

EDU WORLD 2022**Edu World International Conference Education Facing Contemporary World Issues****STUDENT OPENNESS IN BUILDING ONLINE LEARNING
COMMUNITIES BY MEANS OF MOVIE**

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Abstract

The main goal of this research is to underline the role of students' openness in forming learning communities in the online environment, outside class hours, using movie as a learning resource. The participants were formed by 58 women students in the second year, of three study programs: Pedagogy of Primary and Preschool Education, Special Education, and Psychology, out of whom 46.6% expressed their interest in taking part in building a learning community, while the rest of 53.4%, denied. To make visible the possible differences between the two groups and whether the aspects concerning the level of openness and adaptation to the academic life influence the decision of participating in the study, we have used two instruments who measures the level of openness and the level of student adaptation to environment and academic requests. The results for the comparative analysis reflect differences between the openness towards intellect and the level of adaptation to academic life. The means are higher for the students wanting to take part in the learning community. The study can be seen as a starting point in building a student profile for future participants to online learning communities where movie is a learning resource.

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1. Introduction

Our study begins from the results of previous research that: presents the role of online learning communities formed by groups of students; illustrates the influence of openness as a personality trait in the interest in watching the movies and in the aspect of taking part in online learning communities. Burne and Kavan (2009) think that many teachers have searched for creative ways to use the movies as a means of intensifying learning, considering the young people's preferences for watching a film than to listening to a lecture. The film offers not only a different form of presentation of information compared to those written as a text, but also one that talks to the students in various ways and at different levels, being more than a narration or communication of simple words (Brown, 2011). Russell and Waters (2017) believe that scientists should focus on the means by which the interest of students in film watching could increase their level of knowledge, of preoccupation and understanding of certain pieces of information. Our hereby presented study aims to deal with two of the aspects that influence the interest and involvement of students in online learning communities, by using movies as an educational resource: level of openness and level of adaptation to the student environment and academic requests.

1.1. Student openness and movie watching

Much analyzed throughout the years, Openness, as we call it and measured in this study, represents the fifth factor of personality (Albu, 2017). Looking back at the history of this concept, Albu (2017) mentions its taxonomy, like the following: culture, intelligence, intellect, fluid intelligence and tender-mindedness, independence vs. passiveness, disobedience; aesthetic-intellectual, openness to experience.

Howard and Howard (1995) think that Openness refers to the number of interests a person has and to the depth and intensity these are followed with. Thus, a person having a great openness has various interests, but each of a low intensity, while a person having a low openness has less interests, but each with an intense manifestation. Dollinger et al. (1991) believe that openness to experience shows that a person's preference to imaginative activities as opposed to the conventional forms of entertainment. In their study Dollinger et al. (1991) state the hypothesis that students having low levels of openness would prefer to get involved in formal or conservatory activities at the university, but those having high levels of openness to imagination would like to get involved in activities that allow them to assume a different identity (eg. to participate to a Halloween party to put on costumes).

Finn (1997) studied the influence of personality traits on mass media consumption; one of his hypotheses stated that high levels of openness would lead to spending a greater amount of time watching movies at the cinema or to read books, and less for watching TV, conventionally. The findings showed that a person's high levels of openness have a positive and great correlation with the pleasure of reading books, but a negative correlation with the idea of watching classic programs on TV. Summarizing his findings in the field bibliography, Finn (1997) draws the conclusion that openness reflects a person's own need to know himself/herself, his/her family, friends, society, but also his/her need to have many experiences mediated by films and books.

Following the findings of the above-mentioned studies, we start from the hypothesis that students having high levels of openness would show a greater interest in getting involved in activities that use movies as a learning resource. The movie, i.e., movie sequences, would allow the illustration of the challenges of a disabled person in leading an independent life, and the participation in an online learning community would create the context for discussions and would bring out the advantage of getting additional support from student fellows and from teachers in the process of learning and fulfilling a groupwork task on the intellectual disability.

