

Distributed Mentoring: Peer interaction and collaborative learning in P2PU
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As the agenda for OER shifts from the development of free content towards the provision of 'participatory learning infrastructures' (Seely-Brown and Adler, 2008), two areas of empirical investigation arise: first, the integration of free resources in an OER context; and second, emerging learner models from engagement with free courses. Launched in September 2009 with the mission to put a 'social and pedagogical wrapper' around open access and educational materials, Peer-to-Peer University has evolved into a public space that demonstrates the fostering of collaboration among activists within the open education movement, volunteer tutors and motivated learners in the design and facilitation of short courses. While 'peer learning' between interested participants occurs throughout the design and delivery of courses, the relationships of mentors, volunteer tutors and engaged students during the running of courses, requires further exploration.

To explore such relationships, the paper focuses on two P2PU courses – each with different pedagogical designs: a) Cyberpunk Literature; b) Creative Non-Fiction Writing and c) Copyright for educators. Drawing on the Community of Inquiry framework (e.g. Garrison and Anderson, 2003; Garrison and Anderson, 2007) and perspectives from online communities and social media (e.g. Alevizou et al., 2010; Conole and Alevizou, 2010; Galley, Conole and Alevizou, forthcoming) and deploying observational logs with participants, we outline how expressions of tutoring and mentoring relate to different nuances of peer learning and how these may influence the learning experience. Evident from the textual interface and social organization of the three courses is that the role of the instructor or course organizer adheres a cooperative model (Boud and Miller, 1996; Burge, 1994), reflected in the aggregation and filtering of materials and the evolution of pedagogical modeling; this is *negotiated* both prior to, and during, the running of the courses. The course of study is *influenced by* a network of participants, which includes on-the-side community mentors and students in the relevant groups. 'Instructor behaviour' (providing structure, pacing and often focusing) is evident across the three courses in the design and management of discussion(s) on resources and assignments. However other supporting behaviour appears to vary. In the Creative writing course expert guidance and contributions is more prevalent, in the form of technical and constructive feedback (e.g. through grading) and individualized and content-related messages. In the Cyberpunk course on the other hand, there's evidence of students actively seeking to share control with the organizer in the co-designing of activities, producing more intense engagement and independence. The Copyright for educators' course, has similarities to a workshop with tutor presence and distributed mentorship balancing purposeful communication and *collective construction of meaning* through sustained reflection.

The presentation will structure results from an analysis of 'distributed mentorship' and 'peer behaviour' based on the following interrelated dimensions:

- a) Self-representation: personal narratives and descriptions of self, motivations and incentives

- b) Social presence & participation: in assigned activities, contribution of alternative perspectives; attendance to others' experiences and reflections; sharing of cognitive and social resources; collective sense-making
- c) focused messaging & affective feedback: supportive and constructive exchanges, credit, humor

We conclude with an evaluation of the ways in which the courses under study promote a participatory infrastructure, that not only can make the process of learning transparent, but also represent a relationship between teaching and learning in an open fashion.

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