

CHILDREN LEARNING AS PARTICIPATION IN WEB-BASED COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

João Filipe Matos

University of Lisbon

Madalena Santos

University of Lisbon

Assuming learning as participation in communities of practice and taking a situated perspective on learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) we looked at children practice within the activities of project WebLabs. Data collection was based on video recording of groups of children in selected sessions and the material published on the webreports by children. Data analysis enabled us to describe children's practice in the project and find evidence of learning in the following categories:

(i) The emergence of a shared repertoire, where we include:

- vocabulary instantiated in ways of approaching problems, questions, demands, challenges (using technology, programming and modelling), ways of representing and sharing ideas (describing their work, ideas and thinking, commenting other people work and ideas, building from others' ideas to go further in their own, e.g. constructing an Encyclopaedia on Randomness)

- an emerging valuing of crossing boundaries (both cultural as well as in specific knowledge domains, e.g. on Number Sequences);

(ii) The co-definition of mutual engagement, which is visible through:

- an emerging acceptance of partiality of knowledge as a positive contribute to the knowledge of the community as a whole group and not as sign of 'not knowing' things (e.g. the exchange of modes of proving that a certain ToonTalk robot produces a certain sequence of numbers);

- an emerging sense of responsibility for the overall achievement, i.e., the joint enterprise where children feel that they have a voice (e.g. their contribution to the improving of the software making children experiencing a strong sense of belonging to a team in a project);

- an emerging sense of ability and pleasure in going deeper in their ideas and products (a kind of localized depth) by way of a set of conditions, namely: interaction with powerful computational tools, interaction with teachers and researchers who help sustaining collaboration (acting as peers in the exchanges within their specific tasks) and possibilities for innovative representations.

References

Lave, J. & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated Learning – legitimate peripheral participation*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning and Identity*. New York: Cambridge University Press.