



Leading Learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: *Engaging Educators and International Partners in the Practice of Online International Learning (OIL) through Collaborative Projects*

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Finland



Coventry  
University

United Kingdom (UK)



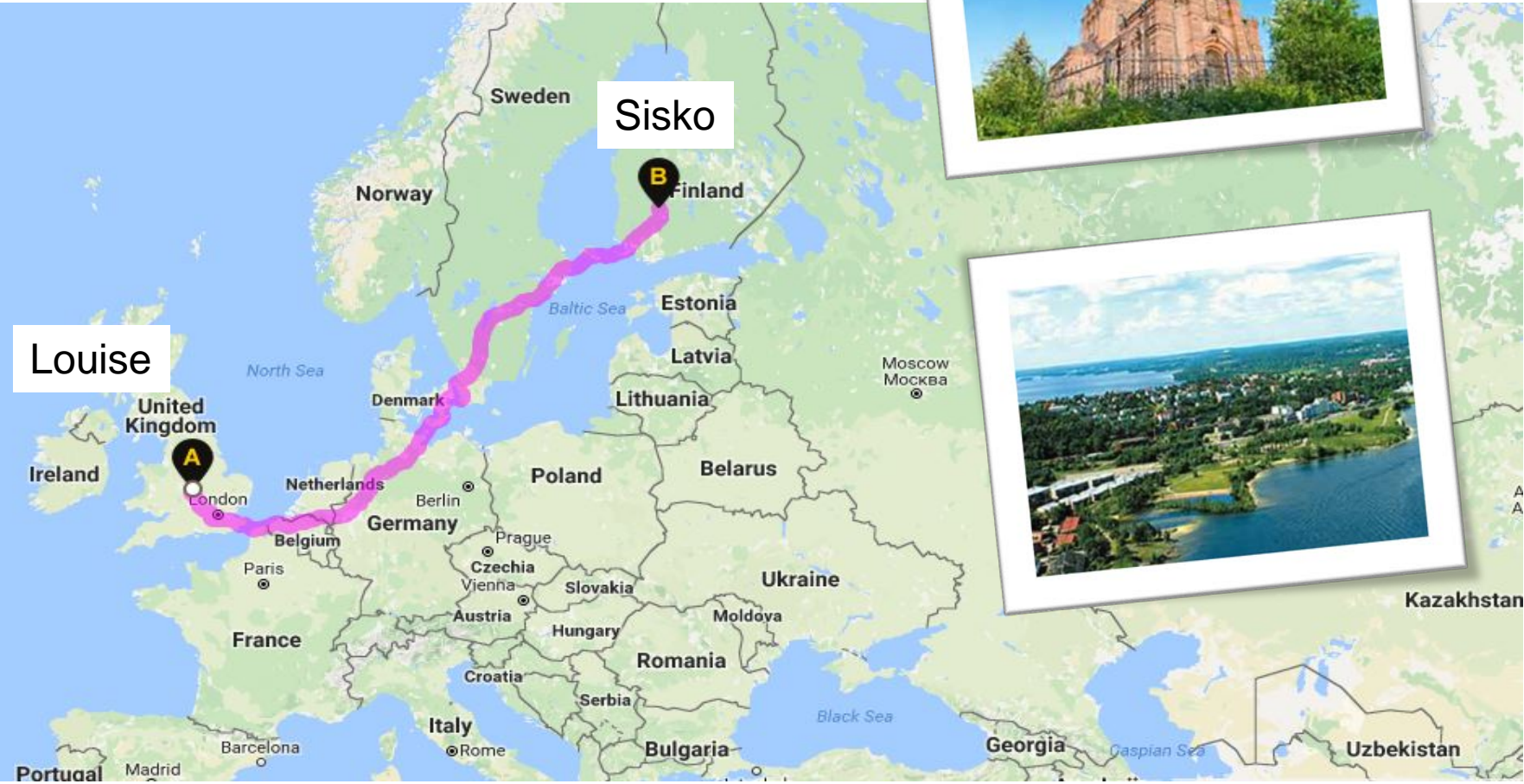


Greenland

Iceland

Sisko

Louise



# VIRTUAL LEARNING CHALLENGE

- Two different countries
- 16 staff who were interested but who had not met before – two groups of 6-8
- Two different assessments in two different institutions
- Using different online learning systems
- Different time zones
- International 'students' where English was not always the first but a common language between the group
- Different assessment dates
- No idea if it would work out in the end – needed careful planning
- Both had to satisfy different assessment criteria

