Commentary

Brief thoughts on becoming a TELIC 'newbie'

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Abstract

In this paper I outline my experiences as a new member of the TELIC community, and my hopes and expectations of being a student at masters level, of studying online, and, as a Dutch-speaking teacher in Belgium, of working in English as my second language.

Keywords: *community; learning; growth; technology*

Social media has made it much easier for the like-minded to connect. I am quite a Twitter fan and it is amazing how educators can benefit from a personal (passionate?) learning network. I have been tweeting about ICT and education some years now, and at a certain time I got a private message from *@zelfstudie*. Koen and I follow each other, we have similar backgrounds as teachers in secondary education, and we share common interests for technology and innovation. In short, he introduced me to the TELIC programme. I guess we are talking about synchronicity.

Currently, I'm a practitioner lecturer and ICT coordinator in an adult teacher-training programme in Flanders. In early 2013 I was exploring the possibilities of getting a Masters degree in Educational Sciences or similar. In Flanders there is not really a Masters degree on Technology and Innovation (not that I know of), so this message from a colleague, Koen Timmers, (himself a student on the course) turned out to be a golden tip. After a Skype session with Richard Pountney, the course leader of the TELIC course, followed by some more research on the contents of the

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course and a confirmation that the degree is NARIC approved in Flanders (yes, it is), I decided to 'go for it'. And how has it been so far? Let me share some thoughts with you.

If I was to send out a tweet about TELIC it would go something like this:

> *#telic1 keeps stretching my thoughts. Interesting to learn how humans & nonhumans connect. Great MSc 4 tweeps with #edtech growth mindset.*

At the beginning of the course, I was a bit nervous. How will it go? Will my headset work? Is my English not too rusty? But the first virtual classroom session (in *Collaborate*) broke the ice and we got to know each other very quickly. Although we haven't met in-real-life (IRL), I have the feeling of being truly connected to the other participants. After the first session we had to set up some tools for learning: a set of wiki pages – check!; a personal blog – check!; my #telic1 *Tweetdeck* column – check!.

The Collaborate sessions themselves work out fine for all participants. There are no big technical difficulties. In fact it is amazing how this technology combined with the right pedagogy can facilitate a masters programme like this.

In between the Collaborate sessions we work in pairs or little groups on challenging tasks about technology and how it enhances learning. Not only about technology, also about broader sociological or psychological aspects in learning. Sometimes the critical reading assignments are even puzzling or pleasantly frustrating - but always interesting! It really is about learning and constructing knowledge. Thinking outside the box and seeing differently – *delicious innovative food for curious minds*!

Finally, perhaps a very practical element: the programme is 'doable' to combine with my family life and my job. Although it is hard work, and the deadlines are often close, I am glad I took up the challenge. I am just starting my dissertation stage and it is amazing to see how my learning from the four modules comes together in my research project (I am investigating social media by the way). I am looking forward to this and also to meeting a lot of the TELIC people in May 2015 at the annual conference in Hasselt, Belgium. Connecting digitally is good, but both digital and IRL is better.

Happy to be on (TELIC) board!
Bram