

Just a buzz?

Exploring collaborative learning in an open course for professional development of teachers in Higher Education



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Presentation

Abstract

This poster provides insights into the experience of open learners of the Flexible, Distance, Online Learning (FDOL) course <http://fdol.wordpress.com/> which was offered to teachers in Higher Education from September to December 2013. It was a non funded open course developed by two educational developers from the UK and Sweden who had the vision to enable open cross-disciplinary and cross-institutional development in this area of teachers in HE.

The second iteration of the FDOL course, FDOL132, was used as a case study for a PhD research project in open cross-institutional academic practice for the professional

development of teachers in Higher Education (HE). The overall aim of the PhD research is to develop a flexible collaborative learning framework for cross-institutional open courses. A collective case study approach is used to investigate the learners' experience in different natural settings. Preliminary findings from the FDOL case study are shared and data gathered and analysed from survey instrument that helped first conclusions to be drawn regarding the profile of the participants, their motivations, prior related experiences and learning habits. We will discuss how these factors influenced engagement with the course, linked to collaborative learning.

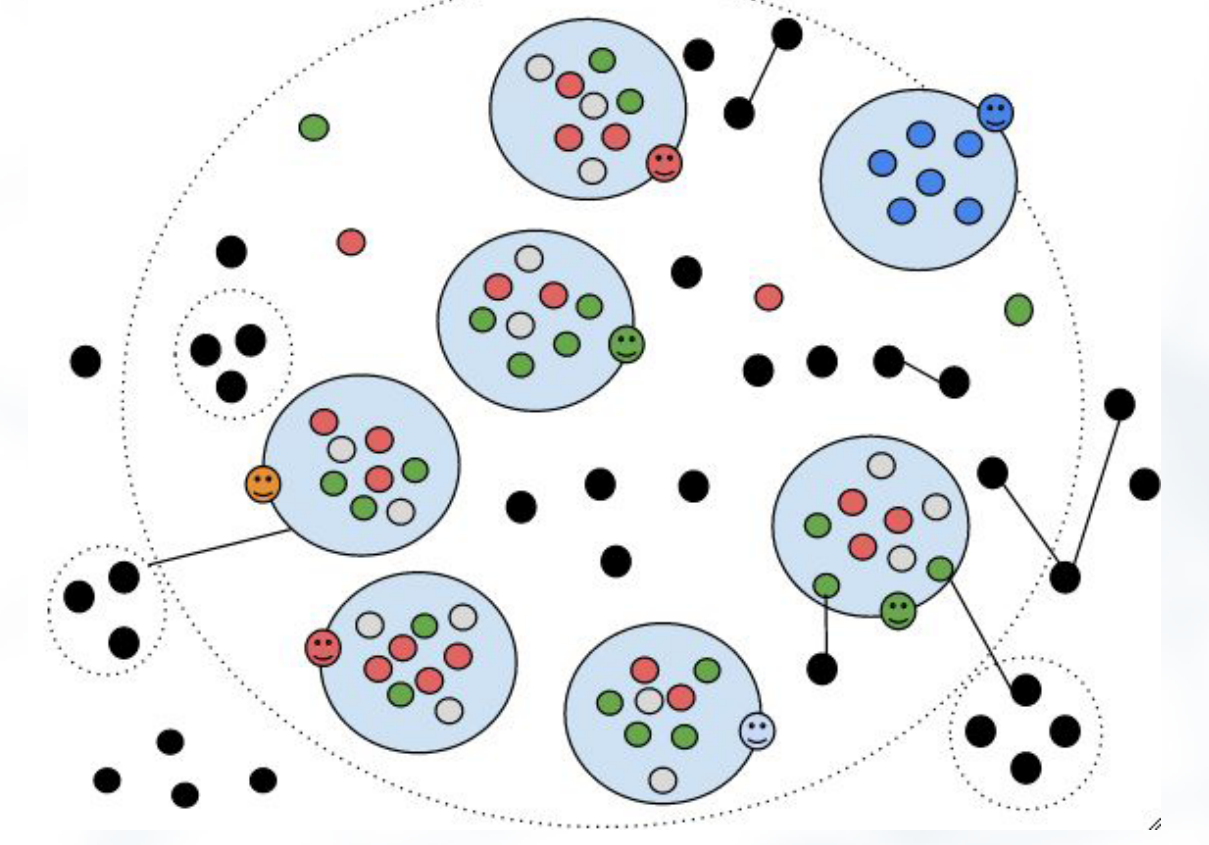
Open Course FDOL132

Open cross-disciplinary professional development course for teachers in HE
Developed and organised by Academic Developers in the UK and Sweden
Developed using freely available social media
Offered from **September – December 2013**
Pedagogical design: simplified Problem-Based Learning

