BEYOND
ZOOM

REPORT
on existing online and hybrid delivery approaches

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The report was prepared as part of the project: **Beyond Zoom** implemented as part of the Erasmus+ program. Its goal is to support the digital transformation by increasing the competence and capacity of VET educators to provide a high-quality training offer available both online, offline and in a hybrid form.

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INTRODUCTION

Change constantly accompanies education and its institutional and social environment. Most often it results from cultural and technical changes accompanying the flow of time. It is also driven by changes in social policies; new knowledge on education didactics and other locally conditioned specifics.

The direct participants of this change are institutions and persons providing educational services as well as recipients of these services - children, youth and adults using educational services. Nowadays, an important role in education is played by third sector entities that can provide educational services or participate in their provision. The NGO environment, among others, thanks to the implementation of innovative projects, also participates in creating changes in education.

The undisputed game changer of education development in recent years was the COVID-19 pandemic, which established new, so far not commonly used, criteria for educational processes. Probably never before in history have the principles to which this historical and overwhelming experience made them so democratic for various spheres of social life (not only education).

Among the various, often dramatic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, a significant acceleration in the development of communication techniques and technologies should be noted. All tools supporting communication in the era of a pandemic were only a means to an end, which from the perspective of education was effective communication and effective teaching. Now is the time to take the lesson and consider which of the changes caused by the pandemic will permanently settle in education; which ones are worth preserving and developing.

INTRODUCTION

This report is devoted to existing online and hybrid delivery approaches/case studies and a synthesis of key findings in relation to VET education. It collects and analyzes the most important conclusions regarding the impact of major technological changes on vocational education. Conclusions related to online and hybrid delivery approaches for the future were also presented.

The **Project synthesis** part briefly characterizes the assumptions of the Beyond Zoom project, its goals and results. The **Method** chapter discusses the assumptions and research approach used in the analyzes of the report and indicates the technical aspects and the questions that were asked during the project partners' seminars. In the **Key research conclusions** part, the most important research findings are indicated, and in part **Comparative analysis of methodologies in different countries** presents detailed analyzes that led to these findings. The report closes the **Forecasting online and hybrid delivery approaches** section, which presents the potential future of experiences gained thanks to technological acceleration resulting, among others, from the conditions of the pandemic. The report also includes an **Overview of project partners** who also hosted local Beyond Zoom seminars.

PROJECT SYNTHESIS

The aim of BEYZO is to contribute to digital transformation through the development of digital readiness, resilience and capacity by enhancing the competencies and capacities of VET educators to deliver quality, inclusive training opportunities in online and hybrid (online, offline and combination of both) teaching and learning environments.

To reach this aim, BEYZO has the following **objectives:**

– Increase the knowledge on existing best practices in online and hybrid VET delivery and synthesize results for wider dissemination,
– Support VET educators in delivering training and educational activities in online and hybrid environments,
– Increase the availability of educational resources supporting VET educators to adapt offline training into online and hybrid settings,
– Improve the skills and expertise of VET educators across a range of sectors in facilitating inclusive quality learning processes in both online and hybrid spaces,
– Support the policymakers in understanding the needs for national and pan-European accreditation for digital facilitation skills training and contribute to the definition of micro-credentials (https://crnonline.de/project/beyond-zoom/).

The projects' three results are:

Result 1: A report on existing online and hybrid delivery approaches/case studies and a synthesis of key findings.
Result 2: A training-the-trainer curriculum for VET educators in online and hybrid facilitation skills.
Result 3: Digital/e-learning resources to support VET educators to develop digital competencies for delivering training in online and hybrid settings (https://www.innoved.gr/beyond-zoom/).

METHOD

Seminars organized by project partners were used to gather knowledge about existing online and hybrid delivery approaches and good practices in this area. Stakeholders were invited to share their knowledge and experience during the seminars.

Stakeholders VET professionals (or professionals related to your organization's specific field) who will share their learning/knowledge and expertise in the field as part of a facilitated discussion and present case studies of good practice to them.

Other VET professionals, as well as the partner's staff and teams, will also be invited to these online seminars as attendees.

Each of the seminars was open to the public. The organizational assumptions of these meetings were common to all partners.

Technical issues

1. Each seminar should last max. For 1 hour, we invite two stakeholders to present case studies of good practice, each has 20 min to speak + about 10 min for Q&A. If we are unable to invite 2 stakeholders for 1 meeting, we need to organize a second seminar.
2. The seminar can be organized in a traditional form (face to face), online, hybrid, or blended way (online with the audience in presence).
3. The recording should be in English, if not - please add English subtitles.
4. At the beginning and the end of the recording, we add two boards informing about the project and co-financing under the Erasmus+ program (attached).
5. The recording should be prepared for publication as a Webcast video (cut and cleaned) in mp4 or mpeg4 format.

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6. Please prepare a file with a transcription from the recording - this will be useful for us to prepare the Report (.doc or .pdf format).

7. When the recording and transcription are ready, please upload them to google drive.

Recordings of the seminars are available to project partners. According to the assumptions, a transcript in English was created from each of the seminars, which is the research basis for this report.

The theme of the seminar was transitioning to and from online training environments.

Main seminar topic: transitioning to and from online training environments.

While conducting the seminar, each of the partners relied on a common list of project questions.

Agenda/questions:

1.A brief description of the organization

- Who are they?
- What are their core values?
- What do they do?

2.The transition from offline to online delivery

- How did it go/how did it happen?
- What elements of their work were transferred?
- Have they introduced new activities?
- Has the change affected the quality and type of their work?
- Did they implement any new working methods/online programs, and why?

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- How has the educational system changed because of online teaching?
- Which online tools do they prefer, and why?
- Did they experiment with tools created by themselves or did they „copy" them from others?
- Did they need support to educate themselves?
- Did they use different tools for different target groups?
- How did they engage people using only digital tools?
- What was the real effect on people of the switch from offline to online?

3. Moving back to offline from hybrid & blended delivery

- How did it go/how did it happen?
- Which method of work was the most appropriate for them?
- Did they develop a new method, and what were its elements?
- Did they come back to the methods they used before the pandemic?

4. What unresolved issues are they still facing after two years' experience with online training?

5.Did the hybrid method give them the possibility to involve people that otherwise they couldn't have reached?

6.Describe key learning similarities between delivering their activities in online environments compared to offline environments.

7.Describe each medium's (hybrid sessions/blended programs) strengths and weaknesses and determine what role they play in designing their sessions.

METHOD

8.How did they make the online message attractive and not bore the listeners? (Online attention is short).

9. What are their expectations of future online/hybrid methods?

10. Are there any tips/recommendations they would like to share concerning hybrid/blended delivery?

11.How has the educational system changed because of online teaching/working?

12.Q&A, discussion.

Based on the material from the transcripts, it can be said that each of the seminars was conducted in accordance with the assumptions made.

SEMINAR SUMMARIES

Based on each of the seminars, short articles have been prepared containing the most important findings and comments arising from the discussions from the perspective of speakers. The articles allow readers to better understand the context of the report's conclusions. The articles are presented in alphabetical order of the countries - the project partners.

The Craft of Asynchronous Teaching in the Online Classroom, Dr. Sonia Andreou, Cyprus

The online seminar discussed the experience of delivering training in online learning environments within Higher Education, concentrating on best practices on asynchronous teaching in a fully-online postgraduate program. The best practices were based on the speaker's experiences as a teacher in the online MSc Interaction Design program offered by the Cyprus University of Technology and Tallinn University in Estonia.

The program offers students skills in the areas of design, technology, and theory as related to the domains of Interaction Design, Online Learning and Human-Computer Interaction. Offered in English to students worldwide, it provides access to Google's online learning suite. Moreover, all course modules are provided with an emphasis on practice-based learning through research, design and implementation of different individual and collaborative projects; building a community among students is a priority, hence a preference for group work is pointed out.

Following that, functionality available in Google Classroom and how this can support students and teachers with their group and individual assignments was emphasized by Dr Andreou. Assignments, tips and other useful resources are posted by instructors, while students are encouraged to follow suit.

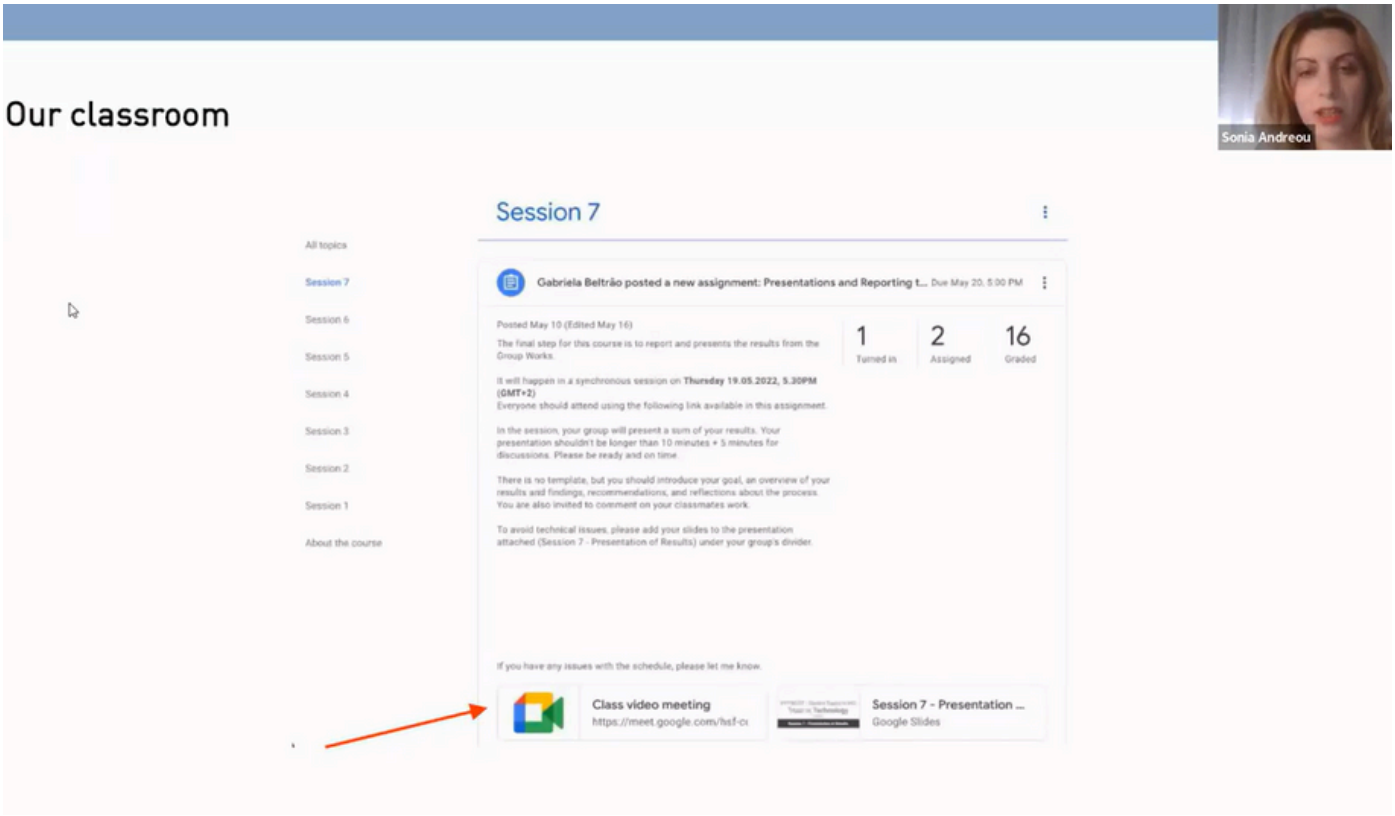
Communication between students is also encouraged.Synchronous lectures are offered and to further enhance student experience, virtual office hours for every module are kept weekly. All in all, the course is characterized by flexibility so as to cater to the different needs and schedules of graduate students.

