

Review and preliminary reflections on the design of the 3xC workshops Version 0.9e IACM/FORTH

1. Role of the tutor

It is suggested the identification of three instead of two tutor types.

- a) **Technical support** (which is not really tutoring).
- b) **Workshop tutors.** Each workshop is assigned to a tutor who has some kind of expertise on the topic of the workshop.
- c) **Tandem tutors.** Each tandem is assigned a tutor, who has the task to motivate, support and monitor the activity of his/her pair(s) during the whole duration of the course. Depending on the number of tandems, a tutor may be assigned several tandems.

The need for both a workshop and tandem pair tutors arises by the course's idea that the pairs can follow their own pace. Therefore, they need a tutor to keep a close eye on their progress from workshop to workshop.

The workshop activities & tasks, as a whole, will be introduced by the Workshop tutor while the specific tandem processes to deliver the tasks will be moderated by the Tandem pair tutors.

It is suggested that the workshop tutor's presence is based on a pre-determined and known to all schedule. For example: The tutor of the "Workshop 3: Identification of Partners - Partnership Building" will be available to answer to questions of all tandems working on the tasks of this workshop every lets say Monday & Friday evening.

Although the tandem pair tutor is expected to follow on a, more or less, day-to-day basis the pair activity she/he has to make his/her own "presence" arrangements with each pair, also in a very explicit manner. For example a tandem pair tutor, due to personal or professional reasons, may not be available to the learners at weekends or specific days during the week. This has to be known in advance to all. Such arrangements usually help because it is often the case in on-line courses that learners, particularly these who are very active, develop the misconception that the tutor has to be on-line on a 24hrs basis and get frustrated when they do not get immediate responses to their questions/comments by the tutor.

2. Evaluation

Overall, the data sources for the evaluation of the course are proposed to be the following:

- a) Pre-course questionnaire (by the beginning of the 1st on-line workshop-introductory),
- b) Post-workshops questionnaires (by the end of workshop 2 to 6),
- c) Post-course questionnaire,
- d) Reflection forums for each workshop,
- e) Overall contributions during the whole course.

Suggestions about the pre-course questionnaire

An overall self-evaluation of the prior experience of the learners in the topics of the course is proposed to be obtained by the *pre-course questionnaire* that can be completed during the *first on-line introductory workshop*. The short explanation of the stages from novice to expert, as proposed for the pre-module questionnaires, will be used as a tool to develop a series of specific topic-related questions to be included in the pre-course questionnaire. Also the interview questions employed during the research conducted within the frame of the work package 3 can be of great help. The preliminary analysis of the data obtained can help the course organizers identify the “level of prior experience” of *all* learners, and thus be more aware of the *learning needs* of each pair.

Themes of the pre-course questionnaire

- Learners’ prior experiences and competencies on the topics of the course
- Learners’ expectations and motivation regarding their participation in the course
- Learners’ prior experiences in on-line learning
- Biographical data.

In the **Version 0.9e of the course design** it is proposed that the f-to-f meeting will also serve as context for evaluation data collection, in particular the “Collecting the expectations of the participants” activity. It is however suggested that this activity is organized with the main aim to help the course organizers better adapt the course design and proceedings to the needs of the learners. Of course they could be handed-out a paper and pencil questionnaire for them to fill-in about their expectations. However, not all learners will participate in a f-to-f workshop and furthermore our data collection needs prior to the course are not limited to learners’ expectations. It is also their prior topic-related experiences, their experiences related to tandem learning, their experiences related to on-line learning and of-course bio data. All these is better to be collected altogether during the first on-line workshop. A short-list of the most common expectations expressed by the f-to-f participants which can be constructed by the meeting organizers (by for example encoding what the learners have written in their stickers) can be passed to Kathy so as to inform the construction of the pre-course questionnaire on the topic of expectations, or learner motivation.

Pre-module self-evaluation questionnaire

The open-ended questions of self-evaluation questionnaire before each workshop, as proposed, may be too time-consuming for the learners to answer. Therefore the self-

evaluation has to be part of the learning process *per se* in order to become a meaningful exercise for the learners. It is suggested that by the beginning of each workshop by each pair of learners, the tandem pair tutors ask the pair to write down in a short post their prior experiences on the specific *topic as part of the learning process* between the tandem learners. The post-course content analysis of their answers can offer additional input to the overall evaluation.

