Erasmus+ project
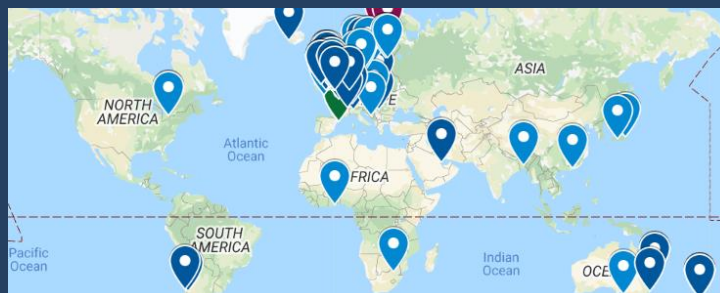**ABC to VLE: Beyond Curriculum Design**

ABC LD Toolkit 2020

Part 7.
The ABC LD Community

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Resources available from http://abc-ld.org

PART 7 THE ABC LD COMMUNITY

7.1 WHY THE ABC-LD COMMUNITY IS IMPORTANT

Since ABC-LD was launched in 2015, the global community of users has grown rapidly. A survey by UCL in 2019 showed some 70 institutions using some variant of the method, and we know there are many more that have not contacted the UCL team. The June 2020 map indicates the spread of users, with the focus on Europe, but with growing interest elsewhere. The UCL team have been particularly active in the UK and Europe but have run 'train the trainer' workshops as far apart as Chile, Qatar, and New Zealand.
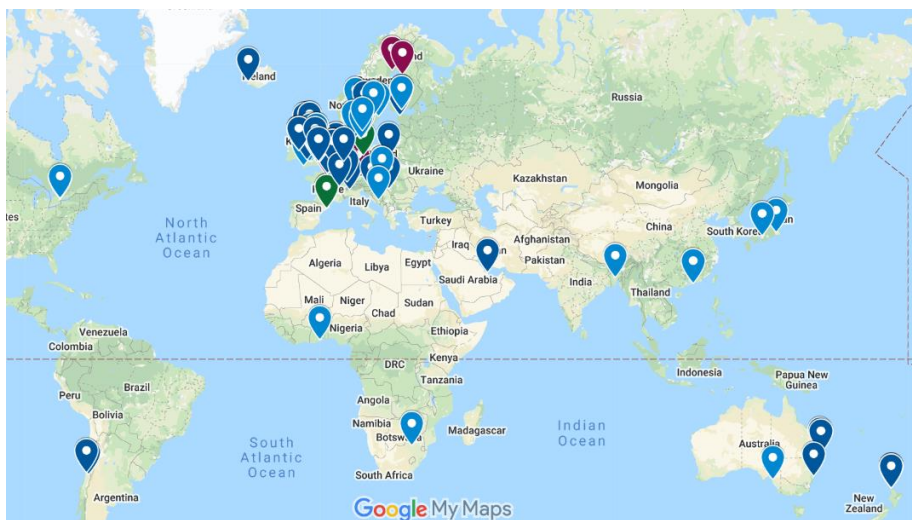

Fig 7.1 ABC-LD activities worldwide

Fig 7.2 ABC-LD activities in Europe

During the final (online) meeting of the Erasmus+ project in June 2020, one partner remarked that the 'Toolkit' was not simply a set of downloadable guides, resources, tools and videos. Although we know of universities that have adopted ABC-LD and have not contacted UCL or any other current user, the Toolkit artefacts themselves take on more value if they are placed in the context of professional practice. New users are recommended to discuss with UCL or other partners to form a better understanding of ABC-LD and the ethos behind it. The remarkable response of the ABC-LD community to the Covid emergency was an example of a group of like-minded professionals drawing together to share expertise and resources.

In the next stage of ABC-LD, the partnership hopes to develop a structure of national information 'hubs', local online communities, and an international conference to share ideas and resources. A method of 'badging' facilitators to recognise their skills and experience has already been planned. Above all we anticipate that users of the toolkit will wish to join the wider community, not only to gain ideas and updates, but to contribute to it themselves. The underpinning pedagogy of ABC-LD is the 'Conversational Framework', the workshop in both live and online formats is also essentially a conversation and we hope the international ABC-LD community will build eventually to be a global conversation about learning design.

7.2 CURRENT COMMUNITIES

A number of ABC community groups have already been established in particular countries and regions. You can join one or more groups by clicking the links below. The ABC International community group welcomes members from all over the world.

- 🌐 ABC LD International community

- ABC LD Australia & New Zealand

- ABC LD group Denmark (❶FaceBook group)

- ABC LD Swap Shop Community Ireland

- ABC LD community Sweden (❶FaceBook group)

- ABC LD community Germany (ILIAS group)

- ABC LD community Flanders (ⓘLinkedIn group)

- ABC LD community in Finland (in Teams, please feel free to request access through Teams or through edutech@helsinki.fi)

These groups run on different platforms and have various degrees of engagement but are a good place to start for newcomers trying to tap into (fairly) local expertise. Some run local webinars and events (for example, in Ireland, an ABC Learning Design Swap Shop webinar series has been established as a vehicle for discussion about the method). Through these types of groups it can be possible to attend

a local workshop or train-the-trainers session, which is also a great way to get started. The https://abc-ld.org/about/community/ site has a contact form for anyone wanting to start a new group for their region.