Moving on, the EU Digital Agenda (i.e. e-Inclusion, e-Accessibility and e-Services) being at the core of the program's philosophy was explained.A comparison between synchronous and asynchronous online classes followed, also depicting their intersection; attending class from anywhere, communicating regularly with instructors and networking/making connections with classmates being at the heart of this intersection.

Focusing on asynchronous online learning in particular, the speaker pointed out that in this mode of learning, advantages like flexibility and ease of communication are juxtaposed with a number of possible drawbacks. For one, the content can either have an "expiration date" (ephemeral content) or be evergreen, and instructors should decide on this when teaching online. Other pitfalls to be wary of as an instructor included the lack of peers' presence as some learners are unlikely to form classroom relationships along their learning journey the way they would in a real-time learning environment. Also, the lack of attention can affect students, mainly stemming when they feel that they do not have people to turn to in their moment of learning need; as such, some learners will feel that they have to navigate challenges on their own. Learner self-discipline was another pitfall highlighted. Since asynchronous courses are individualistic, learners will need to practice self-discipline to stay on top of their development.

Thereafter, best practices were discussed in more detail on the following aspects: clear objectives; small sized sessions; consistent assignments; accessibility; engagement and interactivity; expressive feedback; resources and online discussions.

The seminar ended with a discussion on useful tools one can use when teaching in the online classroom. These included implementing videos, performance support aids, having recorded lectures, blogs, digital library, presentations, discussion boards, and different forms of assignments (quizzes, tests, group work).



Tips for effective online teaching: Best practices and lessons learnt, prof. Colla Jean MacDonald, Cyprus

Using as an example a 9-module, 9-week-long online course aimed at enhancing academics' online teaching (developed as part of the Dig-It Erasmus project), this talk by Dr McDonald, addresses the issue of e-learning and provides numerous tips for effective online teaching.

A first step towards developing an e-course, according to Dr McDonald, is a needs analysis (focus groups, interviews).Even informal needs analysis (by way of an in-class survey) is crucial in designing a course that successfully meets learner needs and/or wants. A second step is course evaluation, which would lead to minor or major tweaks. As reported, in the sample course, evaluation resulted in faculty members requesting training and support towards online teaching.

The speaker then moves on to share a number of tips for making online courses more effective. One such tip is using a framework for designing and evaluating an e-course. Since one of the outputs of the Dig-It project was to design a Quality standard e-learning framework, an extensive literature review took place, in order to trace existing similar frameworks. Building on that research, a new theoretical framework (European Union Digital Education Quality Standard Framework) was created, to guide the designing, delivery and evaluation of e-courses. Videos in the national languages of the Dig-It project partners were also created, so as to explain how the Framework is to be employed.

As noted, the Framework comes with an evaluation toolkit. This is used to evaluate programs and modules/sessions that apply the Framework.An example of a Temperature Check that takes place in week 3 of a module is provided. This is directed towards learners with the purpose of identifying any changes or minor tweaks needed. Everything is in Likert scales except a couple open-ended questions (What's working? and What can be improved?). Dr McDonald stresses the importance of running this early in a course, so that any required changes are applied in time.

A final summative evaluation is also useful, in order to make improvements for the next time the course is offered.

Following that, the presenter exemplifies how the sample course aligns with the said framework, by sharing a table with the framework's main variables and sub-variables (content, delivery, support, structure, community and outcomes) and explaining how these are used for course evaluation. She also makes mention of further statistics on the sample course: it has already been taught in five different universities and has already been completed by 250 people, rising to 300 when staff from four other Universities take part.Additionally, all graduates are invited to attend 3 additional modules (pedagogical theory, technical skills and Framework usage).

Turning now to teaching online, the presenter's main tip is using a road map for each module (i.e. clear learning outcomes and objectives, detailed break-down of lessons, course content, information on assignments, teaching tips and resources). This, she purports, maintains high motivation levels both for instructors who participate in the Dig-It course, and for learners who attend online courses, as they both get to implement their own ideas respectively.

Further tips provided to learners once the online course is underway are also mentioned (e.g. step-by-step guidelines, a Q&A forum for technical help, online meetings). Especially on the use of a Q&A forum, the presenter emphasizes the fact that it saves instructors considerable time, by having students posting their questions and helping each other out rather than emailing the instructor (which they should only do for personal reasons). Even in cases where voluntary online or f2f meetings are held, very few or none attend, since their questions will probably have already been addressed in the Q&A forum. A way for learners to save time is to split the class into smaller groups (e.g. 3 groups of 10 in a class of 30), which would mean students having less material to read from their classmates, rather than everyone having to read every other person's posts.

Prior to assignments, it is suggested that learners would benefit by getting a list of common errors from previous similar assignments, and also good previous assignments as e-samples for them to see.Such techniques, according to the presenter, are valuable for learners, as they generally do better once they understand expectations clearly, as well as for instructors, who in turn receive better drafts with less corrections to be made.

Participation (usually a graded part of an online course) is also mentioned in the talk, as one of e-learning's weak points. To tackle this, it is suggested that learners are tracked and checks take place with reference to whether they have been getting the materials, or how much time they spend logged-on. A lack of activity leads to instructor contact, which is said to eliminate the problem – if not, then dropping the course might be proposed to the learner. Finally, for learners to get the participation percentage, they can be asked to post their views and also respond to group members.

In conclusion of her talk, Dr McDonald mentions a number of considerations that render the Dig-It project sample lesson a success, such as the existence of a climate of respect, encouragement of active participation, practical and useful assignments, opportunities for reflection, and the creation of a learning community, which is a prerequisite of e-learning.

Adapting to Change: People's Voice Media Transitions to Hybrid Learning During and Post-Pandemic, Hayley Trowbridge

Adapting to change is a fundamental skill that individuals and organizations must possess to thrive in the ever-evolving world. The COVID-19 pandemic has forced many organizations to adopt a new way of working, and the education sector is no exception. People's Voice Media, a UK-based charity that uses storytelling as a tool for social change, has adapted their storytelling training activities for vulnerable and marginalized groups during and after the pandemic.
In a presentation, Hayley Trowbridge from People's Voice Media discussed how they transitioned their Community Reporting and storytelling training activities from in-person to online environments and then back to face-to-face training after the pandemic. The training programs are designed to challenge social inequalities and injustices and work with a range of groups, including those with disabilities, racial minorities, adults with learning disabilities, and those with low academic qualifications. The organization's core values are collaboration and equity, authenticity and integrity, learning and evolving, and optimism and joy.

During the presentation, Hayley emphasized the importance of flexibility, accessibility, and the need to consider the digital divide. She also highlighted the importance of prioritizing the voices and experiences of marginalized communities in their training activities and promoting social change through storytelling. People's Voice Media adapted their storytelling training activities to the pandemic by transitioning from in-person to online and then back to a blended approach utilizing a range of tools and platforms to facilitate this transition.

To address the challenges of transitioning back to in-person training as pandemic restrictions eased, People's Voice Media adopted a hybrid approach that includes both online and in-person training. This allows for greater accessibility and flexibility while still providing the benefits of face-to-face training. Community Reporting is a powerful tool for social change, and the organization is committed to empowering individuals to tell their own stories and make a difference in their communities.

Hayley also introduced a project called "The Value of Co-production," which uses lived experience storytelling to demonstrate the impact of co-production in surface research and policy. The program includes one-to-one storytelling activities online, group sense-making and knowledge exchange workshops. The online format was chosen not only because it is more cost-effective and time-bound, but also because it allows for greater accessibility for people with disabilities who may find travel to be a barrier.

Despite the challenges involved, the transition to hybrid learning was ultimately successful for People's Voice Media. Trainers, learners, and partners all worked together to adapt to the new learning environment, and the use of technology allowed for continued learning even during lockdowns and quarantine periods. Additionally, the increased flexibility and autonomy given to students allowed for personalized learning experiences and helped students take ownership of their education.

However, the transition to hybrid learning posed certain difficulties. Some students faced obstacles to learning due to difficulties with technology or limited internet access, while others found it challenging to adjust to the absence of face-to-face interaction and missed the in-person learning experience. Trainers also faced new challenges in engaging learners in a virtual environment and providing differentiated instruction.

People adapting to change is a continuous process that requires organizations to remain open-minded, flexible, and responsive to new challenges and opportunities. For People's Voice Media, the transition to hybrid learning was just one example of how they have adapted to changing circumstances over the years. They have constantly evolved their training programs to reflect the needs and experiences of their learners, and to address emerging social issues and injustices.

BEYOND ZOOM

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented many challenges for organizations worldwide, but it has also opened up new opportunities for innovation and growth. By embracing technology and adapting their training programs to a hybrid learning environment, People's Voice Media has been able to reach more learners than ever before, and to empower individuals from diverse backgrounds to tell their own stories and create positive change in their communities.

As we look towards the post-pandemic world, it is clear that the shift towards hybrid learning is here to stay. Organizations that are able to adapt to this new reality will be better equipped to meet the changing needs of their learners, and to continue delivering valuable services and training programs to their communities.

People's Voice Media remains optimistic about the future of hybrid learning. They have learned valuable lessons about the importance of technology in education, and the benefits of a flexible and personalized approach to learning. Going forward, they will continue to adapt and evolve in response to the changing needs of their trainers, learners, and the wider community. The speaker's experiences demonstrate that by being flexible and adaptable, organizations can successfully navigate change and continue to deliver valuable training and services to their communities.

icr The Institute of Community Reporters

People's Voice Media
Hayley Trowbridge

People's Voice Media Connecting Communities

The Importance of Online Integration Courses During the Pandemic, Ilkka Vuolaslempi and Martin Barthel, Germany

The COVID-19 pandemic has drastically changed the way people live their lives and has affected different industries, including education. The pandemic has forced schools and universities to go digital, and this includes integration courses in different countries, such as Finland. Integration courses are designed to help unemployed immigrants integrate into society by learning the language and culture of the host country.

