

ACTIVITY THEORY: A FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS OF A COLLABORATIVE INTERACTION



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Summary & Learning goals

SUMMARY:

In this exercise, the students are expected to work in groups use *activity theory* as an analytical framework to examine an existing technology mediated collaborative interaction in three levels (i.e. coordination, cooperation, reflective communication), and create a (re)conceptualization of the collaborative interaction to improve the breakdown situations or contradictions that occur between the actors in the current activity system.

LEARNING GOALS:

With this exercise students will be able to;

- Analyse different levels of a collaborative interaction by using Activity Theory as a lens to look at different components of an activity system
- Evaluate the breakdown situations or contradictions that occur between different actors in different levels of collaboration
- Propose a reformulation/reconceptualization of a component in the current activity system for further improvement.

Analysing Collaborative Interaction through the Lens of Activity Theory

Step 1. Set a group (max. 4 people) and pick one activity system (e.g. a digital application or tool) that a type of collaborative activity is mediated (e.g., work, learning, leisure, organizational etc.).

Step 2. Make an analysis of the activity system based on the table in the next slide and examine the current practices and activities. Fill out the empty fields that the activity system offers. Leave the field empty if you think the activity system is not capable of supporting any aspect of a level of interaction and consider this area as a room for improvement.

<p>LEVEL OF COLLABORATIVE INTERACTION IN THE ACTIVITY:</p> <p>COORDINATION (individual aim, externally related, assigned actions and roles)</p>	<p>ACTOR Each collaborator externally related, focus on performing assigned actions and roles</p>	<p>MEDIATOR What are the individual tools and roles of the actors to perform this activity?</p>	<p>OBJECT What is the individual aim for each actor (regardless of the common objective)</p>	<p>RULES What are the individual norms or rules that govern the performance of each actor?</p>	<p>COMMUNITY What is the environment in which individual activity carried out?</p>	<p>DIVISION OF LABOR Who is responsible for what, when carrying out this activity?</p>	<p>OUTCOME What is the desired outcome from carrying out this activity?</p>
<p>LEVEL OF COLLABORATIVE INTERACTION IN THE ACTIVITY:</p> <p>COOPERATION (adjust the actions to others' actions and joint tasks to the individual aim)</p>	<p>ACTOR Each individual have to relate the joint task to the individual aim</p>	<p>MEDIATOR What are the negotiated tools and roles that the actors adjust to the others?</p>	<p>OBJECT What is the stable common object that the actors focus and agree upon?</p>	<p>RULES What are the shared norms and rules that govern the performance of group activity?</p>	<p>COMMUNITY What is the environment in which the aims and tasks placed above the individual actions and aims?</p>	<p>DIVISION OF LABOR Who is responsible for what, when carrying out this activity?</p>	<p>OUTCOME What is the desired outcome from carrying out this activity?</p>
<p>LEVEL OF COLLABORATIVE INTERACTION IN THE ACTIVITY:</p> <p>REFLECTIVE COMMUNICATION (reconceptualize the rules, routines, change or transform practice, reconceptualize their own organization and interaction in relation to shared objects)</p>	<p>ACTOR Actors focus on reconceptualizing their own organization and relation to shared objects</p>	<p>MEDIATOR What are the means/tools/routines that the actors reconceptualize within the interaction and communication?</p>	<p>OBJECT What is the unstable object that is collectively (re)constructed?</p>	<p>RULES What are the norms and rules that the actors opt for reformulate?</p>	<p>COMMUNITY What is the environment in which the group activity is carried out?</p>	<p>DIVISION OF LABOR Who is responsible for what, when carrying out this activity?</p>	<p>OUTCOME What is the desired outcome from carrying out this activity?</p>

Analysing Collaborative Interaction through the Lens of Activity Theory

Step 3. Identify the gaps and the breakdown situations, tensions, controversies and/or conflicts within and between activity systems.

Step 4. Consider new rules, routines, division of labour or mediating tools to improve the collaborative interaction

Step 5. Create scenarios for your idea for improvement and discuss it with your group members.

Step 6. Reconceptualize, revise and redesign the mediating technology design and the collaborative interaction.

Presentation

Present your analysis, evaluation and (re)conceptualization for the design of the collaborative activity system mediated by the technology you chose to improve.

Discuss it with your peers in the class.



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