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Developing Professional Learning Environments: model and application

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ABSTRACT   *In this article we offer a number of insights and instruments to facilitate the realisation of learning communities in professional training contexts, and in the context of adult education in general. We direct our attention towards environments that support the development of professional skills that follow the line of the behavioural sciences, and more especially management competencies and organisation psychology competencies. Firstly, we give a brief outline of our view of learning and the general approach that this may require. We then go on to present a number of theoretical viewpoints mainly from an experiential, and from a constructionist, situated learning perspective. We structure our argument introducing three concepts: orientation, elaboration and integration. Simultaneously, we illustrate our point with a case: CIGO,[1] a training program that regards the development of variable competencies with reference to change within groups and organisations. Finally, we discuss the model/method more critically, which leads us to its refinement, showing the tensions between the practice of orienting, elaborating and integrating within a learning trajectory.*

Some Basic Premises about Learning

For us, learning means that people develop their practices (ways of thinking and speaking, habits, rituals, ...) within the communities in which they move and within which their—in this case, professional—identity develops (see Lave & Wenger, 1991). We maintain that the learning process has three characteristics: (1) it concerns the total person; (2) it emerges from the transaction between person and environment (Kolb, 1984); (3) it is an ongoing process. The learning process unfolds in the creative encounter between the person's ever-evolving theory-in-use (Argyris & Schön, 1996) and his or her sensitivity to real-life events. This process usually takes place within a particular community (see Lave & Wenger, 1991), and contributes to a holistic, adaptive "way of being" in the world (Kolb, 1984, p. 32).

The forgoing leads us to the conclusion that professionals should not be seen merely as experts, but also as artists (Wolfe, 1980), who bring their identities into their work. They continuously investigate their persons—the point of integration between knowing and doing—as instruments. Management—in the broadest sense of the term—in any case remains, to a certain point, improvisation. This is the case with management of learning.

The model described here can be seen as a tool to manage learning. It indicates an approach that should not be seen as a step-by-step set of rules and formulae that show the facilitator and his or her group the way to successful learning. The instrument described does not fit inside any "if/then" logic. It is a resource that makes learners and teachers sensitive to specific aspects of the ever-unique situation as it presents itself. We suppose that the tool box described here can help those concerned to make the learning process—always unique up to a certain level—manageable, and to go to work with it. The method delineates a project. It includes signposts that can be of help along the way. There is, after all, a difference between the making/following and knowing of a path of learning. The method helps the facilitators and the learners as they go their way along the road rather than helping them with any knowledge of the road. The latter happens retrospectively. And this retrospective knowledge of the learning path, the course it takes, gives form to the subsequent steps to be taken.

We simultaneously illustrate the framework by presenting the CIGO training program. After the outline of the building blocks of our framework, we discuss the described approach by taking into account the participant's voice. In connection with another research project (De Weerdt, 2000) we interviewed 10 out of the 14 participants three times during the 2 year program. Using their comments we will confront and refine the described approach. But first we briefly present the CIGO case.

Presentation of the CIGO Case

The objective of the CIGO program is, in broad outline: the development of knowledge, diagnostic skills and intervention skills in order to facilitate change at group and organisation level, and the development of a professional identity, integrating professional skills, attitudes, self-perceptions and values as a change agent. The participants in this program already have a certain professional experience in the world of human resource management: training and development, corporate communication, career counselling, quality management, etc. The trainers always try for maximum diversity in professional background (profit and non-profit organisations), gender, nationality (Belgian and Dutch). The total number of participants is limited to 14.

CIGO is inspired by three traditions, sensitivity training (Kurt Lewin) and process consultation (Edgar Schein), as well as by the experiential learning model devised by Kolb (1984). The CIGO scheme sets out from the idea that in order to speak of "knowledge" two conditions have to be met. Firstly, knowledge should have a personal character and should become an active part of the learner's identity. Secondly, knowledge should have a practicable, do-able character, i.e. a usable aid or instrument for functioning or intervening well in one's own (professional) world of experience. For the set-up of a learning program, this means that as far as possible insights are given a personal aspect. Insights ought to be part of one's own theory of practice.