Ilkka Vuolaslempi, a training expert from the University of Turku, shared his experience working on the Dig-Inc project, and his involvement as an educator in integration courses in Finland during the pandemic. In his presentation, Ilkka discussed the general information about integration courses in Finland, the importance of online courses, and the challenges of transitioning to digital platforms during the pandemic.

In Finland, the local government offers integration courses to unemployed immigrants to help them learn the language and culture of the host country. The courses usually last for a year, and the target level is to reach B1 level of Finnish. However, statistics show that one-third of the attendees reached this level after a year, while the remaining two-thirds still needed additional support.
The courses have three different levels, namely, a slow lane, a fast lane, and a middle lane. These levels are determined based on the results of the assessment that the attendees undergo upon arrival. In larger cities, there are different levels available, but in smaller communities or rural areas, all attendees are in the same classroom, and the teacher needs to level out and give additional support to those who need it.

Due to the pandemic, providing integration courses for unemployed immigrants became a challenging task as it was mandatory to ensure the safety of both attendees and teachers. However, online integration courses emerged as a solution to this problem.

These courses are particularly beneficial for attendees who live far away from the city, lack transportation means, or are unable to attend physical classes.

Online courses in general offer a range of benefits, including flexibility, accessibility, and convenience. Attendees can study at their own pace and choose the time that suits them best. Additionally, online courses can be accessed from anywhere, as long as there is a stable internet connection available. Another advantage of online courses is that they tend to be less expensive than in-person classes, as attendees do not need to pay for transportation, accommodation, and other expenses associated with attending classes.
In the integration courses offered in Finland however, the attendees cannot choose completely free, when they study, as they are expected to be present at particular times of the day. The courses are generally free of charge.

However, transitioning to online courses during the pandemic was not without its challenges. Teachers and attendees had to adjust to the new system, and not everyone had access to stable internet connections or devices to attend the classes. There were also challenges in creating engaging and interactive courses, which can be difficult to achieve for a teacher who is not so experienced in online or hybrid sessions.

In 2015, an online learning system was launched in Finland that provided short courses to people in rural areas. The courses were aimed at helping individuals improve their skills and find employment. By the time the COVID-19 pandemic hit in March 2020, the system was already in place and had been running successfully for five years. At the start of the pandemic, the system was well-established, and a team of around 12 people were in place to help attendees use the system. Participants were given computers, and those with poor internet connections were offered better connections. The courses were designed to be easy to use, with minimal clicking required to access the system.

When the lockdown started in March 2020, it was an almost complete lockdown in Finland, with a limit of 10 people allowed outside at one time. However, the team had enough devices to give to people for online courses. But when everyone nationwide was put into online teaching, it was impossible to provide everyone with a computer or laptop. However, attendees who had their devices could use them for online classes. In the case where a student did not have a device or did not know how to use it, arrangements were made to assist them. For example, some were let into a computer classroom, and there was someone to help them use the device.

At the time, there were around hundred instructors who were all offered a crash course in teaching online. This was made possible through the existing system, and even those who had no prior experience in teaching online were taught the necessary minimum requirements. An online team was established already before the lockdown, and took on the task to ensure that the students were taken care of. When the lockdown began on the following Monday, the system was already up and running. Instructors were given the opportunity to take back their groups once they felt confident in teaching online, and if they required additional time, it was provided to them.

In Finland, attending integration courses is mandatory, and failure to attend can result in legal consequences, such as losing unemployment benefits. During the pandemic, the courses were conducted online, and while some challenges arose, there were benefits to this method. The instructor had to be creative in finding ways to connect with students and ensure they were learning, as physical cues and body language were not available online in the same way, as they were in the classroom. There were also challenges in reaching out to students who may be facing personal issues, but online communication tools were used to maintain contact with students.

Despite these challenges, there were also advantages to online teaching, such as the ability to reach students who may have difficulty attending in person, and having the flexibility to use digital resources to support learning. Overall, while there were some challenges, the transition to online teaching during the pandemic proved to be a successful alternative for in-class integration courses, and the implementation of online communication tools was a helpful resource for teachers.

In conclusion, online integration courses have proven to be a valuable resource for attendees who are unable to attend face-to-face classes due to the pandemic or other reasons. These courses provide flexibility, accessibility, and convenience, and they are also cost-effective. However, transitioning to online courses requires careful planning, support, and resources to ensure that both teachers and attendees can adjust to the new system successfully.

Seminar summary, Nikolas Panagiotou, Greece

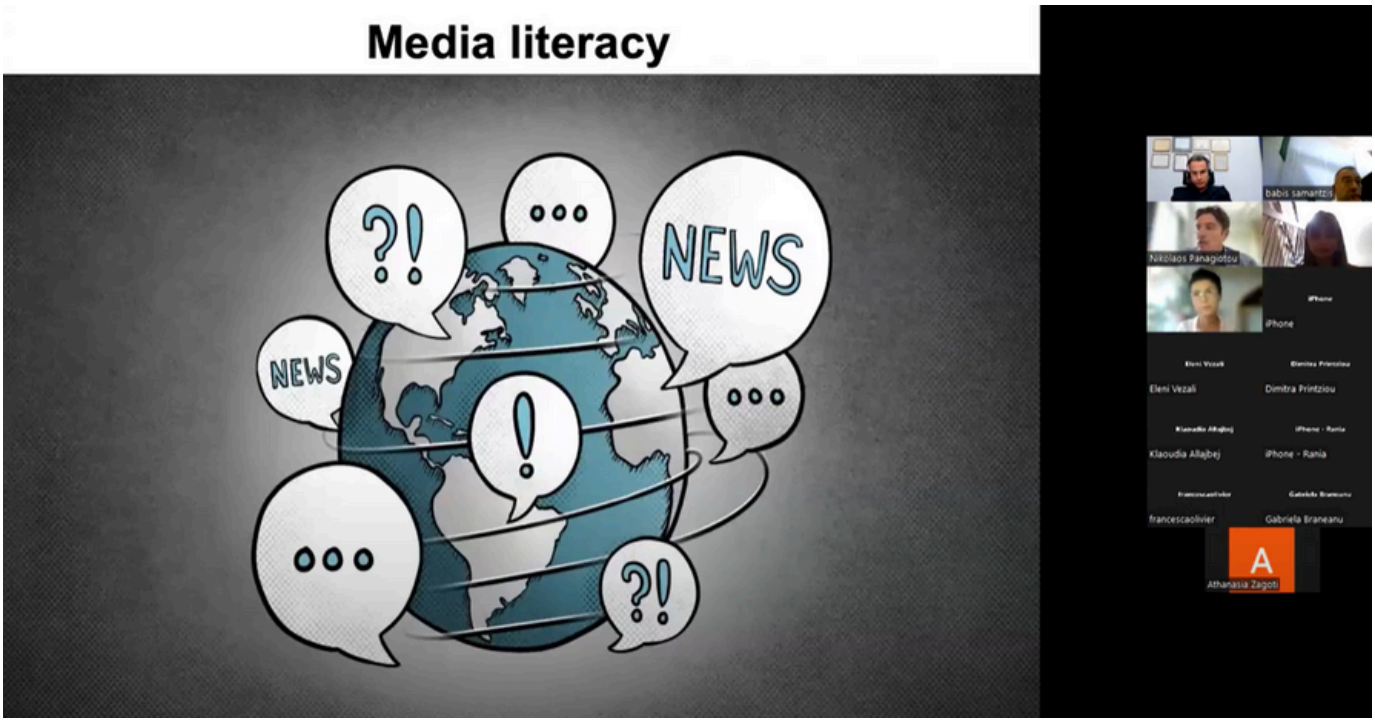
The Center for Education and Innovation (InnovED) for the purposes of the Beyond Zoom project, with reference number 2021-2-DE02-KA220-VET-000049017, conducted a webinar on September 23rd, 2022. The Center for Education and Innovation (InnovED), brought together experts from various fields to discuss important issues related to education and entrepreneurship. Two key presentations at the webinar were on media literacy and entrepreneurship skills, delivered by Mr. Panagiotou and Mr. Stefanidis respectively.

The speakers provided valuable insights on media literacy and entrepreneurship education and highlighted the importance of understanding how media messages influence our perceptions and emphasized the need for promoting entrepreneurship skills to drive economic growth and development.

Mr. Panagiotou spoke on media literacy. His presentation was focused on the importance of media literacy in today's changing world. Mr. Panagiotou discussed the various forms of media that people consume on a daily basis, including social media, television, and news outlets. He emphasized the need for individuals to be critical consumers of media and to develop their media literacy skills to better navigate the complex landscape of information available to them. Mr. Panagiotou provided practical tips and strategies for developing media literacy skills, such as fact-checking information, identifying sources, and being aware of propaganda. He also discussed the importance of understanding how media is produced and distributed and the potential impact it can have on society.

One of the key points Mr. Panagiotou emphasized was the impact of filters on our lives. He explained how digital technologies can create "filter bubbles" where people are only exposed to information that confirms their existing beliefs. This can create a distorted view of reality and hinder critical thinking. Therefore, individuals need to be aware of the role that filters play in shaping their online experiences and actively seek out diverse perspectives and sources of information.

Moreover, Mr. Panagiotou highlighted the five key questions that individuals should ask when consuming media, which include identifying the author, analyzing the creative techniques used, understanding the purpose, considering diverse audience perspectives, and analyzing the content. These questions help individuals to evaluate the credibility and potential prejudices of media and to become more critical consumers. Additionally, Mr. Panagiotou discussed the rings of responsibility framework, which identifies six groups that have a responsibility to promote media literacy: media industry, government, creators, educators, parents, and individuals. Each of these groups has a role to play in creating a more informed and engaged society and promoting media literacy for all.



Mr. Stefanidis, the president of the Academy of Entrepreneurship, began the second presentation by highlighting the Academy of Entrepreneurship's mission to inspire and train young entrepreneurs. The academy provides a range of programs and resources that help entrepreneurs develop their skills, find funding, and grow their businesses. By fostering entrepreneurship, the academy contributes to the growth and success of the Greek economy.

The academy has successfully completed over forty European projects, collaborated with more than three thousand beneficiaries, and partnered with fifty countries worldwide, making it a global entrepreneurial network.

Moreover, Mr. Stefanidis shared some of the academy's good practices that have contributed to its success. These include creating a supportive and collaborative environment, focusing on experiential learning, and providing access to experienced mentors. The academy also emphasizes the importance of networking and creating partnerships with other organizations and businesses, which helps to create a vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem.Mr. Stefanidis also emphasized the importance of entrepreneurship for addressing social and environmental challenges. He emphasized the need for physical teaching to develop entrepreneurship skills, but also highlighted the blended learning approach that combines online and physical training. They aim to make e-learning activities engaging and interactive for learners, encouraging communication between learners and their physical instructors.

