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APPROACHES FROM THE LITERATURE: Activity Theory, new tools and changing educators’ practices

This study asks if the introduction of a new tool – the computer – into the classroom shifts a teacher’s pedagogical practices. It offers a thick description of the educator’s changing activity system after the entry of computers into the learning environment.

Emerging themes:
- Time and workload
- Visual cues
- Interaction and building rapport
- Use of direct messaging and email

Peruski and Mishra 2004

By way of cross-case analysis, this study examines three expert face-to-face educators who design and teach their first online course. It aims to see which contradictions emerge when designing and teaching an online course, and asks how participating in these activities transforms the thinking of the educators (or the systems) in terms of teaching, learning, technology, course design, and face-to-face teaching.

Findings:
- Re-think, re-evaluate teaching issues long put to rest in face-to-face context
- Anxiety about ability, re-consider role as educators and what they want to achieve
- Transformations in thinking about face-to-face teaching
- Gain deep knowledge on technology and interest in incorporating tech into face-to-face teaching

Conclusion

This poster has examined three studies which use activity theory to examine change in educators’ practices after the introduction of a new tool/mediating artefact into the learning environment. Our study incorporates these three studies into the design of our study of change in educators’ practices.