7.3 POST-ERASMUS+ SUSTAINABILITY

To survive and thrive, communities need to have a focus. The **abc-ld.org** site is funded for five years to 2022 and is intended to provide simple continuity and a home for the Toolkit until post-Erasmus+ activities become established. Four areas of sustainability have been discussed by the Erasmus+ partners.

7.3.1 ABC-LD AFFILIATES

The project has 12 partners but many other universities currently using ABC have expressed an interest in participating in the project. Some have been using and adapting ABC for several years and are keen to contribute to the community and the Erasmus+ project. It has been suggested a small number of such universities would be invited to become Affiliates, members of the project and participate although with no financial exchange.

What would affiliates do?

- Short (5') intro video on how they are using ABC (localization)
- Share resources, articles, blog posts (localization)
- Review and provide feedback on toolkit
- Participate in online webinars (optional)
- Case study (optional)
- Data on numbers of local users etc (optional)

7.3.2 ABC-LD HUBS

The role of the Hubs would be to ensure the sustainability of a local ABC community of practice and liaise with the other Hubs and the UCL International Hub. Hubs would require initial face-to-face training by UCL staff and follow-up online help and discussion as necessary. UCL would publicise the national centres on the ABC-LD.org site and encourage enquiries to the centres directly. Existing project members would become Hubs if they so wished, as would Affiliates who have already been trained.

What would Hubs do?

- Own, update and host the local language translations of the ABC workshop materials and supplementary resources on an open web page (linking back to UCL).
- Act as a national point of contact and coordination for ABC e.g. for projects and liaison with the UCL Centre.
- Encourage dissemination and projects in their local educational communities through local (language) networks and conferences.
- Organise and lead a local online ABC special interest group with (optional) meetings.
- Report back to /work with UCL and the wider community to share resources and develop the method.

- Open some of their workshops for visitors/auditors from other institutions to attend as a method of outreach.
- Run ABC demo workshops and 'train the trainer' sessions (optional)
- Provide consultancy on the method for other institutions (optional)

The last two could be chargeable if necessary for funding the national hub.

7.3.3 ABC-LD BADGING

ABC has become so popular the community has asked for a digital badging scheme to recognize skills and experience. The feasibility and process is still being explored but the first ABC badge is most likely to be *ABC-LD Workshop Lead*. The criteria would be:

Badge earners are able to organise, localise as necessary, lead, run and evaluate the 'Base' ABC-LD Learning Design workshop as outlined by the ABC-LD Toolkit (2020) at module and/or programme level. Earners will be able to outline the background theory and can provide basic advice on all of the technical items on the ABC design cards. Attendance in at least one ABC train-the-trainers event.

7.3.4 ABC-LD ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The first ABC-LD 'mini-conference' was held in March 2018 and was an immediate success, attracting some participants from across the UK. This was followed up by a conference June 2019 focusing on the experience of ABC in five London institutions, Goldsmiths, Imperial College London, LSE, QMUL and UCL. Again the event proved popular and attracted 100 delegates. A third, and much larger, conference planned for June 2020 was cancelled due to the Covid emergency. The interest in these events suggest a one-day conference might be viable and a Conference team will be assembled after the Erasmus+ project is completed with the aim or running an event in the first half of 2021.

Fig 7.3 Prof Laurillard speaking at the first ABC-LD conference in 2018

Fig 7.4 The second ABC-LD conference in 2018

7.3.5 FUTURE ABC-LD (FUNDED) PROJECTS

The uncertainties over Covid and Brexit have prevented the UCL team from considering any immediate follow-on projects after 'ABC to VLE' but there remains huge potential in using the method for future research and development projects. The community is well-networked and represents a wide range of geographical areas and types of institutions. Although the focus has been on higher education, there is also now interest from further and secondary education, too. The possibility of introducing ABC-LD into new areas of education (geographic, cultural, mode or discipline) are almost endless. Using ABC-LD as a common language for cross-institutional collaboration, for example in the design of shared programmes, is also possible. At UCL several students have used ABC-LD as part of their Masters projects.

At the time of writing one obvious development area is the production of a dedicated ABC-LD tool to facilitate online workshops. Several ideas have been proposed but all would require reasonable funding. Moving to an educational perspective the impact on the student experience of learning design change stimulated by ABC-LD would be valuable but would require a long-term commitment. Section 3.5 of the Toolkit hints at other (maybe more bounded) areas that may be worthy of study, such as ABC-LD for academic development or digital literacies, strategic integration, quality assurance, or as a basis for learning analytics. The idea of 'students as designers' has been raised frequently and we would love to carry that notion forward.