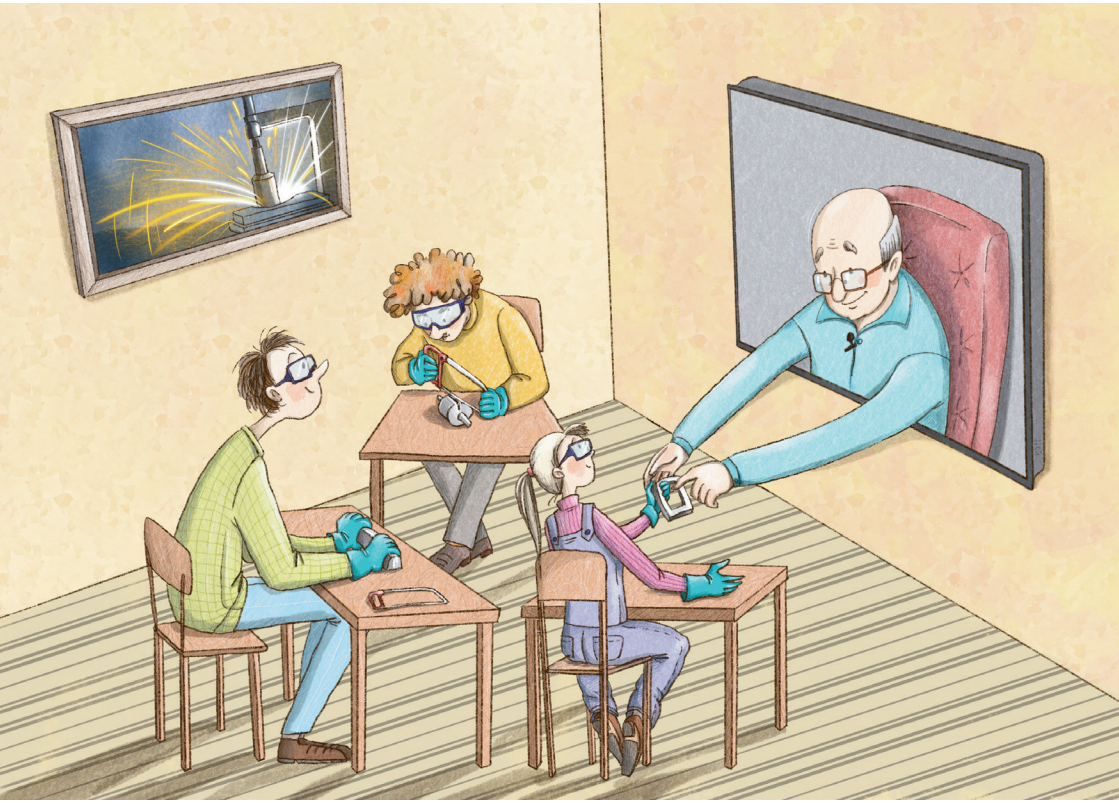
Remote Teaching in Vocational Training

A Collection of Good Practice from Belgium, France, Estonia, Ireland, Sweden and Germany



Hannover

2024

REMOKING

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https://remoking.eu/

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Impacts of Remote Working on
Training and Teaching Practices

Remote Teaching in Vocational Training

A Collection of Good Practice from Belgium, France, Estonia, Ireland, Sweden and Germany

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Erasmus+

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Contents

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About this book

Many educational institutions around the world have made the shift from traditional classroom teaching to online learning, at least to some extent, in recent years. This transition was driven by two main factors, one short-term and one long-term. The short-term cause was the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic around March 2020, which led to a sudden shutdown of public life and all kinds of places where people gather for leisure, work, or education. Organisations had to quickly adapt by rolling out (or sometimes hastily developing) plans for remote work or online teaching. The long-term factor is the ongoing development of technology, often referred to as digitalisation, where computerised devices and processes are becoming increasingly essential to our economy, culture, daily activities, and private lives. This technological shift naturally extends into the education sector.

This book, created as part of the Remoking project, is designed to assist educators transitioning from traditional teaching to online teaching (or any other form of remote facilitation of education), particularly in vocational education and training (VET). The book presents 18 good practices that we, the authors, identified in various European countries and considered noteworthy. These examples are intended to offer educators and educational managers a) an understanding of what is currently being done and b) ideas that could be adopted and applied to their own educational practice.

The examples cover a wide range of topics. In collecting them, we focused on four key areas: 1) Pedagogy/didactics 2) Work-based training 3) Curriculum 4) Management. These four categories are still used to classify the good practices at the top of each article. You find them marked in the "Area" rubric. However, as we reviewed all the articles, we realised that the real world is more diverse, and for many examples, the initial categorisation was not clear-cut. Therefore, we opted for a different set of categories to structure the book. The chapters are now arranged as follows:

1. Tiny tools for everyone
2. How to work with people
3. Specific activities
4. Virtual objects & simulations

5. Reorganisation of space
6. School management

The 18 examples of good practices were collected from Belgium, France, Estonia, Ireland, and Germany – the countries where the project partners are based. The country of origin does not significantly impact the methods or approaches, so it is not highlighted in the individual articles. However, you can find this information in the "Who did it" section at the end of each article.

Each partner organisation in the project contributed at least three examples.

Christian Geiselmann
Hannover, September 2024

Authors

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For their institutions, see next pages, Section *Consortium*.

The Remoking Project

With the outbreak of the Covid pandemic in March 2020, there was a sudden surge in remote work all around the world. Companies quickly adapted, implementing solutions such as home office arrangements wherever possible. This shift, of course, extended beyond the workplace to education, which also had to adjust. Many classes were moved online, with many courses now adopting a hybrid model that combines both in-person and online elements.

The *Remoking* project was created to help bridge the digital divide and reduce the associated learning loss by providing VET educators with a set of tailored resources and a clear upskilling pathway. This aims to enhance their digital readiness, improve their teaching skills, and empower them to actively participate in the digital transformation of the economy, especially in the VET sector.

"Remoking" is an abbreviation for the full name of this Erasmus+ funded project – *Impacts of Remote Working on Training and Teaching Practices.*

Main outputs of the project are:

1) The *Remoking* Handbook of Good Practices (which you are currently reading): This handbook presents a collection of case studies on good practices developed across Europe in the context of remote teaching and training in VET and related fields of education. Its intended audience is educators and educational managers. The focus is on how to adapt remote teaching and training to meet learners' needs and how to effectively support them.

2) The *Remoking* Training Toolkit: Developed based on insights from the good practices, this toolkit includes a curriculum and a range of practical tools to support VET educators in delivering blended and online training courses.

3) The *Remoking* Digital E-learning Hub: This is an online learning platform open to everyone, but primarily aimed at educators. The hub features a repository of open educational resources, as well as selected interactive online training activities, inspired by the good practice examples and the training toolkit.

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Consortium

The *Remoking* project consortium consists of six organisations from six European countries.

Hälsinglands Utbildningsförbund – Sweden

HUFB is a non-governmental organisation (NGO) and public education association based in central Sweden (Hälsingland) serving several rural municipalities. It delivers upper secondary and VET at EQF Level 4 to both young people and adults. It also provides Swedish language courses for immigrants. HUFB also acts as a centre for higher education, helping to bridge the gap between individuals and learning institutions in rural areas, particularly at EQF Level 5.

www.hufb.se

Forum Citoyens - Burgers (FSB) – Belgium

Forum Citoyens – Burgers asbl develops and promotes youth and adult education and social integration in Belgium, particularly in Brussels and globally in the French-speaking region. It was established in 2019 to meet the needs of people who wish to participate in various learning activities, international projects and citizenship initiatives to increase active citizenship and improve professional qualification on many topics including democracy, sustainability, intercultural, social and professional issues.

www.forumcitoyens.be

OÜ Vestifex – Estonia

Vestifex is an adult learning centre (private company, Estonian: OÜ) based in Narva, Estonia. It provides opportunities to grow professional and personal skills in the Ida-Virumaa county of Estonia. This includes training courses, programmes, seminars, events in Estonia and abroad for adult learners, educators, school staff members, private companies, governmental and non-governmental institutions. One of their main training courses is a long-term

course of Andragogy designed for teachers, trainers and educators of adult learners and preparing them for qualification examinations.

https://vestifex.ee

Association de Gestions des Fonds Européens (AGFE) - France

AGFE is an NGO based in Clergy, about 30 kilometres north-west of Paris. It was founded by a number of organisations active in the area of inclusion and employment in order to run their European funded activities. AGFE's aim is to strengthen coherence and effectiveness of the various public interventions in the field of training, employment and inclusion. This includes pooling of financial assistance from local authorities and running projects supported by the European Union, in particular via the European Social Fund (ESF) and Erasmus+.

www.agfe95.eu

Future in Perspective - Ireland

Future In Perspective Ltd. is a private company based in the border region of Ireland (Virginia, Cavan County) specialising in the areas of education, e-learning, media production, business development and evaluation. Working on national and EU funded projects, it supports local youth groups, migrants, the elderly, and individuals who have been absent from education to re-engage with service providers and mainstream education and training offerings.

www.futureinperspective.com

VHS Hannover – Germany

VHS Hannover is the adult education centre of the municipality of Hannover, Germany. With 100 employees and 700 freelance teachers it is the largest municipal adult education provider in the federal province of Lower Saxony. As a typical German *Volkshochschule* it is part of the national network of about 900 similar institutions in Germany. The full name is *Ada-und-Theodor-Lessing-Volkshochschule*, remembering the two progressive intellectuals who were crucial for establishing the institution in 1919 with the purpose of offering affordable education to adults in the spirit of Enlightenment and Humanism.

www.vhs-hannover.de

Reporting structure

To present the good practice examples in a uniform way, we used the structure outlined below. This provided the individual authors with key questions to answer, while allowing flexibility to deviate from the pattern where necessary for specific cases. These questions appear in the good practice descriptions as marginal notes. Occasionally, their phrasing may differ slightly, depending on the context.