1.2. Student openness to build learning communities

Communities can take various forms, including those religious, political or the neighbourhoods (Brook & Oliver, 2003; Goth, 1992). A critical element in building a community is the social aspect, thus, some rules are necessary for an online community to function (Palloff & Pratt, 2007): have a clear definition of the group's goal; create a distinctive space for the group meetings; promote efficient leadership inside the community; clearly state the behaviour norms and conduct; give a role to each member; allow and facilitate the division into subgroups; allow the members to settle down their own quarrels. Furthermore, the online learning community allows not only a mere joined meeting online, but also a debate, a secure place for reflection and argumentation, and even a cooperative and supportive approach of the academic activity (Palloff & Pratt, 2007). Shea et al. (2005) talks about the various definitions of the learning community, underlining the common elements or themes, like: ability to build mutual trust, a connection of the spirit, a sense of belonging, a sense of membership, a sense of support, and an ability to share in the educational journey together.

Preece (2000) believes that communities built in the online environment have four basic characteristics: people, goal, politics, and informational systems. But to these, Palloff and Pratt (2003) add two more: cooperative learning and reflexive training, both also necessary for the transformative learning to occur. In 2007, Palloff and Pratt give an even more complex model, by organizing the characteristics of the online learning communities into three groups: people, goal, and process, and think that the result of a community focused well-built online course is the reflexive/transformative learning. Essential aspects in building learning communities are the following (O'Donnell et al., 2005):

- Students have an active role in learning, a role underlined in the constructivist learning theories
- High levels of knowledge are developed from the experiences had with other competent people
- high levels of knowledge are developed around learning experiences with colleagues who cooperate for achieving a result
- The quality of a discourse influences the quality of learning
- Modern technologies play an important role in the processes of learning and bonding with others.

The markers that Palloff and Pratt (2007) show as evidence in the case of creating a community in an online class are: an active interaction that implies both, course content, and personal communication; cooperative learning, represented mainly by peer cooperative relationships, and only secondly by those of student-teacher; the significance given to the ongoing activity, a significance built on social relationships and shown by comments or questions that should lead to an agreement between the members; sharing

resources within the group; expressing mutual support and encouragement within the group, but also being open to critically assess the others' activity. Under certain aspects, these educational communities can be stimulating, interesting and intense for those involved in the journey of education because they bring together people with similar interests and goals, not only people that occasionally connect to a group (Palloff & Pratt, 2007). Openness is relevant to the well-being of the students throughout their education journey at university due to its relevance for the intellect (Bardi et al., 2009). Thus, people with high openness are interested in intellectual activities and because, university studies offer such activities, it can be a congruent environment with the openness trait. As a consequence, we expect that openness should be important for both, students' well-being (Bardi et al., 2009), and level of adaptation to the student environment and academic requests. Although the creation of student communities influenced how other theoretical models study the learning communities, Ehrlick and Slotta (2018) believe that in the last two decades there was no significant progress either in theory, or in practice.

2. Problem Statement

Teachers are much more focused on providing a suitable context for professional training and developing students' professional and cross-curricular skills than on the process of adaptation to academic life (Gray, 2004). As a result, there is a lack of preoccupation in the teacher's part for building proper relationships with the students and among the students (Popa et al., 2018). But developing positive relationships with the students should be one of the teaching goals during and outside lectures and seminars. The movie can be offered an important role in creating a suitable context for interactions and debates on specific concepts, even in an online environment. Our research underlines whether the level of openness and adaptation to academic life is in association relationship with students' interest and participation in learning communities, in the online environment, outside class hours, by using movies sequences as an educational resource for fulfilling a groupwork task. When building an online learning community, one should keep in consider that the existence of social relationships depends mainly on the possibility of shared ideas, interests, feelings, or beliefs, rather than on being all present at the same time in the same place. In our research, using sequences from the movie "I am Sam" as learning resources, students are invited to form an online learning community outside class hours (lectures or seminars), to participate to learning activities based on mutual support to fulfil a groupwork task, a task that differed according to the study program of the students. Thus, the students of Pedagogy of Primary and Preschool Education focused on the aspects related to the way they (as future teachers) could form an efficient school-family relationship when there is only a single parent and the parent is an intellectually disabled person. The students of Psychology and those of Special Education had to illustrate the specific traits of the intellectual disability. We started on the premise that student participation in these learning activities, within the online community created especially for this purpose, would be related to their level of openness. Those having a high level of openness would take part in the online learning community, outside class hours, while those with a low level of openness would like either to work on the task without joining a learning community or to dismiss it altogether, having less interest in getting involved in studying in a new context and with new approaches. When stating this hypothesis, we followed the

lines of Howard and Howard (1995) on the levels of openness, according to the scores on the openness assessment scales:

