Title: From awareness to participation - student engagement in an online environment

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Track; Practice or Open track
Format; we suggest to have this presentation as a workshop
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Abstract
A central challenge for all who design open online courses is establishing a supportive community and encouraging "passive" learners to become more active through careful scaffolding (Smith & Smith, 2014). An additional challenge is how to work on learners' individual experience and goals while simultaneously promoting interaction and collaborative learning and achievement (Swan, 2002). The course Open Networked Learning (ONL) attempts to meet these challenges by designing a collaborative online learning environment including scaffolding for individual and group inquiry and building of Personal Learning Networks (Ossiannilsson, E., Uhlin, L. & Creelman, A. 2014). ONL builds on the ideas and pedagogical frameworks of Problem-Based Learning (PBL) (Dolmans et.al., 2005) and networked learning (McConnell et.al., 2012). As a part of the design, a model named FISh (Focus, Investigate and Share) is used for individual and group inquiry (Nerantzi & Uhlin, 2012). We believe that using emerging ideas of networked learning and PBL design can be a fruitful way of addressing the above-mentioned challenges.
In ONL the course participants interact, collaborate and learn in different online contexts. They participate on several levels: in the overall course community, within smaller PBL-groups and in many cases with learning partners.
Participating in a *PBL-group* involves discussing the material both synchronously and asynchronously and collaboratively visualizing the group's findings. As an individual you can use PBL-group discussions to fuel your reflective journal and for giving feedback to the assigned *learning partner*. The *main course community* is an arena for both those who participate in the PBL groups and those who choose to study independently. Here projects are presented from groups and thoughts from reflective writings are shared and commented on; this is the learning hub of the course.
The participants' views on scaffolding during ONL were evaluated through a questionnaire. The results show participants' views on the opportunities for collaborative learning and potentially important factors for completing an open course. The mode of participation seems to influence the course completion rate, as evaluation results showed that learners who participated in a PBL group were much more likely to complete the course than those who did not.

In this workshop/presentation we would like to share our experience of scaffolding and open up for a discussion of key quality factors for participation and inclusion in online learning.

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