

Learning from undergraduate students' experience of the Digital Learning Across Boundaries (DLAB) project

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INTRODUCTION

This research forms part of an established project: Digital Learning Across Boundaries – Developing Changemakers (DLAB). An Erasmus+ project, it runs internationally across five countries (Belgium, Denmark, England, Norway and Spain). DLAB is now in its sixth and final year, having worked to support learners crossing geographical, personal and environmental boundaries using technology.

This strand of research reviews the experience of the English undergraduate (UG) students who joined the DLAB team this year. It explores how students viewed their involvement, and what they perceived as their own growth through the project.



AIMS

- To understand more about the undergraduate student experience of involvement in the project.
- To empower students to reflect on their own experience of involvement and identify any growth.



METHODOLOGY

- Qualitative data gathered through semi-structured interviews.
- Group interviews chosen to offer opportunity for communication between students (Blaik Hourani, 2013, p.14).
- Gibbs' Reflective Cycle (1988) used to frame the questions.
- Model and questions sent to participants in advance. This was to provide clarity around the expectations of the interview, to enable students to develop cognitive preparedness (May, 2011, p.141).
- Data analysed and coded; themes identified. Inductive approach enabled researchers to respond to data without pre-formulated ideas of themes (Cohen *et al.*, 2018, p.645) to avoid assumptions of student perceptions.



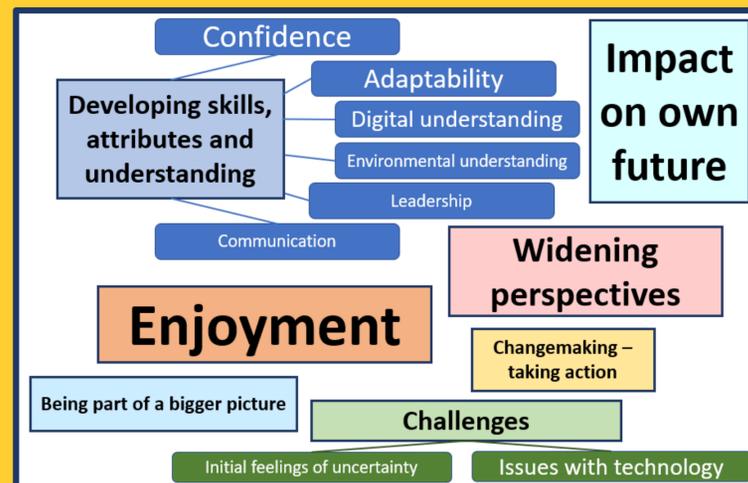
RESULTS

...developing confidence and adaptability...

...a lot we can take away that will help us, whether that's in education or in personal life or anything

Quotes from UG student participants.

Themes identified: larger text denotes more dominant theme.



English UG students running a GIF-making workshop at the Multiplier event in Bruges.



DISCUSSION

Data suggest that students:

- found an increase in confidence and adaptability through the project.
- gained enjoyment from participating.
- developed Changemaker attributes such as collaboration, and felt empowered to apply these in jobs, practice and wider life, both now and in the future.
- felt part of a 'bigger picture' and collaborated with others.
- valued the new experience and widened their perspectives.
- identified that the experience contributed to their future roles.

These themes relate to connectivist learning theory: students have used technology to collaborate and communicate, learning as they co-created, as part of a collective journey (Whewell *et al.*, 2022, p.9). Skills acquired and developed through this can be applied in future work and personal lives, as identified by the students themselves.



CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

Working as part of the DLAB team offered students the opportunity to build confidence and adaptability, and work collaboratively in an international context. Students felt they had gained and developed skills for their future careers and their personal lives.

Research into the impact of DLAB continues with the wider research team. This will: evaluate the collaborative week working together in Bruges; explore notions of co-creation within the project; and evaluate the experience of children, students, teachers and lecturers from the involved countries.

Insights will feed into future collaborative projects.

Scan this QR code to visit the DLAB2 website, or use the URL:
<https://mypad.northampton.ac.uk/dlaberasmus/>