3. People with high scores for this factor, called “explorers”, have vast interests, are fascinated by innovations and new things, have an inclination towards introspection and reflection, and think of new approaches;
4. People with low scores for the Openness factor, called “protectors”, have limited interests, are at ease in a familiar environment and are seen as conventional people;
5. People with average scores for Openness, called “moderate”, show interest in exploring as long as it is necessary, but not for a long time because they get bored; they can focus for a long period of time on familiar things, but then, they feel the need for new things.

3. Research Questions and the Hypotheses of the Study

Our study attempts to give answers to the following questions:

- Do students who intend to form an online learning community have different levels of openness as opposed to those not desiring to participate in such communities?
- Is the level of adaptation to academic life different for the students who want to form an online learning community than that of those not wanting?
- Is the level of adaptation to academic life in an association relationship with the level of openness?

According to these questions, we have formulated the following hypothesis of the study:

Hypothesis 1: The students’ interest and involvement/non-involvement in group learning activities, in an online environment, using movie sequences as educational resource, differ according to their openness towards the intellectual and cultural aspects. Students that would show interest in taking part in group online learning activities would have a higher openness towards learning, on an intellectual and aesthetic level, compared to those that are not opened to participating to such activities.

Hypothesis 2: The students’ interest and involvement/non-involvement in group learning activities, in the online environment, using movie as educational resource, differ according to their level of adaptation to student environment and academic requests.

Hypothesis 3: There is a correlation between the students’ level of openness towards learning, on the cultural and aesthetic level, and the level of adaptation to student environment and academic requests.

4. Research Methods

We used the following research tools:

A new instrument for Openness Assessment (The Questionnaire D), elaborated by Albu (2017). Openness, as measured by D questionnaire, refers to the inclination to diversity and nonconformism, to the existence of interests for cultural and intellectual aspects. D questionnaire contains 18 items grouped in three scales. Each scale evaluates an Openness dimension: Openness towards learning (7 items), Openness towards aesthetics (5 items) and Openness towards intellect (6 items). The answer is offered on a 5-level Likert scale, with 1 meaning very little and 5, very much. Here are some examples for the items:

subscale of openness towards learning – I believe you can learn something from every human being; I am sure I have still much to learn; openness towards aesthetics – For me, Art is something that gives me thrills; openness towards intellect – I like scientific challenges or I like to take part in scientific venues (conferences, debates, round tables, s.o.). The author pointed that the internal consistency of the scales is a good one: a coefficient varied between .763 and .860.

The questionnaire on adaptation to student environment and academic requests (ASEAR), designed by Rusnac et al. (2015), is a new tool for understanding the impact of social changes on a micro, mezzo or macro level on the adaptation of students to academic life. The questionnaire has 45 items. It uses a 5-level Likert scale, with 1 – disagreement and 5 – agreement. It is divided into 3 main scales and 9 secondary ones. The measured values show:

1). a state of comfort/discomfort due to social environment changes (housing, communication, cultural, religious or economic, s.o.) that show the measure in which the needs (socio-communicative, eco-social and socio-economical) are fulfilled (5 items each subscale);

2). a state of comfort/discomfort due to changes on a mezzo level in the social environment that identifies the measure in which the needs for communication with relatives and friends, peer students and teachers are achieved (5 items for each subscale);

3). a state of comfort/discomfort due to the changes on the level of the self (forming and accepting a new identity, possibilities of self-appreciation, valorisation and monitoring, s.o.) that shows the measure in which the needs for professional self-management and self-time-management are fulfilled (5 items for each subscale). After the psychometric assessment of the questionnaire, the authors said there was a good internal and external validation, a good fidelity and normal distribution of the results. The alpha Crombach coefficient was a high one, .956, for the subject lot of this study.

5. Participants

As a participants, among the 58 women students participating in our research, all students from the Faculty of Social and Humanistic Sciences in the town of Oradea, Romania. As a percentage, 41.4% were enrolled in the study programme of Pedagogy of Primary and Preschool Education, 25.9%, in Special Education and 32.8%, in Psychology. Among those, 69% were taking one study programme of our Faculty, while 31% were taking two study programmes, out of whom 10.3% were enrolled in two university study programmes. Most 70.7% are single, and the rest, 27.6%, married and 1.7% widows. 58.6% coming from the rural environment and 41.4%, from the urban. The experimental lot was formed by 46.6% of the participants, while the control lot, of the rest of 53.4%.

