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Course Description

Communicating about Change and Developments

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Abstract

The aim of the course is to prepare students to foresee societal changes and to manage transformations in regards to New Business Models, innovations and managing the change in educational organizations. The students work in small teams and in the beginning search for organizational innovations and services in their own area in order to be able to identify innovative elements in them. The students create presentation material of the cases/services/organizations and share information on these on facebook. The students try to identify change drivers and strategies that make transformations possible. Furthermore, students find out examples/best practices of awarded innovative organizations in their area/country and inquire what makes them so innovative.

Course Description

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is not only an essential building block of a society, but currently also the driving force behind social evolution. Our generation has the luck to live through –and the responsibility to shape– an era in which mediated information and communication have become the catalyst of human progress.With this course, students will deepen our understanding on how social and technological revolutions go hand in hand.

Students will contemplate about what technology actually is and how it evolves. Armed with the powerful conceptual frameworks of innovation theory, students will inquire how societies co-evolve with technology. We then look at the current social transformations and ask about what happens when information and communication is digitalized? Digitalization comes with certain characteristics that can trigger political revolutions; create unprecedented richness as well as new dimensions of poverty;

redefine our understanding of friendships, culture and entertainment; transform education, health care and business; and lead to both visions of future scenarios of global democracy and informational dictatorship. While doing this, a global perspective will be essential, as is the fact that not everybody has equal access to the digital age.

Digital technology is the most powerful and also the most tangible tool we currently have available to exploit the ensuing opportunities for social change. This course tackles the big picture of the digital age and we are not afraid of asking the big questions that arise from the incredibly complex dynamic of ongoing digitalization (one that all of us already live in day by day...).

The online course "Communicating Change and Transformations" is based on Team teaching-principles and is integrated into the Module New Business Models and Innovations. The goal was to discuss societal changes:

Discussion topics:
1. Foreseeing changes and developments
2. Society and transformations in public administration
3. Implications for Public sector
4. Competences and change management
5. Networking and development
6. Successful cases or solutions of transformations

Who is it for?

Members or students form private or public organizations interested in transformations in organizations

What will you do on the course?

The learners will search for new Business Models and new Innovations, make collaborative material on these and discuss the innovations on Facebook.

By the end of the course students will:
- Make better sense of personal experiences and global trends of the digital age by learning adequate formal theoretical frameworks;
- Apply the learned concepts to real-world examples of your

own choice, making them meaningful to you;

- Have a more structured understanding about strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and imminent threats of the digital age;
- Develop a basic appreciation of the complexities of human development during times of fast-paced technological change;
- Gain insights into how companies and governments manage the disruptive social change of digitalization.

Feedback methods

The students get feedback on the cases from their peers and from the tutor teacher(s).

At the end session of the course, each student team will assess team collaboration as well as the results of their collaboration efforts. Additionally, students will exchange ideas and provide feedback eachother discussion posts.

Requirements

Ability to read, write and speak reasonably good English and willingness to share and co-create knowledge in an online context. A computer with reliable Internet connection is needed.

What you get from the course as a student?

The student learn to foresee changes and take the knowledge to their organizations/studies and (s)he will get experiences of working in an online community,

The student learns digital skills and insight into innovations in two countries as well as improved English language communication skills.

What you will hold in your hands after the course?

Readiness to foresee changes and function as a member of an online learning community. Understanding of change management processes and need to listen to the members.

