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REPORT ON EPICA PROJECT TEAM'S PARTICIPATION AT THE E-LEARNING AFRICA 2019 CONFERENCE HELD IN ABIDJAN, CÔTE D'IVOIRE

1. INTRODUCTION

The 14th eLearning Africa 2019 Conference was held in Abidjan, Côte D' Ivoire from the 23rd – 25th October 2019 at the Sofitel Abidjan Ivoire Hotel. The EPICA project was allocated a stand/booth by the organisers at the entrance of the Auditorium where the main events such as the Plenary sessions and the eLearning Africa debate took place. The EPICA project team was represented during this year's eLearning Africa by the following partners; Jean-Baptiste Milon (ICDE), Snorre Qveim (ICDE), Michael Opiyoh (MU), Richard Kajumbula (MAK) and Edephonce Nfuka (OUT).

The EPICA Project booth/stand was manned by the project team from the first to the last day where promotional materials of the project were distributed to both the exhibitors and also other stakeholders who came to the booth. Those who visited the booth included members of the public, educationists, students, employers, technologists and policy makers, all drawn from different parts of the world.

One major challenge that was encountered by part of the EPICA team was that being Côte d'Ivoire a French speaking West African country, the majority of those who attended this years' eLearning Africa were locals/nationals who could only communicate in French language. Luckily, we had members of our team who could communicate fluently in French.

From the EPICA partners point of view, this year's eLearning Africa Conference was successful as it brought key players in the eLearning industry such as Martin Dougiamas, the Moodle founder and other companies in Europe that have developed new innovations/products in eLearning. The conference presented an opportunity for us to network with other players in eLearning drawn from different parts of the globe. Lastly, we would like to remind the exciting networking moments that we shared during the well-organised joint lunches that were served for two days as well as the sumptuous dinner that was served by the pool side on the second day of the conference.

EPICA Booth at eLearning
Africa 2019 in Abidjan

2. EPICA SESSION

The EPICA Session was scheduled for Friday, 25th October, 2019 at 2.00pm and was well attended by different stakeholders. Key people among the stakeholders were some members from African Universities in Uganda, Tanzania and Côte d'Ivoire. The EPICA Session was organised in three parts; first, a presentation of the EPICA project to the stakeholders; second, a walkthrough of the ePortfolio System with a practical demo that showed the ePortfolio's main features and lastly a practical group session that led to highly interesting conclusions.

2.1 Presentation of EPICA Project – 20 minutes

The following items were presented:

1. Introduction
2. E-Portfolio Overview
    i. University/Teacher Perspective
    ii. Student Perspective
    iii. Employer Perspective
3. E-Portfolio Integration with LMS at the Implementing Universities
4. Conclusion

2.2 Open Plenary – 50 minutes

1. Demo of the ePortfolio – 15min.
2. Questions/Responses – 15min.
3. Group Activity/Presentation/Discussion – 20min.

3. CONCLUSION

The EPICA project session was rated the best of the conference by many participants, thanks to the team work and collaboration amongst the various partners during the conference. I wish to thank the eLearning Conference organisers for their support that made it possible for us to attend and participate in this year's eLearning Africa conference. I look forward to participating in next years' conference.

EPICA Booth at eLearning Africa 2019 in Abidjan

EPICA AT ICDE WORLD CONFERENCE

By: Jean-Baptiste Milon

1. INTRODUCTION

The EPICA Project was presented at the 28th ICDE World Conference held in November 2019 in Dublin, Ireland.

The 28th ICDE World Conference on Online Learning in Dublin is one of the largest and most prestigious international conferences in the area. The conference theme of "Transforming Lives and Societies" anchors the growth of new models of open, online and digital learning in a number of big questions and the wider context of the Sustainable Development Goals. It aims to explore many of the contemporary problems and opportunities facing today's educators in the globally connected digital-era. The organising team was the National Institute for Digital Learning (NIDL) at Dublin City University (DCU).

EPICA at ICDE World
Conference 2019 in Dublin

2. EPICA Engagement

A Poster designed by the MyDocumenta Team (Dr. Andrea Contino) was presented at the poster session. The poster provided an overview of the EPICA Eportfolio ecosystem and the interactions between the Administrator, the Teachers, the Students and the Employers.

EPICA Eportfolio Ecosystem
Poster

This international conference was also the opportunity for the EPICA Consortium represented by ICWE (Mrs. Rebecca Stromeyer) and ICDE (Mr. Jean-Baptiste Milon & Mr. Snorre Qveim-Leikanger) to engage all partner institutions and potential funding bodies and raise awareness on the sustainability needs of the EPICA Eportfolio. As private Sub-Saharan universities base their

sustainability model in revenues from donors, and, public ones from governmental public procurement, EPICA aims to engage key actors for a strong and stable eportfolio demand through public and donor procurement of innovation for HEI institutions. In that way, EPICA is establishing liaisons with the public sector and donors and attempts to create a framework that would facilitate the assessment and adoption of the ePortfolio in Sub-Saharan states and Pan-African institutions.