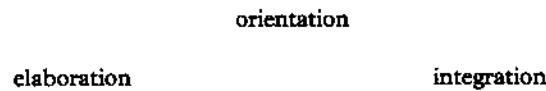orientation

elaboration　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　integration

FIG. 1. Three moments of learning.

The program covers a total of 50 days spread over a period of 2 years. There are five learning blocks, each of which consists of several sessions that may span a period of a few days to a week. Separate theme days are organised within each block. The venue of the meeting is either residential, or in one of the organising universities, or in one of the participants' organisations.

A Model

We structure our argument by making a distinction between three moments that make up the learning trajectory: (1) orientation; (2) elaboration; and (3) integration (see Fig. 1).[2] We do not conceive these moments linear-temporally here. Engaging in learning, on each separate occasion, implies opting for one or another of these moments.

In the orientation moment trainees and trainers together take responsibility for what is going on. And based on this awareness of co-ownership, participants delineate where they want the learning path to head. In the elaboration moment participants are invited to "walk the talk", to practise espoused conceptions, and to engage in all kinds of learning activities. In a third moment participants deal with the integration of theory and practice taking place inside and outside the learning community. This moment of integration supports the construction of a practical theory and a unique professional identity, rooted in the multi-membership of the participant and transcending the local practices of each community. We explore each of these theoretically and illustrate them with reference to the CIGO training program.

The Orientation Moment

Learning is a process that third parties either cannot control or enforce at all or can only do so with difficulty (Wenger, 1998). The learners must therefore assume responsibility for their own learning (Anderson, 1997). They must even give form to their learning process, seeing that "[the] ultimate meaning can only be established by and not for the learner" (Harley, 1993, p. 47). This responsibility then results in the awareness of what one wishes to learn, i.e. the understanding of the direction in which the learning path should be heading, as well as the realisation of its use and purpose for the learners. The learning community can thus find its bearings and arrive at a number of well-considered choices.

In order that the orientation moment may be turned to constructive account, the course leaders first try to procure a certain homogeneity of the participants' cher-

ished beliefs and assumptions concerning ways and means of training and the learning process. Before the start of the course, the trainers have a 1 hour intake talk with all candidate participants separately. This allows the course leaders to form an idea of how the candidate can contribute to the learning group; and to explain to the candidate what he or she can expect of the course. This conversation is bound to make clear that the program parts company with a "classical" expert/novice model: everyone has something to bring to the learning community out of his or her very singularity; at a given moment, the learner is also a facilitator, and vice versa. The candidate is now for the first time brought before the choice as to whether he or she will fall in with this approach. In other words, the intake conversation gauges the extent to which the candidate participant is likely to fit in with the manner of training inspired by an experience-oriented vision of learning. "Responsibility for one's own learning" is still an abstract idea for candidate participants at the time of the intake conversation: they do not yet entirely know what they agree with. However, this aspect comes to occupy a quite central position from the start of the program—a 6 day residential training following a sensitivity approach—that adds experiential substance to the principle of "ownership of own learning".

From the start of the program it becomes clear to the participants that they are made responsible for what they put in and for what they leave out of the program. The facilitators stress over and over again that the learning community and the individual member alike have to face the making of choices. The course leaders are careful to ensure that any situation in which difficulties were encountered is redefined in terms of free, conscious choices. They do so by making interventions such as: "it is not happening to us", "that's what we would appear to want". The emphasis is laid on belief in one's own possibilities. There is always a certain sphere of influence, and the question that then arises is how best to populate it.

The monitoring of responsibility is a continuous area of concern for the course leaders and for the participants. Facing responsibility requires: (1) that participants gain insight in what they want, on their own personal learning objectives; and (2) that they take charge of the learning path accordingly.

In the orientation moment, the participants assume responsibility for their own learning, explicate their personal curriculum, and give direction to what they hope to attain within the course. However, this is easier said than done. Two obstacles hinder the realisation of the learning community: (1) the attribution of expertise; and (2) the fear of loss of face. The two elements are interdependent: out of fear, participants suspend self-expression and hide behind the expertise of the course leader; this hiding, in turn, perpetuates the learner's fear. To bring about a learning community, both obstacles will have to be tackled.

