

THE ROLE OF BROKERS IN CULTIVATING AN INTER-INSTITUTIONAL COMMUNITY AROUND OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Marjon Baas, Robert Schuwer, Ellen van den Berg, Tjark Huizinga, Roeland van der Rijst, Wilfried Admiraal



Context of the study

- In the Netherlands there is a strong focus on discipline-specific inter-institutional communities

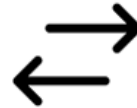


PROJECT TOGETHER NURSING
(2018-2020)

Session:
The Truth Is Out There
Wednesday 11.00 Salle 200



ONLINE COMMUNITY



OER REPOSITORY

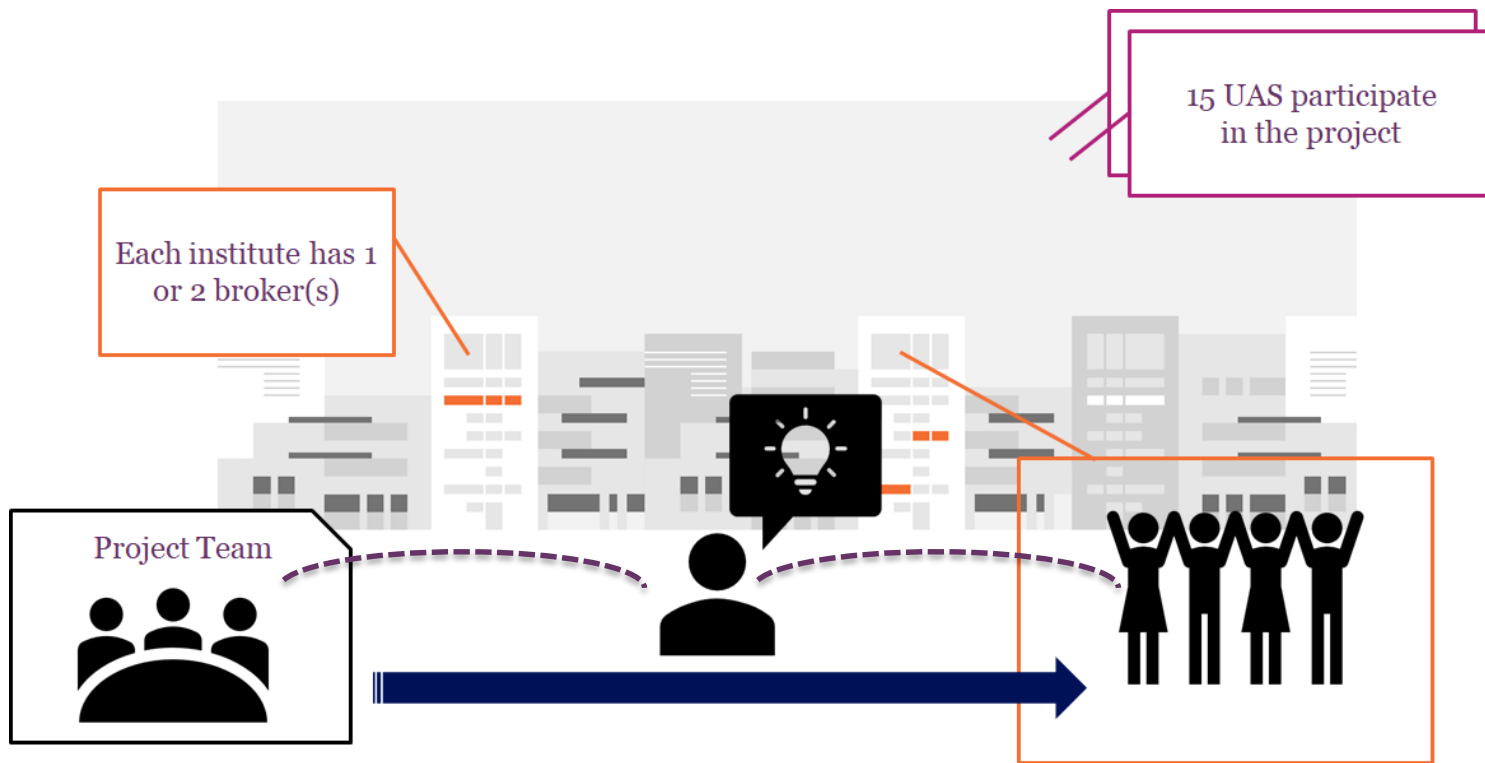
*Offers opportunities to connect with colleagues,
discuss (teaching) practices, showcase OER*