Enhancing Digital Learning Spaces. Insights from Rosaria Lagrutta's Workshop, Italy

Introduction

Digital technologies introduced within a space can disrupt the entire environment and may be perceived as a threat by some. Therefore, it is crucial for different dimensions to merge and connect to facilitate the integration of technologies. In this workshop, Rosaria Lagrutta, a researcher from the University of Basilicata conducting field research in Finland, shares her insights on these issues.

Understanding Digital Learning Spaces

Lagrutta starts by defining what learning spaces in the digital era entail. She explores various types of spaces, the technologies that support them, and how digital technologies can be integrated into these learning spaces. Additionally, she delves into critical human factors that can influence the success of a learning space, where success refers to its ability to support and enhance learning dynamics, knowledge sharing, and more.

Dimensions of Learning Spaces

Lagrutta emphasizes that learning spaces can take different forms, ranging from physical to virtual or hybrid spaces. She discusses how these spaces can be formal or informal and are characterized by the action and interaction among different actors, who collaborate and share knowledge in various capacities. Learning spaces have the potential to promote specific cognitive processes and influence dynamics within the space.

Infrastructure and Governance of Learning Spaces

The infrastructure of a learning space plays a crucial role in supporting its objectives. Lagrutta identifies five key infrastructure dimensions. Firstly, the learning **context** refers to the physical or virtual environment where knowledge sharing and learning dynamics occur.

It is essential to ensure that the furnishings and components of the space facilitate the integration of technologies.

The **interaction** among actors within the space is another important dimension. Different actors with varying roles, such as teachers, tutors, and students, contribute to the learning process. Technologies can support external and internal interactions, fostering communication and relationship development.

Lagrutta highlights the significance of **learning methods** and culture within a learning space. These include the techniques used to integrate technologies effectively, such as gamification, simulation, and immersive experiences. Additionally, creating a knowledge-sharing culture among participants is vital to foster collaboration and engagement.

The **technological resources** dimension focuses on the tools and infrastructure that facilitate the learning and knowledge-sharing process. The selection and implementation of appropriate technologies are crucial to achieving the desired objectives. It is important to ensure that the technologies are functional and stable, while also considering the digital and cultural competencies of the individuals using them.

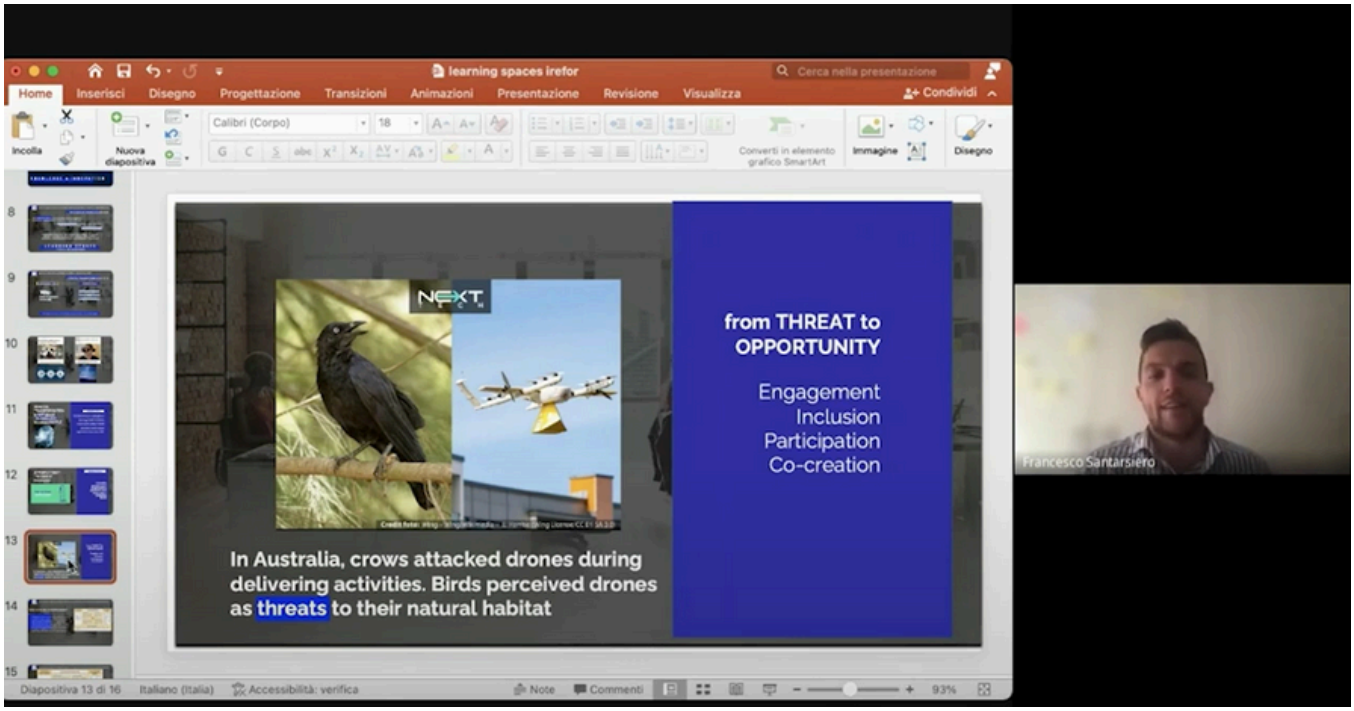
Lastly, **governance** plays a vital role in the success of a learning space. Planning, implementation, and evaluation are necessary for monitoring and measuring the impact of the space. Different evaluation methods can be employed based on the type of learning space and the desired outcomes.

Discussion and Implications

Lagrutta prompts a discussion on the importance of learning spaces and their implementation. Participants are encouraged to explore the elements that are most significant in their own learning spaces and the technologies typically integrated into them. By considering the different dimensions and factors, Lagrutta highlights how the integration of digital technologies can support the transformation of learning spaces and improve the overall learning experience.

Conclusion

Rosaria Lagrutta's workshop provides valuable insights into enhancing digital learning spaces. By understanding the various dimensions involved and addressing the human factors, organizations and educators can create effective and impactful learning environments. Implementing appropriate technologies, fostering a collaborative culture, and considering the governance of the space are key elements for successful digital transformation in the realm of learning



Digital Transformation of Learning Spaces. Engaging People for Sustainable Success, Francesco Santoro, Italy

Introduction

The Beyzoo (Beyond Zoom) project is a co-funded initiative by the European Union's Erasmus+ projects, aimed at assisting educators and trainers in adapting to the new tools introduced during the pandemic.

Francesco Santarsiero, a researcher at the University of Basilicata, spoke on the topic, sharing his experience and presenting a new training methodology focused on the digital transformation of learning spaces.

The Complexity of the Digital Era

Francesco Santarsiero emphasizes how the pandemic has introduced new tools and approaches to online learning and teaching. With ever-evolving technological progress, it is crucial for educators to understand the new challenges and opportunities that arise. The current business landscape is characterized by volatility, ambiguity, and complexity, influenced by complex problems that require innovative solutions.

Digital Transformation as an Opportunity

To remain competitive, organizations must embrace digital transformation and innovation. However, one must be wary of the "innovation theater" approach, where organizations solely focus on acquiring advanced technologies without a comprehensive strategic plan. Instead, digital transformation should be guided by an understanding of user needs and problem-solving with appropriate solutions.

People at the Center of Digital Transformation

People are at the heart of digital transformation. It is essential to involve end-users and organizational staff in the decisions regarding the transformation of learning spaces. By focusing on people's needs rather than just technology, it is possible to avoid skill misalignments and ensure an effective transformation process. Innovation should be an endeavor to solve problems and meet unmet needs.

Co-creation as the Key to Success

To address the complexity of the digital transformation of learning spaces, Francesco highlights the importance of co-creation. Engaging the entire organization and end-users through participatory activities helps understand their needs and provide targeted digital solutions. The goal is to create an environment that fosters knowledge dynamics, enabling organizations to adapt to the evolving digital world.

The Technological Dimension and People as Catalysts for Transformation

Francesco Santarsiero explores the different dimensions of digital transformation in learning spaces, focusing on the importance of balancing the technological dimension with people's involvement. The "technology push" approach, where technology drives change, can lead to disappointing results if human needs and existing skills within the organization are not considered. It is essential to adapt technology to user needs and actively involve staff to ensure an effective transformation process.

Challenges and Opportunities of Digital Transformation - Conclusions

The digital transformation of learning spaces requires a holistic approach. It is not just about digitizing existing activities but rethinking teaching methods, required skills, and cultural development within the organization. Digital transformation offers opportunities to improve the quality of learning and value generation, but it requires particular attention to user needs and skill alignment.

The digital transformation of learning spaces necessitates a strategic approach that places people at the center of the process. Francesco Santarsiero emphasizes the importance of actively involving end-users and organizational staff, adopting a co-creation approach, and considering the specific needs of the organization. Digital transformation is not solely about implementing advanced technologies but requires an innovation and problem-solving-centered approach. Co-creation and active participation from all involved stakeholders are crucial to ensuring sustainable success in the transformation of learning spaces in the digital era.

In conclusion, Francesco Santarsiero presents a strategic approach to the digital transformation of learning spaces, emphasizing the importance of engaging people and adapting to the needs of end-users. Digital transformation is not just about implementing advanced technologies but requires an innovation and problem-solving-centered approach. Co-creation and active participation from all stakeholders are crucial to ensuring sustainable success in the transformation of learning spaces in the digital era.

The learner's journey, Regina O'Brien, Sinead Mulvaney, Ireland

In Ireland and across the world during the COVID-19 pandemic people had to adapt to different ways of working and learning. During the pandemic schools closed all across the world. Globally, over 1.2 billion children were out of the classroom.

As a result, education has changed dramatically with the distinctive rise of e-Learning, whereby teaching is undertaken remotely and online meeting platforms.

In a seminar Carol Cantwell qualified Trainer, Project Manager with MEAG Ireland. Discussed with Regina O'Brien (Trainer and Administrator) and Sinead Mulvaney (Learner, Degree in Fine Arts). How learners and Trainers transitioned from in-person to online learning during the pandemic and going forward the learner's journey to hybrid learning.

The seminar was conducted by an online meeting platform. The learners were presented with a presentation and an introduction to Hybrid learning.

Unplanned and rapid move to online learning with no training, insufficient internet and little preparation made the learning journey quite a challenge.

The disadvantages of the online learning environment: Learners and trainers were expected to have technical skills for the online learning environment. When remote learners have technical issues, it can disrupt the class. This can be difficult for the trainer as it can become time consuming. Further education and training settings face the challenge of delivering effective, engaging lessons for online teaching. The advantages of the online learning environment gave access to learners across the world to online learning, this created an inclusive learning environment as all learners had access regardless of their location.