Duration, Intensity & ECTS

The course consists of asynchronous sessions following the topic guideline. 2 credits during 6 weeks.
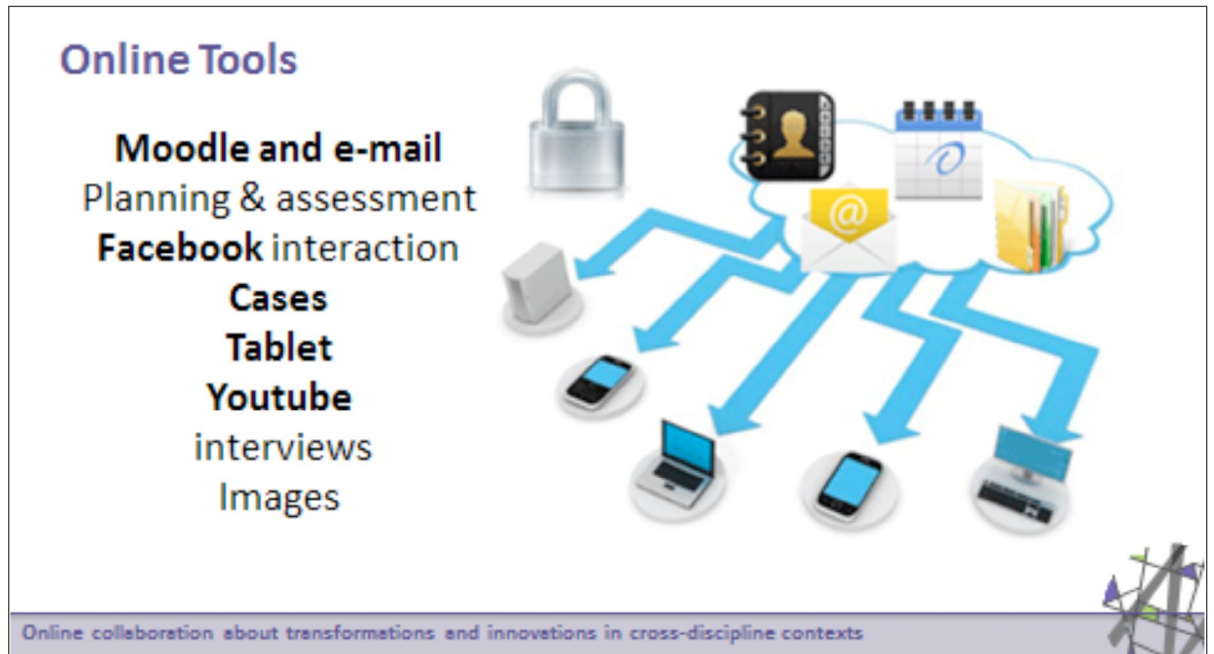
Platform

Planning: Moodle and email

Collaborative Knowledge Management: google docs

Interaction between students: Facebook group

Online collaboration about transformations and innovations in cross-discipline contexts

Online collaboration about transformations and innovations in cross-discipline contexts

Method

The methodologies were technology supported collaborative learning and interaction and authentic learning .

The method is a systematic pedagogical strategy that encourages small groups of students to work together for the achievement of a common goal. The term ‚Collaborative Learning' is often used as a synonym for cooperative learning when, in fact, it is a separate strategy that encom-

passes a broader range of group interactions such as developing learning communities, stimulating student/faculty discussions, and encouraging electronic exchanges (Bruffee, 1993). Both approaches stress the importance of faculty and student involvement in the learning process. Collaboration in teams and across disciplines.

Curriculum

The online course run during 6 weeks and the implementation was based on asynchronous collaboration on facebook. The online course is embedded in a 5-credit unit module New Business Models and Innovations. The students study in the Campus area /online students in synchronous platforms. The goal is to apply the learned knowledge of New Business models and innovations and communicate about changes and developments in regards to innovations during the online session.

Experience Report

The students worked in teams and tried to identify innovative businesses and their services or products. The students shared the findings on facebook and made descriptive material using any media they preferred to. Since the course content focused on innovations, the students were recommended to publish the cases in multimedia format or videos. The student feedback showed that sharing interactive material and communicating change drivers and innovative solutions was easy on facebook but structuring the information flow was demanding because of rich interaction flow. English language caused some problems for non-English learners.

The outcome was positive but more time for planning would have been required. The students would have wanted to have synchronous sessions and online tutorials so that all the participants would have been able to use all the features of facebook.

Analysis of the results

Mobile learning makes learning more accessible and flexible for students and training organizations should look for solutions that support mobile learning. However, the online knowledge ecosystem is complex and requires in-advance planning together with the participants. Even though the students found collaboration rewarding and interesting, timing the course activities made collaboration difficult. Furthermore, it proved that

a joint-tutorial in the use of Facebook should have been organized; there are far more qualities that could have been used in joint-courses than the students are using in every-day communication. The students acquire working life skills when they are required to work with students from different disciplines; the starting point that is not always valued by the students. The students, when reflecting on the collaboration and learning outcomes, expressed that this kind of collaboration should be continued but there should be more time for online collaboration and online webinars or synchronous sessions could be added to the implementation. Facebook is not meant to be used in education; therefore assessing collaboration activities, at least in large, active groups is more time-consuming and more hours should be reserved for the teachers.

The findings prove that collaboration with valuable knowledge transfer occur between the participants if the online tools used facilitate participation and reflection on the activities. Digital as well as international competence development is best supported in authentic learning situations where challenging tasks are integrated into the implementation. Collaboration is supported by the use of interactive technologies but the adoption leading to efficient use requires consensus of the users and most importantly by the students. The students, while working in authentic cases, learn important digital skills; after all, they often assist in the adoption of new technologies in their learning. Therefore, even the problems with the use of the tools and online collaboration can serve as valuable experiences.

Learning to foresee changes as well as learning to cope with changes if an important competence in any organization and the students should learn these skills during their studies. Change Management, therefore, is an important are in the degree programmes and it is not sufficient if the students approach changes with their peers who come from similar contexts. It is possible to support interaction and collaboration with the students from totally different areas representing totally different cultures and languages in an online setting, especially in asynchronous context. Collaboration between the Turkish and Finnish students proved to be valuable and the students acquired skills they in normal cases would not

have acquired.

