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## **OPEN LEARNING ARENAS WITH AN OPEN CULTURE OF SHARING – SUCCESS FACTORS**

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### **Introduction**

It is said that higher education is undergoing an era of disruptive development, and likewise as the music and film industry has done (Gaebel, 2013; EC, 2013). The development of open, free, and flexible education, with the use of OERs (Open Educational Resources) (Atkins et al., 2007), and MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) (Wikipedia, 2012) challenge higher education dramatically. However, unfortunately the way teaching and learning happens is undergoing infinitesimal shifts. Likewise, the way how quality and success factors are presented, and measured are still under the same umbrella, as in the so called traditional paradigm, e.g. linear offered, delivered, assessed, certified (Haggard et al., 2013).

Open learning cultures are significant quality issues in terms of globalization (Gaebel, 2013; EC, 2013; Haggard et al., 2013). Open education creates not only opportunities to participate in online courses from prestigious universities, but also allows for participation in global social online collaboration and interaction (Gaebel, 2013; Haggard et al., 2013; Ossiannilsson, 2012). Moreover, it is a democratic right. What is paid by taxpayers should go back to taxpayers. Free education for all is a social innovation, as well as the initiative with housing for all is. Both initiatives are inclusive and lead to better living conditions, a healthier population and possibilities for more active social citizenship (Ossiannilsson, 2012). Commissioner Vassiliou (EC, 2013) expresses it as:

*The education landscape is changing dramatically, from school to university and beyond: open technology-based education will soon be a ‘must have’, not just a ‘good-to-have’, for all ages. We need to do more to ensure that young people especially are equipped with the digital skills they need for their future. It’s not enough to understand how to use an app or program; we need youngsters who can create their own programs. Opening up Education is about opening minds to new learning methods so that our people are more employable, creative, innovative and entrepreneurial (EC, 2013).*

The development and introduction of MOOCs force quality enhancement of education, research, and collaboration with the surrounding society (EC, 2013; Haggard et al., 2013; Ossiannilsson, 2012). Additionally, MOOCs contributes to sustainable development. MOOCs

are a revolutionary way of thinking about learning, social interactions, and quality (EC, 2013; Haggard et al., 2013; Ossiannilsson, 2012). MOOCs are already embracing the world and millions of people are enrolled, completely free, unrestricted, and at comfort in their own home. MOOCs requires rethinking and involves disruption of educational foundations (Wikipedia, 2012; Chok, 2014). MOOCs requires a shift in culture, power, and ownership; from stakeholder offers to learners' demands and promotes *choice based* learning. Choiced based learning is understood as that it is really the individual, the learner who makes the choices of his or hers own education, as the most of the prestige global educational offers are available almost for free here, now and from everywhere on Internet.

This paper focuses on how open education contributes to education for all on equal terms, free and inclusive, and with social interaction. The question is no longer how to work with digital media in education, but rather how to stimulate online learning as well as social interaction and participation in a digital world, and on a daily base, in schools and in working life. Higher education is one of the most powerful incentives to change the world. Democracy, richer and better living conditions may thus be encouraged. This does not happen by itself. It all starts with access, inclusiveness, interactiveness, and openness in education. If ancient models of education still are used, how can individuals, then be expected to successfully be active global citizens to be responsible and influence their own and others' situation in a modern and changing society. This paper also focuses on quality dimensions and ways on how to measure and how to work with quality enhancement in open learning arenas with an open culture of sharing.

### Opening up education

Open and flexible learning are about fully exploring the potential of ICT to improve education and training systems, and aligning them with the current digital world (Downes, 2007; McAndrew, 2006). The EC stress with its initiative on opening up education, that ICT tools, OERs, and open practices allow for an increase in the effectiveness of education, allowing for more personalised learning, a better learning experience, and improved use of resources (EC, 2013). Such measures also promote equity by increasing the availability of knowledge. Furthermore, it is argued that ultimately, opening up education may lead to a situation where all individuals may learn anytime, anywhere, with the support of anyone, using any device.