One of the many tools of the course management system (CMS) is the record button. Recorded classes can be convenient for the learner to listen back to a class. It gives easy access to classes for learners to work around their own schedule.

At present the fuel crisis can have an impact on learners traveling to college from rural areas in Ireland, the online class was preferable to save on the cost of fuel. Online learning gives learners who have no way of traveling an opportunity to continue their education.

Both traditional and hybrid teaching have strengths and weaknesses that better support certain learners than others.

In a hybrid teaching environment not every trainer feels confident on live video or has the IT skills to operate online and offline classes together. In the traditional classroom environment learners still receive real-time interaction body language, the classroom structure that can be crucial for learning. When a learner experiences technical issues it can cause the trainer to experience a time delay in their classroom teaching, this can cause frustration among the in-classroom learners.

The most significant change we have seen the COVID-19 pandemic caused are feelings of isolation and loneliness.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic most of us were extremely familiar with in -person classes while few trainers had little experience managing remote learners let alone checking in with groups in a hybrid model.

Training organisation had to quickly adapt to online methods during COVID, this caused financial impacts on organisations. To go forward as a hybrid model of teaching, Learning Management System (LMS) is a central component of your hybrid teaching strategy, LMS can be expensive to maintain.

A training manual would be useful for Trainers and Learners to operate these systems. Support and training in hybrid delivery would be an advantage for both the trainer and the learner. Monitoring and evaluating hybrid courses are very important.

The changes COVID-19 have caused might be here to stay. A new Hybrid model of education is fast emerging.

Interview recording with Inn Training UK Conclusion

As we are already aware in Ireland and across the world during the COVID-19 pandemic people had to adapt to different ways of working and learning. MEAG Ireland decided to interview Murray Thexton, Director of Inn Training, which is based in the UK. Murray has been involved in previous Erasmus plus programmes. Murray has 25 years' experience within the training field and we decided to take this opportunity to use his knowledge and real-life experiences for our research as part of the BEYOND/ZOOM project.

As a result, Murray described dramatically his experience of keeping his training organisation from closing down when the COVID-19 pandemic changed the world. The distinctive rise of online-Learning was the pinnacle point for Murray and saved his business from sinking.

Like many organisations he found himself in an unfamiliar environment he had to think on his feet without guidance or a manual. Overnight he changed the way he operated -he made a move towards the unknown to completely working from an inhouse environment to an online only training environment. He was one of the lucky ones because he is involved in this type of business, he could readapt his business to operate online.

Murray was asked to explain in his own words his understanding of the Hybrid learning environment; He stated “there is no difference between a Hybrid learning environment and an in-house learning environment. “There is no such thing as a virtual learner. A good facilitator/ trainer will create an inclusive learning environment with the tools that technology has provided us with.”

During the COVID-19 pandemic Murray quite often found himself being the only point of contact for learners during the insolation that the world’s population experienced. For Murray as a facilitator of training he described his online classes turning into a group discussion or a counseling session-Murray has empathy and good humor that all facilitators need to possess no matter what learning environment they are teaching in.

He thinks it is down to the person's personality as a facilitator if they are able to manage the Hybrid learning environment and continue to facilitate training to their learners with the same learning experience as if the learner was in the classroom.

Murray demonstrates the online training methods and tools that enabled him to adapt quickly onto online teaching and, through self-teaching from video and internet searches he became comfortable to continue his transition to online training. He also mentions collaborating with other organisations and self-evaluating his own teaching as a way to know if the learners are learning. This is very important quite often as a facilitator we forget to self-reflect on our own performance.

Murray identified that engaging learners is another issue that all facilitators will find difficult in a Hybrid learning environment. Facilitators managing online learners and setting boundaries is important and to follow your lesson plans and continue with a structure to follow.

As a facilitator you have to be professional when you are inboth environments .Teaching methods in the Hybrid environment have become innovative, for example having two screens to engage the learners, as a facilitator you can check in on the learners as you can zoom in on them. Some of the other tools like the raised hand icon allows the learner not to interrupt the facilitator. This icon now comes in different skin tones which allows for cultural awareness and creates an inclusive learning environment.

Language barriers and cultural awareness are challenges you may come across as a facilitator but Murray has the first-hand experience of being involved with Erasmus plus projects he describes a tool on a meeting platform which is a transcript tool that can be very innovative when you are faced with language barriers.
Been aware of the learners needs and knowing your course content and having excellent observation skills are the skills required for a hybrid learning environment. Safeguarding issues, legislating, GDPR are all identified obstacles that need to be overcome within a Hybrid working Environment.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, old teaching processes got shaken up, organisations do not like change but the ones that are willing to embrace change will move with the times. The younger generation are very savvy when it comes to technology and embracing change. Learners have adapted quickly to the flexibility of online learning.
Is a Hybrid learning environment here to stay? The answer is yes: we are moving towards a virtual learning environment and we need to understand there is no such thing as a virtual learner but, we need to embrace a virtual learning environment.

Finally, you need to be brave as an organisation to go Hybrid and learn from collaborating with people who have the experience of using this method of teaching. Like it or not Hybrid learning is here to stay a Vocational Educational and Training organisation who does not positively embrace the change, is in danger of being left behind.

Inn Training UK, Murray Thexton, Ireland

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Covid-19 as an educational gamechanger, Anna Waligóra, Poland

Moving teaching to the virtual world has proven to be an important challenge for universities. First of all, it required a change in thinking about education as such - something that had previously seemed impossible became an everyday reality for academics and students. Second, after the initial pandemic shock, remote teaching brought solutions that were not possible in face-to-face education. Of course, the very reason for changing the teaching system during the pandemic remains an absolute negative. The incidence of Covid-19 itself and the stress of the possibility of contracting a "new, unfamiliar" disease reaped its consequences, but nevertheless the change in thinking and the relatively rapid opening to new educational solutions was an important contribution to what post-covid university education and thinking about it looks like today.

Until the pandemic, solutions in education mediated by the Internet and accompanying technologies were used selectively. It was possible to use them for classroom instruction, but at the same time it was difficult to imagine removing the need for direct attendance at the university. Participation in online classes posed an ethical challenge debatable beyond the rules of the university. Participation in classes and the educational process as such meant the absolute necessity of being on campus. Thus, it can be said that the pandemic brought a broadening of the definition of university education - what seemed impossible until the Covid-19 era became standard. Today, however, classes are conducted with greater use of remote teaching methods. And while lectures and exercises have for the most part returned to university classrooms, selected online courses, on-call and online seminars are available. It has become a good-new tradition for the university to hold open seminars online. They can be attended, among other things, through online streaming on YouTube. University staff can also train in this format, which expands the possibilities of inviting experts not always available stationary.

It is also worth noting that many university processes and resources have been digitized. "Thanks" to the pandemic, new procedures have been developed for handling paperwork without having to come to the university. Educational materials have also been refined, new materials for the digital library have been purchased. University processes have thus become greener (reducing paper consumption) and more accessible, which is especially important for foreigners studying in Poland or people with disabilities.

Of course, the pandemic has uncovered or brought more complicated and less positive consequences in the form of students "disappearing" behind disabled camera windows during online classes. Some of such situations were economically motivated, and some were psychological. Situations were diagnosed in which students did not have the opportunity to actively participate in classes, due to, among other things, sharing a room with siblings who were pursuing their educational commitments in parallel. The economic situation also proved to be a barrier - not every home had enough online equipment available to make using Teams or Zoom seamless. Some students found it difficult to adjust to the online educational process - motivation to participate in classes declined, and crises of pandemic, long-term retreat were observed. In order to solve the technical problems universities created classrooms that allowed students to participate in online classes under a sanitary regime (this option met the needs of students studying and living in the same city). Psychological consultants were also appointed, to whom both employees and students could turn for advice if necessary.

From offline to online in social economy and social entrepreneurship, Jarosław Wypszyński, Poland

Jarosław Wypszyński, Poland

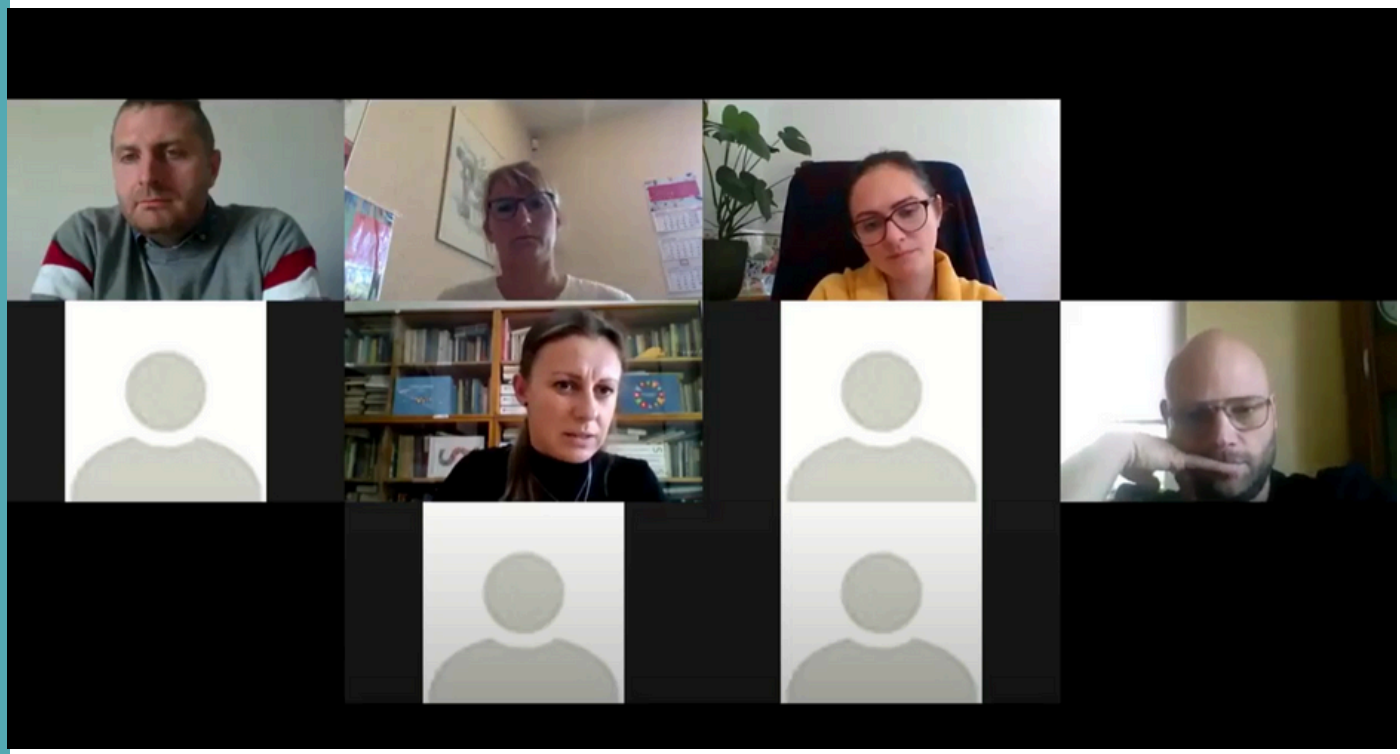
The social economy and, above all, social entrepreneurship in Poland function in relation to the tangible products and services they provide. The reality of Covid-19 was much more complicated for this area than for educational services, the vast majority of which could temporarily or permanently move to the virtual world. The pandemic has become a field of experimentation for social enterprises related to the partial or temporary transfer of communication and activities to the virtual world. Some social economy entities have moved to these solutions smoothly; for some of them it was a time of great trial, among others due to the lack or inadequacy of the equipment facilities to the conditions of activities dictated by the sanitary regime caused by Covid-19.