Questionnaire delivery platform

The questionnaires can be delivered on-line through a questionnaire delivery system that has already been developed in a server at IACM/FORTH. This system has been used in the past to deliver questionnaires for learners in several on-line e-learning courses and has a proven record for effectiveness.

Informing the learners about the evaluation research process

The learners should be explicitly informed that the course involves a research process. This should be made clear during the introductory workshops (both on-line and f-to-f) by the organizers. IACM/FORTH has to develop a hand-out regarding the research process, its aims and the timing for the delivery of each questionnaire to be distributed to the learners.

3. Workshop 1: Introduction vs Workshop 1 Alternative: Introduction (Face-To-Face)

These two course “events” are not viewed on an “either-or” basis because they serve different purposes. Ideally, f-to-f introductory workshops should be held in each national context to introduce the local participants to the course. However, such meetings cannot be considered as a substitute for an on-line introductory workshop. This is because the on-line introductory workshop is the context where all learners from different countries will meet for the first time, enrich their profiles with more info, browse the environment, fill-in the pre-course questionnaire etc.

In the Version 0.9e of the course design it is not made clear when the tandems will be formed. The tandem pairs is proposed to be formed during the first on-line introductory workshop. On this basis, the tasks can be the following:

On-line introductory workshop tasks

1. Editing one's own profile in moodle including the upload of a photo (as a continuation from the f-to-f workshop for those who participated, or as a completely new activity for those who did not)
2. Creation and upload of a CV in European format
3. Participation in a “café” moodle forum where all learners and tutors introduce themselves
3. Self-Evaluation through formal on-line pre-course questionnaire
4. Thinking about a preliminary project idea and posting a short rough description of a project idea by all learners,
5. Reading through all the preliminary project ideas,

6. Choosing partner.

Usually the introductory phase of international on-line courses is a quite stressful situation for all people involved, particularly those participating for the first time in such activities. Maybe this phase should last more than a week. Ten days maybe better.

It could also be helpful to upload materials produced during the f-to-f meetings (for example photos etc) in a module of the moodle (just prior to the “Workshop 1: Introduction” module).

At the moodle introductory workshop all tutors should in some way show “presence”, uploading their profiles, maybe proposing project ideas that tandems may undertake etc.

It should be noted that not all learners respond positively to open-ended tasks as is the proposal of a project idea. At this level they may need some structuring in their tasks. It could therefore be helpful to offer headings under which each learner describes his/her *preliminary* idea. This could be considered as a “warming up” individual activity before the real thing which is introduced in “Workshop 2: Clear and Concise Explanation of a Project Idea”. These headings (which are already described in the Workshop 2 design), offer a kind of continuation from the individual exercise to a deeper level by the tandems.

Maybe task 6 “Choosing partner” has to be also a more structured activity. It is suggested that the learners first choose a “project idea” among those which have been proposed by the individual learners and then choose, or are assigned to, a tandem partner who has also chosen this idea. On the basis of this proposal, it could be helpful that the Workshop Tutor, by let say at day 6 or 7 of this workshop, writes down and posts a list of the most promising or better articulated proposed ideas so that learners focus around them and choose one of them. It is only when all learners have chosen their preferred idea that learners are called by the Workshop Tutor to form tandems with other learners who have chosen the same project idea. *This way it is more possible that the learners will choose partners not on personal basis but on the basis of shared topic interest.*



4. Pre-course questionnaire

Please choose up to 3 of the following statements that best describes the reasons why you decided to join this course. I joined this course because I wanted to...

- a) meet with other people who may share my interest in the conduct of international projects
- b) practice my English
- c) develop more knowledge and skills on identifying project partners in international contexts, approaching them and developing partnerships
- d) develop more knowledge and skills about setting up new project proposals
- e) explore the potentials of e-learning
- f) develop more knowledge and skills about managing international projects
- g) spent my time constructively
- h) improve my communication skills
- i) develop professionally

Other reasons not in the list...

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