

Learning Networks for Lifelong Learning: An Exploratory Survey on Distance Learners Preferences

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Overview

- Introduction
- Learning Networks
- Survey: distance learner preferences
- Discussion
- Exchange of experiences



OUNL: Open Universiteit Nederland

- Distance education
- Adult & continue education
- Bachelor and master programs
 - Informatics
 - Psychology
 - Management
 - Law
 - Cultural Sciences
 - Natural Sciences
 - Education



OUNL: Open Universiteit Nederland

- About 30,000 students
 - 51% female; 49% male
- Adult learners (25-45 years old)
 - Self-directed, plan and study in isolation
 - 60% has a full-time job
 - 44% are second-chance students
 - Choose OUNL programs because of their time- and location-independent character



Challenge & Solution

- **Challenge**

- **Distance learners**

- High drop out rates
 - Have few f2f contact with peers, staff, institution
 - From isolated learning to social learning

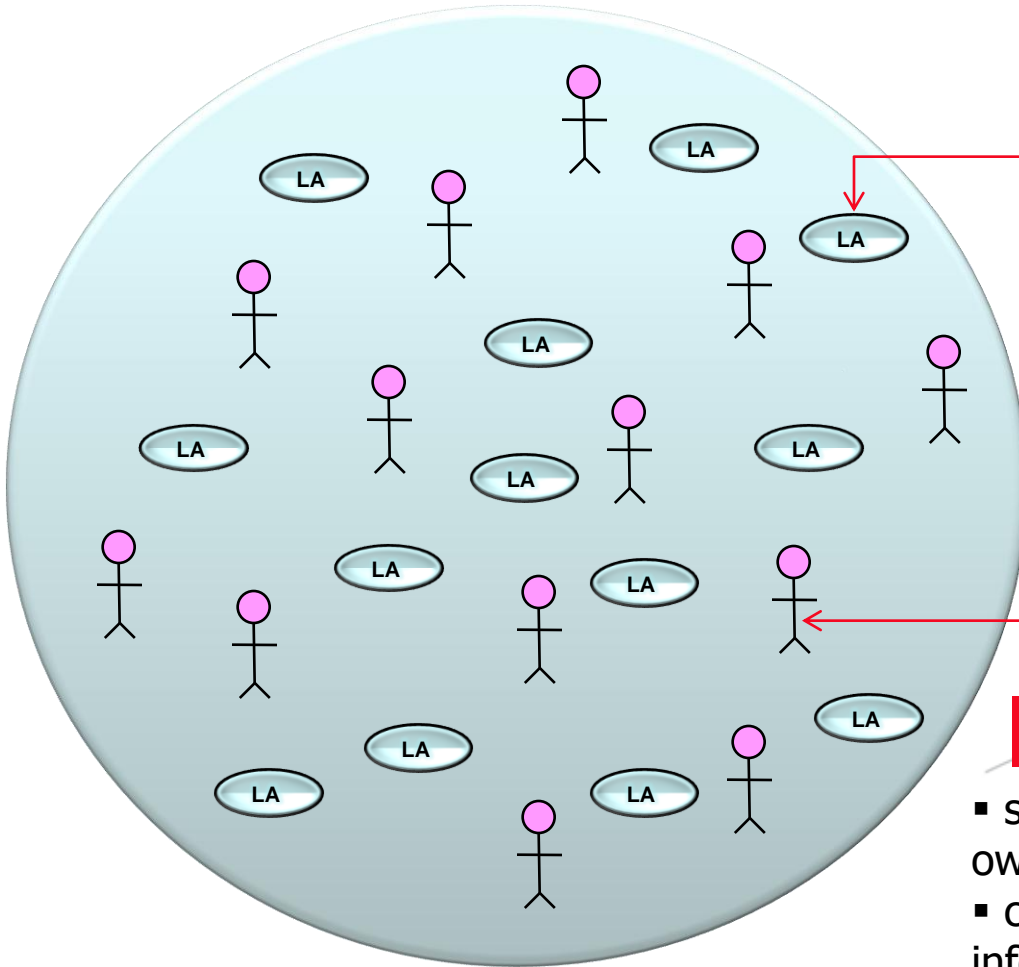
- **Solution**

- **Learning Networks**

- Online social network: participants and learning actions
 - Facilitate social interaction and knowledge sharing



Learning Network



Learning actions

help learners to acquire a competence (formal/non-formal/informal):

- courses
- assessments
- learning resources
- workshops, etc..

Participants

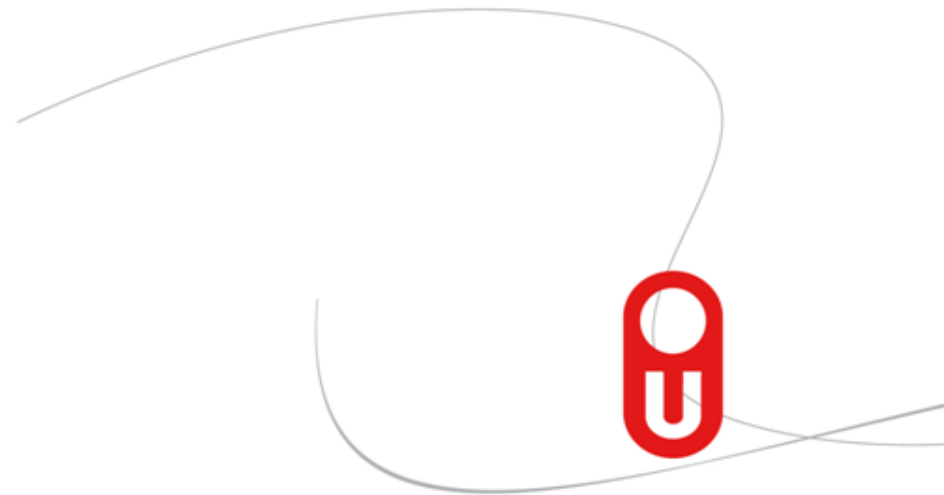
learners, institutions, trainers, teachers...

