

REPORT ON PILOT INTERNATIONAL VIRTUAL COURSES

Four courses were selected within the IN2IT project to be offered during the academic year 2017-2018 – Essential Skills, Entrepreneurship, English for International Purposes and Embracing Diversity. All were offered first as a pilot project during the second semester of the academic year 2016-2017.

- **Essential Skills** with 36 students from the following partner institutions: ORT Braude College, Beit Berl College, Tel Hai College, Sapir Academic College, Warsaw University of Technology, Brunel University.
- **Global Entrepreneurship** with 16 students from the following partner institutions: ORT Braude College, Tel Hai College, Tel Aviv Yaffo Academic College, Sapir College, Kingston University, University of Montpellier.
- **English for Internationalization Purposes** with 22 students the following partner institutions: Kaye Academic College of Education, Al Qasemi Academic College of Education, Sapir Academic College, Warsaw University of Technology, Università Cattolica.
- **Embracing Diversity** with 50 students from the following partner institutions: Kaye Academic College of Education, Al Qasemi College of Education, Politecnico di Milano, Ludwigsburg University of Education.

The courses all have different structures, learning modes and learning outcomes, participant numbers, number of sessions, and the experience of the pilot varied significantly as the attached reports indicate. One of the pilots Embracing Diversity was offered as a MOOC with open enrolment on the Politecnico di Milano's platform and not on the platform set up by the project. However, across the four pilot projects the following observations can be made.

Academic Team

The academic teams had to learn how to work together and establish a clear set of procedures and working practices as the vast majority of them had never worked together before and there was an extremely broad range of experience around working collaboratively on line. Most identified a need for regular meetings to ensure shared understanding and workload.

Course Design

The teams with the least experience had naturally the steepest learning curves and realised they would need to rethink a lot of the course design following the pilot. Much of this had to do with the need for greater clarity in terms of presentation of information, use of graphics and preparation of materials, as well as the challenges of organizing synchronized sessions. Issues had to be solved around credit allocation, whether the module would be a stand-alone elective or integrated into an existing course and so on. There were also questions around what enrolment numbers should be as well as solving challenges of timing and coordination across different academic calendars.

Technology

The project set up its own platform for the modules and inevitably using it the first time meant that there were a number of issues around technology and what the platform could or could not do that had to be worked out. This meant additional guidance and support required both for the academic team and the students which at times interfered with the teaching and learning experience.

Student Experience

There were often issues around communication to students during the pilot and which was the best technology to use. A blended approach where students have a physical point of contact in their own institution was often preferred or recognised as a necessary component of the module.

There was often an expectation of collaborative work from the students that was not always sufficiently present, or groups were deemed to be too large for effective collaboration. Organisation of synchronic meetings was a challenge, as was the varying levels of knowledge or experience with on line learning across the different student groups.

However, in general the students expressed enthusiasm and satisfaction generally with the experience of international online learning and were generally interested in becoming more involved.

Summary

The value of the pilot was recognised by all four groups who said that it had provided essential information for the preparation of the module to be offered in the following academic year.

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Annex: Teams' Pilot Summary Reports