EPICA AT OEB 2019, THE GLOBAL LEADING CONFERENCE & EXHIBITION ON TECHNOLOGY-SUPPORTED LEARNING AND TRAINING

On Friday November 29th, the EPICA Initiative had the opportunity to be presented at OEB Global & Learning Technologies Conference in Berlin. It was a real privilege to have the chance to present the last developments of EPICA to such a high-level expert audience.

The project was presented by Rebecca Stromeyer, CEO of ICWE and Founder of eLearning Africa, Germany.

In a highly interactive session specifically dedicated to the EPICA project and after almost 2 years since the start of the project, the session had a short introduction about the specific goals of the project and the work developed in the past months, but there was also a chance to make a short demo on how the EPICA ePortfolio actually works, as it is actually ready for the Pilot phase that is already being implemented in the African universities.

The session had an amazing input from all participants who gave instant feedback on all issues that were addressed. Especially interesting for participants were all aspects related with the visibility of competences that the ePortfolio includes as a major innovative feature compared to other existing tools. a real privilege to have the

Another interesting aspect to highlight was the interest of participants to get access to the EPICA ePortfolio once it is market ready, so different exploitation options were suggested during the session as potential options to become future users of it.

Participants of the session came from both European and African institutions and it was especially remarkable the participation of a delegate from LinkedIn Europe who made highly valuable suggestions and was highly impressed by the outcomes made so far by the EPICA Initiative.

Click for details of the session

We would like to thank the OEB organisers, as well as all the participants who made our presence on behalf of EPICA such a valuable delight for us and the project as a whole.


E-PORTFOLIOS AS AN E-ASSESSMENT METHOD IN MOOCS. INSIGHTS FROM THE OPEN VIRTUAL MOBILITY PROJECT.

By: Ilona Buchem
Coordinator of the Open Virtual Mobility Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership. Professor for Media and Communication at Beuth University of Applied Sciences Berlin, Germany.

Several concepts, tools and technologies have been used in online courses to assess learning outcomes. Assessment in Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) has focused on supporting learning and achievement, and has included assessment aimed at course completion, tracking learner behaviour and predicting learning outcomes as well as certification of specific skills and knowledge gained from a MOOC (Chauhan, 2014). MOOCs usually apply automated forms of e-assessment, mostly based on multiple choice questions. Alternative forms of assessment such as

peer assessment are mostly found in MOOCs, such as cMOOCs, which aim to enhance the interaction between learners (Sánchez-Vera & Prendes-Espinosa, 2015). In fact, peer-assessment has been seen as a remedy for the broadcasting mode of MOOCs, especially xMOOCs (Suen, 2014). However, there are only a few examples for e-portfolios being used as an e-assessment method in MOOCs. For example, Chen (2017) describes the integration of e-portfolios to support formative assessment with MOOCs in context of English for Special Purposes (ESP). One of the key potentials of using e-portfolios in MOOCs is the support of formative assessment, documentation of learner progress, provision of peer-assessment and enhancement of learner autonomy (Chen, 2017).

In the European strategic partnership Open Virtual Mobility, funded under the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Commission for the period of 2017 to 2020, we have been working on integrating e-portfolio methods and tools into MOOC design and meaningfully combining e-portfolio with other forms of e-assessment.
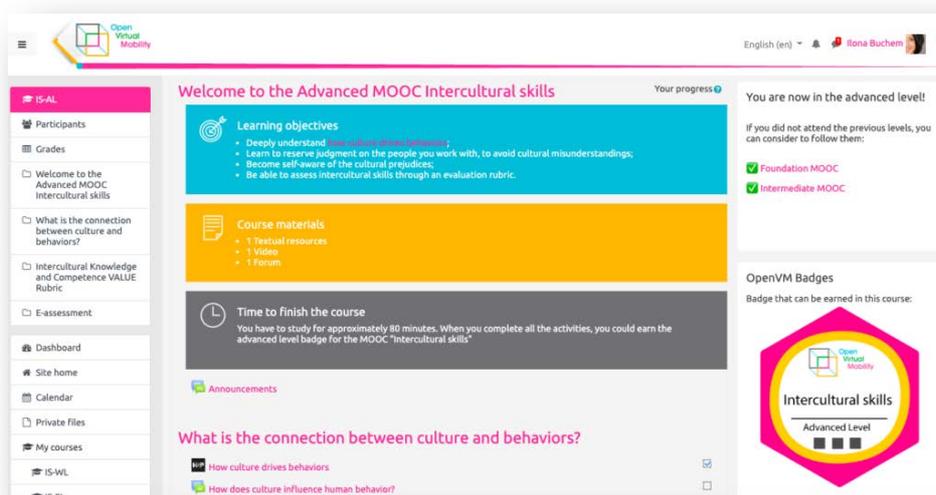
The strategic partnership Open Virtual Mobility, is dedicated to creating accessible opportunities for achievement of virtual mobility skills of teachers and students in higher education. The aim is to ensure higher uptake of virtual mobility by supporting higher education institutions, educators and students in acquiring, assessing and recognising their key competencies needed to successfully design, implement and/or participate in virtual mobility.