Firstly, "The teacher teaches, the students are taught" is a very widespread assumption whereby course leaders and learners embark upon a course of learning. Whether one is prepared to learn from someone depends on the other's position on the ladder of expertise (Van Looy *et al.*, 2000).

This supposition entails the danger of the learners declining responsibility for their own learning. However, a learning community is a self-steering community. The ownership of the learning process must therefore be reallocated (see also Schein,

1999, in the context of organisational change). Such reallocation means that the learners will regard the course leaders as facilitators: they concentrate on the process rather than on the content (Anderson, 1997), monitoring and facilitating the interactions between those involved.

The framework in which the participants are invited to operate offers them a chance to take their learning in their own hands. The course leaders state the framework explicitly at the start of the week: "Our work is experience-oriented"; "we work in the here-and-now"; "doing and thinking are both central"; "in this group, we are both researcher and study object"; "we have a shared responsibility for each others' learning"; and "the course leaders are facilitators; they do not set the agenda".

After this brief exposition, these standards or rules of the game are embodied, in the first instance, by the course leaders. Although referred to previously as a framework, the 6 days consist of a slow process leading to a community capable of operating in accordance with these principles. Through their interventions the facilitators underline those participants' contributions that fit inside the framework. Participants gradually come to understand the interpretation the course leaders give to the initially formulated rules of the game and eventually manage to auto-correct. Besides their facilitating role, the course leaders also monitor the facilitating character of the participants' interventions.[3]

The collective experiences gained over the first 6 days, and later in the program, make each participant a co-expert vis-à-vis that particular body of knowledge. The difference between expert and novice becomes increasingly less distinct also because the focus during the first week is on the relational and emotional dimension (the process dimension) of the group's thereness, where all are involved in their own ways and, by this involvement, are co-experts.[4]

Secondly, the fear of loss of face causes learners to place themselves unduly in their own focus (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999), which entails difficulty in opening out to new experiences and the possibility of renewing practices. Fear causes learners to be all too often directed towards consolidation of their own selves, which can stand in the way of development.

The moment of orientation has as its intention the explication and establishment of individual and collective curricula. Addressing the learners' agendas requires a community of difference in which all participants feel at ease and are considered as valuable resources supporting and contributing to the learning enterprise. Transforming the learning group into a "community of difference" can dispel this fear. Shotter (1993) here posits a relational quality whereby individuals: (1) identify with each other and, simultaneously; and (2) come to the "genuine recognition of the importance of differences rather than similarities" (pp. 63–64). In a community of difference, enquiry as to content is coupled with relational affirmation: "belonging to" does not mean "agreeing to". Within such an environment the often implicit needs and personal concerns and goals can be activated, expressed, explored and shared. Establishing a secure learning community creates room for the exploration of differences, so that its individual members may express their own learning objectives.

Creating security also involves a broadening of the spectrum of purely rational behaviour to an emotional level. At the start of the first 6 days, the participants try to project a good impression of themselves, say, playing up the importance of their own function and the projects in which they are involved. The course leaders invite the participants to a different kind of behaviour. After the participants have introduced themselves in rational and formal terms, the course leaders can follow with: "These are the stories we apparently tell each other when we meet for the first time; we should also be able to relate our current situation. I feel rather uncomfortable with such a new group." The course leaders also discuss what is at work within the group, and underline participants' interventions that assist the process. Participants can gradually verbalise their own feelings of insecurity: for example, "If I say that, others will punish me for this", or: "I've heard you talking to him about me, so I don't trust you."

Identifying the process elements at work in the group requires the feeling of security and, by the same token: an increase in the feeling of security expands the space in which the process can be called by name. This space expands by degrees and finds its own tempo in each learning group. Each group member is, to a greater of lesser extent, "ahead of" or "behind" that tempo. Group members lagging "behind" are spoken to in the matter by the facilitator or by their fellow participants. Group members too far "ahead" of the field are given a tighter rein, because they expose themselves to injury in an uncertain environment that can harm them (stereotyping, exclusion).