The social enterprises in question provide, among other things, care and catering services. During the pandemic, recipients of these services often did not want to allow carers to come to them due to the risk of Covid-19 infection. On the other hand, establishments that used catering on a daily basis (e.g. schools) went online, which meant that social enterprises temporarily lost customers. In the circumstances, it was necessary to remodel the service offer and find new customers. Of course, this process did not run smoothly and was associated with a periodic reduction in the income of social cooperatives. However, an important lesson related to the resilience of the functioning of social enterprises emerged from it - it turned out that they have the resources to act innovatively (although this was often associated with organizational stress).

An important challenge for an organization such as the Association for Social Cooperatives, which coordinates and supports the activities of social enterprises, turned out to be a new way of organizing advisory services. The service, which until now was organized either at the headquarters of the association or at the headquarters of social cooperatives, has moved to the virtual world.

It can be said that after a period of trials (selection of the optimal online communication tool), consulting services in virtual reality were successfully organized. Also some training could be conducted in this form. Consulting and reporting social enterprises online proved to be more challenging. After the pandemic period, we all returned to conducting these issues face to face with relief. Certainly, these new practices and solutions will partly stay with us, both in relation to cooperation with existing social enterprises and in activities leading to the establishment of new social economy entities.

Certainly, the pandemic survival test allowed some online solutions to be tested by social enterprises. Some of them remained after the pandemic. These include new, social media-oriented marketing of products and services, or facilitating telephone communication with current and potential customers. Online advisory consultations using Skype were also partially accepted (Teams was considered a more complicated tool, and therefore less used).



Futuregames - Learning Through Diversity, William Easton, Sweden

Futuregames is a games school that has been around for almost 25 years, which makes it one of Europe's oldest gaming educations. The school offers shorter as well as longer programs, both for those who are already established in the gaming industry, and for future game developers about to start their career. About 40% of those actively working in the Swedish gaming industry are former Futuregames students. The educational programs include game artist, quality assurance game tester, game designer, project manager, programmer, VR, AR, Animation VFX artist and more. Former students of the school have also established themselves at leading companies in the gaming industry internationally. With around 1000 students, the school has locations across Sweden, from Boden in the north to Malmö in the south. At present, Futuregames is establishing schools in Norway, Poland, New Zealand and is looking for similar expansion in Denmark and Czechia.

Futuregames is highly rated in the international rankings of gaming educations and part of this success is due to its close cooperation with almost all of the leading Swedish and many international game companies, including Hazelight, Avalanche Studios, CD Projekt RED, Star Stable, Zordix, Paradox, Turborilla, North Kingdom, King, Ubisoft, EA DICE, Fatshark Games, Starbreeze Studios, Embracer Group, Epic Games, and many others. New collaborative partnerships are added every year and currently the school has active relations with over 300 companies working in the games and related industries both in Sweden and internationally.

Since October 2022, Futuregames has been part of AcadeMedia, Scandinavia's leading education provider with over 650 schools and 180,000 students across preschool, primary school, upper secondary school, and adult education.

Futuregames full time education delivery are governed by The Swedish National Agency for Higher Education (MYH).

As such one thing that distinguishes higher vocational in Sweden from university and other higher education institutions is the requirement that at least 80% of the students find relevant employment within a year after graduation. Another major difference from traditional university education is the composition of its teaching staff. Rather than having a large permanent staff, Futuregames only has a few full-time teachers and employs almost 900 industry professionals working as teachers and mentors. This means that during their education, students have the chance to meet a vast cross section of people from the gaming industry, which not only helps anchor their studies in the latest developments in the professional industry, but also allows for the critical networking students need to be able to set up the 30-week internship that is the conclusion of their education. On average, 90% of students find direct employment at the company where they have been interns. To make the education as relevant to industry needs as possible the courses are all practical in nature and include a series of game projects where the students work in groups across disciplines releasing and publishing the games they create, and the school publishes roughly 40 new titles every year. Another critical distinction between university education and higher vocational studies is the close involvement of industry representatives in the maintenance and development of the curriculum. All the educational programs have a board made up of industry professionals who are both required to sign off on the make-up of the education but most critically also suggest any changes to the course contents needed to guarantee continued industry relevance.

During the Covid 19 pandemic, teaching at Futuregames went from being conducted in a hybrid form to being entirely online. Hybrid teaching here means a combination of classroom and online teaching, according to, for example, Dziuban, Graham, Moskal, Norberg and Sicilia (2021). Online learning refers to a form of distance learning that uses internet-based technologies to provide education to students studying remotely.

It allows various tools that enable students to participate in learning from any location with a computer and internet connection, Nortvig et al. (2020). How did this transition go? For many, it was not such a big change, as the students were used to being taught by teachers who were located elsewhere. The gaming industry at large has long been characterized by hybrid forms of work, with employees working remotely. However, some phenomena became more apparent. These are discussed below on the theme of interaction and technical access.

Interaction has taken place between teachers/lecturers and students both on site and digitally. Futuregames has students as well as teachers/lecturers from all over the world. This means that it is not necessary to have a diversity manager within the company, rather diversity is built into different learning processes. The same applies to diversity when it comes to functional variation. A student who has hearing loss contributes to game development through their unique perspective. A perspective that may be difficult for the teacher or lecturer to convey, but through heterogeneous student groups, both in terms of nationality and functional variation, the students get the opportunity to interact with people who have had completely different experiences. During the pandemic, it became particularly clear that interaction can take place even over long distances, and that students and teachers can learn and even interact remotely.

The transition from classroom teaching to online and/or hybrid teaching worked well for many students, for example by recording more lessons allowed students to view recorded lessons in their own time. A combination of synchronous and asynchronous learning has proven positive for several students, not just for students who have missed the regular lectures but also as an opportunity to go back and review materials. For students with social phobia, it has been a relief to be able to communicate in writing digitally instead of verbally in the classroom. Questions regarding GDPR in relationship with recorded lessons, and related issues are urgently being worked on and compliance has been a central concern.

With an education already existing in a digital context (the gaming industry) technical access has not been an issue. Students as well as staff are used to using computers and other technical equipment as a means of communication.

Some students with neuropsychiatric conditions found the transition to online teaching problematic. Change is generally more difficult to manage for people with ADHD and/or Asperger syndrome for example. Futuregames cooperates closely with various professional national and international organizations with the aim of being able to support these students in the best way. The need for continued work in this area has been identified and will continue when education continues to transition to an online form in the future.

Something that emerged during the transition to online teaching is that the digital environment is perceived as more toxic by both students and staff. Students tend to say/write things behind the protection of a screen that they wouldn't express if they were meeting face to face. As an education provider, Futuregames has strict guidelines that are communicated to staff and students. A distinction is made between official channels, which the school manages and oversees, as opposed to the students' private channels, such as Discord. In the official channels, the school is quick to speak out against offensive and inappropriate forms of expression. This work needs to continue to ensure that students as well as staff, have a well-functioning and safe (digital) work environment. There is a real risk that some students isolate themselves and do not participate as actively in social interaction. To prevent this, Futuregames works a lot with collaborative projects where students from different game education programs participate. In these projects, students get a hands-on experience of the tools used in the gaming industry and the focus on collaboration is actively emphasized. Doing this in a hybrid or online context is still a challenge for Futuregames and requires ongoing development work.

Futuregames - Learning Through Diversity, William Easton, Sweden

In recent years, Futuregames has increasingly been working with connectivist pedagogy as a way to shape, improve and update its teaching methodologies. Connectivism is a relatively new direction in education science and has been around at least since George Siemens' pioneering work from 2005. (Siemens 2005). Its main points of departure are that developing and maintaining connections and networks is critical for learning, that learning can exist outside direct human interaction, and that knowledge is found in diversity. Students learn by being part of networks and benefiting from each other's different approaches to solving complex problems. For Futuregames, it is also important that students learn to build their own networks and are able to find knowledge and learn from a variety of sources, including other students, teachers, online courses, and other external sources. This pedagogy prepares students for life after education by emphasizing the importance of continued collaboration and being open to the possibility of learning in different contexts. When students start their education, they are told for example that they will learn about 70% from their classmates. This often comes as a surprise to those who come straight from high school and have been used to most learning taking place between teachers and students. Students are encouraged to build networks both inside and outside the education system, for example through LinkedIn, Discord and other professional social media channels. This is emphasized from day one of the education and then permeates the entire education, both in terms of the teaching and what takes place outside online and in the physical classroom.

This article describes how Futuregames Higher Vocational Education has worked with interaction during the covid pandemic, technical access and lesson design using connectivist pedagogy. The article shows that Futuregames works actively on several fronts to ensure that both students and staff have a good and safe (digital) work environment, but that much work remains to be done.

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Kulturverkstan - Navigating Challenges and Embracing Online Learning in Cultural Project Management, Jesper Eng, Sweden

For this seminar, we have invited Jesper Eng who is Head of Education at Kulturverkstan in Gothenburg. Kulturverkstan is an independent higher vocational school that educates, among other professions, cultural project managers, and they also run many different projects - both nationally and internationally. Kulturverkstan itself is a part of the larger company Nätverkstan and Kulturverkstan works a lot with the three following perspectives: relational, contextual, and operational. To achieve this, teachers are contracted both from the academic world and from working life, as this gives a broader learning and creates both deeper theoretical understanding and practical application through operationalization of the theoretical knowledge. The relational perspective aims to provide students with the necessary insights and abilities in terms of conflict resolution, group dynamics and leadership issues, and the contextual perspective aims to increase students' ability to reflect on how the outside world affects or is affected by a cultural project.

Kulturverkstan conducts its education largely through interaction in the classroom where students exchange thoughts and experiences, and much learning takes place in the social context. When the pandemic struck, all of Sweden's higher educational programs were forced to switch over to distance learning - something that also affected Kulturverkstan.

Technology

Transitioning to distance learning from one day to the next proved to be a major challenge for Kulturverkstan. Digital literacy varied greatly between the students and also among the teachers - something that made the transition to the digital platform not entirely unproblematic. Jesper says that they chose Zoom as their digital platform because they found the platform user-friendly and it provided the functions wanted and needed, such as chat function and breakout rooms. Kulturverkstan was not previously bound to any digital platforms and could thus make the choice relatively easy.

