ECOLHE
Empower Competences for Onlife Learning in HE

IO4

SYMBIOTIC LEARNING PARADIGM (SLP). TEACHER COMPETENCES, METHODS & APPROACHES IN HIGHER EDUCATION
TOOLKIT and FACILITATION GUIDE

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Erasmus+

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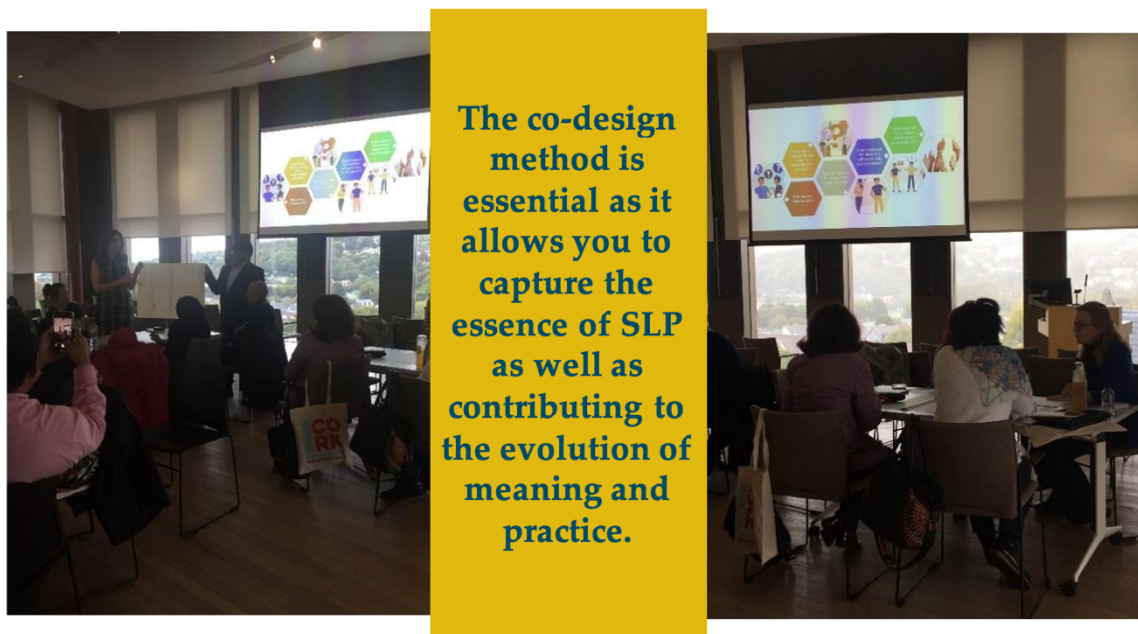## LIST OF FIGURES

1. INTRODUCTION

"To be a teacher in the right sense is to be a learner, I am not a teacher, only a fellow student."

Søren Kierkegaard (1813 – 1855)

This facilitation guide aims to support you to understand and enable the 'Symbiotic Learning Paradigm' (SLP) approach to curriculum design. It aims to provide you with the context to facilitate active enquiry using the SLP model in your higher education context. It draws on critical social theory and Freirean 'praxis' as it requires co-design with various stakeholders and it aims to advance the emancipatory 'function' of knowledge by positioning the learner at the centre and by embedding 'reflection in action' and 'reflection on action'. It will question current practices to elucidate higher education professional development needs for twenty first century teaching and learning contexts.

The American writer and futurist Alvin Toffler commented that "the illiterate of the twenty-first century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn and relearn." SLP asks you to embark on this journey of 'learning, unlearning and relearning' with your colleagues, learners and external stakeholders using the Symbiotic Learning Paradigm.

Figure 1. Facilitating a SLP workshop – The 3rd Multiplier Event of the ECOLHE project at UCC September 2022

The co-design method is essential as it allows you to capture the essence of SLP as well as contributing to the evolution of meaning and practice.