*The place where teachers across all institutes
can find, select, rate and share OER.*

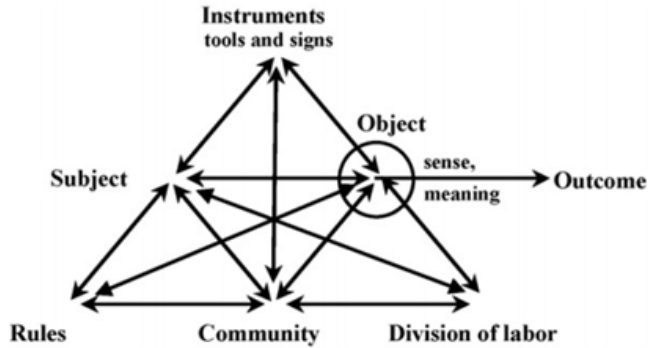
What is a broker?

- Brokers are individuals in an inter-institutional Community of Practice who facilitate transfer of knowledge and resources, and coordinate efforts across boundaries of organizations

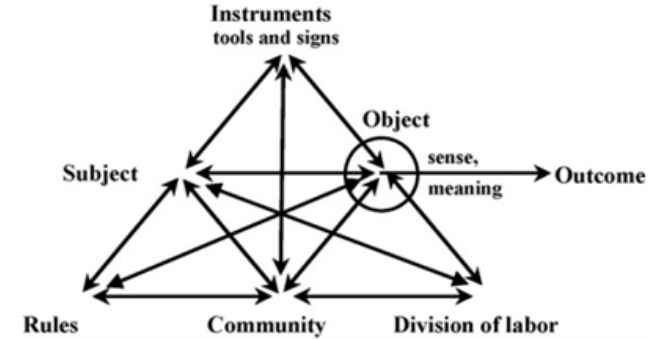
The role of brokers



Broker between activity systems



Activity system of project



Activity system of institute

Images: Engeström, Y. (1987). Learning by Expanding. An Activity-Theoretical Approach to Developmental Research. Orienta-Konsultit.

Research questions

1. What is the role of brokers within the collective activity system of cultivating an inter-institutional community around OER?
2. What actions do brokers undertake to cultivate an inter-institutional community around OER and what impact do these actions have on the activity?
3. Which conflict experiences do brokers encounter in their role of fostering sustainable collaboration on OER among higher education teachers across institutes?

