INCLUDE PROJECT

include

Newsletter, Issue 2

In this issue you will be presented with:

- Project website
- Intellectual Output 1 introduction
- The first publication
- Steering committee meeting 1
- Stakeholder seminar 1, and
- Article on Output 1 findings about the Asia Pacific context

INCLUDE Project Website

Aiming to provide details and progress of the project and to disseminate the project results to the wider community the project website was launched in December 2021. The live project website which is open to public will be updated continuously and populated with project outputs. It can be found through the below link:
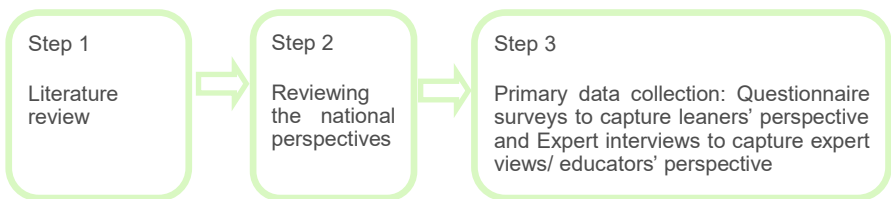
http://includeresearchproject.org

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INCLUsive Disaster Education

INCLUDE (INCLUsive Disaster Education) is a collaborative research project co-funded by EU Erasmus+ programme. This two-year research initiative aims to reimagine online distance learning education so that it better supports the diverse DRR community. INCLUDE project is led by the University of Huddersfield's Global Disaster Resilience Centre, based in the UK. The project consortium consists of five partners from four Europe countries and one from an Asian country.

An overview of Intellectual Output 1

"A survey of online, distance learning strategies used in DRR education and their effectiveness to identify their success factors and associated issues and problems"

INCLUDE begins with identifying the currently available online, distance learning strategies in DRR, their success factors, associated issues and problems. In this context, O1 helps to understand exactly where the gaps in remote learning exist, how educators are coping, their predictions for the future, and also whether the current practices address the differences in relation to the access and use by underrepresented groups. O1 will be very useful for DRR educators and policy makers to understand the existing online and distance learning strategies, associated issues and their effectiveness, and will provide valuable lessons to deploy distance learning at scale across all levels of DRR education. To tackle the problems that will be identified as part of O1, a framework will then be developed to reimagine online distance learning education that can support the diverse DRR community. The below diagram illustrates the steps undertaken to pursue O1.

Step 1

Literature review

Step 2

Reviewing the national perspectives

Step 3

Primary data collection: Questionnaire surveys to capture leaners' perspective and Expert interviews to capture expert views/ educators' perspective

Publications

BARRIERS THAT HINDER INCLUSIVE ONLINE EDUCATION AND THE GOOD PRACTICES IN DIGITAL PEDAGOGY

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic gave rise to several unprecedented challenges, including an emergency shift to online learning and distance education. Although many consider it normal to own devices like mobile phones, laptops and computers, studies suggest that about 46% of the global learning population remains offline. Consequently, inclusive education and social equity have become elusive during the pandemic crisis. Changes to the education setting have led to a search for solutions to known issues associated with online and distance learning. For example, not all learners are able to benefit from innovations in digital pedagogy. Studies have shown that there are many learners with fewer opportunities, such as people with health conditions or disabled people, or those facing barriers linked to education and training systems due to the 'digital divide' or discrimination, or cultural, social and economic reasons. For such groups, the digital transformation of education can be an enabler or an additional burden. It is, therefore, crucial to understand the barriers that hinder inclusive education to promote equal learning opportunities. This is an account of the first phase of a longer-term study to investigate those barriers and provide solutions through good practices for learners and educators. This initial phase of the study sought to identify, through a desk review, barriers that hinder inclusive online education and recommendations to address them, as well as key expectations from the learners for the success of inclusive digital education. A systematic literature review using PRISMA protocols (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) was carried out across peer-reviewed academic research in Emerald Insight, Science Direct, SCOPUS, and Springer databases. Key search terms included online and e-learning, virtual learning, web-based learning, computer-based learning, cyberlearning, cybergogy, digital pedagogy, digital education. The search was extended to relevant institutional and policy reports, for example, the United Nations' Policy brief on 'Education during COVID-19 and beyond', and the European Commission report on 'COVID-19 is reviving the need to explore online teaching and learning opportunities'. The findings reveal nine key challenges in online and distance learning education: the digital divide and social injustice; technology; skill deficit; anonymity; security; cost; emotional disturbances and health issues; continuity; rules, regulations, and policies. The literature analysis further revealed three key recommendations to educators: refining existing teaching skills and developing new skills, especially those that are on-demand for online teaching; to self-evaluate their competencies and identify training/ learning needs; and administrators to ensure quality. Further recommendations were given to the educators to better engage the learners with fewer opportunities. Similarly, the study highlighted key expectations from the learners for the success of inclusive digital education. These include the trust learners place in the system; learners' technological readiness; network, peer support or collaboration; flexibility; and quality interactive time. The findings of this research are developed as part of an ongoing collaborative research project co-funded by the EU Erasmus+ programme. These desk study findings will inform future research, which aims to reimagine online distance learning education.