Learners

- self-directed learners, responsible for their own learning process
- can participate at the same time in formal & informal learning actions
- heterogeneous with respect to competences they have and their learning goals

Learning Network: Services

- Recommendation
 - People, peers, experts
 - Resources: learning content, materials, readings
 - Learning path: learning offers
 - Next step to follow
- Advice
 - Study progress
 - Formative feedback
 - Learning strategies
 - Self-assessment



Questions

- How Learning Networks should be designed for distance learners?
- Can we learn from social network sites? What?
- ... are OUNL students actually using social network sites? How?



Survey

- Objective
 - Investigate OUNL students
 - (a) Social Network sites (SNS) usage, perceived benefits & drawbacks
 - (b) Design features they value most
 - (c) Desired features in a OUNL Learning Network designed to support them to develop their competences



Survey

• Demographics

- N=353 students
- First year Psychology Faculty (97%), 67% female
- Average age, 39.33 (Min = 20; Max=69; Mode= 39; SD= 9.72)
- Educational background: 52% higher education; 38% secondary education
- Weekly Internet usage: 10 to 20 hours (30%); 5 to 10 hours (25%)



(a) SNS awareness & usage

- **Aware:** YouTube (65%), Hyves (54%), Schoolbank (40%), LinkedIn (32%), Facebook (27%), MySpace (17%)
- **Active participation:** Hyves (24%) & LinkedIn (13%)
 - → Profiling SNS the most known and used
- **Use**
 - personal (78%), work (17%), study (3%)
- **Reasons of using SNS = social**
 - Keep in touch with people (56%), Leisure (39%), Networking (28%), Socialization (27%)
 - *Versus* → *career development less relevant*
 - Acquire new knowledge (13%), sharing expertise (13%), business (12%) or acquire new skills (7%)



(a) SNS perceived benefits and drawbacks

- **Benefits**

- Keep in touch with others (64%), networking (52%), make renewed contact with old acquaintances (51%)
- *versus*
 - Useful to share knowledge and expertise with others (33%), can help to learn from others (25%)

- **Drawbacks**

- Share information (48%), too many SNSs available (37%), time consuming (34%)
- *versus*
 - Privacy (25%), insufficient data protection (24%)



(b) SNS most valued functionalities

Functionality	1 st (%)	2 nd (%)	3 rd (%)	4 th (%)	5 th (%)	Total
Personal messaging	15	14	14	11	12	66
Profile	23	10	8	8	9	58
Browse profiles	19	16	10	5	6	56
Contact list	9	12	8	9	9	47
Browse resources	10	5	8	9	8	40
...						
Create communities	2	4	5	0	0	11
Browse communities	0	0	4	0	6	10
Discussion groups	2	0	0	0	0	2
Bookmarks, Rating, Tagging,	0	0	0	0	0	0
Blog, Commenting Recommendations	0	0	0	0	0	0

Communication 1-1
Content-driven

Community aspect

Social aspect

networked Learning, 2010

(c) Aspects that motivate/hinder participation in a OUNL Learning Network

<i>Willing to participate if</i>		<i>Hinder to participate if</i>	
Trustworthy information	66%	It is a pay service	69%
Tools for self-assessment on progress and skills	63%	It is not easy to use	56%
Easy to use	59%	Contains irrelevant resources	54%
Interesting course materials	56%	Demands excessive time	51%
Get fast response to their problems	52%	Has a very detailed profile	45%
Are able to contact peers easily	37%	Cannot find experts in the network	34%
Able to collaborate with others	36%		

7th International Conference on Networked Learning, 2010

Ålborg, Denmark

(c) Most appreciated functionality for a OUNL Learning Network

<i>Functionality</i>	<i>Option</i>					Total
	1 st (%)	2 nd (%)	3 rd (%)	4 th (%)	5 th (%)	
Contact experts	24	26	19	11	11	91
Search resources	22	17	23	15	12	89
Schooling	27	10	9	11	12	69
Contact participants	2	14	15	18	19	68
Contact peers	20	12	10	10	15	67
Peer recommendation	4	11	15	17	17	64
Advice	1	10	10	18	13	52



Discussion

- Respondents are self-centred, goal-oriented learners, for them:
 - It is not essential to share their knowledge, find peers or work collaboratively
 - Focus on developing competences as fast and efficiently as possible
 - Want to get support from experts, not so much from peers
 - Are not willing to work collaboratively in communities
 - Are not keen on Web 2.0 tools (blogs, wikis, etc.)



Discussion: Learners need support

- Learners are not accustomed to work in new social approaches
 - Their learning strategies might not fit the 'new' educational trends on social learning
 - Need support to develop social learning strategies
 - Learning activities should show the potential of social learning
- Learners do not feel part of a community, need support to
 - Create an identity and to access resources
 - Become familiar with others
 - Interacting with the community and actualizing their identity
- Are teachers accustomed to work in new social approaches?
- Are institutions?



Questions?

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