

RadioActive101: Implementation and Evaluation of Internet Radio as an Educational Intervention for Inclusion, Informal Learning and Employability

RadioActive101 is an international internet radio hub that is an educational intervention which gives a voice to disenfranchised groups throughout Europe. It is realised through the application of state-of-the-art thinking in Community Action Research, Socio-technical design (e.g. Ravenscroft et al., 2012a; 2012b) and Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL), and has been funded by the Nominet Trust in the UK and through the EU Lifelong Learning Programme (EC-LLP). Through using radio to give a voice to these groups, such as at-risk and unemployed young people, schoolchildren in low-income areas and older people who have various challenges, RadioActive stimulates and facilitates inclusion, greater well-being and informal learning of citizens who would otherwise be excluded and 'left behind'.

RadioActive is an international consortium of six partners in five countries (see radioactive101.eu), and where these partners have direct links and ongoing collaborations with eleven Associate Partner organisations who perform and deliver RadioActive 'on the ground'. The RadioActive model, and national hubs, are operational in all five partner countries, proving its replicability and scalability across countries and contexts. Through RadioActive101 the target groups are developing digital competencies and employability skills 'in vivo'. These competencies and skills align with six of the EU Key Competencies for Lifelong Learning and we have developed a progression and accreditation model linking these key competencies to RadioActive activities and performances that are recognized through electronic 'badges'. These badges provide concrete recognition of informal learning and represent proficiencies that are relevant to further education or employment, in particular related to 21C skills for learning and working.

Thus far, the RadioActive implementations have been evaluated in terms of learning and development in three countries; the UK, Portugal and Germany (e.g. Edmonds et al., 2013), and below we present a brief synthesis of the main findings, that showed striking complementarity across contexts. Firstly, all groups showed the development of greater 'confidence' and 'well-being', and that this was a platform for further engagement and skills development. In other words, RadioActive seems not just to be an educational intervention, but there are signs that it is also a positive psychological intervention (in terms of confidence, well-being, dialogue and digital discourse). Secondly, the groups showed improved communication and media literacy skills linked to their greater confidence and propensity to 'use their voices'. These, in turn, led to more competent, confident and coherent group and organisational thinking and communication. Thirdly, and overall, there was a clear demonstration of improved creative and critical thinking, demonstrated through the interlinking of ambitious and big ideas to the well organised collaborative co-production of radio shows. The evaluation suggests that RadioActive has the capacity to inspire expressing 'dreams and ambitions' in ways that can then be realised as concrete and quality radio and media content, and in doing so foster significant empowerment.

The Online Educa 2014 presentation will provide a highly interactive exemplification of the implementation and evaluation of RadioActive101, including: demonstrating the 'model in action' through highlighting particularly innovative show content; and, exemplifying the evaluation findings through personal quotes and case studies.

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