Security ensures that participants remain open to whatever is going on in the group and thus enables other participants to make contact. Among these interactions, differences can be drawn, named and investigated. The learning objectives that participants cite at the beginning of the 6 days tend to have an abstract, impersonal character. By the end of this program component they have a more concrete, personal cast. This is made possible by, *inter alia*, the realisation of a learning community in which differences between participants are acknowledged as valuable resources for learning. Four separate phases can be identified here: (1) the denial of differences: "we all want pretty much the same thing"; (2) the recognition of differences, through the participants' being constantly invited to speak for themselves and not on behalf of the group; (3) the naming of differences as problematic: "I want this, you want that, and finding compatibility is no easy matter"; and (4) the naming of differences as opportunity, as value-added, rather than as a stumbling block. The recognition of differences facilitates the identification and, thus, the further development of personal learning objectives.

In this article most attention is drawn to the orientation moment, since it can be regarded as a sort of meta-context, watching out for the possibility of reconsidering choices made. A learning community ensures that the learning path remains the object of research—ideally at all times. Once tension arises between the project ("where do we want to go?"; "how do we want to get there?") and the trajectory ("what has happened in the past and what's happening here and now?"), space ought to be created to examine the learning process. Continuous adjustment of

course and mutual alignment takes place through joint action in a shared context (after Vygotsky, in Fernyhough, 1996).

Ideally, the possibility of reorientation will remain open at all times. This means that, in principle, the day's timetable can be put to one side at any point in the course to allow time for that manoeuvre. The CIGO program has already gone some way to that end with, for instance, its built-in evaluation moments at regular intervals. At such moments, expectations can be exchanged regarding objectives, work methods, roles and relations (see Fry *et al.*, 1981).

However, continuously keeping open the possibility of reorientation can never be more than an ideal to strive towards. There are three reasons for this. (1) The interdependence with the broader environment means that the group cannot simply change its agenda at any given moment.[5] (2) Another reason concerns the discontinuity in the CIGO program: the time intervals between the various CIGO sessions complicate the naming of what went on in the group during previous sessions. Questions of a more sensitive kind are more easily handled at the time they present themselves. This brings us to the next reason: (3) participants and leaders opt for elaboration rather than reorientation because of the lack of time (i.e. priority) and energy that reorientation requires. The above reasons limit the room to opt for reorientation. This means that expectations will diverge as to what goes on inside the group. Unexpressed irritation ensues, which may result in moments of crisis. These crises then trigger a more thorough contemplation of what substance to give the program in future and how each participant can see his or her needs thereby catered for.

The Elaboration Moment

The elaboration of the learning activities is given form by three elements: dialogue, the interplay between understanding and activity, and the interplay between the development of the community and that of its members. These three elements stress the point that any path of learning is continuously under construction.

Dialogue. The members of the community try to enter into dialogue with each other. The dialogue stands for a manner of conversing that creates space to allow new meanings and perspectives to emerge (Anderson, 1997; Weisbord, 1992; De Weerdt, 1999). To attain this, the utterances of the parties concerned are approached as open, fragile and unstable entities, full of possibilities of alternative interpretations. Dialoguing means "loosening the grip of certainty" (Isaacs, 1993, 1999) and it can happen only in a community of difference (Shotter, 1993), a notion explained in short above. There is a security in this community, in which the mutual difference in "talking about" between the learners, including the leader, can be explored.

Understanding and activity. The learning community tries to set up an interplay between knowing and doing, between walk and talk. Understanding and activity relate to each other in a dialectical manner (Lave & Wenger, 1991): "to know

an object is to act on it" (Piaget, 1964, p. 26). Insights that are not born of activity and that do not have issue in action remain, in any case, only dead insights. The dialectic between knowing and doing can also be found in Kolb's experiential learning model (1984).

The individual and the collective.   The activities to which one commits oneself contribute simultaneously to the development of the self as an individual member, and to the transformation of the community (Brown & Duguid, 1991, 1996; Lave & Wenger, 1991). The individual member learns from the community: he or she learns how to act, think and feel in a legitimated manner within the community. And the community also learns from the individual member: he or she contributes, and jointly gives direction, to the practices that are valid within the learning community (Brown & Duguid, 1991, 1996; Lave & Wenger, 1991). March (1991) speaks in this connection of "mutual learning": community and member learn from each other.