To foster opening up education for collaboration and for competitiveness the European Commission launched the initiative Opening up education to boost innovation and digital skills in schools and universities (EC, 2013). Three main areas are emphasized:

- Creating opportunities for organisations, teachers and learners to innovate;
- Increased use of Open Educational Resources (OER), ensuring that educational materials produced with public funding are available to all
- Better ICT infrastructure and connectivity in schools

More explicitly, and in detail the three areas are expressed in seven tasks for universities:

- review their organisational strategies
- exploit the potential of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)
- stimulate innovative learning practices such as blended learning
- equip teachers with high digital competences
- equip learners with digital skills
- think about how to validate and recognise learner's achievements in online education
- make high quality Open Education Resources (OER) visible and accessible

## Rethinking universities and teaching and learning

In the first bullet point above, it is set out that higher education needs to review their organisational strategies to meet the growing changing educational paradigm, where openness and learning is in focus. It is argued that since the MOOCs made its entry, nothing will be the same in and for higher education. Change is inevitable, with this follows that the way Gen Y needs to be engaged is also changing. Higher education needs to adopt new methods of the way to engage and interact with students, as well as how to interact with the global society of academics and educators. Boundless information awaits with just a mouse-click (wireless, of course) (Ossiannilsson, 2012). Chok (2014) stress that:

*Today's young leaders need to be conversed with, and stimulated with more practical learning techniques that can translate into tangible skills and that can lead to real career opportunities. The truth is, students who are engaged in this way are excelling.*

She continues to say, that she:

*...believe they are coming out ahead of students who are only exposed to, the more "traditional" instruction. Our job market ... is becoming increasingly competitive. More and more institutions are making the shift to accommodate this new age of learners. Students who are immersed into real-world experiences earlier on in their education are more prepared, more confident, and frankly, it follows that they would be more employable.*

So the decisive quality questions are, if universities and educators offers, really prepare students in an adequate way for a mobile, flexible surrounding world at work and working places. Through case-based learning for example, students can work with real cases, and in addition with OERs, MOOCs in global networks through the Internet this can also reflect multi-cultural learning dimensions. Students require being active to solve real-life scenarios, and through self-directed learning students discuss, and learn analytical and practical knowledge. When students are discussing and solve real-life scenarios to acquire the analytical and practical knowledge needed for a given skill-set, they learn to be active participants in their own learning process and to orchestrate and take control themselves in their learning process and content due to learning aims or learning objects (Ossiannilsson, 2012). This

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framework requires students to be actively involved, and take part in self-directed learning. Essentially, it helps learners in a real-world setting, and not just by memorizing. Research from Stanford shows that;

*...Students who students who learned in this way were more likely to become self-directed learners, because they had exercised metacognition to derive solutions. I can speak from experience that when a learner is actively solving a problem, they have to articulate and justify their logic and can't just follow a cookie-cutter approach to the problem. (Chok, 2014)*

## Learning design

Several researchers as Conole (2013), Laurillard (2012), and Ehlers (2013), stress the needs and demands for a changed paradigm for learning design in open learning culture. With the use of web 2.0 tools (Mak et al., 2010), Figure 1, and even the upcoming 3.0 tools, learning design and learning analytics has to be rethought in many ways. In addition, personalized learning is stressed (Ossiannilsson, 2012). Opening up education with increased digitalization, OERs, MOOCs etc, will enable learning and personalized learning pathways (Downes, 2007; Mackness et al., 2010; Rodriguez, 2012; Pawlowski & Clements, 2013), and let the learner take control in the driving seat and orchestra ones own learning (Ossiannilsson, 2012).