6. Findings

For research data interpretation, we used SPSS 20.0 for Windows. We checked the data distribution with Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and saw there was a normal distribution at the level of the lots. Thus, we used parametric data analysis.

6.1. A comparative study. Comparative data analysis of the level of openness and adaptation to academic life for the two groups

We used t-test for independent samples to test hypothesis 1-students' interest and involvement/non-involvement in group learning activities, in the online environment, using movies as educational resource, differ according to their openness towards the intellectual and cultural aspects. The results are shown in table 1.

Table 1. Results in t-test for independent samples on Openness

| Variables | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | t-test for Equality of Means | | | | |
|-----------------------------|---|------|------------------------------|----|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| | F | Sig. | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference |
| Openness towards intellect | .001 | .972 | -2,422 | 56 | .019 | -.473 | .195 |
| Openness towards aesthetics | 1,701 | .198 | -.632 | 55 | .530 | -.142 | .225 |
| Openness towards learning | .006 | .938 | -.530 | 56 | .598 | -.093 | .175 |

Observing table 1, it can be seen there are differences only for openness towards intellect; the means for the results of the students that intent to take part in the online learning community (m=3,6296, s.d=0,732) were higher than that of those not wanting to participate in such a community (m=3,155; s.d=0,751). Thus, there is a high level of interest and openness towards the intellect of the students who want to participate in learning communities compared to those that do not have the same intention. Effect size (Cohen) d=0,64, which is a value over the average. There are no differences between the two lots for the level of either openness towards learning or openness towards aesthetics; the means of both lots, for both dimensions of openness are high, over value 4. Thus, these results partially validate our hypothesis.

Table 2 shows the results for the three subscales of our research instrument after testing hypothesis 2-students' interest and involvement/non-involvement in group learning activities, in the online environment, using a movie as educational resource, differ according to their level of adaptation to student environment and academic requests.

Table 2. Results of t-test for independent samples on Adaptation to Student Environment and Academic Requests

| Variables | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | t-test for Equality of Means | | | | |
|---|---|------|------------------------------|--------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| | F | Sig. | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference |
| Adaptation on a macro level in the social environment | 7,772 | ,007 | -2,349 | 49,052 | .023 | -.3405 | .1449 |
| Adaptation on a mezzo level in the social environment | 3,822 | ,056 | -3,221 | 54 | .002 | -.4061 | .1260 |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|-------|------|--------|--------|------|--------|-------|
| Adaptation on a micro level in the social environment | 4,033 | ,049 | -3,043 | 53,895 | .004 | -.4115 | .1352 |
|---|-------|------|--------|--------|------|--------|-------|

The research results validate the hypothesis by showing statistically significant differences, according to the lots, for the dimensions of the scale on level of adaptation to student environment and academic requests. There were higher means for the students that want to take part in an online learning community (m1) as compared to the means of those choosing not to participate in such a community (m2), for all three dimensions of Adaptation in the Social Environment: on a macro level (m1=4,32, s.d=0,4,07; m2=3,98, s.d=0,662), mezzo level (m1=4,376, s.d=,38; m2=3,969, s.d=0,529) and micro level (m1=4,376, s.d=,424; m2=3,969, s.d=0,599). The effect size is over the average for the subscale Adaptation on a macro level in the social environment ($t(49,05)=-2,349, p<.05, d=0,67$) and higher for the results of the other two subscales: adaptation on a mezzo level ($t(54)=-3,221, p<.01, d=0,876$) and on a micro level ($t(53,895)=-3,043, p<.01, d=0,829$). Thus, the hypothesis is validated.