In short, establishing a learning path can be seen as simultaneously an individual and a collective enterprise, which entails the continuous negotiation and creation of meanings from action and meanings brought into action.

In actual elaboration, the course leaders offer the experiential learning model devised by Kolb (1984) as the formative framework for participants' learning activities. Kolb's learning cycle (Concrete Experience–Reflective Observation–Abstract Conceptualisation–Active Experimentation) is reflected in the CIGO program on three levels. At the macro level, work begins on the construction of the various blocks or components of the program, especially from the real world as perceived by the participants (Concrete Experience–Reflective Observation). And by the end of the program, the emphasis is placed more on the ability to intervene in groups and in organisations from acquired knowledge (Abstract Conceptualisation–Active Experimentation). At meso level, the sequence "experience–reflection–conceptualisation–experimentation" is respected in each block or component of the program. At micro level, each session constantly plays on all four elements of the learning cycle. The emphasis is heavily on the "picking up" of learning conclusions, the putting into practice of learning points, i.e. returning the abstract (reflection and theorising) to the concrete (action and experience) in order to complete the learning cycle.

The facilitators fulfil an exemplary function, or the function of role model. Their way of treating others (i.e. the process) is congruent with their message, i.e. their vision of what constitutes successful intervening and positive action. Doing, rather than talking about, is here the most important channel through which the facilitators can make their vision bear fruit. Or, in one slogan: the process is the message. Their coaching within the learning course is congruent with the positive action they take within organisations.

Participants confront each other concerning the divergences between what they do and what they say ("walk the talk"; see also Argyris and Schön's, 1996, distinction between "espoused theory" and "theory in use"). This difference reminds us, after all, that practice and theory are still to a certain extent detached from each other.

The Integration Moment

The interplay between insight and activity occurs both inside and outside the learning community. It is important that insights are not only brought into activity within the learning community. After all, each learner always makes his or her own way up within and especially outside the learning community. Time and time again, this unique way makes the difference between the members of the learning community, and these differences form a substratum for the continuous dialogue. Diversity within the learning community is fed by its members' multi-membership (Wenger, 1998) and by the moment of integration this requires.

The moment of integration takes place as soon as the learner moves between the learning community and other communities within other contexts: work, family, associations, etc. We distinguish between two movements—continuously succeeding each other—that converge in the integration between learning community and other communities. In the first movement, the learners import narratives, questions, cases, problems and so on and so forth from other communities into the learning community. In the second movement, the learner exports the experiences he has acquired in the learning community to other communities. Then the first movement starts up again, whereby the learner gives feedback regarding his practical experiences to the learning community. These accounts are then mutually exchanged, with the result that the learning community comes to a shared interpretation of the events roughed in by the learner (Orr, 1996). This shared meaning creates instruments by which the learner can arm himself for the second integration movement.

The CIGO program aims at the development of a personal theory of practice in each of the participants. This means, in keeping with Kolb's (1984) learning model, working with practical experience, and that the insights that take shape within the program are tested against practice. Experience and practice can occur either in the program itself or between the program and the work environment. This is, of course, very important because the relevance of what is learned and the perceived value of the program are strongly related to its meaningfulness and usefulness in work situations. The program, being a learning community, "endeavors to encompass, within their own practice, an increasing portion of the nexus of multimembership of their members" (Wenger, 1998, p. 216).

The integration process between the program and work contexts has two movements. Firstly, the practical experiences from work situations can be taken up in mental exercises whereby specific problems are set for other participants, who are invited to give ideas on the issue from their point of view. All participants are considered as co-experts. The group members also undertake role-plays by which various ways of intervening can be explored. Secondly, certain practical theories and their behavioural implications in the work situation are being tested. This can be done in collaboration with co-participants (coaching, consulting). And then again, the findings that result from these "experiments" carried out in the second movement can contribute to the program. These two movements continuously follow and foster each other. They facilitate the personal integration of the membership in the learning community and in the working community. This integration goes along

orientation

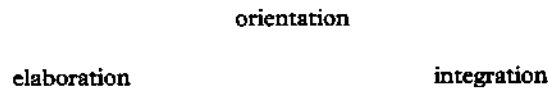elaboration   integration

FIG. 2. Moments of learning in tension.

with the development of a professional identity by which people to some extent transcend the specific context in which knowledge is created, thus assimilating contextualised knowledge into a personal and therefore unique practical theory.