Summary

The good practice is presented comprehensively in one single paragraph. Academics would call this an "abstract", but we tried to keep it very concrete anyway.

Description

This section presents the good practice example in a comprehensive way. The aim is to describe the approach clearly so that a third-party reader – someone unfamiliar with the case – can easily understand it.

Why is this interesting

The authors were asked to explicitly explain why they found this case relevant, particularly for the Remoking project. Why did they select this example over others? How does it meet the criteria set by Remoking?

Can it be applied elsewhere?

Here, the case study authors provide insights into the feasibility of applying the presented method in other institutional contexts. Are there specific requirements or challenges? Or can the approach be applied as is?

What else should be said?

In this section, the authors could add anything they felt the reader might need to know to better understand the good practice or to apply it in their own work.

Institution

Context matters. A method can only be fully understood when its environment is known. Therefore, we asked the authors to provide details about the organisation where the good practice was observed. What type of organisation is it? What is its legal status? How large is it? What services does it offer to its clients?

Size

Technical information on the institution, e.g. staff size, number of learners or similar details.

Is it a VET provider?

Here, the authors briefly comment on how the educational institution relates to Vocational Education and Training (VET), a core category in modern formal education systems. As 'Remoking' focuses on VET, it's important to note the different forms it can take – VET may be offered in traditional vocational schools or as part of broader adult education.

More on this

In this section you get tips where to find more information on the Good Practice in question. Often this is simply the website address of the institution where we found it.

All Cases in Brief

On the following five pages, all 18 good practices are presented briefly, using just the title and the "Summary" section. You can use this for getting a quick picture. The red numbers indicate the page where this can be found.

1) Tiny tools for everybody

Liberating Structures – Group activities to foster creativity and communication 19

Liberating Structures is a collection of 33 activities designed to help teams unlock hidden creativity, generate new ideas, or simply get to know each other in new ways. The activities vary in duration, ranging from 12 minutes to 7 hours. Initially developed for teamwork in corporate settings, particularly in the software industry, Liberating Structures can also be effectively applied in adult education and vocational education and training (VET) contexts.

SpeakUp – A non-commercial app for classroom quizzes 27

An app for teachers and learners to do polls, quizzes, and online chats with their classes effortlessly. The app is free to use, non-commercial and free of advertising.

30 000 Times Free – A network of universities in France offers self-learning materials on a wide range of subjects 31

Students in France have a unique opportunity to not only complete their homework but explore much more. A network of universities, unified under an organisation called UTN, offers online learning resources on a wide range of topics. The best part: almost everything is free to use, and you don't even need to be an enrolled student. All materials have been thoroughly reviewed to meet academic standards. However, for the international audience, there's a catch: the materials are all in French. While access is free, users must have a good command of the French language.

2) How to work with people

3) Specific Activities

4) Virtual Objects and Simulations

5) Reorganisation of Space

6) School Management

Collection of Good Practices

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1
Tiny Tools for Everyone

Liberating Structures set of cards. This can be used by the facilitator to quickly remember the instructions for the 33 activities. The set of cards has the same function as the Liberating Structures app but works without a mobile phone.

Liberating Structures

Group activities to foster creativity and communication

VHS Hannover

Summary

Liberating Structures is a collection of 33 activities designed to help teams unlock hidden creativity, generate new ideas, or simply get to know each other in new ways. The activities vary in duration, ranging from 12 minutes to 7 hours. Initially developed for teamwork in corporate settings, particularly in the software industry, *Liberating Structures* can also be effectively applied in adult education and vocational education and training (VET) contexts.

Area

- ☒ Pedagogics / Didactics
- ☐ Work-based training
- ☐ Curriculum
- ☐ Management

Description

Team meetings can sometimes be tedious. In the worst-case scenario, one person, usually the boss, does all the talking while the rest of the team just listens. To make meetings less monotonous and more engaging, many methods have been developed to actively involve participants.

Liberating Structures is a set of 33 activities designed for group work. Initially developed by business coaches in the software industry, where it is still widely used, particularly in "agile" management settings, these activities can be applied in any environment where teams need to collaborate and unlock their hidden creativity.

VHS Hannover has been using *Liberating Structures* in team meetings and seminars for a couple of years now,

with teachers incorporating them based on their individual preferences.

Although the group work methods were originally developed for in-person meetings, many can also be adapted for online settings, such as video conferences, especially when the video conferencing tool allows participants to be split into smaller groups.

The name *Liberating Structures* reflects the idea that these small group work activities (also called mini-structures) are meant to "liberate" a team, by fostering creativity and encouraging open, cross-communication. The term "Structures" indicates that the activities offer a scaffold for group interaction, which can be „filled" with any concrete topic.

In business contexts, *Liberating Structures* are often used to develop solutions to problems in areas like product design, marketing, or management, but they can easily be applied in other contexts, including classrooms.

The 33 activities vary in length, with some taking as little as 12 minutes, and others requiring up to three full days. What they all share is a strict time structure, which is managed by the facilitator to ensure the activities run smoothly.

Examples

All theory is grey. Here are three examples of group activities (*Liberating Structures*):

Impromptu networking – *Rapidly share challenges and expectations; build new connections with random others.*

This activity can also be described as "speed dating in motion". The facilitator poses two simple questions (e.g. "What is your challenge?" and "What do you expect from this meeting?")

Participants then randomly walk through the venue. When the facilitator gives a sound signal, participants form random pairs. Each pair discusses the questions, with each person having 2 minutes to speak, meaning the pair will talk for 4 minutes in total. At the next sound signal, the pairs separate, and everyone moves around the room again. After a minute, a new signal prompts the formation of new random pairs for another round of discussion. This process is repeated a third time. By the end, each participant will have shared their thoughts and heard from three different people.

1-2-4-All – *Engage everyone simultaneously in generating questions, ideas and suggestions.*

This activity takes just 12 minutes. The facilitator presents a question or problem, and participants self-reflect on it individually for 1 minute, possibly taking notes. Next, they pair up randomly and exchange ideas based on their self-reflection; this takes 2 minutes. Afterward, each pair joins another pair to form groups of 4, where they discuss and develop ideas based on the previous results; this takes 4 minutes. Finally, everyone returns to the full group, and each team shares what they consider to be their most important idea.

One key advantage of this activity is that it ensures equal participation, preventing more vocal participants from dominating the discussion.

Troika consulting – *Get practical and imaginative help from colleagues immediately in 30 minutes.*

A group of three people – known as a "troika" – is formed, where one person acts as the "client", and presents a challenging problem or dilemma. The client has 1 minute to explain their issue, after which the two "consultants" ask clarifying questions for 1 minute. Then, the client turns away to block visual contact, continuing to listen. The two consultants then discuss the topic, generate ideas or offer coaching advice for 5 minutes. After this, the client turns back around and shares, for 2 minutes, what they learned from the consultants' discussion. The roles are then swapped.

In larger groups, several troikas can operate simultaneously.

How to learn it?

The brief descriptions above are not sufficient as standalone instructions for implementing the activities. To fully learn these methods (and the remaining 30), the best approach is to participate in group sessions where they are practiced, ideally led by an experienced facilitator. In some cities, there are practice circles specifically for this purpose.

However, there is also printed material available. For books, you can ask your local bookstore or public library; ask for literature on *Liberating Structures*.

Additionally, there are free resources available. We particularly recommend the following:

- **The Liberating Structures app** - A concise resource for the mobile phone providing descriptions of all 33 methods, perfect for quickly referencing them, especially when planning to use them in a classroom or team setting.
- **Liberating Structures set of cards** - A portable set of cards for quick reference. This set can be bought for 15 euros from *Holisticon* (link provided below).

Why is it interesting?

In this collection of Good Practices in distant teaching and learning, we aim to showcase practical solutions that teachers can use when organising online sessions. The Liberating Structures set of group activities is one such Good Practice. Although originally developed for face-to-face meetings, most activities (or "mini structures") can also be implemented in online environments, particularly when the platform allows for multiple parallel working groups (as most modern video conference software does).