The OpenVM project addresses the need of enhancing awareness about virtual mobility and creating accessible opportunities for developing skills needed for participation in virtual mobility. These aims are based on practical observations of the nine partner organisations in higher education participating in the project, which show that the possibilities and the competencies, needed for virtual mobility still remain unknown to many educators and students in higher education in Europe.

INFOBOX:

What is virtual mobility?

The European Commission defines virtual mobility in the following manner:

"*a set of activities supported by Information and Communication Technologies, including e-learning, that realize or facilitate international, collaborative experiences in a context of teaching, training or learning.*" (European Commission, Erasmus + Programme Guide, 2019, p. 327).

One of the key outcomes of the Open Virtual Mobility project is the Open Virtual Mobility Learning Hub (OpenVM Learning Hub)[1], which is an online learning environment for the development, assessment and recognition of virtual mobility skills in higher education.

The OpenVM Learning Hub hosts a set of eight mini-MOOCs, each dedicated to one of the eight competency areas needed for successful engagement in virtual mobility. These competency areas have been identified in the OpenVM project through the Group Concept Mapping Study[2], which resulted in clustering of competencies into main groups with sub-competencies. All OpenVM MOOCs are designed as mini-MOOCs. Mini-MOOCs are smaller, shorter, and cover less content and fewer skills than traditional MOOCs. The series of eight mini-MOOCs aims to facilitate just-in-time and on-the-go learning.

INFOBOX:

Which competency areas and mini-MOOCs are supported by the Open Virtual Mobility Learning Hub?

Learners in the Open Virtual Mobility Learning Hub can develop competencies in the following eight competency areas:

1. Media and digital literacy
2. Active self-regulated learning skills
3. Autonomy-driven learning
4. Networked learning
5. Intercultural skills and attitude
6. Interactive and collaborative learning in an authentic international environment
7. Open-mindedness
8. Open virtual mobility knowledge

In each mini-MOOC the learner can study at one of three levels: Foundations, Intermediate and Advanced.
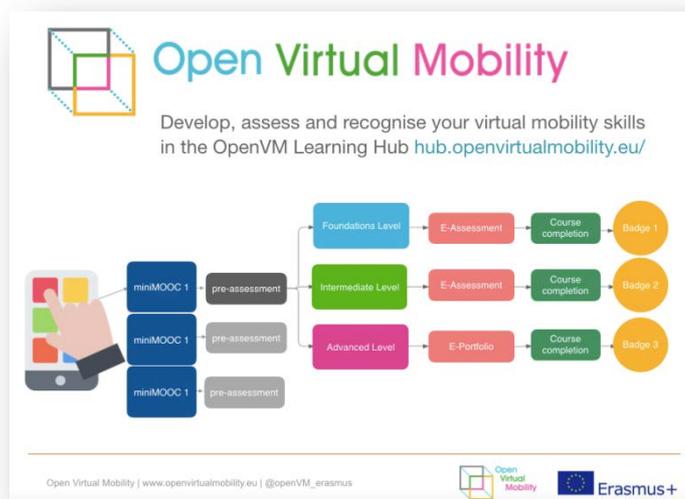
With each mini-MOOC broken down into three levels, learning pathways can be designed by individual learners depending on their initial and intended competency levels. All mini-MOOCs contain different forms of e-assessment depending on learning objectives and competency levels.

Learners in all OpenVM mini-MOOCs have a number of opportunities to assess their virtual mobility competencies, including automatic self-assessments and human-supported evidence-based assessments. The e-assessment of virtual mobility skills also includes diagnostic, formative and summative assessments.

To assess the initial level of a given skill, each mini-MOOC starts with a pre-assessment of competencies in a given competency area. Based on the results of the pre-assessment, one of the three levels is proposed to the learner, who can decide to follow a recommended pathway.

In this way learners can study in a flexible, modular manner in accordance with their own interests, needs and preferences.

Summative assessment in OpenVM mini-MOOCs is combined with the OpenVM Badges[3], i.e. digital credentials based on the Open Badge standard, which are issued as part of the project summative e-assessments.

E-portfolio assessment combined with peer-reviews performed by learners in a given MOOC is available only at the Advanced Level in a given mini-MOOC. In this way learners progress in the complexity of e-assessment along with the progression in competency development.

The OpenVM Learning Hub is open for everyone to participate in the available MOOCs, all offered in English. We look forward to welcoming you in the OpenVM Learning Hub!

If you want to explore more about this project, please contact with the author of this article, Ilona Buchem: buchem@beuth-hochschule.de

The EPICA Initiative is seeking to find synergies with other European projects that are working on the same topics, and through a collaborative dissemination we expect the outputs of both projects to enrich each other in the future.

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[1] https://hub.openvirtualmobility.eu/login/index.php

[2] https://www.openvirtualmobility.eu/topics/outputs/o1-framework-and-guidelines/

[3] https://www.openvirtualmobility.eu/topics/outputs/o5-credentials/

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