The possibility of using pre-recorded material was used to some extent - this made it easier for the students to come prepared to the digital lessons and thus they could focus more on diving deeper into the current topic. Something Kulturverkstan noticed was that there was higher attendance at the lessons when switching to online teaching. Perhaps it's easier to connect to a digital meeting from home than actually leaving home and going to school?

Now after the pandemic, Kulturverkstan still uses Zoom from time to time, although they have returned to the norm of teaching in the physical classroom. However, Jesper reflects that today's students increasingly expect to be able to take part in all teaching remotely. Zoom is used as a complement and lessons that are suitable for the digital format are gladly run there - a kind of hybrid solution, where you alternate physical meetings with digital ones. Kulturverkstan also tried running the type of hybrid classroom where one group is onsite in the classroom and the other group is online at the same time. According to Jesper, this did not work at all, and it is not a method they use today - however, he would like to take part of the results from this EU project and get tools to handle the hybrid world better.

Interaction

As mentioned earlier, Kulturverkstan puts a lot of emphasis on the learning that takes place through peer-interaction in the classroom. This dynamic changed completely with the virtual disappearance of informal communication. What we usually refer to as "coffee machine talk" now found itself lacking a natural meeting place and thus disappeared. Jesper also believes that it was difficult to perceive whether the students understood the instructions given, the threshold for asking questions is higher in the digital space and much of the non-verbal communication suffered when all you saw was a small picture of the participants. Sometimes not even that – when attendees chose not to have their cameras on, the small piece of visual contact was lost.

Lesson design

Kulturverkstan quickly realized that it was not possible to simply bring the analogue lesson design into the digital format without adjusting it. The kind of lessons that worked well in the physical classroom were not at all successful in the digital room. Since much of the learning was based on informal communication during, between and after the lessons, new challenges were faced. Jesper Eng particularly highlights how they felt the lessons had to be shorter and structured in a different way in the digital format - the new word Zoom fatigue was something they experienced to the highest degree, i.e. the crippling fatigue the individual experiences after sitting for long periods in digital meetings/lessons. To counteract this, they chose to shorten the lesson hours to 45 minutes and make sure to take regular short breaks. Jesper also points out that they found it successful to mix up the days more than before, to make sure to alternate heavier subjects with lighter ones and vary the forms of presentation.

Since Kulturverkstan had not worked so much in the digital forum before the pandemic, there was no "best practice" regarding digital education, which meant that they had to try out what worked and adjust their model along the way. The digital platform gave Kulturverkstan the opportunity to collaborate with other countries in a different way than before - being able to have joint lessons with partners on other continents was a positive side effect of the transition to online teaching. The ability to bring in lecturers without having to consider geographical distances was also seen as positive. The digital world gives us many new opportunities - we must be better at understanding and making the best of them.

KEY FINDINGS

Based on the information from the seminars, the following conclusions regarding online and hybrid delivery approaches were formulated. Conclusions were presented in order from the most general and common for project partners to specific, proving good practices and experiences worth sharing.

Beyond Zoom. The background for all experiences related to the transition to teaching/sharing knowledge and electronically mediated communication is the state of awareness and readiness to communicate despite the change of communication tools.

(Not)Readiness of institutions vs (not)readiness of students to use and develop online education is organizationally, economically and culturally conditioned. How a given educational institution/organisation approaches changes in teaching depends on how durable the changes introduced in electronically mediated communication are/will be. There must also be a will and space among the stakeholders to consolidate and develop online classes. Another boundary condition is having sufficiently good (for each country it means something different) technical conditions and equipment (both on the part of the organization and students) to follow advanced online solutions and accept them as valid and respected solutions.

Nobody makes decisions they know are wrong. Despite the considerable shock (the emergence of COVID-19) resulting from the rapid transition to online education, it seems that the institutions and organizations represented during the seminars and their stakeholders showed great openness to testing solutions related to online education. Initially, this was due to the difficult conditions of transition from offline to online education.

Currently, there is a culture of openness and readiness to test optimal solutions for online education. **It seems that the experience of online education teaches the extremely important culture of error management and openness to discussion about it.**

Implementing education and online tools is easier for students than for educators? At first glance, it seems that it was/is easier for pupils and students to acquire knowledge via online solutions, as it is assumed in the current state of knowledge that they are digital nomads. However, this belief may be apparent and lead to accepting attitudes of pupils and students and stopping/slowing down the education process. Educators, on the other hand, are seemingly slower to learn new online educational solutions and carefully implement them into their educational practice. However, it seems to be a good strategy for a responsible transition to knowledge sharing.

Online solutions knowledge think tank now. Despite the fact that such a conclusion did not come directly from the statements of the stakeholders participating in the seminars, their statements show the need to have a kind of think tank - a kind of credible, constantly updated source of knowledge about online solutions that educators can use.

Beyond COVID-19, beyond Zoom. "Thanks" to the pandemic, various educational solutions were tested and implemented that had not previously been considered as part of educational progress. Stakeholders have rather similar experiences and predictions about their future. Staying with online learning (and the use of accompanying tools) is largely dependent on the country's education policies (especially in publicly funded schools). Some institutions/organisations have implemented online solutions as dominant, some use a mixed teaching methodology; still others have opened online-only educational programs; others test them, but do not treat them as "solutions of the future". rather as an emergency solution in a situation where a similar pandemic situation were to occur again. As it was emphasized, a lot depends on the approach of the board, educators, as well as pupils and students.

“Democratization" of education and teaching. The COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences have meant that many educational decisions (related to both which educational institution and which courses to choose) have moved to the online sphere. There is a noticeable tendency to democratize the teacher-student relationship and move away from methods of providing knowledge based on the lecture formula. Importantly and interestingly, not only the student, but also the educator and the course itself are subject to a thorough assessment and they should be ready for this assessment.

Teaching without a master. There is a noticeable change in the role of the professor/teacher/educator from a person who has knowledge to a person who processes this knowledge and is its curator. This change requires both a redefinition of the role of the teacher and the ability of this person to acquire and share valuable knowledge resources with pupils/students.

Teaching without a human-professor/teacher/educator guidance approach. Online courses based on a “teacherless approach” are and will be increasingly incorporated into educational practices. It seems that as an educational product, they will be relatively easily applied to practice. It is worth considering that they change the role and perception of the professor/teacher/educator, who becomes the "invisible" designer, curator, and ultimately the moderator of the course content.

“So we have technologies, but we are not technologies [...]”. The key to understanding the way and extent of the relationship between knowledge and the way it is processed and transmitted is understanding and remembering the overriding goals for education, which go beyond the tools of education, whatever they may be.

Specific conclusions on “before and after” online transformation

The transformation of online learning is a consequence of many changes (e.g. social and technological) significantly accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic. This means that at the moment of "stopping the world" caused by the pandemic, development caught up with the change "here and now", for which we were already partially ready.

“So I've been teaching online for over 20 years I was in the beginning it was very difficult, students didn't want to change they found it was a lot of work to not only learn the content of the course but also to learn the technology 20 years later, that's totally changed, students usually feel very comfortable with technology and often more so than the students.”

[stakeholder from Cyprus]

Technological change is only a part of a larger process to which achievements and solutions in the field of modern pedagogy and teaching must adapt. This adjustment is not linear; the systemic readiness of countries in terms of educational solutions and the level of resilience vary. Adapting to technological modernity is an important challenge for education systems.

“But I do honestly believe that this kind of connected pedagogy is going to become the dominant or not dominant, but it's going to become a useful way for everybody from all levels of education to start looking at education in the future. I think we're already 25 years behind in this. And I think we have to move quickly because when we work in things like the metaverse, we see the future of what is going to be a cross-platform multipoint site where information and data is being exchanged. This is going to happen. What is already happening and all education, all forms of society are going to have to embrace this.”

[stakeholder from Sweden]

The changes brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, consisting in accelerating and adapting education to new restrictions, allowed for the implementation and then adoption of at least partial good practices. In the case of some countries, space has been created in educational practice to conduct at least some of the meetings online. Both educators and pupils/students had to get used to this situation.

"When I think about the changes in the educational system, I don't see a lot of them because in a formal way, for now, we are still in a model of working face to face. We all have in the back of our minds the possibility of closing the university [...]. But. For now. No one believes that we will come back to online teaching, or this is not a very close perspective. So, for now we are again in face-to-face reality. But what I can say is that there are good things that have slipped from online reality. We still use Teams and Zoom as a platform of communication and we still use gamification as a new model of working during the lectures. When it comes to things we communicate, for example, during our office hours with the students. So, it is simple or easier for me just to talk with the person who prepares the thesis or bachelor thesis, just to have a small chat and discuss problems. During preparation of this work and also I can meet them with me to with them face to face."

[stakeholder from Poland]

The shift to (partial) online learning is permanent. One of its paradoxes is that some students find it easier to participate in educational development. However, it is difficult to imagine that all areas of development/education could be transferred to the online sphere.

"It's kind of a paradox. The digital connects people easily from everywhere and at any time but at the same time they are somehow isolated.

Yeah it isolates people and they have problems in kind of socializing, in creating real, you know. They're not very social anyway so that's why I think for instance with (??) higher education at least but not only. Part of the training is always, can always become and let's say be transformed into digital or on digital sport and part of the training which is interactive which is extremely creative which generates creativity in the end and brainstorming, allows brainstorming that's to be done on-site. That's how I see things."

[stakeholder from Greece]

The transition to a new model of teaching creates many new challenges that probably not everyone will be able to respond to satisfactorily. However, it is indisputable that online learning opportunities will be - in the near or distant future - the main challenge for effective and efficient education.

"So it's not just to try and to transform in-person lessons, activities into digital ones, but maybe we know we need to ask more questions. For example, the training methods, the teaching meters are right also in the digital version or we need to change something we do not just to focus on the technologies that allow us to digitize or to deliver a lesson in a digital world. But we also focus on people, on students, on the desired results and on the teaching. That's the approach that I love to give also experience to students, to people, to recipients in general. And another article that came to my mind was that according to which the employees of the Met accompany the Mark Zuckerberg employees do not understand the metaverse, so they are working for the metaverse, but they did not understand it."

[stakeholder from Italy]

Forecasting of online and hybrid delivery approaches

One of the questions asked during the seminars was about the future and what will be incorporated into / developed in the future as a result of the COVID-related teaching transformation. Projections regarding this issue are presented below.

The situation of opening up to online teaching has changed the approach of stakeholders to thinking about not only how, but also where to get experts for the actions taken - launched courses or their resources. The difficult, competitive situation on the education market has triggered the need to acquire not only new solutions and new experts, but also new students in a way that has not been used so far. The development of online education methods is also an opportunity to include people with different needs in the education process. It seems that in the future these solutions will be incorporated into the good practices of institutions/organizations dealing with education and that they will be further developed.