The Symbiotic Learning Paradigm (SLP) developed from practice in the Centre of Adult Continuing Education (ACE) at University College Cork (UCC), Ireland. Although the University has been providing adult education-based courses since the early 1910's, ACE as an organisation has been operating since 1946 first providing a diploma in Social and Economic Science. ACE has grown to provide over 90 programmes ranging through social science; arts, culture and heritage; community, diversity and inclusion; business and coaching; health and wellbeing; education and learning and a wide range of cross-sector personal and professional development programmes delivered locally, nationally and online. Its purpose is to provide opportunities in lifelong learning within UCC for all adults irrespective of age and previous educational background. SLP emerged from ACE's practice of learner-centred and transformative lifelong and life-wide learning provision.
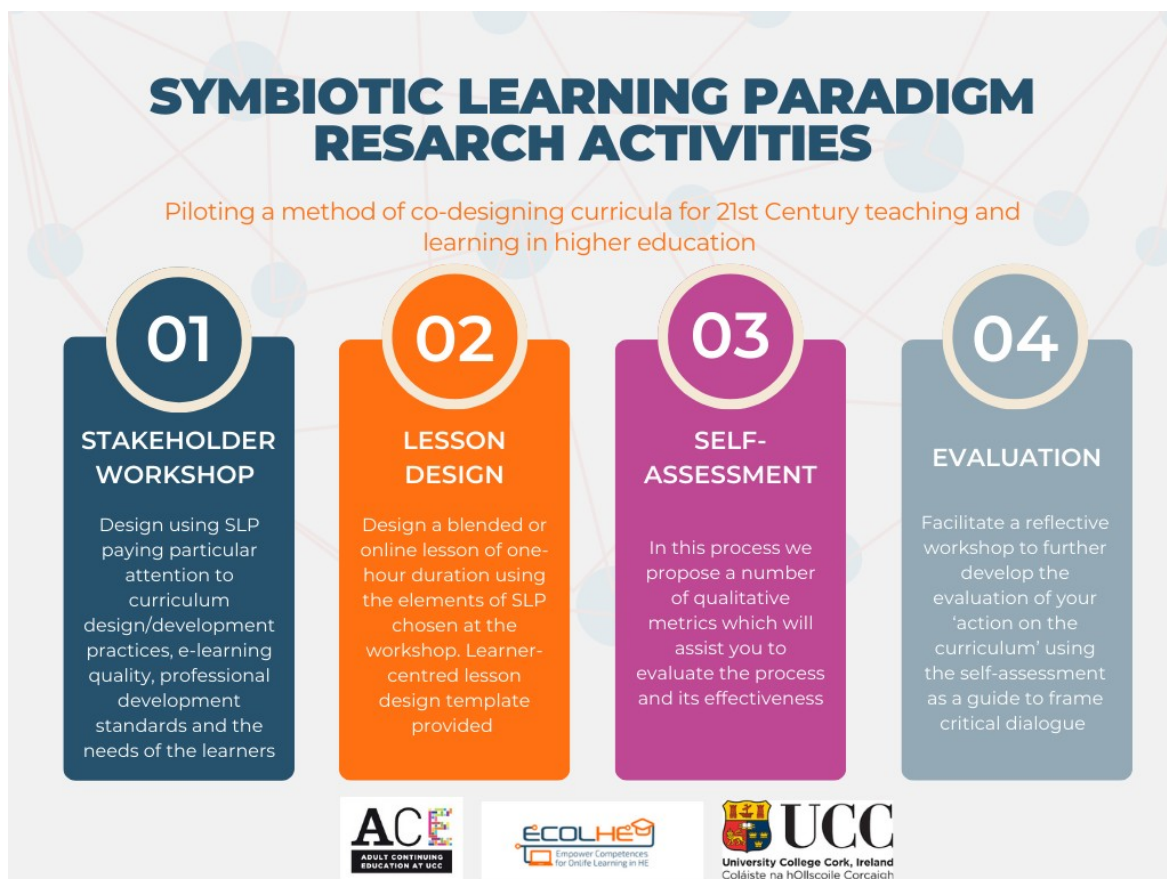
Curriculum design at ACE embraces all forms and types of learning and curriculum design is driven by learner interest, needs, and values both professionally and personal.

2. ECOLHE – EMPOWERING COMPETENCIES FOR 'ONLIFE' LEARNING IN HE

The 4th step of the Erasmus+ ECOLHE project "Symbiotic Learning Paradigm (SLP): Teacher Competences, Methods & Approaches in Higher Education" (IO4) involved the development and piloting of a co-designing approach for 21st Century teaching in higher education. SLP is about imagining and achieving possibilities and thinking outside of conventional constraints in the design, delivery, and objectives of learning. The challenge for ECOLHE was about a cultural shift that allows institutions, teachers, and learners to embrace a significantly different paradigm.

SLP is a 'bottom-up' curriculum design approach that aims to put the learner at the centre. Through the SLP research activities that we designed the ECOLHE partners provided valuable insights and supported our work to further understand SLP in practice by sharing their experiences implementing the approach in contexts outside of ACE. We continued our co-design and collaborative approach in how we incorporated the key findings from their engagement in the process to develop our understanding of SLP. We compared across the piloting in different contexts and used the key findings to act as an evidence-base for SLP and to support our work to develop and refine the approach fully.