Discussion

Here, we try to fit the participants' critical remarks inside the outlined framework by discerning various tensions between the three learning moments (see Fig. 2). If managed properly these tensions can reinforce the learning process. If not, they can be pitfalls to the approach.

Tension between Orientation and Elaboration

One important difference in orientation within the group can be seen in the learning style theory–experience dichotomy. Some participants choose a "fast" theoretical approach: reading the literature and amplifying it through discussion. Others favour a "slower", experience-minded approach, in which they often find discussion of the group process to be important. At best, this calls for a conversation between these two voices in order to arrive at a creative solution that fits in with each party's agenda. Yet this is not always easily established, and these differences in goal setting can finally weigh on the relationships between participants, and also between the participants and the course leaders (see Fry *et al.*, 1981). This issue puts the group to the test regarding their ability to manage diversity, and in this regard provides some learning opportunities.

Tension between Elaboration and Integration

The course leaders characterise the CIGO group as a teaching/learning organisation. That is why CIGO, as much as any other organisation, must devote due attention to taking responsibility for keeping content, procedure and process balanced. This metaphor, CIGO as organisation, helps the participants explore their actions within the group as material to reflect on regarding their behaviour in professional environments. Usually they come to the conclusion that within the CIGO group they underestimate their sphere of influence, which gives them hope and courage to take action in their own professional environment.

There are, however, important differences between CIGO and other organisations: in the CIGO program a new group is built up without prior history, organising is done more from a model of learning than a model of power (Bouwen & Fry,

1991), hierarchical differences are limited, and so on. Disillusionment can arise if new practices are introduced in their professional organisations too enthusiastically. CIGO can become something that is "too good to be true". Managing this tension means that the participants learn to use the CIGO group to try out new behaviour and thoughts in surroundings safer than the "outside" world.

Tension between Integration and Orientation

Various sub-communities emerge in the moment of integration. The members of these sub-communities exercise counselling and consulting activities for each other outside the formal, total CIGO group activities. There are some important differences between the CIGO group and these sub-communities. The CIGO group is put together by the course leaders; the members of the sub-communities choose each other. Whereas CIGO is like a family, the sub-communities are like groups of friends. CIGO is a temporary group with a fixed start and a fixed end; the sub-communities usually survive CIGO and last as long as is desired. Sometimes, counselling groups are created on the initiative of some CIGO members, and these groups function as a follow-up program. Especially towards the end of the program some CIGO participants start to question the value of their "time consuming" membership of the CIGO group—in favour of their membership of one of the sub-communities.

There is less heterogeneity within these sub-communities since they consist of like-minded people with often similar professional activities. Just like the orientation–elaboration tension, the integration–orientation tension raises the question of managing heterogeneity within the CIGO group. If members question their membership of CIGO overtly, this can be an opportunity to reorient through rethinking and rediscovering the legitimacy of its existence.

Fourth Tension: the trainers' position

The trainers choose consequently to intervene from their role of facilitator. Exceptionally, i.e. only if it can spring from a spirit of equality between participants and course leaders, they will give their opinion as a co-expert. Participants may, from time to time—for example at junctures when the program addresses more theoretical issues—reinstate the course leaders in their positions as experts. If recourse is taken to the course leaders' expertise, they will first examine the participants' motives. If the participant defines his or her question from a position of dependence or a complementary relation, the course leaders will not consider it. If, however, the question is put with an attitude of interdependence, then course leaders and participants can enter into an exchange of accounts in a spirit of reciprocity. Then the course leader attempts to find connections with the account of the learners. He or she builds on the elements that the learners bring: adding to, rearranging, and expanding on, rather than knocking down, interrupting and correcting (Anderson, 1997, pp. 126–127). The facilitator's expertise does not precede the event, but follows and connects with it.