	Essential Skills
Introduction	The participants: OBC 4 students participated in the pilot and all of them participated in the focus group (FG). 3 of them studied for their B.Sc. in Engineering and another one already has M.Sc. and study for her Teaching Certificate. SAP: 4 students participated in the pilot and the FG from Managing Human Resources Department. BBC 3 students participated both the pilot and the FG they all study for kindergarten teacher and BA degree. THC- 4 students participated in the course and only three of them in the FG. WUT: 6 students participated in the pilot and only four of them in the FG. BUL: 8 students participated, from mixed levels and study backgrounds. 4 of them are PhD students from computing and engineering backgrounds, 2 MA students from Design & Engineering and 2 UG students from int'l language study backgrounds.
Recruitment	Most of the students were recruited by prior acquaintance with one or more of the project's team members. In some colleges, the students did not get credit for their participation and their only incentive was being a part of an international course. Most of them felt enthusiastic about participating in the pilot.
Technology	Many difficulties using the BBB. They need more support from Sapir. In BBB meetings it was frustrating not to be able to embed video links within PowerPoint documents, or show live videos to the participants (MP4 or other audio file uploads are not supported). It would be useful to be able to look at the platform live during the synchronic meetings. We experienced lots of issues in the synchronic meetings, mostly with the ability to hear and listen, minimizing the students' participation. The site should be simpler to operate and more accessible. We recommend adding a video tutorial to the site. There were many technical problems on the site. The platform is not ideal. It could be clearer and better planned. We had to use other platforms to communicate (re-word to: Students had to use other platforms to communicate?). More instructions before the first task on how to communicate are needed and build first relationship with their international group members. The students prefer communicating by WhatsApp, Skype or Email. Navigation of the content and structure was poor. Usability needs improving. The content list was not easily understood against the course material. When scrolling down there is not an easy way to go back up. The students often needed guidance, further information/explanations and encouragement in order to fully comprehend the pilot course tasks and activities posted in the modules. In addition to the Q & A help platform in the course platform, they suggested that each participating institution would have a face-to-face meeting with an institutional developer of the course to briefly outline the course objectives and assignments. Students had a problem only in task 2.3 in which they did not understand the purpose and have difficulty in using the database.
The Synchronic meetings	On the one hand, most of the students thought that the synchronic meetings were helpful: it created multicultural discussions with different points of view, online feedback, teamwork and commitment. On the other hand, few students claimed that it was boring, not challenging, the teacher should have been more active and the technical issues overshadowed the meetings.
The task Load	OBC and Sapir students said that the task load was reasonable, while BBC student said that we have to reduce the number of tasks or to increase the time allocated per each task. Students like to work with people who respond quickly and are active online. Brunel students found the exercises useful and there was a good level of interest. The instructions were clear for task 1 but were somewhat difficult and confusing for Task 2.3 (group skills map). Students enjoyed the flexible participation time. The second task was difficult and very complicated for many of them. The first task was very interesting. The communication between the students in the group contributed to the task. They could understand the benefit. The second task was difficult and very complicated. The questions for the synchronic meeting was not clear, sent very close to the meeting and added lots of stress. They did not understand what they had to prepare as group and could not manage to communicate effectively about the task. Brunel Feedback: None of the students complained that they didn't have time to complete the tasks. Track student participation early and if they drop out then recommend a group restructure to aid group activity. Track student participation throughout and encourage them to engage with activities and group work.
Communication	In most of the institutions, the students claimed that the communication was poor. They had difficulties to interact with each other due to: different time zone, availability of communication tools, different communication styles in each culture and study load. Their idea was to embed few communication tools in the course's platform and to set BBB's virtual spaces that will enable them to communicate not only during the online meetings. Another thought was to have a clear communication plan of when emails go out to students with task notes or meeting reminders.
The task content	One of the students recommended this "Essential Skills" course is a mandatory course. She believes that the benefit is working online in multicultural groups and getting familiar with new teammates. Building the collaborative collage as a first group activity was highlighted by all Sapir's students as a simple and very effective task that assisted them in getting oriented with the course and getting familiar with their team mates. Additionally, they indicated that this simple and easy to follow task has yielded important personal and group insights. Some students believe that the course is attractive in its content and messages and enhance students' learning experience. Some students emphasize that the course may contribute to communication skills in English, to presentation skills, to teamwork and personal development.

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	<p>They had suggested adding more new tools to the course materials.</p> <p>The OBC and other students refer to task 2 as a significant and challenging task and they recommend giving more time to discuss their future vision and insights.</p> <p>Some students found all the tasks interesting but sometimes difficult to understand the instructions. Most of them found the tasks interesting, clear and not difficult except the task 2.3 that they found it difficult and not clear. Sapir students said that the 2nd task was too ambitious for a short pilot because they need more time and guidance in order to fully comprehend and appreciate the task. Using the 'mind-map' as a graphic representation of their vision was indicated as a nice experience, but they need more time to do it properly. For THC students thought that the Mind map task was too childish for them.</p> <p>Sapir students noted that when the complete course plan was presented to them in the second synchronic meeting, they have realized that this component of building a personal leadership development plan will receive far more attention and elaboration in the full course.</p> <p>Students from THC were disappointed by the pilot they expected it to be more challenging. They felt older than the others did.</p> <p>Some of the students said that there should be an opportunity for a more open discussion where everyone will have the opportunity to express themselves.</p> <p>Brunei Feedback: The content needs to have a clear structure in advance and the development roles are clearly defined.</p>
The task flow	<p>Only one institution comment on this issue: The students claim was that the course's structure was not clear enough about where the synchronic meetings fit in. It also needs to be clear where student's activities are located within the platform.</p>
Other	<p>The students in the one focus group highlighted the course advantages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Making connections with students from other countries and cultures *Experiencing multicultural team work *Enhancing spoken English and presentation skills *Empowering students through discussion and feedback from the team mates * Developing self- awareness (to your belief and values, strengths, weaknesses) * Getting 2 credit points without exams. <p>Another group added that the contribution of the course is the ability to contact and collaborate with other people from different institution in Israel and in EU. "It was very interesting to expose yourself and to collaborate and work with other people.</p> <p>Forum could help in distance learning.</p> <p>It is a challenging experience".</p> <p>In another institution, the highlight was on the content and quality, rather than on technological issues.</p>