Set out to:

- Discover new ways of teaching and to develop international networks/collaborations
- Explore new tools and technologies that can be used in practice
- Enjoyable experience of working as part of an online educational community of practitioners
- Establish social and collaborative learning that was meaningful to 'students' and to practice

# WHAT IS AN 'OIL' PROJECT – BOTH PERSPECTIVES

## Vocational Teacher Education at TAMK

The vocational teacher education programme (60 ECTS credits) provides the pedagogical qualification required of teachers in Finland at

- universities of applied sciences
- vocational schools
- vocational adult education centres
- comprehensive school
- non-formal education



## Online International Learning at Coventry University

Online International Learning (OIL) refers to 'virtual mobility' experiences.

They are included within the curriculum and provide opportunities to interact with international universities and industry professionals.

OIL is used to help develop intercultural competences and digital skills, while working with others on subject-specific learning tasks or activities.

OIL Projects can take place in 'real-time' so that 'students' from different countries are communicating and interacting 'live' at the same time.

Projects can take place 'asynchronously' (students from each country interacting and working together at different times). This helps with differences between countries e.g. Time, jobs, etc!





# VIRTUAL MOBILITY - LEARNING EXPERIENCE

## Assessment Activity:

### Teaching Online & Building Online Learning Communities (10ECTS cr)

Module comprises themes such as planning of online teaching, creating of online learning environments, multi-skilled teaching and networking

#### Objectives: Teacher Students

- can describe the characteristics of online teaching and learning
- can demonstrate understanding of theories underpinning learning communities
- can apply education technologies, social media tools in teaching and facilitation
- are digitally literate
- can describe the pedagogical foundations of meaningful e-learning
- know the principles of instructional design
- know how to operate in a global collaborative learning environment online
- build and foster learning communities and communities of practice
- have developed their professional identity as an online facilitator and teacher
- have increased their professional networks



## Assessment Activity

### - Online Collaborative Activity:

- work as part of an online group on a task
- no more than five people
- produce a concise **online learning/knowledge resource** which can be used as a useful aid for culturally diverse students or lecturing/academic staff.
- aim of the resource is to help students with their studies or other University teachers with their delivery to a contemporary student body within higher education.
- Make shareable learning/knowledge resource available to peers for feedback
- Write an Individual Report (for assessment)
- Work remotely from each other using social media to communicate online as a collaborative group (e.g. communication technology other than email)
- Share the resource with others by creating this and using a social media platform



# CHALLENGE: *WHAT BROUGHT THE INNOVATION ABOUT*

- Virtual collaboration
  - Ability to demonstrate presence
  - Ability to drive engagement
- Multidisciplinary teams
  - Diversity leads to innovations
- New media, multimedia content
  - Ability to create content
  - Ability to critically read & assess
- Globally connected world
  - Cross-cultural competence
  - Social intelligence
  - Diversity and adaptability
- The social aspect of learning was already part of Vygotsky's (1978) work on social constructivist theory. He argued that knowledge is built in collaboration with peers who can support each other in the *zone of proximal development* where an individual cannot quite manage on their own.
- Connectivism (Siemens, 2005): individuals connected with each other and with technology in an online environment. Information is retrieved from various sources, and knowledge is shared and constructed in collaboration. What this means as active participation is to "*consume, connect, create and contribute*" (Littlejohn, Milligan & Margaryan 2011)
- Development of courses and graduates for 21<sup>st</sup> Century, global employment, collaboration and living/working in today's world

# WHAT WE DID – A JOINED APPROACH

A 'briefing document' for the collaborative project issued to the Finnish and UK participants. Set out:

- Key dates, submission dates and targets
    - Showed 'stepping off' points
  - Provided contact details for supporting colleagues
  - Provided them with two 'options' to set up online groups
  - Suggested examples of technologies that could be used
- 
- Apart from the initial meeting with the UK partners and one guiding session with the small groups in June, Sisko was on summer vacation 😊 most of the time.
  - Met as the facilitators and designers of the virtual mobility learning experience
  - Review assessment and establish how this joint venture would work in practice
  - Organise the activity, communities and first meeting of the teams
  - Provided online support (mentoring and coaching)
  - Support through the postgraduate teaching course (launch and guidance)