Figure 2. Summary of the research activities that the ECOLHE partners engaged in to implement and evaluate the Symbiotic Learning Paradigm

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From our piloting process through the project, we understand that the central concepts underpinning the SLP approach to curriculum design are: 'Learner at the Centre' and 'Lifelong and Life-wide Learning'

We developed our understanding of the key elements and refined the approach to create the final version outlining the eight key elements:

•   Collaborative relationships

•   Tripartite: learners, external stakeholder & HEIs

•   Flexible, accessible, and open

•   Reflective education

•   Knowledge and skill adaptive

•   Transversal competencies

•   Responsive to unpredictable futures

•   Reflexive education

These eight elements can be grouped into two themes that emerged 'Participatory & Empowering' and 'Responsive & Dynamic.'

Figure 3. Summary of the key concepts, elements, and themes of SLP from the ECOLHE project (Version 3)
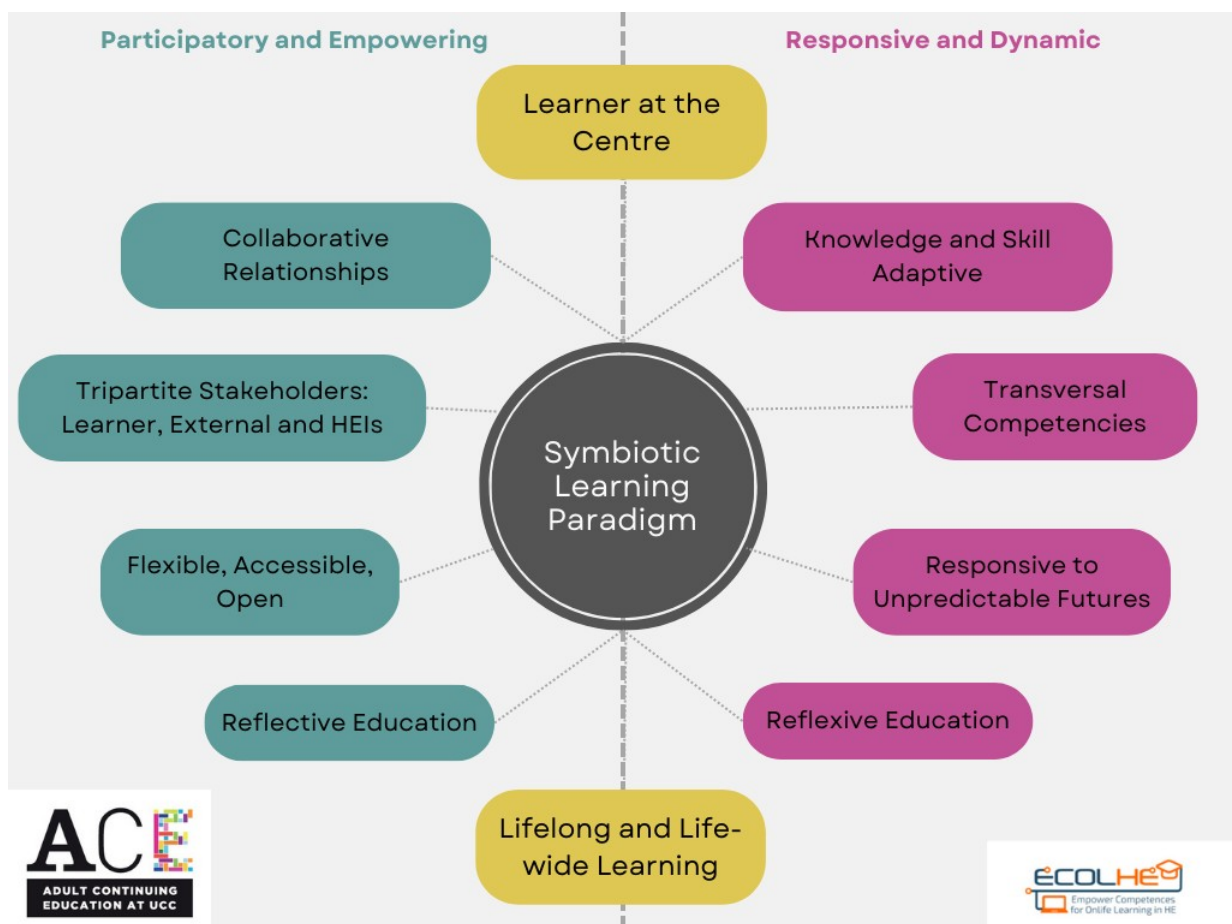
3. CO-DESIGN WORKSHOP

Facilitate a 1-hour workshop to implement your own SLP model with colleagues, learners, and external stakeholders.

3.1 Before the Workshop

1) Identify a new programme or one in the process of re-design to critically explore how you would implement the model.
2) Recruit 15 participants for the workshop with a mix of external stakeholders relevant to the content area, teaching staff, curriculum design staff, researchers and learners (aim for min. 5 past/present learners for balanced representation in the room).
3) Pick the elements of SLP that you want to use to design with (three).

