Diversity: A blessing or a curse for online collaboration?

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Abstract: Online communication through social networks and free knowledge exchange are playing an important role in our life. (Online) group work is the most important 21st century skill, for employees, according to Association of Graduate Recruiters (2016). The previous factors, together with globalization and massive immigration, are erasing the geographical boundaries between people and the meaning of “distance” has changed. For us involved in education this knowledge is essential in order to transform our way of learning, teaching and working online. Fast emerging technologies and the complexity of the problems that we are facing today needs collaborative efforts from different people. Thus diversity matters: different skills, (working with software, using audio, debating skills) talents, ways of seeing the world and approaching life are needed. However, coping with diversity brings challenges and can become a curse. However, what happens when collaboration between a group of people of great diversity succeeds? Synergy! How to overcome the obstacles (time, misunderstanding, the best direction, technical access) posed by being different, having different goals and still needing each other to succeed, is something that we should want to understand.

Our purpose is to communicate our experiences from the Open Networked Learning course (ONL162) where we collaborated as a PBL online group. Further, we aim to understand the role of diversity for online collaboration using Community of Inquiry (COI) as a paradigm. Finally, we are going to expose different factors that contributed to a successful online collaboration.