We see the value of *Liberating Structures* in VET organisations on two levels:

- *Liberating Structures* can be used to make the lesson more interactive. Teachers can assign the class a task, and a chosen mini-structure will give the class the necessary framework to engage and act productively.
- Moreover, practicing the mini-structures in class offers learners practical experience with running meetings in a way that is different from traditional formats. This will be valuable when they enter the workforce, especially if they find themselves in management or team leader positions. In other words, using *Liberating Structures* serves as training for management and leadership skills.

Can it be applied elsewhere?

The *Liberating Structures* set of activities can be used in a variety of settings, including commercial, educational and civil society environments. The "ideal" number of

participants typically ranges from 4 and 100, depending on the specific activity. The duration of each activity can vary significantly, from as short as 12 minutes to as long as 7 hours.

Who does it?

Organisation

VHS Hannover is the public adult education centre of Hannover, the capital city of the German federal province of Lower Saxony. Although it is technically part of the municipal administration, it operates as a distinct institution from the perspective of the general public. It provides both general adult education (languages, arts, health, computer skills, etc.) and courses for specific groups, such as adult literacy, German language courses for newcomers, and Second Chance courses, which help individuals obtain a lower secondary school certificate. In the past, VHS Hannover also offered full vocational training courses in selected professions.

Size

The adult education centre employs around 100 salaried staff, including approximately 30 teachers dedicated to Second Chance classes. In addition, it collaborates with around 700 freelance teachers. Each year, about 30 000 individuals participate in the learning programmes offered by VHS Hannover.

Is it a VET provider?

VHS Hannover is not a VET organisation in the strictest sense, but many of its courses are job-related, such as typewriting, office computer skills, and specialised software for accountants. In the past, it also offered full VET programmes in areas like sales, office management and pre-press services.

More about this

Website of one of the proponents of *Liberating structures*:

https://liberatingstructures.de

The set of cards can be ordered from this website.

The materials, including the set of cards and the app, are available in English, while the website is in German.

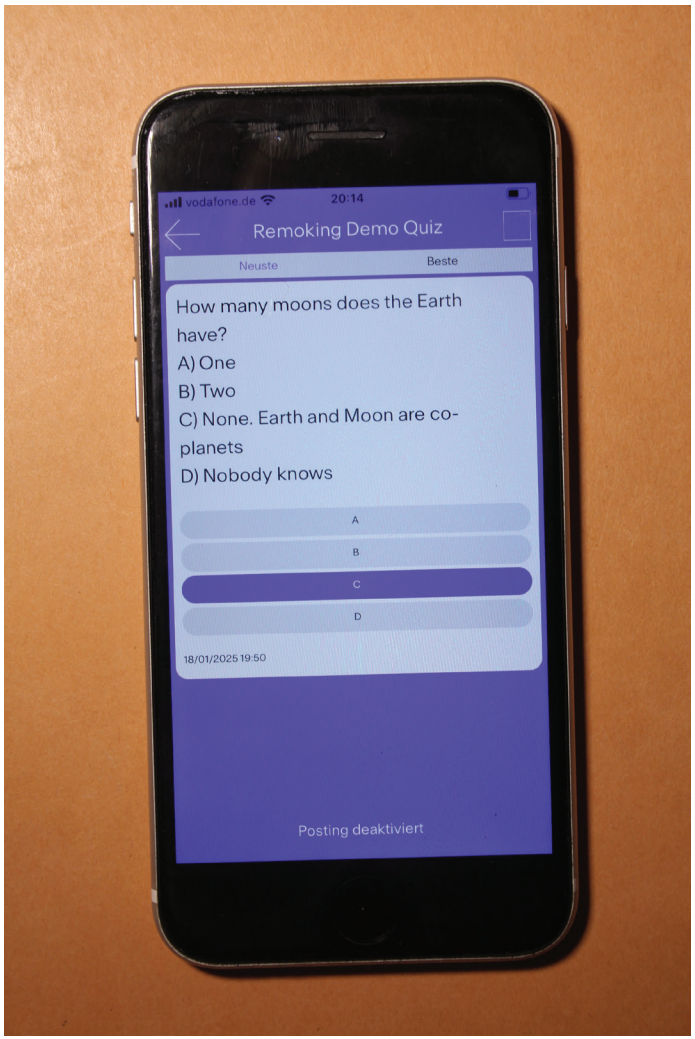
Books on *Liberating Structures* are published in English, German, and several other languages by various authors.

VHS Hannover's website is

https://www.vhs-hannover.de

but you would not find information on this specific good practice there.

Illustration page



The SpeakUp app used on a smartphone for a classroom poll, here with a multiple choice question. So far, only one participant picked their answer.

SpeakUp

A non-commercial app for classroom quizzes

Consortium of four universities in Switzerland

An app for teachers and learners to do polls, quizzes, and online chats with their classes effortlessly. The app is free to use, non-commercial and free of advertising.

Summary

- ☒ Pedagogics / Didactics
- ☐ Work-based training
- ☐ Curriculum
- ☐ Management

Description

The SpeakUp app is used to encourage classroom interaction and feedback during synchronous lessons/courses. It's a simple classroom interaction application to support rich learning scenarios. It was designed and developed by a consortium of 4 Swiss universities.

SpeakUp is a chat application for mobile devices and computers that enables teachers to create chat rooms which learners can using a password. Within the chat room, learners can post messages, vote on them and take part in surveys and polls.

Why is it interesting?

SpeakUp is an interesting case for the *Remoking* project as it facilitates interaction between teachers and learners as well as between learners themselves, during online training. The application supports the implementation of various learning strategies remotely:

- Ask questions
- Try and test

- Gain knowledge
- Feel the pulse of the classroom
- Thinking / combining / sharing activities
- Feedback and comments

SpeakUp is a free, non-commercial app that is also free of advertising. Using SpeakUp is completely anonymous; no personal data is collected. Users do not need to log in, register, or provide an email address. In order to be able to return to their rooms or activities, users get anonymous user IDs. The server is based in Switzerland. The owners reserve the right to use the data generated for research purposes, but this data does not include any personal information, as such data is not generated.

Can it be used elsewhere?

Published for free use, this tool can easily be used in other institutions moving towards distance teaching and learning. The SpeakUp app is free and easy to download online. The application runs on multiple devices.

Who runs it?

Institutions

SpeakUp is a joint project of the universities of Lausanne, Genève, Neuchatel and the École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL).

VET providers?

These four institutions are traditional universities.

How it came about

The project emerged from a shared recognition of the need for a more effective and anonymous platform for feedback within academic settings. By pooling their resources, expertise, and funding, the participating institutions work together on research and development, with each university contributing its specialised knowledge in areas such as technology, social science, and user engagement. They share anonymised data generated by the app for research purposes to enhance

functionality and explore new methods of fostering open communication.

The development of SpeakUp involved a series of workshops where representatives from each university identified the limitations of traditional feedback mechanisms and envisioned a platform that would allow for candid and anonymous communication. Following these discussions, a prototype was developed and tested in a pilot phase to refine its features based on user feedback.

The successful launch of SpeakUp across the institutions marks a significant step in improving feedback systems in educational environments, demonstrating a successful model of inter-university collaboration.

How to use it

The website of the App is:

https://speakup.info/

a) The app can be installed on digital devices (mobile phones etc.), or it can be used as a web app, i.e. by simply accessing it via any internet browser (without installing anything).

b) But it can also be used without downloading an app, just using an ordinary internet browser:

https://web.speakup.info

For using on devices such as mobile phones, the mobile app is most convenient. It can be installed from Google Store or Apple store.[1]

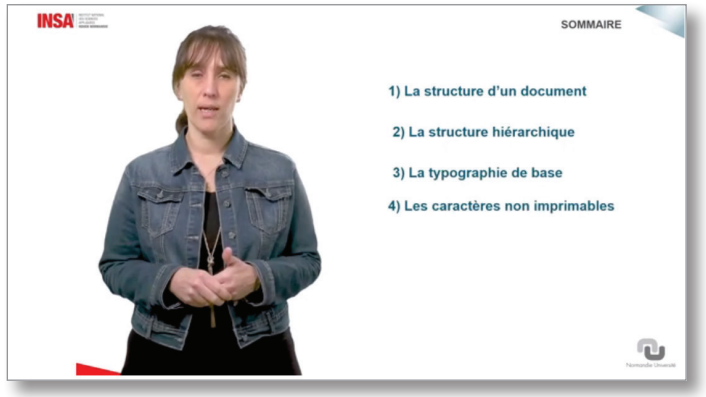
The SpeakUp tool is handy, but it needs a bit of getting acquainted to for those who are used to commercial products such also Kamoot or Mentimeter. Therefore you will find instructions in den Appendix of this book.

Instructions see Appendix!

1) All links etc. were tested by the authors of this book in late 2023.

Illustration page

Start page of the Digital University. Click on "Ressources" for quickly getting to 30 000 different self-training materials.