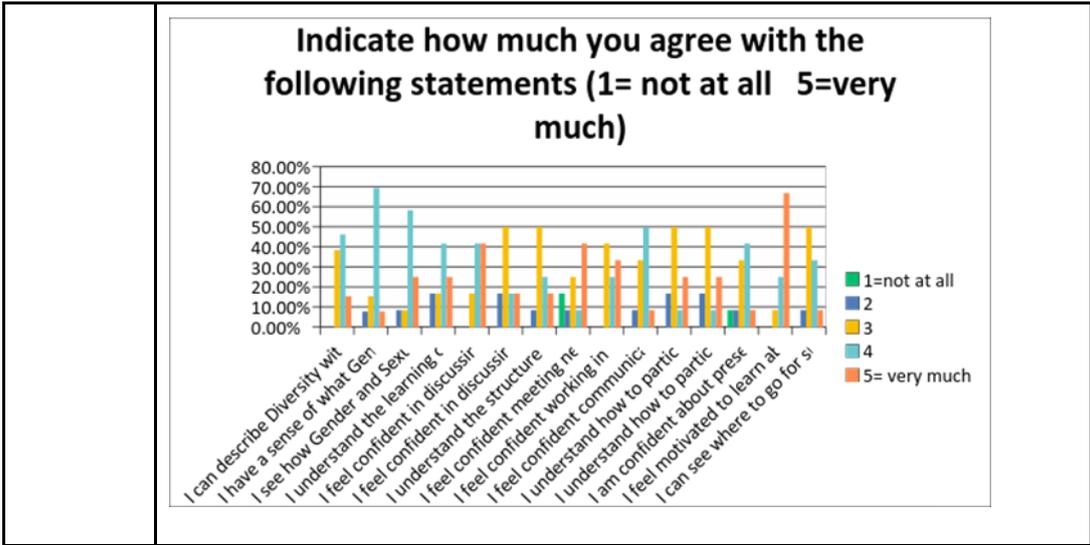
	<p style="text-align: center;">English for Internationalization Purposes</p>
	<p>The EIP pilot module was comprised of 3 online sessions and was originally scheduled to take place over a period of 3 weeks (a week per session). 25 students from 4 institutions (Sapir, Kaye, WUT, AL Qasemi & UCSC) were selected to participate in the pilot. In most institutions, recruiting students was fairly easy, at least in as most of them expressed interest and enthusiasm to join, the strongest incentive being the international group learning experience. Due to real-time difficulties in synchronizing schedules between the participating institutions, the pilot was stretched over a longer period of time and 22 students actually took part.</p> <p>Teachers monitored their students' progress in the pilot, guiding and supporting them through the learning environment when needed. According to student feedback collected so far, students felt relatively comfortable in the learning environment, saying it was friendly to use, and expressed their interest to take a complete EIP course. They did say however, that they would have liked to see more collaborative work with their international partners.</p> <p>Following the pilot, the 5 EIP teachers had a Big Blue Button meeting and outlined some of the challenges encountered and the next steps to take:</p>
CHALLENGES and possible solutions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Familiarity with the environment: In order to overcome technical difficulties and general orientation, the first session of the course (introduction) should be done with home students in class, F2F, as the teacher guides them through it. 2. Monitoring of progress: Teachers should have a clear monitoring protocol of students' completed work (who monitors what and what qualifies as completion of assignment). It is recommended that most assignments would be given a grade and/or a badge upon completion. 3. International collaboration between students: We found that groups of 5 were too big to create real collaborative efforts. We believe that pairing students would be more effective. Re-pairing and take place at a few milestone points, in order to facilitate diverse interaction. 4. Topics studied: Topics studied throughout should directly focus on internationalization issues. We are building a pool of resources. 5. Coordinating English language level among participating students. We thought we were aiming for the same level of students, but it seemed like the EU students were more advanced. We should carefully work on matching levels to pitch the course at the right level for all participants.
Next steps	<p>Finalizing the structure of the course in terms of the following issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Will this course be given as part of the regular EAP curriculum courses? If so, students have to take standard final assessment in every institution, which means we can only include it as a segment of the regular course. If it is offered as an elective, however, the risk is twofold: some institutions will be reluctant to give it academic credit and students will not join. * Synchronizing semester schedules: our toughest challenge so far! (I am personally inspired by the CORE model - I saw a presentation on that at Trent Nottingham - basically, it's a semester given in 3 weeks!)* Number of enrolled