Countries
UK - 66
Sweden - 17
Canada - 4
Ireland - 2
also participants from: Hongkong, Argentina, Greenland, Switzerland, New Zealand, Slovenia, Belgium, New Zealand, Norway

Numbers
Registered: 107
FDOL132 community in G+ until now: 72
Signed up for PBL groups: 31
PBL groups: initially 8-9 in each x 4 > then 3 (group 2: 6 / group 3: 5 / group 4: 6)
PBL facilitators: 4
Participants in webinars: 10-25
Participants who completed in groups: 31 (42%)

Organisation of FDOL132



Nerantzi, Uhlén & Kvarnström (2013)

FISH a simplified PBL model



Nerantzi & Uhlén (2012)

Step 1: Focus

- What do we see?
- How do we understand what we see?
- What do we need to find out more about?
- Specify learning issues/intended learning outcomes

Step 2: Investigate

- How and where are we/am I going to find answers?
- Who will do what and by when?
- What main findings and solutions do we/ I propose?

Step 3: Share

- How are we going to present our findings within the group?
- What do we want to share with the FDOL community?
- How can we provide feedback to another group?
- What reflections do I have about my learning and our group work?

Context

- Gibbs (2013) Academic Development to lead innovation and influence change
- Browne Report (2010) Teaching qualification for all staff teaching in HE
- Redecker et al. (2011) holistic changes are needed to transform education more generally to foster personalisation, collaboration but also informalisation as these are features of learning in the future.
- UK Quality Code (2012) and European Commission (2013) Initial and ongoing Development of Teachers essential
- Gibbs (2010, 2012) ; Parsons et al (2012) Impact of teaching qualifications on practice
- Wiley (2006) a shift towards 'openness' in academic practice as not only a positive trend, but a necessary one in order to ensure transparency, collaboration and continued innovation
- European Commission (2013) Teacher Development programmes to use open and joined up approaches that foster collaborative learning
- Ryan & Tilbury (2013) Flexible pedagogies to be modelled in Academic Development provision

