Increasing Student Engagement through Collaborative Learning outside the Classroom

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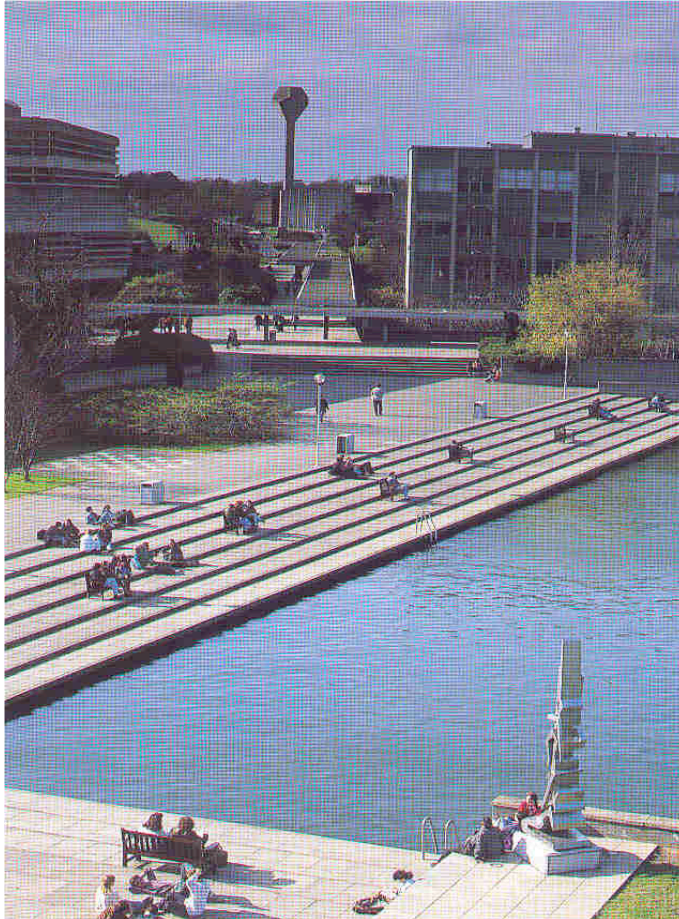**charo.hernandez@ucd.ie**

Overview

- **Context of the study & Aims**

- **Methodology**

- **Data collection and results**

- **Discussion**

- **Conclusions**

Study Context

In 2005 University College Dublin undertook a major institutional reform

- **Academic Structures**

- **Curriculum**

Study Context (cont.)

Academic Structures

- 11 Faculties ⟹ 7 Colleges

- 110 Departments & Centres ⟹ 38 Schools

Fully semesterised & modularised programmes

- Academic year ⟹ 2 semesters / 12 teaching wks

- Courses ⟹ self-contained modules (Bologna)

Study Context (cont.)

Curriculum: ALL programmes

- Undergraduate programmes:

  - *Majors / Minors*

  - Modules: Core, option, elective

  - *Horizons* (electives)

  - Typical Undergraduate module = 5 ECTS

    - 100-125 hours of student work

    - Teaching: (typically) 2 hours per week

    - Learning: assessed in a variety of ways

Opportunities & Challenges

- Greater engagement of students in the learning process (Learning Outcomes)

- Freedom to introduce several assessment strategies

- Greater use of VLE (Blackboard)

- Fewer in-classroom teaching hours

- Develop ways to facilitate student learning: self-directed learning

Study Aims

- Ascertain the impact of **collaborative work outside the classroom** on student learning:

    - Maximise study time outside the classroom in line with Bologna.

    - Support student self-directed learning.

    - Encourage greater use of the VLE.

    - Promote employability skills: team work, time management, etc.

Preparing the way for collaborative self-directed learning in Spanish Language

Modules	Academic year	Activity
Level 1	From 2006	Written portfolio (individually)
Level 2	Pre 2010	None
Level 2	From 2010	Oral & written group work (collaborative)

Action Research Study – Level 2
(semester 2 2010-11 & semester 1 2011-12)

- Students were randomly placed in groups (4-5 students per group)

- They had to meet as least 4 times per semester

- They submitted 4 entries in the group journal (minutes of the meetings)

- They delivered a group oral presentation or completed an individual audiovisual task at the end of the semester

Method & Data Collection

- **Anonymous Institutional Student Feedback Survey**

  7 core questions [5 Likert-type, 2 open-ended]

  2010-11 (Semester 2):   ModA [N=55] = 38.3%

  ModB [N=20] = 45%

  2011-12 (Semester 1):   ModC [N=93] = 46.4%

  (Semester 2):   ModD [N=62]

  ModE [N=22]

- **Staff-student forum meetings**

Analysis

- **Qualitative [Q6 & Q7] & Quantitative [Q2]**

- Q6: "Identify up to 3 aspects that most helped your learning"

- Q7: "Suggest up to 3 changes to the module that would enhance your learning"

- Q2: "The assessments were relevant to the work of the module"

The Student Experience...
Q6: "Identify up to 3 aspects that most helped your learning"

" Project and final presentation helped for consolidating material learnt."   [ModB]

"Doing the oral work in groups was a good idea – at first I was not so sure but in the end, you end up speaking a lot more than you would if you'd done it alone."   [ModA]

"I found the online aspect of the module and the group work outside the classroom helpful."   [ModC]

The Student Experience...
Q7: "Suggest up to 3 changes to the module that would enhance your learning"

"There should be an individual oral exam"   [ModA]

"My group had difficulties in making progress on it as we didn't know what we were meant to be doing"
                                                             [ModC]

"Groupwork project was awkward to organise for a few marks."
                                                             [ModC]

Q2: "The assessments were relevant to the work of this module" (Strongly Agree+Agree)

ModA	ModB	ModC
71.4%	100%	66.7%

Conclusions

- Students acknowledged CL as a positive factor contributing to language improvement

- Collaborative work facilitated the development of self-directed learning

- CL provided a social platform (physical and virtual) for students to communicate with each other

- CL contributed to the development of employability skills by managing their own learning

Conclusions (Cont.)

- Collaborative work was viewed more positively by some groups than by others

- Students with weaker linguistic ability found collaborative work hard

- Some students don't like being assessed on collaborative work

- Turning groups into effective collaborative teams will require further teacher support

Thank you!

Any questions?