

Virtual Mobility towards Internationalisation at Home; Challenges and Achievements

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Abstract

Research has long preached for physical mobility as an effective tool for students' internationalisation. However, this type of mobility is not always affordable to the average student because of the funding and visa requirements. What made physical mobility even more unreachable is the current health crisis that paralyzed travel movements between countries. Therefore, in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic, universities have recognised virtual mobility as a path for their local students' internationalisation at home (IaH). This concept is one of the major objectives of MED2IaH project (The MEDiterranean Countries: Towards Internationalisation at Home). The intent of this paper is to give an overview of the MED2IaH project with a special attention to the challenges and achievements of virtual mobility towards internationalisation at home and present two cases of virtual exchange courses as concrete examples for local students' internationalisation at home. Despite their different orientations, these courses have three common learning objectives; enhancing students' intercultural communicative competence, collaborating in virtual teams, and practising the English language. The research study followed three phases: course design, virtual exchange and evaluation through students' questionnaires. Results were in line with the quasi consensus over the efficiency of virtual mobility in improving students' intercultural communicative competence and hence supporting them in their internationalisation at home process.

Keywords: MED2IaH project, internationalisation at home, Intercultural communicative competence, virtual mobility