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	<p>students: We believe we can't cope with more than 15 registered students in every institution in the online environment.</p> <p>* Inter-institution collaboration: Everyone with everyone or split into 2 + 3?</p>
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	<h3 style="margin: 0;">Embracing Diversity</h3>																					
Delivery	<p>The “Embracing Diversity” course PILOT edition, took place between the 3rd of May and the 20th of July 2017 on Polimi Open Knowledge Platform (POK). https://www.pok.polimi.it/</p> <p>The IN2IT platform hosted a link to redirect to the course on POK and a short tutorial in order to help people to register on POK.</p>																					
Structure	<p>The PILOT includes the Gender and sexual attitudes part of the Diversity course developed by POLIMI. It opens with a video interview realized by the partnership in order to investigate “What makes people different” (Week0)</p> <p>It includes the activity of self-introduction of participants through Tarasa http://tarasa.org/ A guide for this activity has been created (Tarasa guide). The last week includes the activity created by LUE with a lesson about Location-Based-Learning and the DiverCity Walk activity. The methodological structure of the MOOC is based on the Kolb’s cycle learning model integrated by Location based learning strategies.</p>																					
Participants	<p>This course is a PILOT edition for IN2IT but it is also a regular MOOC on POK. Here below some results about the MOOC on POK.</p> <p>584 participants from all over the world 176 final certificates (30% of total learners). (The certificate is delivered to all people who answered correctly to at least 60% of quizzes). Initial survey: filled by 215 people (46%) Final survey (ongoing): filled by 67 people (11%)</p>																					
Survey	<p>We created 6 surveys to be filled from PILOT students, they were asked to fill these surveys and not the general ones included in the MOOC.</p> <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto; border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center;"> <thead> <tr style="background-color: #4F81BD; color: white;"> <th>Survey</th> <th>%</th> <th>Number</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>INITIAL SURVEY</td> <td>29%</td> <td>16</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Week1: End of Module</td> <td>70%</td> <td>38</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Week2: End of Module</td> <td>28%</td> <td>15</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Week3: End of Module</td> <td>28%</td> <td>15</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Week4: End of Module</td> <td>18%</td> <td>10</td> </tr> <tr> <td>FINAL</td> <td>33%</td> <td>18</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <div style="text-align: center; margin-top: 20px;"> <p>% answers to surveys</p> </div>	Survey	%	Number	INITIAL SURVEY	29%	16	Week1: End of Module	70%	38	Week2: End of Module	28%	15	Week3: End of Module	28%	15	Week4: End of Module	18%	10	FINAL	33%	18
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Comments

For the introductory week 0 activity I found that Tarasa doesn't work in IE only Chrome. I felt uncomfortable contributing as I am not confident using web forums or publishing on the web publicly and wasn't sure who would be able to see my contribution and how long for.

Problems resetting my password. Had set aside some time to do course at home one evening but could not remember my password to access the material. I clicked on forgotten password several times but did not receive a single email (checked all folders) to reset it so had to give up in the end.

Luckily I remembered the password the following day and was able to continue. So I would suggest a clearer message if incorrect password is entered or account is blocked. Also, the first question in this survey is asking in which country you live but the countries are listed only in Italian (?). The country codes helped but suggest options are added in English too. Other than that I am enjoying this course and so you are doing a great job.

The first week's modules were interesting, and if you had had little to do with Sexual Orientation Gender Identity (SOGI) issues, this would be a very good primer for what is to come. Informative without being confusing or overpowering.