Introduction part of the 60 hours course on how to work with text processing softwore (Word etc.). In a recorded video, a teacher explains in frontal lesson style what actually is a "document".

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30 000 Times Free

A network of universities in France offers self-learning materials on a wide range of subjects

Université numérique (Digital University)

Students in France have a unique opportunity to not only complete their homework but explore much more. A network of universities, unified under an organisation called UTN, offers online learning resources on a wide range of topics. The best part: almost everything is free to use, and you don't even need to be an enrolled student. All materials have been thoroughly reviewed to meet academic standards. However, for the international audience, there's a catch: the materials are all in French. While access is free, users must have a good command of the French language.

Summary

- ☒ Pedagogics / Didactics
- ☐ Work-based training
- ☒ Curriculum
- ☐ Management

Areas

Description

UTN stands for *Unversités numériques thématiques*, or *Digital Universities* for short. It is a non-profit association founded in 2003. UTN's internal structure is complicated as it consists of multiple sub-networks focusing on certain subjects (thématiques). In essence, UTN brings together over one hundred higher education organisations in France. (For details on the organisation see below in Section "Who does it?").

The association runs the following website

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https://luniversitenumerique.fr

where everybody can access a wide range of self-learning materials such as videos, infographics, online courses (usually Moodle-based), etc. Materials are typically developed by teachers of higher education. All materials undergo rigorous validation by experts to ensure technical, scientific, and pedagogical quality. The number of items available is estimated to be 30 000 (in 2024).

The website is organised into the following topic areas:

- Science, Technology, Health
- Humanities and Social Sciences
- Law, Economy and Business Management
- Arts, Literature, and Languages
- Transversal skills

Let's explore

To give a more concrete idea of the types of materials available, here are a few examples gathered during a random exploration by the authors of this article:

On the UNT website, under *Resources* we can select *Resource types*, then *Typical pathways by subject*, then select a field e.g. *Science-Technology-Health*, followed by, say, *Bachelor's degree in computational science*, then *First year*, and finally we get a list of about 200 different resources for online-learning. These resources vary greatly in scope. Some are very brief, taking only a minute to complete, such as a visual explanation of how URLs (= internet links) are structured. Others are much more extensive, requiring 40 hours or more to work through. For example there is a MOOC on Numerical Analysis that takes 56 hours, and another on Python programming taking 40 hours.

If we scroll down to the Maths section, for instance, we find a module on complex numbers (3 hours). In the Geometry section, there is a course on Analytical Geometry (3 hours) which includes reading materials and tasks, with solutions provided for self-assessment.

If we select *Bioscience* (*Bachelor, first year*) we get a list of about 100 online self-learning materials, such as *Basics of immunology* (20 hours), *Introduction to the search of a species in solution* (2 hours). Additionally, ‚under the subtopic of *Office automatisation*, there is a comprehensive 60-hour course on learning to use text processors (MS Word etc.). This course uses various types of instructional material, including videos, written tutorials, and practice tasks. The introduction video (in a traditional „teacher speaking to audience" format) starts with a very basic explanation of „what is a document" (a paper-like form consisting of multiple pages, with elements such as text paragraphs, headlines, page numbers, etc.). This indicates that the course is designed to bring beginners up to the minimum level required of university students.

If you want to explore the 30 000 available resources yourself, visit:

https://luniversitenumerique.fr/ressources/fun-ressources/

Most resources can be accessed and used free of charge, though a prerequisite is proficiency in French.

A bit of background

UNT, as an association, gathers not only their own resources but also materials from a veriety of other sources, including other educational institutions. These resources are indexed and made accessible through discipline-specific portals, promoting a collaborative and comprehensive approach to online education.

The entire service is funded by the French Ministry of Education.

Why is it interesting?

We selected *Digital University* for this collection of good practice in remote learning because it serves as a good example for how to bridge the gap between traditional face-to-face learning and remote education. It shows how flexible, high-quality training can be effecitvely offered using high quality online resources that are accessible to learners regardless of their physical location.

Can it be applied elsewhere?

Of course, an undertaking as large as providing 30 000 self-learning materials cannot be replicated by an individual teacher or a single adult education or VET institution. However, *Digital Universities* can be seen as a benchmark for educational development and as a recommendation for policy makers, who would need to fund similar networks.

What the individual teachers and organisations can do immediately is to utilise these resources by recommending them to their French speaking learners.

Can it be used in VET and AE?

In the context of VET and general adult education, this portal, which provides access to 30 000 (mostly) free online self-learning resources, may initially seem off-topic, as its primary focus is on supporting higher education. However, browsing through the rich content can also be beneficial for those involved in vocational training or general adult education. Many of the resources available are relevant to these areas as well. A good example is the 60-hour course on using text processing software, a skill that is now essential in virtually every field.

Precondition of course: 1) Users of the materials must be able to carry out self-directed learning. 2) Users need to know French.

Who does it?

Institution

Digital University brings together more than one hundred French higher education and research establishments.

It is a non-profit association, registered under French law Number 1901 in the year 2003, consisting of initially eight (now six) pre-existing networks called *Universités numériques thématiques* (UNT) centred around the topics 1) Health and Sports 2) Engineering 3) Environment 4) Humanities 5) Economy and Management 6) Technological education.

Its purpose is to make digital educational resources available to higher education institutions, for both educators and students, with the aim of enriching teaching practices such as flipped classrooms, blended learning, new materials and resources as well as a possibility of working/studying from home.

The resources are produced by partnering universities, and most of them are free to use for everybody.

Is it a VET provider?

The *Digital University* is not a typical VET school nor a traditional university. It is an organisation providing a range of courses, videos and resources in many different domains which are made available via a central website.

More on this

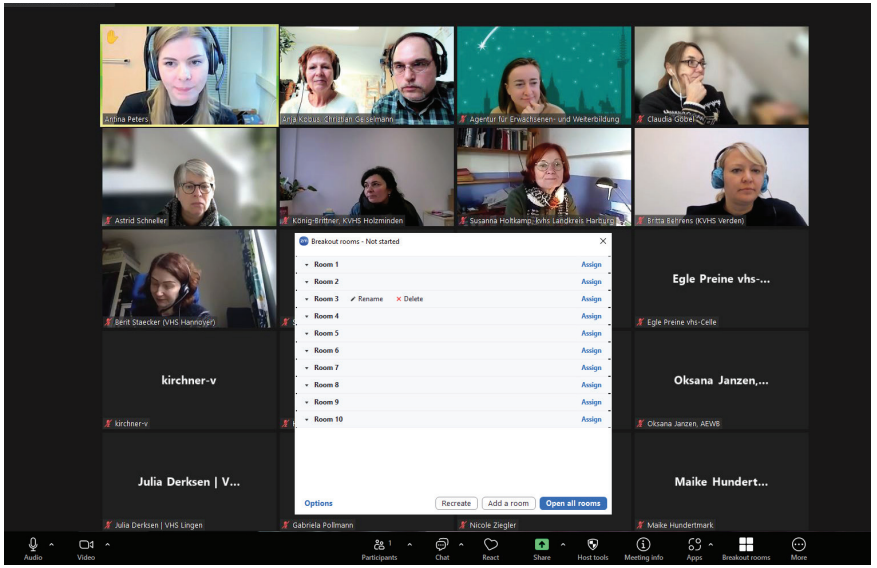
Website of the UTN:

https://luniversitenumerique.fr/

From here, all the materials are accessible.

2
How to Work with People

Illustration page



Computer screen of the teacher (session host) in Zoom, the popular video conference tool. A dialogue is open where participants can be assigned to smaller groups for doing some team work. Participants can be assigend to these groups randomly, or the teacher can assign them manually. The big advantage of work in small groups is that everybody gets really involved.

REMOKING

Getting Involved

Using group work in online classrooms

VHS Hannover

Video classrooms can be dull. Some students appreciate them because they can multitask without being noticed, while others become fatigued from listening to one person speaking continuously. Howerver, there's a way to make video classrooms much more engaging and interactive: incorporate group work in small groups of 3-5 people.

Summary

☒ Pedagogics / Didactics
☐ Work-based training
☐ Curriculum
☐ Management

Area

Description

When teaching in online classrooms using video conferencing tools like Zoom and others, it is a good practice to alternate between plenary sessions (such as lectures or presentations by the teacher) and small group work, typically with 3-6 participants.

Most video conference software today includes the option to split participants into smaller groups for collaborative tasks.

The teacher or presenter can assign participants to groups either randomly or in a pre-planned manner. Group assigningments can be done automatically (e.g., instructing the software to "create groups of 4 people each", or manually, where the teacher assigns participants to specific groups.

REMOKING

Usually the teacher will set a specific duration for the group work, e.g. 10 minutes. In that time the groups discuss a topic given to them in advance. When time is over, they are automatically brought back into the plenary session. Usually there is a clock visible on screen for each group to be aware of the time remaining.