FDOL132 Website Page

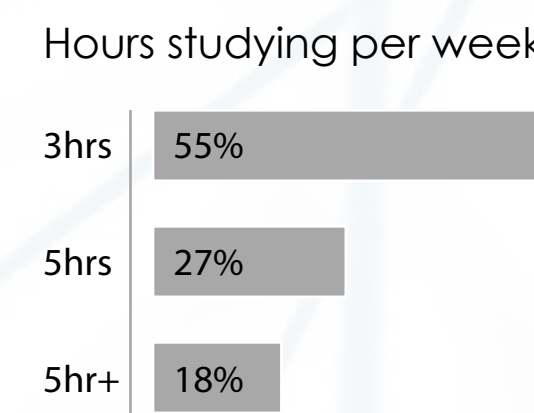
Social Media



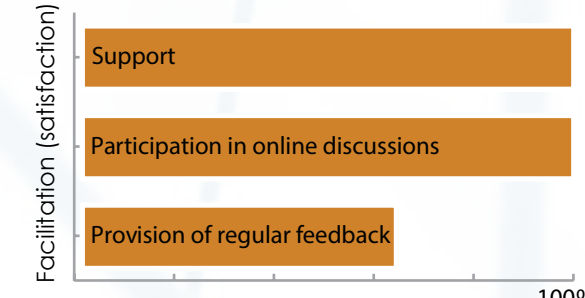
Final Survey

100% personal goals achieved

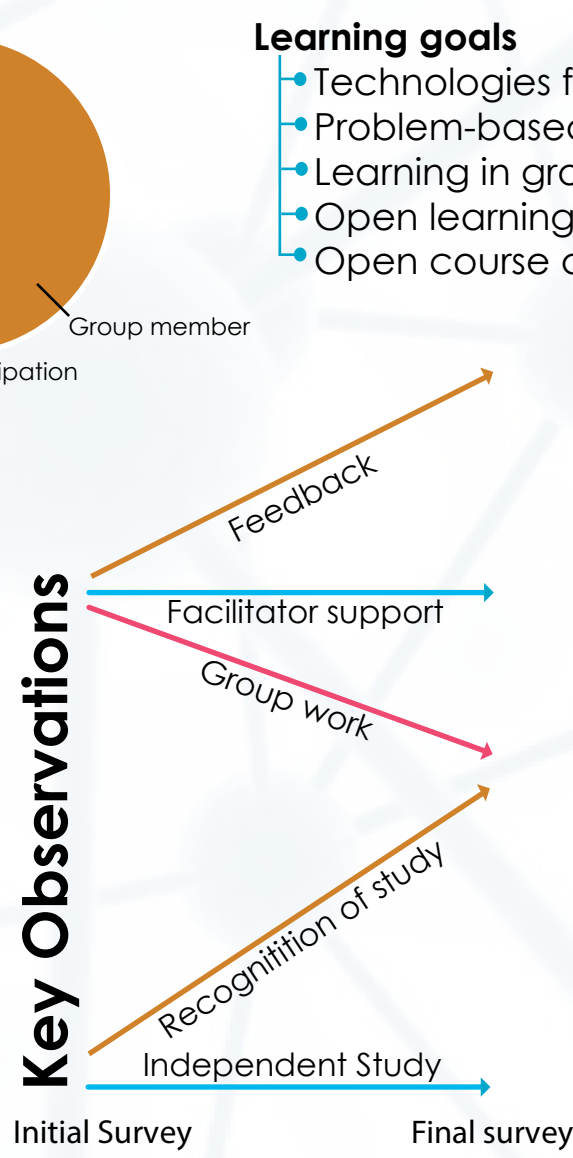
- Learning goals**
- Technologies for learning
 - Problem-based Learning
 - Learning in groups
 - Open learning
 - Open course design



- Learning values**
- Structured course
 - Flexibility
 - Resources
 - Communication
 - Feedback from facilitators, peer and others
 - Recognition for study
 - Group work
 - Variety of synchronous & asynchronous engagement opportunities

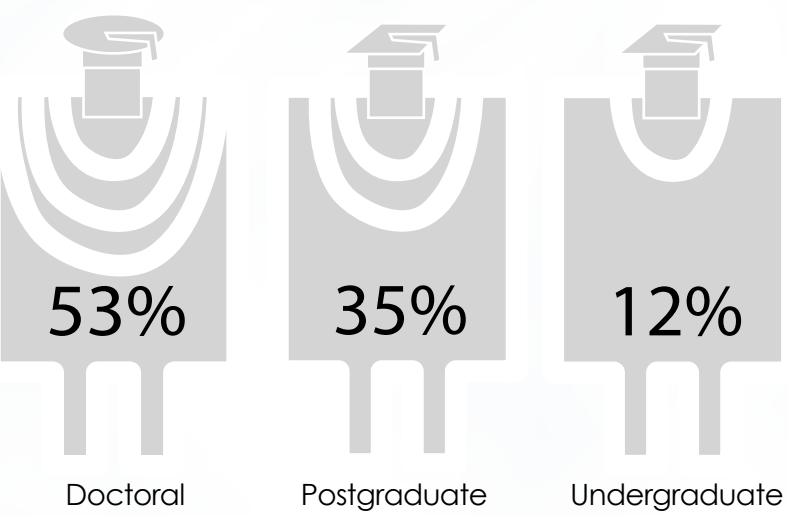
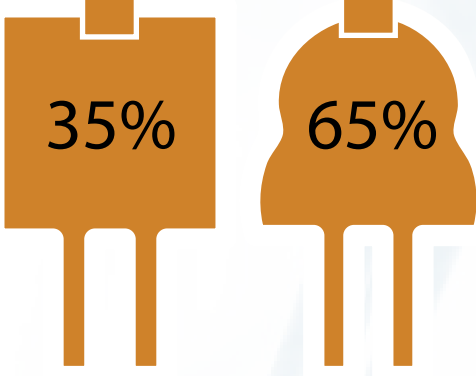


