

Higher education beyond Covid-19: What do teachers need when moving to online education

The Covid-19 pandemic caused major upheaval of education across all levels. Schools, colleges, and higher education institutes closed and had to move to online delivery of content and teaching almost overnight. In the context of the Erasmus+ DigiTel Pro project we performed a rapid literature review to discover how the Covid-19 pandemic impacted higher education with a focus on teachers and students and what teachers' needs are post-Covid when higher education moves to online education.

It is obvious that the overnight switch imposed some challenges and problems. Immediate response was to make learning material available online and look for solutions to provide online lectures. Although students appreciated the effort in the attempts to continue education, after time some objections arose both by teaching staff and by students as quality was not as used to be. Moving to online education entails more than quickly providing content online and making use of commercial conferencing software. This was dubbed as 'remote emergency teaching' as an indication that the quality of this education is not as it should be. Some of the negative feelings and perceptions might be due to being inexperienced with digital and online education, pedagogies and didactics and lack of suitable learning environments and supporting technology and infrastructure.

Many teachers felt overpowered by the abrupt change and experienced an increase in workload and change in their role as teacher having to provide mental and psychological support to students due to the crisis situation. Teachers did not have the proper technical resources, tools and internet access. More importantly, teachers reported not being equipped for online teaching and felt that they lack the skills and competences to develop new learning material suitable for online delivery. While there was not sufficient time to adjust instructional design and pedagogy, teachers tried to find alternatives for the interaction with students. Similarly, students wellbeing was affected. Students also report lack of facilities at home, such as a proper place to study, access to a computer for schoolwork and sufficient internet access. While solutions were found for online delivery of learning material and lectures, several other processes were discontinued. Many institutions had difficulty in taking exams and providing assessment; some institutions even completely stopped the exams, other institutions resorted to some form of online assessment.

Not all was perceived as negative though, because the pandemic illustrated the need and provided opportunities to move forward. We already know a lot about various forms of online delivery of education, be that in hybrid, blended or fully online and distance education. The various EU and national policies on digital society and digital education support the further need of digitalisation of higher education. The literature indicated directions to take to support teachers: continued teacher professionalisation for digital education; educational models for online education; and more support for diversity, inclusion and accessibility. We provide some suggestions what these directions entails.

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