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Role of Seamless Learning in Enhancing Interest-Driven Creator Theory

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Abstract: This paper discusses the concept of seamless learning and its alignment with Interest-Driven Creator (IDC) Theory in response to Tak-Wai Chan's keynote at the 1st MetaACES 2023. He introduced the Seamless Interest-Driven Co-Creator (SIDC) learning framework — an integration of seamless learning and IDC learning. This paper also explores the educational implications of SIDC learning framework.

Keywords: seamless learning, interest-driven creator theory, SIDC learning framework

1. Introduction

In 2006, Chan and his team introduced the concept of a "seamless learning space" in their groundbreaking work titled "One-to-one technology-enhanced learning: An opportunity for global research collaboration." In this work, Chan et al. (2006) emphasised the shifting trends in student learning beyond traditional classrooms. They attributed this shift to the increased affordability of personal digital devices among schoolchildren and college students. Essentially, the widespread availability of affordable digital devices gave these students the opportunity to engage in learning outside of school, anytime and anywhere, with anyone. This innovative development raised students' expectations regarding the use of personal digital devices for learning within their school environment. Chan and his colleagues firmly believed that the line separating learning inside and outside classrooms could become increasingly blurred, due to advancements in future learning technologies. In their view, it was entirely feasible for students to seamlessly continue their learning experiences across various environments.

The notion of seamless learning space is about designing learning environments that leverage digital technologies, placing emphasis on "where to learn", "when to learn", "who to learn with", and "what kind of tools for learning" (Chan et al., 2006). At the same time, this seamless learning space must integrate the aspect of "how to learn" within the future educational learning landscape. Within this context, the tenets of Interest-Driven Creator (IDC) learning aligns seamlessly with the concept of a cohesive learning space. IDC theory emphasises the importance of tailoring learning to students' interests, promoting creative activities driven by those interests, and fostering a habitual culture of learning (Chan, et al., 2018). In other words, IDC learning champions how students engage in learning activities based on their individual interests, making it a natural fit for the seamless learning environment.

2. Seamless Learning and IDC Learning

Integrating a seamless learning space and IDC Theory spawns a new concept — Seamless Interest-Driven Co-Creator (SIDC) Learning. Tak-Wai Chan presented the SIDC Learning framework in his keynote at the 1st MetaACES 2023 (14 June 2023, Hong Kong). The framework emphasises four fundamental orientations: learning, harmony and well-being (Harwell), equity, and environment. He envisaged that educators can optimise the proposed framework to design practical and unique student learning experiences in the seamless learning space. By considering the aforesaid orientations, educators can create a holistic environment that ignites and supports students' interests, promotes their well-being, provides equitable access to resources, and ensures a safe learning environment.

The learning element in the framework focuses on developing students' interest in a seamless learning world. IDC learning recognises that students become more engaged and motivated to create knowledge when they are genuinely interested in a topic. When students practice learning routines that are meaningful to them, they are conditioned to focus and engage in the learning process. When these learning routines are repeated incessantly, students form a learning habit that becomes second nature to them. It is possible to extend this learning habit into a learning ritual. Learning ritual is more than learning habit because it revolves practices that are meaningful to the learners. When learners practice a set of learning ritual, their mind and body become conditioned to focus and engage in the learning process. This structure can enhance concentration and overall learning performance. Seamless learning complements this by providing diverse contexts and opportunities for students to pursue their interests. Educators can create a seamless learning space that is non-judgmental — a learning environment where students are free and comfortable to express their ideas, try new things and take risks without detrimental learning consequences to themselves. Educators may inject some elements of confusion and wonder in the SIDC learning environment. Exposing students to learning activities that would create a little confusion but are interesting enough to hold the learner's attention, can create mental space for students to respond to new or unfamiliar learning situations (Wong et al., 2023). Designing learning activities with well-regulated confusion will likely hold students' attention thus leading to deeper learning.

In addition, the "seamless" element in IDC learning encourages educators to curate diverse learning resources such as textbooks, online articles, videos, podcast and many others to support learner's needs. Educators will have more flexibility to tailor learning experiences to each student learning needs and preferences. By curating diverse learning resources, educators can provide multiple pathways for their students to learn according to their learning styles and interests. Sourcing for rich and varied learning contents allows students to have wider exposure to differing viewpoints and cultures thus fostering a more comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. When educators design multimodal learning activities that incorporate diverse resources, students are able to stay focused and become more engaged learners (Wong & Md Khambari, 2022). In other words, multimodality promotes a better learning experience for learners across different learning contexts (formal education, informal learning, and real-world experiences) as it incorporates the use of multiple sensory modalities such as visual, auditory and tactile methods.

Learning assessment can also be conducted more fluidly — continuous alternative assessments and feedback can be integrated into the home and school learning environments. It is an excellent idea to incorporate diverse learning assessment methods to provide timely feedback and support learners' progress regardless of being in the home or school learning environment. The SIDC learning environment provides opportunities for students to engage in self-learning or collaborative learning experiences, explore real-world applications of their knowledge, and acquire academic and 21st-century competencies.