Keywords: Digital pedagogy, Inclusivity, Online education.

Image source: https://iated.org/edulearn/

The first publication based on the literature findings of Output 1 was presented in 15th annual International Conference on Education and New Learning Technologies (EDULEARN) held on the 4th -6th of July, 2022.

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Steering Committee Meeting 1

The first Steering Committee Meeting with the participation of all the project partners was held in Lund University, Sweden on the 14th June 2022. Initially Professor Mo Hamza (meeting host) welcomed all partners to the meeting and thereafter Dr Chamindi Malalgoda (Project Manager) presented the current progress/ status of the project. Afterwards, Professor Richard Haigh presented his views on understanding global versus regional landscape in DRR higher education and Professor Artūras Kaklauskas discussed ground-breaking DRR methods and tools for students. Afterwards the Output 1 findings were presented by Aravindi Samarakkody, which was followed by a discussion. Discussions were held regarding the planning of the immediate Outputs 2 and 3 in detail and the future tasks, meetings and events were clarified, and some major decisions were made. Alongside the quality board meeting was held.

Multiplier event 1:Inclusive Disaster Digital Education Seminar

The first stakeholder seminar of the INCLUDE project was held on the 15th of June 2022. The Lund University Sweden hosted the event . There were on-site participants as well as online participants, including DRR learners and educators in Universities. The agenda of the event included the following.

- A brief introduction to the INCLUDE project

- A keynote speech entitled "The average classroom: Diversity is the norm - not the exception!" by an educational developer, Lotta Åbjörnsson

- Discussions on "Enhancing networking in digital education through linking potential partners", "Innovative disaster risk reduction methods and tools for teaching, learning and assessment", and "How do we attract the disasters community and professionals to use digital learning platforms?"

Output 1 : Findings from the Asia Pacific context

The COVID-19 pandemic compelled higher educational institutions to shift to emergency remote teaching. It urged the educators to adapt alternative educational as well as assessment strategies. The study was conducted to explore indicators for planning and designing future course of inclusive online education in Disaster Risk Reduction in higher educational institutions. Keio University team conducted questionnaires with the students and interviews with the educators in Asia and Pacific region in order to identify variables that strengthen shifts in teaching and learning systems in DRR education.

For engaging students in online and distant classes, the tutors were found to appreciate synchronous classes for a lively atmosphere as well as its ease for evaluating the participation and engagement of the students. Live chat boxes, presentations, assignments, and video cameras of students were regarded as means facilitating them to evaluate the participation and engagement of the students effectively. On the other hand, the sampled students were found to prefer blended teaching and learning as opposed to synchronous-only classes preferred by the tutors. That is because those students were concerned about emotional and health impacts due to prolonged digital exposure. It was also noted that digital literacy deficiencies and lack of digital accessibility due to socio-economic constraints on the part of the students. These conditions posed challenge upon the effectiveness of online or distance class participation and the evaluation mechanisms used by tutors. Through the SWOT analysis, we identified 31 conditions of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Those played the roles of accelerators or constraints that could be helpful indicators in planning and designing future directions to implement effective participatory online distance education in DRR in higher educational institutions.

Technology opens possibilities to connect the classrooms and the students beyond time and space, as perceived by the tutors. However, there are certain challenges such as authenticity of digitally submitted assignments of the students, group work among the students likely putting a burden on one or a few students, and dialogue beyond the classroom impacting the tutors by the increased engagement time with the students. Further, it is also true that one-to-one interactions have their own place in DRR education. Some would say practical training and excursions for gaining learning experiences of disaster drills could be the examples why we need face-to-face engagement. We could possibly study further on an alternative to existing disaster drills with a case example of disruptive technology, such as metaverse.