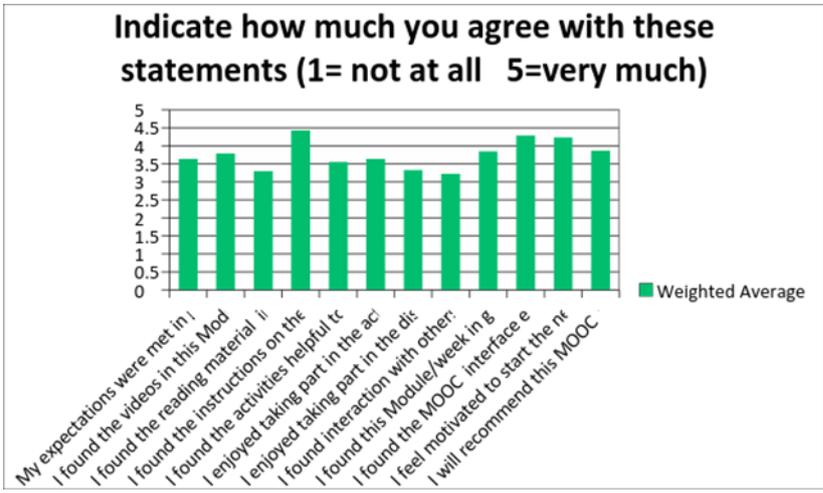
Very brief so didn't take very long but thought provoking

I felt that it could have been more challenging and I would have liked to see disability included.

The activities aren't useful.

The activity is not really helpful.

Sometimes the person in the video is talking a bit fast. There could be sometimes a small break.



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In general, how do you rate this course experience?

Rating	Percentage
Definitely negative	0.00%
Negative	18.00%
Positive	70.00%
Completely positive	12.00%

I think it's a good course. as I understand it's only a pilot, but in the real course I think it will be good of speaking about stereotype with examples like jokes, speaking about the danger of serotype (Such as the Holocaust or hatred between Jews and Arabs).
 Stories are the most memorable way of conveying information. More examples of individuals and what has happened to them would stay in the mind.
 I found the introductory presentation a little simplistic but stuck with it and was more challenged in later sessions to think differently and to be inspired by company examples.
 Just too much work, and no suggestions about timescale, work to complete. I fell behind after week 1 and could never catch up.
 I wasn't comfortable contributing to websites outside of the MOOC platform (pilot activities) as I am not confident contributing public content on the internet - it would be nice if all activities were contained within the MOOC.

Global Entrepreneurship	
General	<p>The Hack idea was good and was very intensive (finished a session @ 01.30AM and returned on 9.30AM) Some enjoyed it very much One student without a proper Entrepreneurship background dropped out Some worked within the team with WhatsApp only A tool like WhatsApp with all contacts (preloaded) was missing Posts to the Q&A forum did not create notification messages to students A dedicated mentor for each group was missing (the mentor should initiate first group virtual sync meeting) The Blue button was not effective and it was not clear when to join The system should filter irrelevant messages (they received many of them) The user interface was confusing Students should have a point of contact within their organization at least for the initial part of the course</p>
Design	<p>Course structure should be simpler graphically and in the way it is organized It is not scalable to video-record everything and we must be able to use the great material on the Internet. Need to work more on the rules and terms to use it We should minimize the sync sessions</p>
Teamwork	<p>It is not effective working without an assigned team leader We had to install a better communication via WhatsApp</p>
Comments	<p>The instructions were not clear. We did not understand what is expected from us at the beginning (maybe an introduction email with guidelines and instructions would help). It might be a good idea to split the work into sprints with defined deliverable for each sprint. We did not know to team up. It will be better if the teachers will assign students from different institutions to teams. We did not work synchronically – each one of us contributed his part on his free time. It will be more effective to have the hackathon during 1 day, i.e., 12 hours (instead of 3 days) when all the students will be in their home institutions and communicate with their team mates by skype and other tools – at the same time. We did not understand how and why to talk with the mentors online. The expectations regarding the final submission were not clear. It will be useful to see an example or to get additional instructions on that matter. In general, communicating in English was not a problem. We did not use the Moodle, but rather Skype, Google drive, and WhatsApp. We enjoyed the experience very much</p>