We use these small group sessions in both our online teaching and online conferences. Group work can be incorporated in conferences of virtually any size. The advantage is that people, who might have previously been in a passive, listening role, suddenly become active conributors. When "arriving" in the small group, participants first familiarise themselves with who else is present. They are encouraged (though they usually do this naturally) to introduce themselves to one another. Working in a small group online feels much like sitting around a table with others.

This form of working together is inspiring and satisfying to participants. Here's why:

- Everybody feels involved
- Everybody can contribute and share their experience and opinion
- People get to know each other
- While waiting for the groups to do their work, the teacher has time to recreate, or to prepare the next step
- People who are embarrassed to speak to a large audience and to the teacher or presenter may feel much freer to speak in the cosy small group.

Typically we assign all groups the same task, e.g. relating the session's topic to their own experiences and everyday life, or dicussing discuss solutions to specific challenges. However, groups can also be given different tasks if desired.

When everybody returns to the large group, the small groups present their results. It is usually not necessary to formally assign a spokesperson for each group, as they tend to self-organize with one or more members naturally taking on the role of speaker during the presentation.

Why is it interesting?

This is an easy-to-implement pedagogical approach that has become so routine for us that we initially didn't consider it worth mentioning in this collection of Good Practices. However, we later realised that this method has become essential for online conferences and classes, particularly in terms of participant engagement, and therefore felt it should be included in this collection.

Can it be applied elsewhere?

This pedagogical approach can be used by anyone providing online classes, organising online conferences, or hosting online meetings with more than 8 participants. There is no upper limit to the number of participants, aside from the limitations set by the software or the subscription model being used.

What else should be said?

It is crucial for the teacher or facilitator to be thoroughly familiar with the small-groups feature of the software they are using (e.g. Zoom, BigBlueButton, Edudip, Teams, etc.). The teacher or facilitator must be completely confident in managing the process, as any issues – such as problems with group distribution, taks assignments or user permissions within the groups – can disrupt the flow and undermine the effectiveness of the entire session.

It is therefore good practice to plan such a session meticulously. We organise our planning using detailed tables, listing the duration of each activity, who will lead it, what tools are required, what content will be presented, who manages the software, and other key details.

It has also proven crucial to thoroughly test all functions in advance, ideally two or three times. We've learned from experience: anything that hasn't been tested at least twice is likely to fail.

Who does it?

Institution

VHS Hannover is the public adult education centre for Hannover, the capital of Lower Saxony, a federal state in Germany. While technically part of the municipal administration, it operates as a distinct institution from the perspective of the general public. VHS Hannover offers a wide range of general adult education courses, including languages, arts, health, and computer skills. It also provides specialised programmes for specific groups, such as adult literacy, German language courses for newcomers, and Second Chance courses, which help individuals obtain a lower secondary school certificate. In the past, VHS Hannover also offered full vocational training programmes in selected professions.

Size

The adult education centre employs around 100 salaried staff, including approximately 30 teachers dedicated to Second Chance classes. In addition, it works with around 700 freelance teachers. Each year, approximately 30 000 individuals take advantage of the learning opportunities offered by VHS Hannover.

Is it a VET provider?

VHS Hannover is not a VET organisation in the strictest sense, but many of its courses are job-related, such as typewriting, office computer skills, and specialised software for accountants. In the past, it also offered full VET programmes in areas like sales, office management, and pre-press services.

More on this

A video explaining "breakout rooms" in Zoom, recorded by a teacher (third-party material):

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z_cWCRs7wyM

Illustration page

Responsible Learners

Vocational training re-organised

CFL Söderhamn

During the Covid pandemic, the CFL Söderhamn vocational school had to re-organise their *Apprenticeship in Commerce* classes to use online teaching instead of teaching in the physical classroom. They managed well, and one element of their success was to give students more responsibility for their activities, while keeping up strict deadlines.

Summary

- ☐ Pedagogics / Didactics
- ☒ Work-based training
- ☐ Curriculum
- ☐ Management

Area

Description

When the Covid-19 pandemic started and classes had do be reorganised to be held online, teachers at CFL Söderhamn were faced with the challenge to keep students involved and active. They developed a participatory approach to teaching and learning which gave students more responsibility for themselves. This partly worked out well, but it also had problems.

The following is a report by H.T., the teacher of the Commerce class, recorded as an interview. H.T. says:

When it became a fact that we had a pandemic, I worked with two different groups that studied Commerce.

Group 1

Group 1 studied Apprenticeship in Commerce. Students were out on their apprenticeship four days a week. One day

a week the students were supposed to be at school. This was an important day both for the community, and educationally. Community is very important because basically we humans are very dependent on feeling belonging and affirmation. When we receive it, we receive the knowledge more easily.

Challenges

As we had to do distance learning, the students adapted to it, but it was not the same. Many tasks had to be presented orally, and it was not as easy via distance. It was due to many different factors. Among other things, there were no discussions, not many questions and not much laughter. It was difficult to get discussions.

Working in Commerce involves many meetings with different people, and how do we best treat others? It is an important issue to take a stand on in the education, and then discussions are needed, preferably in groups. Sure, it was possible to create group rooms online, but it was not the same. Some students lost focus and started fiddling with their mobile phones, eating, drinking, disappearing for a while and more.

Briefings and discussion

Briefings worked better because then it was me who talked and gave information. I had short briefings, then the students had to work independently for an hour or so, then we gathered again and went through what they had come up with, and I had another briefing, and we gathered again and tied the bag together.

A shift in collaboration

The advantage was that the students very quickly got more technically skilled with using the video conference tool and also learned from each other. They created groups and had contact with each other through the groups. All of a sudden, it became a completely different collaboration. Students who did not dare to ask for help could openly write and ask for help. The silent student came forward in a different way, which was very positive.

Unfortunately, many lost their apprenticeships during the pandemic, especially students who were at chain store companies, as the management decided that due to the risks associated with Covid-19 only regular staff should work and no apprentices where allowed. The positive thing about it was that the companies noticed how much work the students actually did in the workplace.

Employment at risk

For some, distance learning is appropriate, and for some, it is not. Some students disappear. They are used to be in the group, and without the group they feel alone and isolated.

Absenteeism

For me as a teacher, it went pretty well. We were a few colleagues who had distance meetings regularly to check how things were going and to encourage each other.

Situation for the teacher

Group 2: Business theory

Group 2 was a group for theoretical business education that consisted mostly of foreign-born people. It was tough because many were weak in the language and had difficulty listening and understanding of what their classmates were saying. It's easier to see each other live, you can understand a lot just by looking at each other. Gestures, faces, body language and more are valuable when teaching language-impaired people. Everyone fought hard, but the result would have been much better if we had had classroom teaching.

Language as a challenge

I thought about how to resolve the situation and divided the meetings so I met two students at a time. It went much better then as students then felt seen, confirmed, and dared to talk more. Many people feel stupid because they think they're not good enough at the language, and that makes them quiet. I chose people based on their level of knowledge and how they knew each other. This demanded more of me, but at the same time I was able to personalize the studies in a better way for the students, and they had a better chance of completing their education.

Solution: consultations in mini-groups

Longing for the group

Of course, the whole group met remotely also to have cohesion, which I thought was important. After a while, the students themselves wanted more and more that we met, all of them wanted to report to each other. "Hitting" the two and two gave them enough courage to dare to swing out more. They got more time with me and had the opportunity to ask questions that they might not have dared otherwise.

I think that distance learning can definitely be good in certain contexts. In those subjects where it works, I think you should offer distance learning. But I also think that students should be able to choose because it does not suit everyone.

Conclusions

It worked better after a time when both I and the students had learned how they could use their newfound technical and digital knowledge and discover the many positive uses of the conference tool. Everything I presented to the class during lessons I could also put as resources in Teams; sometimes I recorded different elements of the lectures and discussions we had with the in-built recording feature in Teams, which was appreciated. Difficult parts of the course, which could lead to long discussions and explanations, the students had to read and research advance to save some time during class. Those resources could also be presented in Teams before the class started, and then we went through it together. The advantage was that they had read through it, written down questions and reflections. They also had to send their thoughts to me in advance and I was then able to answer some of their questions. Many times they had the same thoughts and then there could be good discussions.

As a teacher, it is important to be available and also have knowledge of the technology that we suddenly became completely dependent on. The students learned very quickly and we teachers supported each other and learned from each other.

Observations from online teaching:

- Some quiet and shy students came out in a different way.
- A problem with online teaching is that everyone needs to feel a sense of belonging and community.
- Some students think it was good because they could do their assignments at any time of the day as long as the assignment was handed in on time.
- Unfortunately, some students disappeared from the education on the grounds that they are unable to study remotely.
- It was incredibly good that we had the technology available because this way we could continue teaching despite the pandemic.
- Some students became a little "lazier", they thought it was comfortable to lie in bed, sit on the couch and more during the online sessions. It even happened that someone fell asleep. But on the other hand, it was good because then I had to figure out how to make it more fun and interesting. I started with a small quiz before we started, and I ended with a quiz. The students had to come up with suggestions for questions related to topics and send them to me. I made a compilation, and then we ran through it. It was fun to see their faces when their question came up. Now they started to think in a different way and also wanted to keep up in a different way. Some are competitive people and some learn by being asked. We also did it together, it was not me who had created the questions, it was us together, it became a participation and they felt a value for their questions being included.