6.2. Correlation analysis between Openness level and level of Adaptation to Students Environment and Academic Requests

The results presented in table 3 is to test the hypothesis 3-there is a correlation between the students' level of openness towards learning, on the cultural and aesthetic level, and the level of adaptation to the student environment and academic requests

Table 3. Correlation analysis between Openness level and level of Adaptation to Students Environment and Academic Requests

| Variables | | Openness towards intellect | Openness towards aesthetic | Openness towards learning |
|---|---------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| Adaptation on a macro level in the social environment | Pearson Correlation | .431** | .334* | .400** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .001 | .013 | .002 |
| | N | 56 | 55 | 56 |
| Adaptation on a mezzo level in the social environment | Pearson Correlation | .355** | .233 | .335* |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .007 | .087 | .012 |
| | N | 56 | 55 | 56 |
| Adaptation on a micro level in the social environment | Pearson Correlation | .386** | .259 | .351** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .003 | .052 | .007 |
| | N | 58 | 57 | 58 |

The results presented in table 3 show there are some direct correlations between the level of adaptation on a macro level in the social environment and the level of openness towards intellect ($r=.431, p<.01$), towards aesthetic ($r=.334, p<.05$) and towards learning ($r=.40, p<.01$). But, the level of adaptation on a mezzo level in the social environment has a direct correlation only with the level of openness towards intellect ($r=.355, p<.01$) and towards learning ($r=.335, p<.05$). The level of adaptation on a micro level in the social environment has a direct correlation only with the level of openness towards aesthetics ($r=.386, p<.01$) and towards learning ($r=.351, p<.01$). The r-coefficient of correlation show the effect size is of average for the statistically significant data. Openness towards aesthetics has no correlations with the

level of adaptation on a mezzo and micro level in the social environment. Therefore, the research hypothesis is partially validated.

7. Conclusions

Even if the educative benefits of movies in learning activities and the role of learning in the constructivist framework are already known, the main goal of this study brings into focus a less researched aspect: the influence of students' openness in forming learning communities in the online environment, outside class hours, using movies as a learning resource. Research data point out that the students who intend to take part in learning communities, outside class hours, to cooperate with their peers to fulfil a groupwork task based on film sequences, show a greater openness towards intellect and a higher level of adaptation to the student environment and academic requests. These findings are in accordance with the findings of previous studies, thus underlining that Openness, as a personality trait, determines a greater interest in movie watching (Finn, 1997) and that a high level of openness leads to the well-being of the student during his/her university studies (Bardi et al., 2009). However, the results of this study illustrate that students who manage to adapt to the demands of the university environment and those with a high level of openness to learning will also be those who aim to be more actively involved in their own training. More specifically, this category of students will want to join a learning community that will allow them to learn, train and practice sustainable skills needed for their future profession. Hence the question: What do we do at university with students who want to know and be supported in learning even more than in classrooms and seminars, so outside of school hours? The answer to this question is the one that will open the future directions of applied research. Identifying appropriate teaching-learning strategies to maintain their interest in knowledge, facilitating social interactions and forming learning communities that provide students with a sustainable form of education, even in the virtual environment, is the goal and direction of future research. Identifying a more complete personality profile of students who would like to be part of an online learning community could certainly improve the results of this study. Last but not least, the development of learning activities within a community of students with common interests, using film as an educational resource, and the evaluation of the effectiveness of this approach in terms of developing sustainable skills needed for the future profession in the participants of the experimental group to outline scientifically validated educational models and practices. Overall, our advice is to use the strong points of learning activities when working with students, such the following: openness, setting a suitable learning context beyond class hours, even in the online, and finding the most appropriate learning means or resources for students' interests. Also, it is important to start building from the strong points and positive aspects that have been identified in education than from the weak ones or difficulties (Laurian-Fitzgerald et al., 2018).

Probably the most obvious practical implications of this study are for the activity of the teacher with the students in the university. Thus, at the level of the educational policies assumed by each university, the decision-makers should consider that for the training of future professionals, sustainable learning involves setting up support groups or learning communities in which to participate the teacher and students who have common themes, common interests and goals. The way students are organised in such communities can choose optional subjects in the curricula, in which students are intrinsically

motivated to participate. Simultaneously, the university professor must be aware that beyond the opening of students to sustainable learning, it is necessary to create learning contexts that contribute to a better adaptation of students to the requirements of the university environment. Petre (2022) found that pre-service teachers have a positive attitude in working collaboratively in their study groups for solving the class requirements. Therefore, a closer focus of teachers on the teaching strategies used in the activities can maintain the interest in study and long-term learning.

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