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BOOK OF ABSTRACTS
Including the Collection of “Synergy” Synopses

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OPEN COURSES AS VIRTUAL MOBILITY AND THE ROLE OF COLLABORATIVE LITERACY IN STAFF DEVELOPMENT

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Aims of the workshop

- To collaboratively draw up critical success factors for virtual mobility in staff development
- To raise awareness of the need for a focus on collaborative literacy as a critical element of digital literacy

Background and justification

Open Networked Learning (ONL) https://opennetworkedlearning.wordpress.com is an open online course that is offered both as an internal professional development course at the partner universities (Karolinska Institute, Lund University, Linnaeus University, KTH in Sweden and IIE Varsity College in South Africa) as well as being open to learners from all over the world. The course has been derived from an earlier model that has in turn led to several other online courses. The primary target group is university teachers, educational technologists and course designers but it also attracts educators from other educational sectors both public and private. Using an open collaborative learning environment learners investigate aspects of connected, collaborative learning with modules based around topics such as digital literacies, collaborative and flexible learning, teaching in open spaces and course design.

ONL uses a problem-based learning approach with most interaction taking place in small groups each with a facilitator from one of the host universities as well as a co-facilitator who is a volunteer former participant. This study groups consist of 7-9 learners from different institutions mixing institutional learners (from the host universities) with open learners. They collaborate synchronously and asynchronously to discuss, write and present solutions to weekly problem scenarios using a variety of digital tools and media. This group work is enhanced by individual reflection on personal blogs. The course design has a similar foundation to the earlier iterations but is constantly being revised and adapted as more partner institutions join (2-3 more universities are expected to join during 2016) and as more experience and learner feedback is gained.

From our surveys we have found that ONL participants have seen the internationalization element of the course as a clear added value. We have also positive experience of the collaboration between course facilitators and co-facilitators, also from a wide variety of countries (e.g. Sweden, South Africa, Philippines, Poland, Denmark, Sudan, Portugal).

However the key to participation in virtual mobility activities is both digital literacy (the ability to use online tools and spaces to communicate, access information and create) and collaborative literacy (the ability to truly collaborate online). We have seen on all courses that participants find it difficult to move from the traditional perspective of learning as consumption of content to the perspective of learning as collaboration and co-creation. Only when this collaborative literacy is developed can participants truly benefit from this form of virtual mobility.

Participation and outcome

The workshop will offer a combination of input from project members and group discussions. The results of these discussions will be compiled using a common digital workspace and made publically available. The session will be accessible via Adobe Connect and project colleagues in the course team will contribute online. We will also invite all participants to follow the autumn iteration of ONL either as a registered participant or as an observer.