide selection of cultural, social and national backgrounds

- The data was collected from three stages of mock-up development: its creation, its evaluation and post-mock-up reflection.
Reframing the ‘unfamiliar’ into the ‘new familiar’

- The value of the tactile experience of making as the framing mechanism for the collaborative endeavour;

- The capacity for facilitating, through a common goal, the management of internal team relations and interactions;

- The capacity for externalising and framing the emotional investment of the learners in the collaborative process.
Impacting the innovation process

- New insights enabling learners to expand their knowledge by doing

- The process of embodiment enables members of the team to see their ideas externalised and shared

- The creation of the mock-up is a triggering point in the change from information gathering to content production
Mediating team dynamics

The mock-up has a role surfacing and externalising issues around:

- Team dynamics and size
- Reassignment of the roles of responsibility
- Personal motivation
- Need for external intervention
Establishing emotional connections

Emotional responses can include:
- Pleasure at being able to create something
- An acknowledgement of fun and play
- Frustration when things do not go according to plan
- Concern whether the work ‘will be good enough’
- Disappointment when the feedback offers too critical a view.
- A sense of enthusiasm and ‘we are all in it together’
Coping mechanisms for the ‘unfamiliar’

- The team has to be willing to make the mock-up a central goal of their collaboration

- The making ‘from scratch’ of the mock-ups enables learners to cope with the unfamiliar and its boundaries

- ‘New familiar’ environments still often emerge from new understandings of the familiar aspects of the unfamiliar context learners encounter
Reframing the boundaries

In time the learners recognise:

- Their newly found ability to solve innovation problems
- Feel empowered
- Generate knowledge
- Happily occupy a new familiar environment to deepen and broaden the subject in practice and theory.
Conclusions

- The process of making sense of the unfamiliar and re-creating it into the ‘new familiar’ takes place at metacognitive level.

- It enables learners to fast-track their self-motivation and self-belief as active contributors in collaborative teams.

- It equips them with adaptability and resilience to cope with the uncertainty of such cross-disciplinary collaborative environments.
Thank you and any questions?
References


Excitement of making and mediation of interactions

- allow groups to coalesce around a shared idea of the offering, externalising the individuals’ views and combining into a consensual one

- the mock-up as an artefact imbued with meaning and representation of a common goal can be a very useful way to separate the personalities from the objective of the process to remind learners about the shared and collaborative nature of the experience

- learners mediate their own excitement of making and mediation of interactions