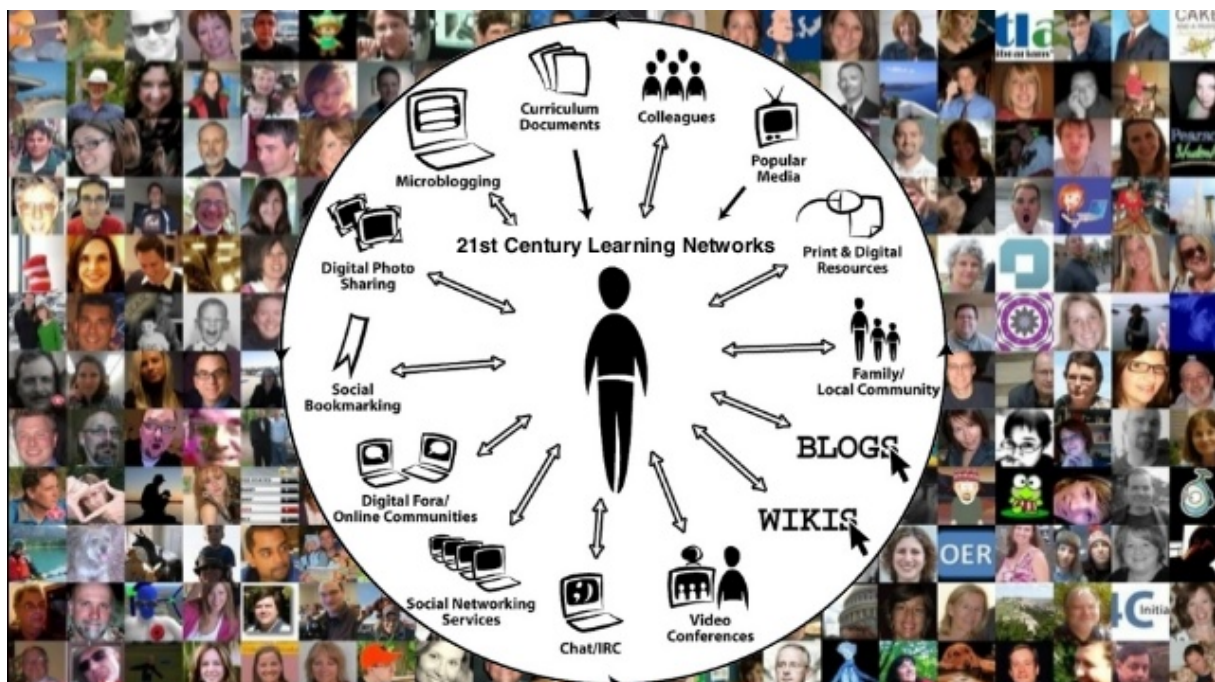


Figure 1. Learning design in an open learning context

Bloom's taxonomy is frequently used since long time in educational settings. By opening up education and digital learning and teaching, it has already been said that there are needs for rethinking in almost every educational area and settings towards the learners choices, and to personalize learning and education. Thus, this is true even for which learning taxonomy is in use. Through the latest years many taxonomy of digital learning for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, have

come in use as for example the one which even is interactive, shown in Figure 2. Through its interactivity, learners and educators can get support for learning goals, activities, and for which tools to use.