Type/Purpose	Example of Tools
<b>presentation techniques</b>	prezi, powtoon, videoscribe ...
<b>collaborative writing</b>	google doc/Drive, office 365 ...)
<b>e-meeting</b>	AC, WebEx, Zoom, Hangout, Appear.in
<b>shared workspace</b>	blogger, wikispaces, wordpress...)
<b>Curate</b> (collecting links, articles, films and photos in one place and sharing your collection with others.)	Padlet, Popplet, Scoopit, Pinterest, Evernote, Diigo, Storify ...)
<b>screencasting + videos</b>	Screencast-o-matic, Screenr, Camtasia ... iMovie, Microsoft Movie Maker, Magisto, Bambuser, YouTube ...)
<b>social networking</b>	twitter, linkedin, facebook, instagram...)
<b>digital interaction in the classroom (or online)</b>	kahoot, socrative, Today's meet, Nearpod...)
<b>collaborative planning and brainstorming</b>	CoggleIt, AnswerGarden, Mindmeister ...)
<b>learning platforms</b>	Eliademy, Moodle, Bb, Google Classroom

# BENEFITS

- Interesting cultural encounters
- Good to have very different perspectives from one's own
- Learned a lot about technology enhanced learning
- Gained new confidence in synchronic and asynchronic online team work
- Experienced in collaborative learning communities
- Collaborative knowledge building
- New tools for own practice



- The first formal meeting - to get the project and to introduce the groups to one another
- Sharing ideas with colleagues from another institution
- Learning from others - their familiarity/use of technologies and experience
- Groups had different fields of study and subject interests – created diverse and numerous ideas
- Good to meet and share ideas with staff at the Coventry outside of usual disciplinary area
- Learned 'how to' use technologies that they had not heard about before or used before in practice
- Experienced creating an actual resource e.g. video, shared documents, etc.



# ADDED VALUE

- Skill based changed as a result and **confidence levels** with OIL projects and technology increased
- Discussions brought about a **richer understandings** than individuals could have achieved by themselves
- **Increased awareness** of a range of technologies and confidence to trial/use
- **Groups gelled** and worked very well together
- Any **concerns at the start were soon overcome** and forgotten as the process unfolded
- Came to **realise the frustrations** that their own students/colleagues might experience with technology
- Excellent **organisation skills** from others and those stepping forward to lead, monitor and set objectives



# LESSONS!

## Advantages:

- Positive experience
- Improved communication, social skills and team working (face-to-face and virtually)
- Able to use communication tools effectively (and to be supported by others around you) – helps with skills for employment and study
- Everyone had a different skill set to bring to the project - richness
- Benefits gained from the diversity of cultures, ideas and group working online
- Improved digital literacy, confidence and partnerships
- Friendships form

## Things To Be Aware of:

- Not everyone perceives the importance in the same way
- Might be an inequity in contribution across the group
- Getting everyone together virtually for online discussions due to other commitments (busy academics/professional)
- Lack of access to some of the technologies
- Time differences can make it difficult to schedule meetings for everyone to attend
- Varying skills of technical ability
- Technical issues with people joining the group call or connections that dropped out
- Missing a meeting or a communication you can fall behind others
- Requires more guidance at the beginning

# NEXT TIME – LESSONS FROM THE DESIGNERS

- Smaller teams and more even distribution of UK partners *(we now had two teams of four who didn't receive any 'guest students' and two teams of six with three UK members each)*
- TAMK students in this program are a multicultural cohort and at this point in their studies already used to online collaboration. Working with UK partners gives them extra confidence and a realization that they've actually learned a lot.
- First pilot, next time in the UK we would include those who have completed the activity as part of the 'set-up' asking them to come as guests to share their experiences with others.

# ADDED VALUE THE 'BURIED TREASURES'

The things we did not expect to discover .... but did!

- Sisko: The best part was planning the implementation together with Louise. Having different educational systems and practices allowed us to take the best of both and learn from each other.
- Louise: As Sisko says! Seeing people grow in confidence and to go through different thresholds of learning as they created the product, learned from the process, formed as 'groups' online, solved problems and produced a reflection that showed how they changed as a result. The friendships and networks that continue.



# WINDOWS OF THE WORLD...

... learning and teaching environments of the future?



Times Higher Education (2016) *IE University's Window On The Classroom Of The Future* [online] available from < <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/ie-university-window-on-the-classroom-of-the-future> > [10 September 2016]

## Eric Whiteacre's Virtual Choir - 2,000 voices strong

TED Talks

[https://www.ted.com/talks/eric\\_whitacre\\_a\\_virtual\\_choir\\_2\\_000\\_voices\\_strong](https://www.ted.com/talks/eric_whitacre_a_virtual_choir_2_000_voices_strong)

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THANK YOU FOR LISTENING