Learning linguistic and cultural competences

The students traditionally communicate about the topics with their classmates in the home organization and sometimes the students do not find it motivated to use any other language with their classmates. When the implementation was being planned, the possibility to interact with the foreign students was presented to the participating students. When the students are involved with the planning and implementation phases, it is easier to motivate them to take part in the joint courses.

The motivational factors and fears were discussed in team meetings and memos were written on the basis of the discussions. The students showed interest in a joint-course delivery in digital platforms and the students found benefits for the implementation. The students found it rewarding that they could share their views on societal changes and innovations with their peers in another country and they could also learn from innovations and technology-related issues in a totally different context.

Additional benefits mentioned were acquiring English language and international communication skills. However, some students reported the above-mentioned benefits as fears: they were afraid that their English language skills would not be sufficient. In fact, that seemed to the case with some students and a couple of the Turkish students used Turkish as their communication language and also seemed google translator so that they could understand the messages.

Experiences and prior research prove that there are many challenges in achieving cross-cultural communication and understanding cultural contexts. It has been claimed that such an understanding can often be reached only if teachers begin by practicing cross-cultural communication (Pratt-Johnson & Prattjoy & stjohns.edu). Practitioners know that it is not sufficient that the teachers become competent in intercultural issues; the students should be given an opportunity to experience culturally diverse encounters. Learning linguistic and cultural issues in an authentic context is an efficient way to integrate real-life experiences to implementations.

Digital Skills and Online Tools

The students were encouraged to prioritize the joint-platform. The students use Moodle as their learning platform in their courses but the majority of the students chose Facebook for asynchronous discussions. The statements given by the students showed that rational values such as easy of use (usability and accessibility), relevance (content and search and customization and Performance (speed and availability) constituted the main reason for choosing Facebook as a collaborative platform. Accessibility on Mobile phones seemed to be the most import reason for the popularity of the Facebook. Out of the emotional values the design of the networking site was an important aspect as well, uploading their own documents on Facebook is easy for the students, not only for the teachers. Security is an important aspect of the platforms and it was decided that the students would be working on a closed group; the decision proved to be wise as the course progressed. The fact that collaboration was based on written communication was mostly seen as a benefit since it was possible to collaborate whenever the students found it appropriate but some students would have wanted to have synchronous sessions as well.

The feedback after the collaboration proved that Facebook was easily accessible, uploading media was easy and interaction was made simple but keeping track of all the messages is more challenging than in Moodle. The students commented afterwards that neither Facebook nor Moodle serve the collaborative purposes in a successful way; there should be a platform that combine the best features of the networking sites.

The Finnish Business students were required to present some innovative cases of Lappish businesses or services and it turned out and additional classes in making interactive material, especially Youtube material had to be organized for some students. Having text-based material is not attractive for the students and they wanted to present cases in a more interactive format. Short additional learning sessions were organized in making the interactive materials in collaboration with the eLearning services and the students found learning new skills rewarding. In addition to learning digital competences collaboration increased awareness of innovative ca-

ses in Lapland. The students were surprised to find out how many innovative businesses they could find.

Interaction on Facebook

If there was any fear that there would not be any interaction on Facebook that fear proved to be wrong. In fact, after the slow star during a couple of weeks, there were a lot of interaction between the students. Even the students who were not active, said that they read the messages but someone else had already posted the same type of message so that there was no point of commenting anything. Some Turkish students who specialized in information technology did not find the topic Innovations and transformations easy or the topic, in their opinion, lacks integration into their degree programme. The result proves that the students cannot see the added value of multi-disciplined implementations.

Studies prove that online collaboration may be efficient and increase awareness but it is obvious that communication can break down in many points (Microcommunication). What is known, is that different cultures learn in different ways and the learning culture has a huge impact on collaboration. In Finland, the Business students are used to working in small teams and they find collaboration to ease the learning process. Another factor that has to be taken into consideration is the Finnish students' willingness to share ideas and views that they have had time to think of. The use of asynchronous platform was useful since it allowed the students to look for facts and reflect their own ideas of the topic. Similar feedback was given by the Turkish students and several students said that they looked for links and material before sending their messages.

Summary

The online collaboration between the Finnish and Turkish students proved to be positive and rewarding and the students acquired change management, language and collaboration skills. However, since the students worked for the first time in this kind of collaborative setting online, there should have been more time for preparations and learning to use the tools. Even though the teachers planned the implementation together, inclusion of the students in the planning process would have made it ea-

sier for the students to start collaboration. At the universities it is difficult to change the timetables or internal structures. On the other hand, life is hectic in modern working life and the graduates should learn to work in hectic, changing environments with different cultures.

Material

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