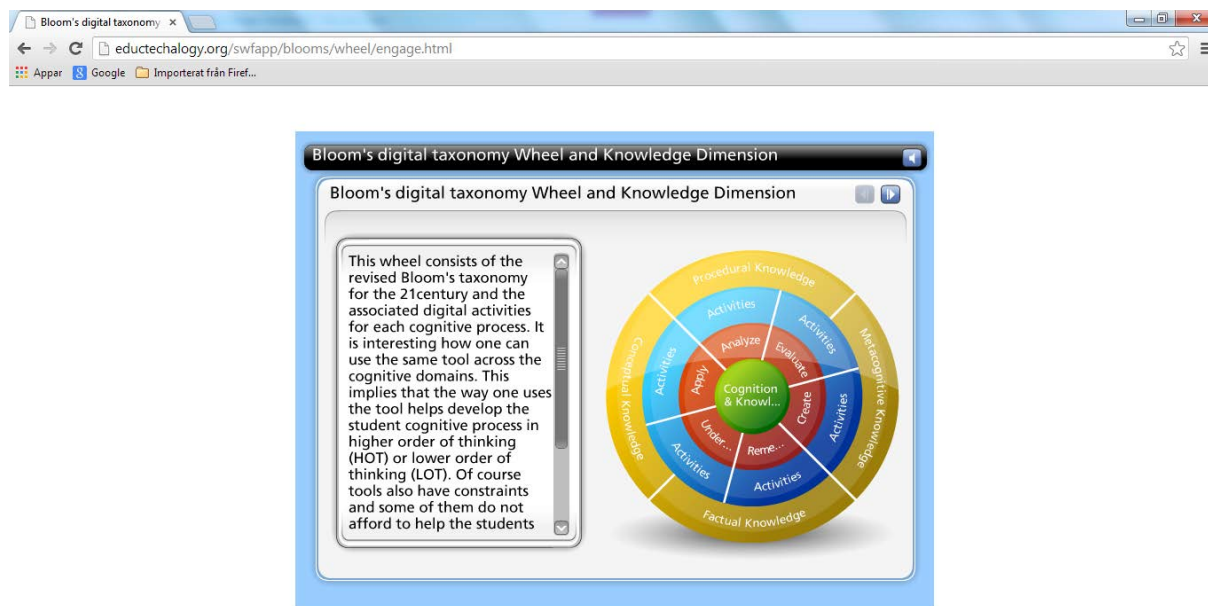


Figure 2. Blooms digital taxonomy Wheel and knowledge dimension

## Quality and success dimensions

UNESCO (UNESCO, 2013, pp 8-27) has recently launched their policy guidelines for mobile learning in open education. Their focus is aligned with the EU's opening up education (EC, 2013), that mobile learning expands the rich and equity of education, facilitates personalized learning, enable the power of anytime, anywhere learning and provides the productive use of time spent in classrooms. Furthermore, UNESCO's guidelines emphasizes that mobile learning build new communities of learners, support seamless learning, bridge formal and informal learning, minimizes educational disruption in conflict and disaster areas, assist learners with disabilities, a maximize cost-efficiencies, and improve communication and administration.

Other success factors can be described in the areas of learning /institutional context, learning resources and learning processes. Success dimensions can also be outlined as referring to course design, learning design, media design, and content (Uvalic-Trumbic & Sir Daniel, 2013). Important is that a holistic approach has to be taken, looking to and reviewing quality in online, open learning contexts (Ossiannilsson, 2012).

It will be noted as well, the importance of whether quality is seen from a retrospective or prospective view (Ossiannilsson, 2012). In addition, the outcomes of a quality review differ if it is a question of quality enhancement (self-evaluation, benchmarking etc.) or if the quality review is an accreditation or certification (Ossiannilsson, 2012; Uvalic-Trumbic & Sir Daniel, 2013). Anyway, the quality is probably best and honestly measured as the expression; *quality is in the eyes of the believer*.

## Conclusions

The question is not any longer how we shall work with digital media and technology in education, but rather how we can work with learning in a digital community, not at least for work and in working places. It is also obvious that academics, and this is also true for managers and directors that the changing paradigm for collaborate work and to see learners as prosumers, academics has to go from sage on the stage...to guide on the side...to meddler in the middle. Likewise, learning situations, both formal and informal have to go from content to context, as content is available from everywhere, it is the context which matter, like the flipped classroom model. To adopt to open learning arenas with an open culture of sharing there are urgent demands for opening up education and to rethink linear learning and education and instead to offer rhizomatic (non linear, or like root threads) pathways for learning, this is true both for educational settings as for work and working life.

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