3.2 During the Workshop

Through ECOLHE we know that engaging with SLP is a reflective process and it can be used effectively at any stage of the curriculum design process. It is a holistic approach that opens the university curriculum design processes to learners and external stakeholders. Centralising the learner in the curriculum design process requires a reflective approach that questions traditional HEI assumptions about their role and the learner's role in curriculum design. The collaborative relationships and processes of SLP need to be authentically designed and reflectively maintained if it is to be sustainable.

Regardless of which elements of SLP you chose to focus on the approach relies on collaborative relationships which must be constructed, trust must be built through openness and a participatory approach that considers that all stakeholders have relevant and valuable views on learner's 'needs' for the curriculum that you are co-designing or developing. A collaborative approach to building co-designing relationships among multiple stakeholders requires conscious designing that questions traditional processes, or it can easily slip back into familiar hierarchical and transactional relationships that undermine the whole process by creating negative participatory experiences for stakeholders.

During the co-design workshop pay particular attention to curriculum design/development practices, decision-making processes, and the needs of the learners according to the learners (learner-centred co-design) to obtain input during the workshop to help you to design a lesson plan, complete your self-assessment,

4. LESSON PLAN

Design a blended or online lesson of one-hour duration on a topic relevant to your own core area of activity and using the SLP elements. The design of the lesson can be used as a team-building tool and in so doing built a collaborative co-designing network that can be readily used to further develop the curriculum in the future.

Follow the template provided which of course you can adapt by adding parts that you feel are relevant to your context. The purpose of this is to engage with SLP at a micro level so you can assess it in practice through the piloting of a lesson plan.

LESSON PLAN
DESIGN - OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION
Rapid review of previously taught concepts. Reflect on previous learning.

LEARNING INTENTIONS
Lesson objective linked to learning outcome and mapped to assessment.

MAKE CONNECTIONS
Activate prior knowledge by linking the current learning to known concepts. Transfer of Learning.

CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT
Clear and concise definition with academic language and real world examples to make learning relevant. Critical dialogue.

APPLICATION
Flipped classroom & experiential learning - consider learner applying concept first and you synthesize in concept development.

LESSON REVIEW
Revisit learning objective. Discuss relevance and next steps.

4.1 Lesson Plan Template for 1-hour Teaching Session

Course Title	
Module	
Year & Level (1st/2nd/3rd/4th)	
Module Aim	
Learning Outcomes	
Assessment(Summative Formative)	
Rationale for choosing it (this content to design a lesson for)	
Elements of SLP you will use to designwith	

Teaching Approaches	

TeachingMethods	
Online, Blended or In Person	

Learner Action	Facilitator Action	Element of SLP

Evaluation of Lesson

Facilitate a one-hour reflective workshop:

1) Present your evaluated lesson plan and facilitate the self-assessment process.

2) Gather the stakeholders' reflections.

We would encourage you to facilitate a one-hour conversation with even a few of the participants to continue your reflective cycle of inquiry into practice by engaging in critical dialogue to further develop the evaluation of your 'action on the curriculum' using SLP. For participants who cannot make this workshop you can engage in providing and gathering feedback through the use of completing a basic form (suggest: image of your design, bullet points of key points from self- assessment, and a space for their comments).

The self-assessment tool is a set of criteria against which you test the effectiveness of the SLP approach in the design of a new programme or the transformation of an existing programme. In this process we propose a number of qualitative metrics which will assist you to evaluate the process, its effectiveness, see where there may be areas that you need to work on, and support you to develop and refine your process and subsequently your curriculum design further. These indicators can be provided in advance to the participants so they can prepare for the workshop and they will be used to frame the reflective discussion.

5.1 Qualitative Indicators

- Did the SLP approach help you to identify and recruit the correct range of stakeholders to contribute to the design of this specific course - who else could be invited?

- Did the process allow for constructive open dialogue and contributions from all the relevant stakeholders – What is needed for this to be developed going forward?

- Did the process lead to innovation, flexibility, and responsiveness to learner needs - How can we build on this going forward?

- What were the key benefits of using the SLP approach?

- What were the key challenges of using the SLP approach?

- Did the process lead to better outcomes in terms of course design, identification of relevant goals/competencies?

- How would you approach the process if you were to start over?

6. CONCLUSION

Through the ECOLHE project we deepened our understanding of the central role of the learners to the SLP approach. SLP is a participatory approach to curriculum design with the inclusion of learners as stakeholders in the design of their own curricula - not learners and stakeholders but learners as stakeholders. The ECOLHE project allowed us to refine our curriculum design approach and we are very grateful to the efforts of our partners to engage authentically with the process in their own contexts. SLP has emerged from a unique teaching and learning space and is intended for use by institutions wanting to design curricula that provide lifelong and life-wide learning opportunities in higher education.