In his keynote, Tak-Wai Chan also introduced the concept of “Harwell” as another critical aspect of the SIDC framework. It is a portmanteau of two words — Harmony and well-being. SIDC learning equates to happy learners. Learning happiness pertains to experiencing joy, both during and following the learning journey. When students are engaged in interest-driven activities, they experience a sense of fulfilment and satisfaction. This corresponds with Maslow's hierarchy of needs, as students' harmonious interactions with themselves, others, and the environment contribute to their overall well-being. Learners need to be in harmony with themselves, the people around them, and the environment. Harmony can be considered an affective learning outcome — it is achieved when the student’s learning needs are fulfilled, gaining a sense of satisfaction and experiencing inner peace. Inevitably, this leads students to feel a sense of belongingness, being happy and eventually becoming lifelong learners. This outcome resonates well with IDC theory which promotes the following assumptions for designing learning activities to optimise students’ learning experience:

1. Learning is tailored to the learner's interests;
2. Learning activities are conceived as creative endeavours driven by these interests;
3. The integration of interest-driven creative activities into students' everyday schedules fosters a habitual culture of learning.

Educators must play a vital role in ensuring Harwell is supported in the SIDC learning environment. Students need to have a clear understanding of whom to connect with — to nurture emotional, mental and physical well-being. They must be able to harmonise these three facets to flourish as happy learners. It is the educators’ responsibility to create a constructive synergy between themselves and their students and also families to create a harmonious learning environment.

SIDC learning's focus on accessibility promotes equity in education. The seamless world is extremely dynamic, often enabled by affordable digital technologies. This allows students from different socioeconomic backgrounds to access learning resources without discrimination. The SIDC learning experience can be heightened as the cost of owning digital technologies has significantly reduced in recent years. Governments worldwide are giving serious attention to disadvantaged students by equipping them with quality digital devices for learning. No students are left behind when learning switches from the school learning environment to the home learning environment. In other words, students' interest-driven learning process is not disrupted when such a switch occurs. This aspect of SIDC learning is crucial for addressing educational disparities and ensuring all students have equal opportunities to pursue their interests. By reducing barriers to access, seamless learning fosters inclusiveness and empowers students to explore diverse areas of knowledge.

Environmental safety, both physical and digital, is an essential consideration in both seamless learning and IDC learning. The SIDC framework acknowledges the need for environmental safety and hygiene, particularly in light of emerging challenges such as infectious diseases. The COVID-19 pandemic is an excellent example of this worry. In his keynote, Tak-Wai Chan warned us that the world is on the brink of peril. He stressed that the pervasive use of digital technology has caused many detrimental impacts on society. The ubiquity of digital technology at an affordable price has also exacerbated the situation. The phenomenon of digital addiction is a significant cause of concern. Digital addiction encompasses the excessive and compulsive use of digital devices, mobile applications and online contents, often causing detrimental effects on the users’ well-being. In the context of learning, students are drawn towards the attraction of social media, video games, streaming platforms and other digital distractions that interferes with their studies. The instant gratification and continuous connectivity afforded by ubiquitous digital technologies contribute to the reinforcement of addictive behaviours.

The SIDC framework also highlights the importance of digital literacy and online safety. As students engage in seamless learning experiences across various environments, educating them about responsible digital citizenship, online norms, and critical evaluation of online information is crucial.

3. Implications for Education

The integration of seamless learning and IDC Theory has some implications for education. Educators can cultivate students' curiosity and motivation by designing learning experiences that leverage students' interests, leading to deeper engagement and better learning outcomes. Seamless learning provides a platform for students to explore their passions beyond the boundaries of traditional classrooms, fostering creativity, innovation, and self-directed learning.

Furthermore, the SIDC framework promotes a learner-centric approach to education. It recognises that students have diverse interests, learning styles, and needs. By embracing seamless learning, educators can personalise learning experiences to cater to individual student's interests and preferences. This customisation enhances student agency. Additionally, it empowers educators to present the learning contents that pique learners' interest, maximising their understanding and capability to connect with the curriculum and the real world settings. In essence, students are more likely to view their studies as more meaningful, leading to a more positive learning experience.

SIDC Learning also encourages collaboration and community engagement. Through seamless learning spaces, students can connect with peers, experts, and communities of practice. These interactions provide opportunities for cooperative learning, sharing ideas, and receiving feedback, thereby enriching the learning experience. Additionally, community involvement and real-world connections enhance the authenticity and relevance of students' learning, bridging the gap between classroom knowledge and its application worldwide.

However, implementing SIDC learning requires thoughtful design and responsible use of technology. Educators must ensure seamless connections between different learning contexts support meaningful learning experiences rather than distractions or addictive behaviors. Attention should be given to designing educational games and digital resources that align with learning goals and promote engagement, rather than perpetuating superficial learning experiences. The onus of designing interesting learning activities lies in the hands of the educators who are willing to embrace SIDC learning. Exposing student teachers to the SIDC framework at the teacher preparatory level would serve as a good starting point to shape their instructional practices to be resonant with the philosophy of SIDC learning. They in turn will likely apply the philosophy in their instructional practices when they teach in the actual classrooms as full-fledged teachers.

4. Conclusions

When learning is driven by interest, better learning outcomes can be achieved. These learning outcomes can be fortified when educators play a vital role in supporting students' well-being and creating a harmonious learning environment while ensuring accessibility and inclusiveness in education. However, it is crucial for the stake holders to address the responsible use of technology, considering environmental safety and digital literacy, to avoid distractions and addictive behaviours. Overall, the SIDC learning framework offers opportunities for students to explore their interest, collaborate with peers and experts, and

bridge the gap between classroom knowledge and real-world application. By embracing this framework, educators can empower students to take ownership of their learning journey and promote the love for lifelong learning.

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