Why is it interesting? This experience is relevant for *Remoking* because the teacher found new ways to get the students involved and active.

Can this be done in other institutions? When it comes to vocational education, any institution can benefit from trying out digital tools that increase student interest and engagement. Educating students via digital tools also helps ensuring continuation of training in cases when they cannot attend classes. Most important however is paying attention to the psychological needs of students.

What else is interesting? A lot of young students think the online learning approach is good because they can do their assignments at any time of the day as long as they hand in their assignments on time.

With this approach applied, student have to be more active and take more responsibility.

Who did it?

Institution CFL Söderhamn is an educational centre in the municipality of Söderhamn in central Sweden. CFL stands for *Centrum för flexibelt lärande* – Centre for flexible learning. Söderhamn is town of about 13 000 inhabitants in a mostly rural environment. The CFL offers primary and secondary education as well as vocational training in quite a number of occupations. CFL Söderhamn is part of the *Hälsinglands utbildningsförbund* (Hälsingland's Education Association), a municipal association in the Hälsingland region with the municipalities Bollnäs, Nordanstig and Söderhamn. The network provides also the opportunity for distance studies within a university of applied sciences.

Size CFL Söderhamn has a staff of 390, working with about 2000 students continuously.

More on this

Website of CFL Söderhamn:

www.hufb.se/vuxenutbildning/cfl-soderhamn

Illustration page

Different Classroom, Different Structure

Some easy-to-remember tips for online classes as compared to presence classes

CFL Bollnäs

The Covid-19 pandemic forced teachers of CFL Bollnäs to stop presences classes and quickly switch over to online classes. In this article, teachers give a number of easy-to-implement tips for online teaching.

Summary

Area

- ☒ Pedagogics / Didactics
- ☐ Work-based training
- ☐ Curriculum
- ☐ Management

Description

Structure and planning is of great importance to any teacher when doing online education. In the regular classroom it is easier for the teacher to talk in front of the class and keep students‘ focus with body language and practical moments. In the digital classroom a lecture can become flat because students miss out on the teachers body language and practical testing of skills, tools and knowledge.

Keeping students focussed in a digital classroom, especially in VET, might be particularly difficult since students here are used to doing engaging activities such as practical training, discussions with their peers, etc. In the digital classroom, when students are at home, they may miss out on these positive stimuli.

It helps to keep the students' focus when the teacher plans the distance teaching with this in mind to create a healthy learning environment.

In vocational training, discussion and participation are key to success.

When the teaching goes digital, we can help discussions keep going by setting strict rules on participation. One such rule is that everybody has their camera switched on and is visible for the team.

Presentations should be kept short so that students do not lose focus. The teacher can keep the classroom active by instigating discussion and interactions between students themselves or between students and teacher.

A common mistake in digital classrooms is forgetting to allow for breaks. Short breaks are important, and planning for them is important.

All lecturing should be structured in short parts alternating with breaks for discussion, practical exercises or short written reflections on the topic of the lecture.

Here are a number of tips for online classrooms from our experience:

- Plan for short instructional phases
- Plan for discussions, practical parts, and written reflections on the topic of the lecture
- Plan for breaks
- Be aware that students will miss practical activities and group discussion from their presence classrooms
- Be strict about cameras being switched on so that students cannot hide and get distracted.

Pros and Cons

Some advantages of online teaching, from our practical experience:

- In online teaching it is easier to keep track of who has submitted materials for their assignments; that's because the classroom platform registers all activities; whereas in the traditional classroom you have to sort through your stack of papers.
- Assignments are typed, not hand-written. In our experience this has the interesting effect that students submit their assignments more readily.
- In online classrooms, we do not use printed textbooks anymore. Hence, students do not have to buy them, and accordingly, the percentage of those who do not have the book is smaller. Also, we do not have the problem anymore that new editions need to be bought.
- The classroom software (MS Teams, in our case) allows teachers to see how much time students spend on reading their textbooks.
- Students who have difficulties with reading the language (here: Swedish) can have the textbook read aloud to them by the computer.
- Students learn to use video conference software, which will be a thing they may need later in the world of work anyway.

Disadvantages in our experience

- In a traditional classroom, the teacher is easily aware of what is going on between students, what they are talking and discussing in small groups, and so on. In online teaching, this all is impeded.

A teacher's toolbox in online classrooms differs from that in traditional classrooms. When there is a need to

Why is it interesting?

move the education to distance learning it is important to use a different set of tools. The most important thing is preparation and structure to create.

Can it be applied elsewhere?

Any kind of education that has to switch from regular presence classes to online classes needs to use a different mindset. The training has to be both practical, interesting and with a structure to support the students' learning progress. So, yes, of course, the suggestions presented above are applicable everywhere.

Something else?

Our experience shows that there is a need and good use of collegial support and learning to create a continuous learning environment for teachers.

Online tools and knowledge on learning in distance courses have been boosted by Covid-19, but there is still a lot to learn and to be evaluated.

Who does it?

Institution

CFL Bollnäs is the municipal education centre in Bollnäs, a small town with 14 000 inhabitants in central Sweden, in the historic Hälsingland region.

CFL stands for Centre for Flexible Learning. The focus of CFL Bollnäs is adult education and vocational training, including options for higher education and degrees in applied sciences.

CFL Bollnäs is part of Hälsingland's Education Association (HUFB) network, a municipal association of Bollnäs, Nordanstig and Söderhamn. HUFB runs upper secondary and adult education for the local residents. It also provides opportunity for distance studies within a university of applied sciences. The three municipalities together have a total of 80 000 inhabitants. HUFB provides courses for 2000 participants continuously in a wide range of subjects and vocations.

Size

CFL Bollnäs has 390 employees caring for about 2000 students.

Is it a VET institution?

One important field of CFL Bollnäs' offerings is post-secondary vocational training, with tight integration into the world of work. Both theory and practice are important. Vocations offered include CNC machine operator, welder, fitness trainer, geriatrician, assistant nurse and gastronomy.

More on this

Website of CFL Bollnäs

https://www.hufb.se/vuxenutbildning/cfl-bollnas

Illustrations

Students at Vestifex Adult Learning Centre practicing off-time activities to get a rest from online learning.

Off-Times & Reflection

Digital wellness in everyday online education

Vestifex Adult Learning Centre

Replacing traditional in-person teaching with computer-based online settings offers many advantages, but it also has its downsides. One significant drawback is that prolonged use of technology can contribute to stress and isolation for both learners and educators. To address this, Vestifex in Narva, Estonia, has introduced several activities into their educational and professional environments to help maintain balance. They refer to this as "digital wellness" or "digital well-being".

Summary

☒	Pedagogics / Didactics
☐	Work-based training
☒	Curriculum
☒	Management

Area

Description

Vestifex is an adult education institution that has been providing train-the-trainers services to various VET institutions in Estonia for many years including *Lasnamäe School of Mechanics*, *Ida-Virumaa Vocational Education Centre* (IVVEC) and *Valga County Vocational Training Centre*.

From 2021 to 2023 in collaboration with the *Valga County Vocational Training Centre*, Vestifex conducted work-based VET training for nurses and carers in Narva.

Recognizing the profound impact that technology can have on our daily lives, we have implemented several

strategies to promote a healthy balance and enhance the learning environment.

Here are some of the key practices we have adopted to foster wellness and productivity of both learners and educators in our educational settings:

- **Discussing the impact of technology on mental health** – Vestifex regularly engages learners and educators in conversations about the effects of technology on mental well-being. They encourage self-care practices, such as taking regular breaks from technology and engaging in physical activities.
- **Adapting teaching programmes for remote settings** – All teaching programmes have been adjusted to remote learning, with an emphasis on more frequent breaks, shorter training sessions, and the incorporation of physical activities and energisers into the sessions.
- **Opening a yoga class** – Vestifex introduced a yoga class at the centre for both learners and educators.
- **Teaching effective time management** – Effective time management is crucial for maintaining a healthy work-life balance. Vestifex helps learners develop strategies for setting boundaries between work and personal time, such as establishing a consistent work schedule, taking regular breaks, and prioritising self-care activities.
- **Incorporating mindfulness and stress reduction techniques** – Mindfulness and stress management strategies have been integrated into their training programmes, with resources provided to support stress reduction.
- **Encouraging social interaction** – Vestifex nurtures social engagement both inside and outside of training sessions. They recognise that remote work can be isolating, so extra support is provided to facilitate and sustain social interaction among learners and educators.
- **Promoting digital detox practices** – Vestifex offers resources for practising digital detox, including tips for reducing screen time and suggestions for offline activities. A digital detox helps improve mental health and well-being by encouraging breaks from technology.

Why is it interesting?

