

Multimedia Case Studies: Creating New Environments for On-Line Learning

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Cases available at: <http://simgame.rhet.ualr.edu/>

Problem:

Traditional CMSs represent and mediate the activity systems of formal schooling

- Clark's (1999) "truck" metaphor

Might a CMS represent and mediate activity systems beyond formal schooling? With what effects?

Two MyCase CMS Cases

Omega Molecular (biosystems engineering, bioethics, technical communication)

Agile Motorcycle (management, BA and MBA)

- Students play the role of consulting teams called in to solve find and solve problems, make recommendations
- Tutor plays various roles. E.g., Head consultant (their boss)
- No best solution. Solutions vary greatly among teams.

Agile Motorcycle case:

- Capstone business management course (fourth-year undergraduates)
- 40 students
- Taught with a combination of traditionally-mediated content and the Agile case CMS (other 'paper' cases, lectures, class discussions, exams)
- Agile engagement lasted nine weeks

Research questions:

Do students in a professional course taught with both traditional materials and case CMS materials configured as an organizational simulation:

1. describe their learning in each more in terms of 'higher-order' or 'lower-order' cognitive processes?
2. attribute professional significance to the case CMS more than to the other course activities?

Key activities/assignments

<i>Case Date (Stage)</i>	Key activity	Assignments: 'Closing Text'
Spring, 1998	Decide what an entrant into the US motorcycle market might look like	Generic entrant-profile memo

Spring, 1998	Recommend whether or not one of four possible entrants should enter the US market	Recommendation memo
Spring, 2000	Contribute to Agile reference library by characterizing Polaris's decision to enter the cruiser market	Case brief
Present Day	Given that Polaris successfully entered the domestic market, evaluate the decision and recommend a course of future action	Post-mortem and recommendation memo

Methods:

- 16 students volunteered for two focus groups, early and late in the term, wks 9 and 14
- Four questions asked
- Responses recorded and transcribed, coded, and analyzed.

Results

- Students describe their learning in the case CMS more in terms of ‘higher-order’ cognitive processes.
- Students attribute professional significance more to the case CMS.
- The subjectivity, rules, and division of labor afforded in the case CMS seemed to change in ways that more resembled workplaces, though students were very much aware this was the activity of schooling

Further development:

- How can a case CMS better achieve the learning intended?
- How do students who have used a case CMS respond to internships and new positions?
- Are students more critical of workplace practices?

Bibliography:

These and other papers available at the project website: <http://simgame.rhet.ualr.edu/>

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