Method

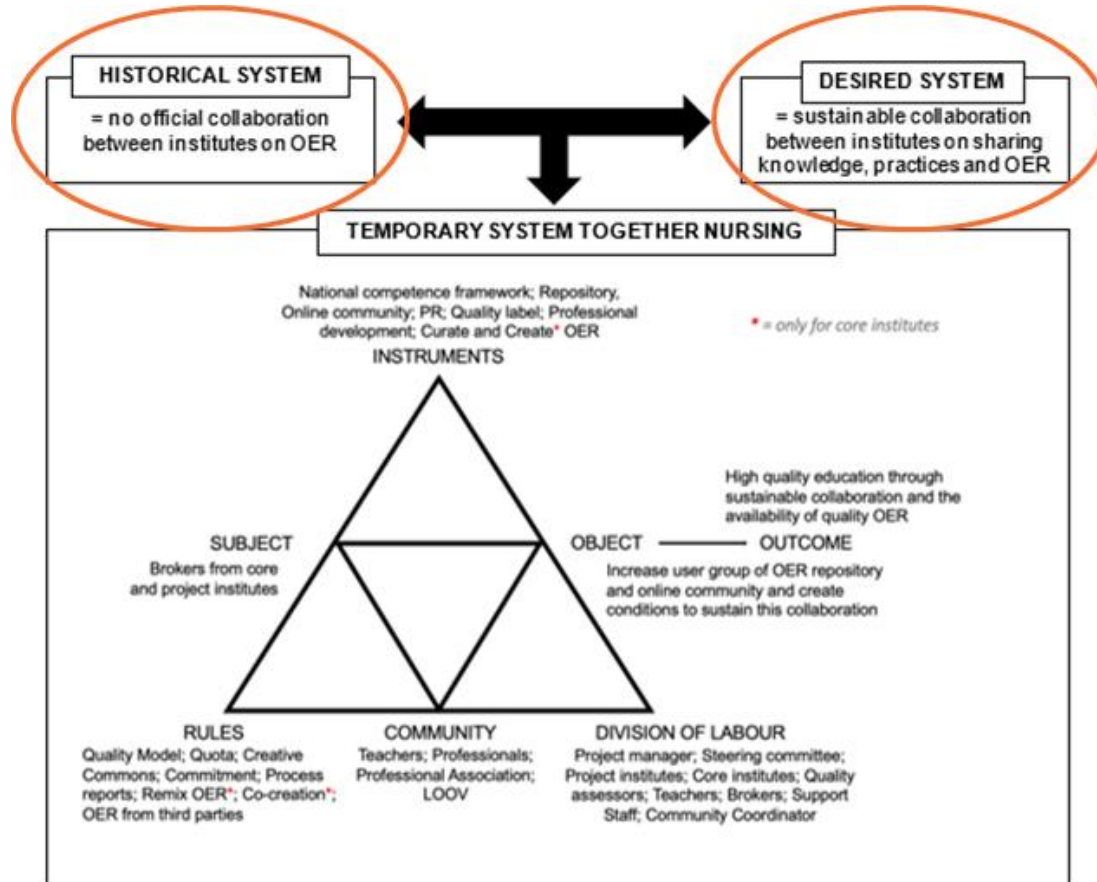
- Qualitative descriptive study
- Data of Together Nursing
 - Project documents
 - Minutes of meetings
 - 92 process reports
- Data collected at the end of Together Nursing
 - Focus group with 7 brokers
 - Reflection reports of 10 brokers

Contradictions

- ‘historically accumulating structural tensions within and between activity systems’ (Engeström, 2001, p. 137)
- Contradictions are needed for an activity system to develop
- Four levels
 - Primary (within nodes of the activity system)
 - Secondary (between nodes)
 - Tertiary (between an old and a more advanced activity system)
 - Quaternary (between the main and a neighbouring activity system (e.g. the activity system in an institution))

Findings

Brokers' role (RQ 1)



Brokers' actions and impact (RQ 2)

Focus of actions	Topic
Incite teachers	Encouragement and awareness
	Teacher support
Use of OER repository	Creation of OER
	Sharing and reuse of OER
	OER quality
Use of online community	Cultivation of community
Organizational	Organization institute
	Project organization
	External promotion

Brokers' conflict experiences (RQ 3)

Level		Perceived conflict experiences
1	Primary	Ambiguity of broker role
2	Secondary	Imposed rules of the project
		Lack of management support
3	Tertiary	Limited use of inter-institutional community
4	Quaternary	Organizational and societal issues

Conclusions

- Brokers were essential in cultivating the inter-institutional community due to the unique positions they held among colleagues
- Brokers' actions yielded the intended transformation of the collective activity, albeit to a more limited extent than expected
- The role of the broker was hindered due to conflicts they experienced
- Management did not empower the brokers within their role

Recommendations

- Brokers encountered stressors in their role. This could be lessened if:
 - the institute provides time, empowerment and organizational support;
 - the project manager provides clear expectations on tasks, responsibilities and intended outcomes;
 - teachers would recognize and value the act of boundary crossing across institutes;
 - address the multi-voicedness of such large collaborative projects with all stakeholders.