Incorporating digital wellness into the curriculum for remote vocational education can help both learners and educators maintain a healthy work-life balance and support their overall well-being.

Mindfulness and stress reduction techniques can be particularly effective in managing the stress and anxiety often associated with remote work environments.

Can it be applied elsewhere?

The approach can be applied in other institutions to promote digital wellness among learners and educators. The strategies mentioned address the challenges posed by the increasing reliance on technology in educational settings. Institutions can adapt programmes for remote settings with breaks, shorter sessions, and physical activities.

Who does it?

Institution

Vestifex Adult Learning Centre develops and promotes adult education in Ida-Virumaa county, Estonia. It was established in 2011 to meet the needs of people who wish to participate in various learning activities, training courses, international projects and initiatives to increase professional qualification and to develop personally.

Vestifex offers a variety of training courses, programmes, seminars, events in Estonia and abroad for adults learners, adult educators, school staff members, private companies, governmental and non-governmental institutions.

Staff of the learning centre have extensive experience in adult education methodology and curriculum design. One of their main training courses is a long-term course of Andragogy designed for teachers, trainers and educators of adult learners and preparing them for qualification examinations.

Size

Vestifex has 9 staff members. The company counts about 500 learners per year.[1]

Is it a VET provider?

Vestifex focuses on training for adult educators, but there are also offers for other vocations.

More on this

Website of the Vestifex adult learning centre:

http://vestifex.ee/en

1) Data as in 2024

3
Specific Activities

Illustration page

Students as Directors

Producing video tutorials remotely as part of vocational training of nurses

Hälsinglands utbildningsförbund

As a VET centre training nurses we need to see the practical skills of our students. Normally this is done during a practice terms or in our practical nursing rooms at school. During the Covid-19 pandemic, this all was not possible. Our solution was to let students show their practice skills by creating short instructional videos about it.

Summary

- ☐ Pedagogics / Didactics
- ☒ Work-based training
- ☐ Curriculum
- ☐ Management

Area

Description

In VET for assisting nurses there are many practical skills a student must learn. This includes caring routines, hygiene, using assistive equipment etc. But during the pandemic we had to close our practical training rooms to minimize the possibilities of transferring the disease. We could not send out students on apprenticeships and neither have a full class in our practical rooms.

Much of what we did to deal with this problem was related to video recording.

Starting from classes being held in form of video conferences (MS Teams), we developed a number of activities for students that all would involve video recording.

We used video recording to give students instructions for practical exercises and exams. We also let students

record discussions they had in small groups during video conference sessions (breakout rooms).

Thus we could continue the education even through lockdown of big parts of society.

Students also had to record their practical activities. This included:

- Discussions in breakout rooms; this saves a lot of time during class since the teacher can watch discussion after
- Practical work such as caring situations for elderly or people with different disabilities
- Hygiene routines
- Using equipment such as lifts, needles, tests.
- Role playing caring

Equipment

Our school provides all student with a laptop with integrated webcam. They can take it home and use till education ends. Hence, every student had the necessary equipment also for video recording.

Video editing skills

We have a lot of students that are not really familiar with digital devices. To help them, we created video clips with instructions, for example about how to use MS Teams. This was supported also by our IT educator who also gave lessons.

We as teachers also went through software apps and their function before students would use them. This we did on screen during video conference classes, and we recorded it directly so that students could then check as many times as needed.

Software

The software used for video production by students was Screencast-o-matic. Its primary purpose is to record what happens on the screen (screencasts) plus voice-over, and it also allows for video cutting (in the paid version). People find it easy to use. Some functions can be used for free. As the files do not take up a lot of space, students can share them easily to profit from each other's good examples.

Students as film makers

In order to deepen the knowledge they had acquired in the work-oriented training as assisting nurses we use the method of letting students create instructional videos.

Topics covered are in areas such as brushing teeth, ergonomically lifting from bed, bandaging, using machines related to care facilities and hospitals.

A typical video is about seven minutes.

The working time to produce the film is approximately three hours (180 minutes). This gives the students time to develop a basis for their narration, make a script and record a short film of up to seven minutes.

Giving them less time would have the disadvantage that students would stress through the various elements so that the quality of the material and the final product is low.

Giving them more time, on the other hand, would bear the risk that the level of ambition gets too high and that the result gets too much space instead of the reflection and discussions about the knowledge that belongs to the work-based education.

Students would then, in groups of 4-5, review the videos and give feedback to each other. They discuss their

films based on various aspects and have enough time to be able to make well-founded analyses of the subject.

When everyone is back in the (online) classroom, the groups present their results in summary.

Advantages

We found that this form of education is extremely inspiring and interesting for the participants:

- Everyone feels involved
- Everyone can contribute and share their experiences and opinions
- People get to know each other
- People who find it difficult to speak in the larger group can feel comfortable in the smaller group and speak more freely.
- A lot of students felt more confident behind the screen and could show their skills as video producers.
- The attendance was also better.

As teachers we found that it worked well to evaluate skills with this tool, and that it was comparable to face-2-face education.

Why is it interesting?

This is an example how both theory and practice in vocational training can be done in a remote setting with a lot of active involvement of students.

Can it be used elsewhere?

Any institution can benefit from trying this and let students produce videos about their subjects and activities.

In a situation where physical sessions are impossible, this also allows teacher to evaluate the learning process of their students.

An institution which is familiar with the method will also be less vulnerable in situations when holding presence classes is impossible.

Remote participation is also an option for students who cannot attend physical classes.

We also see an advantage for rural areas where travel to the school is too time-consuming.

Who does it?

Institution

Hälsinglands utbildningsförbund (Hälsingland's Education Association, HUFB) is a municipal association that consists of the member municipalities Bollnäs, Nordanstig and Söderhamn in central Sweden. The mission is to meet student demand for education with both breadth and quality. It runs upper secondary and adult education for the residents of the member municipalities, as well as providing the opportunity for distance studies within a university of applied sciences.

The municipalities have a total of 80 000 inhabitants. HUF provides courses for 2000 participants per year in a wide range of subjects, including vocational training in some selected areas.

Size

CFL Bollnäs has 390 staff members and about 2000 students.

Is it a VET institution?

CFL Bollnäs offers both upper secondary school for youth on EQF Level 4 and vocational training in industry, cooking and assistant nursing.

As the most important association for adult learning in the area, HUFB has developed different vocational and practical educations to fit our rural areas need.

More on this

Website of Hälsinglands utbildningsförbund:

https://www.hufb.se/

Website of CFL Bollnäs:

https://www.hufb.se/vuxenutbildning/cfl-bollnas

3 – Specific activities
Students as Directors

lustration page

Labour market role play - done online by a student at Vestifex adult edcuation centre in Narva.

The Labour Market Role Play

Job seeking trained in online chats

OÜ Novucenter

Novucenter in Narva, Estonia, lets their learners play job interviews in online sessions, with one learner playing the job seeker, the other playing the employer. Afterwards, students reflect their experience in a a group discussion.

Summary

- ☒ Pedagogics / Didactics
- ☐ Work-based training
- ☐ Curriculum
- ☐ Management

Area

Description

In this remote learning method, participants are immersed in a dynamic role-playing scenario that simulates a real-world process of job finding.

This method assigns participants dual roles: they alternately become employees and employers, which allows them to engage from both perspectives within the employment process.

In practice, at the beginning of the session, participants receive instructions about their roles:

Employee Role:

As employees, participants are tasked with detailing their competencies and professional experiences similar to building a resume. They are given enough time for writing their competences and professional experiences

down. It is done before they start applying fort he available job positions. This aspect of the role encourages them to critically evaluate and articulate their skills and achievements effectively.

Employer Role:

As employers, participants are required to create and advertise job positions. This involves defining job roles, necessary skills, and qualifications, which cultivates their ability to identify and articulate organisational needs and job-specific requirements. Participants should be given enough time for this part of the activity.

Alternatively, if there is a limited time for the activity, the educator/facilitator can prepare in advance the handouts with competences/skills/experience for the role of an employee and the handouts with the job roles for the role of an employer to be used for the activity.

The interaction

The core interaction takes place on a chat platform (could be any social media chat) with the aim to mimic job application processes. Here, participants acting as employees submit tailored motivation letters for the positions advertised by their peers in the employer role.

Employers review the applications and select candidates based on the alignment of the stated competencies and experiences with the job requirements.

The primary goal for all participants is to secure a 'position,' ensuring that each person experiences both acceptance and rejection, mirroring real-life job hunting dynamics.

If there is enough time the job interview simulation could also be added tot he activity.

Group discussion

Following the role-play, a facilitated group discussion allows participants to reflect on their experiences, share feedback, and discuss the challenges they faced.

This discussion is crucial as it helps develop key soft skills such as communication, self-presentation, critical thinking, and analytical abilities. Participants evaluate their approach and learn from others' experiences and strategies.

Why is it interesting?

By integrating practical experience within a remote setting, the method not only addresses essential competencies like communication and critical thinking but also provides a unique opportunity for participants to navigate virtual employment scenarios.

