Pedagogy of Possibility: Exploring the TVET of Southern African Workers on Foreign Vessels Mediated by Ubiquitous Google and Microsoft apps

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Abstract : The context which this paper explores is the provision of Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) of southern African workers at sea on local and foreign vessels using a blended learning approach. The pedagogical challenge of providing quality education in this context is that multiple African and foreign languages and cultural norms are found amongst the all-male crew; and there are widely differing levels of education, low levels of digital literacy and limited connectivity. The methodology used is a nested case study. The study describes the mechanisms used to provide ongoing, real-time workplace TVET on two foreign vessels. Some training was done in person when the vessels came into port, however, the majority of the TVET was achieved from shore to ship using a combination of commonly available Google and Microsoft Apps and WhatsApp. Voice, video and text in multiple languages were used to accommodate different learning styles. The learning was supported by the development of learning networks using social media. This paper also reflects on the shore-based organisational change processes required to support sea learning. The conceptual framework used is the Theory of Practice Architectures (TPA) as is provides a site-ontological perspective of the sayings/thinkings, doings and relatings of this workplace training which is multiplanar as it plays out at sea and ashore, in-person and on-line. Using TPA, the overarching practice architectures and supporting structures which confound or enable these learning practices are revealed. The contribution which this paper makes is an insight into an innovative vocational pedagogy which promotes ICT-mediated learning amongst workers who suffer from low levels of literacies and limited ICT-access and who work and live in remote places. It is a pedagogy of possibility which crosses the digital divide.
Keywords : theory of practice architecture, microsoft, google, whatsapp, vocational pedagogy, mariners, distributed workplaces