From the point of view of some participants, the trainers' voice is heard too seldom. The trainers' reservations in going along with the participants' calls bring some counter-dependent reactions such as: "Will they ever leave their island?" and "I'm tired of being in a lab." In the line of thought of Rogers (1995), the facilitator influences as an expert by: (1) seeking out the expertise in the others; and (2) being prepared to be influenced by them. However, some participants do not experience much effort from the trainers in attaining this reciprocity.

The learning game, just like any other, has rules that cannot be negotiated during the play. These rules present themselves as some sort of minimum structure (see Weick & Westley, 1996, comparing organisational life with an improvising jazz band), a basic framework in which and through which the learning community can find its own way. The trainer's role of facilitator is one of those rules. There is room for talking over the trainers' position, but it cannot be changed. This impossibility is needed to establish a creative tension for learning. The course leaders have the function of role model, consistently embodying the role of facilitator.

The four tensions described above are perhaps far from exhaustive. We think that each of these cannot be resolved through rational problem solving. They should be managed by finding a balance appropriate to the ever-unique situation. Management—in the broadest sense of the term—in any case remains, to a certain point, improvisation. This is the case with management of learning.

Conclusion

From time to time people come together with the intention to learn. When designing contexts that foster learning and the development of the total person, we argue that it is possible and advisable to take into account insights presented in literature focusing on everyday learning (Brown & Duguid, 1991, 1996; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Orr, 1996; Wenger, 1998). Everyday learning can be seen as a process that is prompted by, and supportive of, the shared enterprises in which people engage. Yet in learning contexts the learning itself is the project in focus; that is the reason why people come together, collaborate, renegotiate meanings, engage and find their own position from which they can contribute to the learning community. Besides this important difference, there is also a major similarity between both kinds of learning, which appears to happen when people are willing and able to take responsibility.

In order to get a grip on this complex phenomenon, we have made the distinction between three moments of learning, which we explored theoretically and illustrated by means of the CIGO program. We are careful to emphasise that these moments do not follow each other in a linear way. Each moment can evoke the need to address one of the other moments.

The learning trajectory consists of a complex interplay between these moments. Each of these can appear important at every point in time. So within a learning community the learners should continuously keep in mind the possibility and the desirability of choosing between orienting, elaborating and integrating, managing the tensions that emerge between these three moments along the way.

The CIGO case illustrates that these principles can be implemented—at least to a large extent. We argue that distinguishing these moments of learning and consciously choosing one of these at every point in time supports the maintenance of a shared responsibility for the learning enterprise. For ownership of one's own learning is the one thing lost somewhere in early childhood, which many professionals need to rediscover. Then, just like toddlers appear to embody in their actions, the opposition between participation that supports learning, and learning that supports participation can be transcended. Professional communities, with the conditions for everyday learning, and learning communities, such as the CIGO program, contribute in their own way to the maintenance of co-ownership.

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Notes

1   CIGO stands for "Consulting in Groups and Organisations" and is a 2 year training programme taught at the Limburg University Centre and the University of Leuven, Belgium.

2   There is some parallel between these three concepts and Wenger's (1998) dimensions of learning: imagination, engagement and alignment.

3   An intervention is believed to be more facilitative if: (1) the behaviour of others is described before it is interpreted and, by extension, if people play the ball and not the man; (2) participants speak for themselves, instead of speaking on behalf of others or of the group; (3) they talk to each other instead of talking about each other; and (4) discussing matters occurs as far as possible within the group instead of outside the group. The course leaders also confront participants with any discrepancies between what they actually do and what they say they do, or what they say must be done.

4   Attention to this process within the learning community issues from the idea that relational and emotional elements play an important part in the development of groups and organisations. "The process (the relational–emotional, traditionally typified as the soft side of organisational life; see the term "soft skills") is difficult. "The soft is the hardest any person can collide with, for instance placing confidence and receiving none in return" (quote from an interview with one of the course leaders).

5   For example, two exchanges took place between the CIGO group and students from the "Master's Program in Organization Development and Analysis" at the Case Western Reserve University. It is not always possible to choose reorientation at moments like these.

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