Key Observations



Initial Survey

82% age range
35 - 54 years

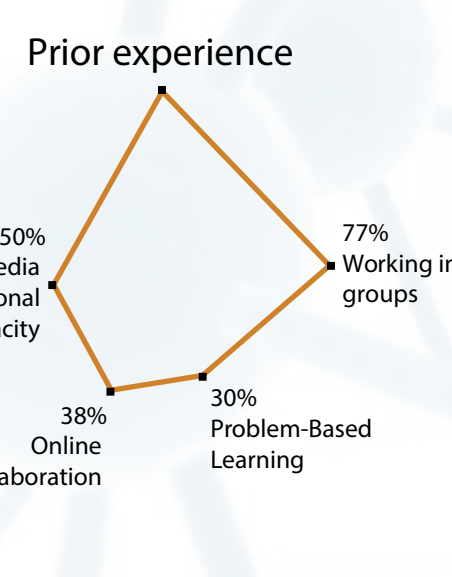
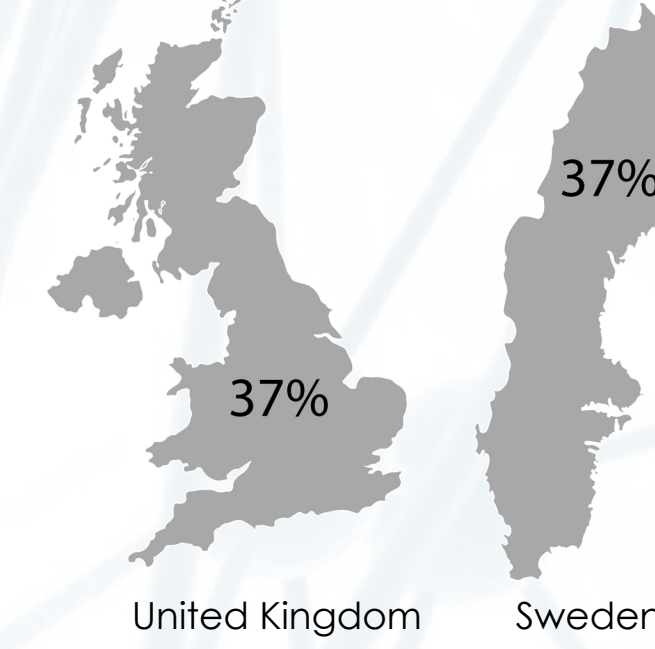


100% employed
88% HE 12% Public Sector

88% had participated in online courses before

47% had participated in open online courses before

- Learning values**
- to be an open learner
 - to connect with others
 - to collaborate
 - to be supported by a facilitator
 - application to practice



Interview Voices

preliminary findings

- Motivations: to be a student, CPD, PBL, TEL to enhance own practice
- Overwhelmed at the start
- Valued group work but found very challenging – learning in a microcosmos made experience personal
- Valued working with colleagues from different disciplines/countries – language barriers, different levels of commitment, time
- Smaller groups worked better, learning from and with others valued
- Time was a massive challenge
- Seeing the other person made collaboration real (hangouts, webinars – also a challenge to participate)
- Individuals working towards credits more motivated, but also seemed to motivate other group members
- Tensions for learners working towards credits: assessment tasks separated from group tasks. Course assessment was prioritised. This meant less time for group work. Quality of output perceived as poor. Too much focus on output.
- Active participation, facilitators' presence and active engagement and interaction with individuals made a difference
- Valuable and positive experience overall, learning and development, examples of application to practice

What followed

- Reviewed FDOL132
- Developed FDOL141 (shorter course, facilitator's role defined, emphasising on support/feedback, more facilitators, different group formation strategy, streamlining of activities)
- Designed and offered BYODL (where badges were introduced)
- Considering opportunities for recognition



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Digital Poster

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