On running from any one of the sites where we're working so we can have lecturers or classes based in one city but actually broadcast to another. It freed us up a lot, particularly in the areas where we're needing mentoring, which is not direct lecturing, but we need to give instruction to groups of students and we can use people from our internal and external teachers so they can do it across different sites. And I think in the future we will be doing it more internationally as well. So the multi-site thing for us has also been a real positive. We noticed that actually in terms of functional variation, being able to conduct education online for us has been able to give support for some of the students with certain aspects of functional variation. So we noticed that because we can record all our lectures, we could look at them again, they can take them asynchronously. It actually helped some students who perhaps found it more difficult to participate in the classroom situation. We're expanding that now to try and see how we can do that in the future."

[stakeholder from Sweden]

Regardless of the educational approach and resources used to achieve learning goals, it is important to distinguish goals from means. The creation of resources in education is and will be an iterative process, based on the capabilities of the actors in this process.

"So we generally have technology push for them and dimensions. The first one, technology Push Dimensions is the most adapted. So technology push dimension means that is the technologies that drive the change, that lead the change. For example, during pandemic training sessions, the organization that wanted to deliver training sessions was obliged to implement an online digital platform to deliver activities. Otherwise it was impossible to deliver sessions. So in that time the technology, so the online platform was pushing the change over, for example. Now what are the most advanced technologies, metaverse or artificial intelligence or virtual realities are driving changes in some fields, but adopting this approach, we have some alarming data that we need to consider because according to the last report provided by Forbes, 70% of digital transformation initiatives fail because. Yeah, we can consider many, many, many reasons behind this data, but we can start saying that focusing exclusively on technologies and ideas is where the problem begins. Because if we focus only on technology, when we want to change something, we want to digitize something we may incur in different syndromes. For example, the so-called innovation theater. So where managers or organizations buy technologies or want to exhibit their own innovativeness, just buying the most advanced technologies and expecting them in their context, in their space. Or, for example, if we have a if we set up an online platform to deliver training activities with many, many functions, many, many possible services to, to, to, to, to to provide to our recipients and our trainers are able only to use two or three of them. This is a sort of innovation theater. So we have technologies, but we are not technologies, are not effective, and do not lead to achieve the desired results."

[stakeholder from Italy]

It seems that thanks to the existing conditions of education, a competitive advantage is and will be developed in the future, based on innovations treated not as an organizational shock, but rather as an element of good practice and organizational culture of the institution/organization.

"So to organizations that want to stay competitive, want to gain a sustainable competitive advantage, need to transform this so they need to innovate. And now, thanks to the technological process, also the awareness about the relevance of innovation is acknowledged among organizations. So the question is not anymore. Do we need to innovate or not? But the question is how to perform innovation, how we need to, while we should innovate successfully. [...] So knowledge dynamics represent the engine for the development of the capabilities for sustainability in the new businesses. And so organizations need to develop capacity for innovation, capacity for transformation, for value orientation. And in this work, organizations facing complexity need to become more flexible, more creative, creative, more innovative, more intuitive in order to adapt themself to the changing digital world."

[stakeholder from Italy]

Thanks to technical and technological changes in online teaching, thinking about the democratization of the teaching and learning process is launched and will develop. Mutual learning, mentoring, tutoring, using online responsive resources instead of the educator's knowledge will become more and more common practices. It should be emphasized that in this approach both educators and pupils/students are in a continuous learning process.

"I think the most important one, that learning may reside in non-human appliances and connected with pedagogy for me anyway, recognising that all these different aspects of how one can improve learning it's all of them are important. So whether you're learning from your fellow students, whether you're learning from a teacher in the classroom, whether you're learning from a YouTube video to explain something, whether you're looking at other kinds of presentations or connecting to other forums where things happen. This is where the future of our education anywhere lies."

[stakeholder from Sweden]

"In these last two years of the pandemic we deal with this new instrument and this new kind of tools, a new way to learn and to teach to the people. That is a way that is not in physical presence, but online and the idea is that for sure, in the future we will deal more and more with these kinds of tools and these kinds of instruments."

[stakeholder from Italy]

"The games industry is and has been a kind of hybrid forum already. Many people already work remotely, so it's not something that it was. It was such a shock to our system that we did learn a great deal. I think from that I'm going to try and go through the things that I think are some of the positives and then the negative, some of the more chat, the challenges we received and some of the ways we're thinking about approaching this in the future."

[stakeholder from Sweden]

Overall, the move to online learning has unleashed and accelerated a transformation of the learning culture. In the first phase, this transformation was a shock, but over time and in the future it will become a common practice serving both effective education and communication, and finally joining the next generations to the labor market, the immanent feature of which were, are and will be more or less shocking changes.

"The situation from the beginning with the pajama students is not so popular anymore. Yes, they know that even if we have office hours and they are meeting with me online, they shouldn't have, you know, blocked beds in their bed. But maybe they should just sit in a room with some nice perspective out of their back or just a blurred view and I think that without the online situation we have, I would not know so many students so well from two years at our university. We have tutoring and a mentoring program. The tutoring program is even more developed than the second one. And I have the pleasure of being the one of the tutors for the students. And it was also thanks to pandemics. The situation of the contact is, I may say, more intimate, but in an intellectual way the students can be more honest. They can express their doubts without the perspective of being judged because in front of other students or they can, you know, just pull the camera off if they do not feel well enough to participate fully in a 1 to 1 meeting. There are many possibilities, many scenarios. And I may say once again, thanks to online reality we have two years ago, I would be happy and when it comes to recommendations to have more trust in online communication because I believe that this is our future. Whether I want it or not, we will be more online and offline. So, it would be good to find a good solution to develop even more the culture of online communication, especially in the process of education. "

[stakeholder from Poland]

Comparative Research Network CRN (Germany)

Comparative Research Network:

Comparative Research Network CRN is actively involved in scientific research, teaching and cultural activities that link the realm of ideas with everyday experience. As our name indicates, we work internationally and cross-culturally. Only through thoughtful comparison can we interpret our local reality, render it more comprehensible and develop strategies to address the issues that affect our everyday lives. CRN performs research both as a partner within international consortia as within the scope of its own projects. CRN publishes a working paper series that communicates the work of its members to a wider audience.

https://crnonline.de

Association for Social Cooperatives (Poland)

Association for Social Cooperatives was established in 2003 in Poznan, Poland, as successor and continuator of association's activity called "Our Home". The organization changed its name from "Our Home" to Association for Social Cooperatives in 2005 by decision of the General Meeting. The main idea behind it is to support the emerging movement of social cooperatives in Poland.

The essential task for association is providing help in setting up social cooperatives, complying with the law formalities as well as creating adequate conditions for running the business. The association provides counseling and information assistance to its cooperators in their current activities.

http://www.spoldzielnie.org/

University of Cyprus – SEIT Lab (Cyprus)

University of Cyprus aims to establish itself as a Pioneer Research Institution achieving International Scientific Recognition in European Higher Education, offering Competitive Programmes and to become a Centre of Excellence in the wider Euro – Mediterranean Region.

The main objectives of the University are twofold: the promotion of scholarship and education through teaching and research, and the enhancement of the cultural, social and economic development of Cyprus.
In this context, the University believes that education must provide more than simply accumulation of knowledge. It must also encourage students' active participation in the process of learning and acquisition of those values necessary for responsible involvement in the community. The University sets high standards for all branches of scholarship. Research is promoted and funded in all departments for its contribution to scholarship in general and for its local and international applications.

https://www.ucy.ac.cy/

Changemaker Educations (Sweden)

Changemaker Educations (Sweden) ChangeMaker AB was founded by Tom Løyche and Per Myrén as a consulting firm in 1998. Tom Løyche is the CEO of Changemaker and an idea driven leader who makes opportunities of reality and reality of possibilities. Per Myrén is Head of Development and a certified firestarter at Changemaker AB. He is a typical jack-of-all-trades, an entrepreneur and a doer.

For over 20 years we've helped companies and organizations with tailor made solutions for leadership, team building and change management. Organisation offers workshops and lectures, project leading and process competence, for both businesses, schools and individuals.

https://cmeducations.se/

Regional Institute for Training & Research - I.Re.Forr. (Italy)

I.Re.Forr. is a limited liability cooperative company founded in 1984 which has diversified experience in the field of training and research.

Accredited by the Basilicata Region since 2004, it obtained the ISO 9001 Version 2008 Quality Certification from CERMET with Certificate n. 8249-A.

Work in the professional training sector:

- It accompanies young people in entering the labor market, paying particular attention to employment and professional requirements;
- It accompanies the professional growth of workers throughout their career;
- It carries out training interventions with public and private funding;It assists companies and workers in the requalification and outplacement of individual work;
- It offers distance learning to develop one's skills through the Internet and new media;
- Lease of own classrooms.

Thanks to the network of relationships, a team and an internal staff of professionals, I.Re.Forr boasts excellent relational, managerial and professional practices both as regards the didactic articulation and for the customization of the most efficient methodologies.

https://ireforr.eu/

INNOVED (Greece)

INNOVED is a non-governmental organization, operating in the not for profit sector. The organization, established in 2019, has its own identity with a prominent position in Greece.

The main mission of InnovED is the support and promotion of individuals and/or organizations as far as vocational education and training is concerned with sole aim the encouragement and advancement of employability and self-empowerment by innovation fostering educational material, techniques and methods.

The organizational objectives base on the creation and development of knowledge and skills through research, practical experience, training and simulation so as to conclude into contributing to the cultural and economic development of the local community and wider society.
InnovED focuses on education and training enhancement through research, experimentation, training, exchange of good practices through a highly innovative character using state of the art technologies and applications that serve its purposes.

https://www.innoved.gr/

MEAG - Mullingar Employment Action Group (Ireland)

MEAG is a community supported 'not for profit' organisation which was formed in 1986 to help tackle unemployment in the Region.
Our Enterprise Centres are home to26 SME's directly supporting over 200 jobs.

MEAG also sponsors and supports the development and vocational education and training of individuals through various schemes including ‘Job Initiative’ , 'Community Employment’ and ‘Community Service Program’, (currently a total of 50 participants).

The continuing Aims and Objectives of Mullingar Employment Action Group are: (1) to support the establishment and development of enterprises which provide viable employment, (2) to manage enterprise incubation space and support entrepreneurship and small and medium enterprise and (3) to create a central community image aimed at the promotion of Mullingar as a Town of enterprise and initiative.
To engage with organisations and individuals locally, nationally and internationally, to ensure that MEAG delivers services and supports according to established best practice.

Through European Partnership Projects MEAG learns from countries and organisations throughout Europe about best practices in developing programs and supports.

https://www.meag.ie/

BEYOND ZOOM

Co-funded by
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