This hands-on approach fosters adaptability, self-presentation skills, and effective communication in a digital context – all crucial elements in the evolving landscape of remote work and learning.

Can it be applied elsewhere?

This method can be applied in various educational institutions seeking to enhance remote learning experiences. Institutions aiming to prepare learners for the intricacies of remote work and promote interactive, practical learning can find value in implementing this method, fostering a more dynamic and engaging educational experience irrespective of the institution's specific focus or discipline.

Who does it?

Institution

Novucenter is a training centre in Narva, Estonia, that offers training programmes and coaching services for adults to support their personal and professional development.

Areas of training offered by Novucenter include Videography, Computer Programming, Digital literacy, Customer relations and Marketing, and dealing with stress.

Size

Novucenter has a staff of three, and about 150 learners per year.[1]

Novucenter is not a VET institution in the narrower sense, but its provides career counselling and coaching for young people and adults.

More on this

Website of OÜ Novucenter:

https://www.novucenter.eu

1) Data of 2024

4
Virtual Objects & Simulations

Illustration page Torch

A welding simulator (brand: Soldamatic) in use. The apparatus has all control elements of an ordinary welding machine, so that the trainee can play with the settings, but it also has a video screen where pictures of the welding process along with various quality data (heat, distance, angle of attack, speed of movement, regularity of movement etc.) can be displayed. This can be done in real time during the welding simulation, and also as a video record for analysis and feedback afterwards. The welding simulation is done via moving the hand torch (replacement of the electrode etc. of a real device) along the edge of a work piece mockup (here: the blue steel bars. The trainee wears an augmented reality helmet which displays a visual simulation of the weld as it would be seen through the vizier of a real welding mask.

Torch and Screen

Training welding using augmented reality

WBS Training, and many others

Summary

Welding is a craft that is expensive to learn and teach. Welders require a lot of practice, and until recently, all training had to be done with real materials: metal workpieces, electrodes, fillers, costly shielding gases, and protective equipment to safeguard trainees from health hazards. However, augmented reality now offers a more affordable solution, allowing much of the training to be conducted virtually, and in a variety of locations.

Area

- ☐ Pedagogics / Didactics
- ☒ Work-based training
- ☐ Curriculum
- ☐ Management

Description

Welding – joining metal parts by melting them at the point of contact – is a craft that is both difficult and expensive to learn and teach. It requires extensive practice, specialised and often costly equipment, and involves significant health and environmental risks due to the heat, radiation, and fumes. Moreover, the materials used for practice, such as metal pieces, often become scrap, adding to the expense.

For two centuries, since welding became part of industrial processes in fields like machine building, shipbuilding, and the production of railway equipment, cars, or construction, it had to be learned on the actual shop floor. However, with the advent of augmented reality

(AR) applications, a new approach to training welders has emerged: welding processes can now be simulated.

In AR welding training, the apprentice uses equipment that closely resembles real welding machines. The setup includes a metal box connected by hoses and cables to a handheld torch (see picture). Instead of a standard welding mask, which shields the user from the light and heat of the electric arc, the trainee wears a helmet with an augmented reality screen. This allows the user to perform the welding process as if it were real. The trainee sees both the workpiece and the torch (real-world objects), but AR adds elements such as the virtual weld bead, which builds up as the torch moves along.

Experts acknowledge that while augmented reality simulation cannot fully replace the hands-on experience of using a real welding torch, it provides an excellent supplement during the initial stages of welders' training.

Why is it interesting?

We included this example in our collection of Good Practices because it highlights the potential for ongoing and future developments in vocational and workplace-related training.

While welding simulators are still expensive and the training typically takes place in specialised learning centres rather than at home, they represent a significant step toward the de-localisation and virtualisation of learning, even in hands-on professions.

Looking ahead, it's possible that one day trainee welders could be equipped with welding simulators for practicing at home, further expanding the flexibility of vocational training.

Can it be applied elsewhere?

Welding training is a common offering at *Volkshochschule*-type general adult education centres in Germany, catering to both professionals and hobbyists. Currently, this training is conducted in real workshops with real materials, but the augmented reality

approach could be adopted by any institution providing welding training, including Volkshochschule-type adult education centres.

Of course, offering welding training with simulators requires an investment in the equipment, but this is not much different from the costs associated with training on real machines.

Who does it?

Institution

This type of welding training is now offered by many training providers. We chose to highlight WBS Training, which was present at a job fair at VHS Hannover last year.

WBS Training is a private enterprise and part of the WBS Group, a company founded in Germany in 1979 that currently (as of 2024) employs around 1800 people. The company operates 270 training centres across Germany and specialises in education and further training, offering 3000 training and retraining programmes. Many trainees participate in government-funded programmes through the Employment Agency.

In addition to vocational training and retraining, WBS Training offers integration courses for migrants and university degree programmes.

Size

WBS Training has over 800 employees, more than 150 locations, and approximately 17 000 course participants annually.

Is it a VET provider?

WBS Training can be classified as a Vocational Education and Training (VET) institution although its focus is rather in re-training of adults, and less in initial VET for youngsters.

What else?

WBS Training is by no means the only training provider in Germany offering welding training with simulators.

This technology has become increasingly widespread in recent years.

More on this

Websits of various companies providing either the machinery, or training offers with welding simulators. The collection of links is rather accidential. You could find hundreds of others by searching in the internet for "Welding simulator".

https://www.fronius.com

https://www.techsoft.co.uk

https://www.slv-halle.de/en/education-training/gsi-slv-welding-trainer

A web application for training welding, without any tools, just using the mouse for a welding gun:[1]

https://welding-game.web.app/

1) We discovered this in 2024 accidentially, tested it briefly and found it a fun tool for first steps.

Illustration page Beast

Plastic models for veterinary training. Source: Université de Liège website.

The Patient Beast

Veterinary training on plastic animals

University of Liège – Veterinary department

At the University of Liège (Belgium), students of veterinary medicine can practice various procedures on plastic models of animals rather than on living animals. Although this is not actually a remote activity, it still makes practicing more flexible, somewhat more independent of location, and cheaper.

Summary

☐ Pedagogics / Didactics
☒ Work-based training
☐ Curriculum
☐ Management

Area

Description

The Skill Lab is a place where Bachelor and Master students of Veterinary Medicine can practice clinical and technical procedures on plastic models of animals, thus optimising their approach to real animals, so that there is never a first-time act on a living being.

The lab is used by all students of the faculty. It allows bachelor and master students to work together, the latter being the tutors of the former.

Some examples of procedures that can be practiced on the animal models include:

- Intravenous (IV) catheterisation: Students can learn how to properly insert IV catheters, a critical skill for administering fluids and medications.
- Suturing and wound management: Practicing different suturing techniques and managing wounds

helps students develop the precision and confidence needed for surgical procedures.

- Endotracheal intubation: This procedure involves inserting a tube into the trachea to maintain an open airway, essential for anaesthesia and emergency situations.
- Ultrasound examination: Students can practice using ultrasound equipment to examine internal organs, improving their diagnostic skills without needing to sedate or restrain live animals.
- Dental procedures: Techniques such as scaling, polishing, and extracting teeth can be practiced on models, ensuring students are proficient before working on live animals.
- Bandaging and splinting: Applying bandages and splints correctly is crucial for treating injuries, and practicing on models ensures students can perform these tasks effectively.

While it is possible to perform these procedures on living animals, using plastic models offers several advantages. It eliminates the risk of causing pain or distress to animals, provides a safe environment for students to learn and make mistakes, and allows repeated practice without the need for a large number of live animals. This method not only enhances the learning experience but also adheres to ethical standards by reducing the use of animals in education.

Why is it interesting?

The Skill Lab practice is particularly relevant to the *Remoking* project, as it offers an effective and inspiring solution to overcoming the challenges of delivering work-related training remotely.

This process has significant potential for remote applications. Here are two configurations to illustrate its versatility:

- The trainer can conduct a session in-person with a small group using "plastic models of animals" and broadcast the session live to additional students online.
- The trainer can teach online while trainees, located at various sites in different cities or countries, use the "plastic models of animals" to follow the course and implement the trainer's recommendations and instructions.

Can this be applied elsewhere?

This practice could be applied in other institutions, especially those offering VET and work-based training, but also adult education, and youth education programmes.

However, it is important to note that the costs of implementing this practice can be significant, and institutions would need to invest in models and artificial mannequins or material adapted to the themes, as well as digital tools to connect competence labs with tutors/educators.

Who does it?

Institution

The University of Liège is located in eastern Belgium and has been in existence for 193 years. It is a public university with nearly 24 000 students, 4300 employees, of which 2800 faculty members (= teaching and research), and 11 faculties (with the HEC Liège Management school is counted in).

Size

The Faculty of Veterinary Medicine is one of only two in Belgium. It has 1600 students and runs three veterinary clinics and 7 research departments.

Is it a VET provider?

The University of Liège is a traditional university but also provides a range of VET courses and programmes.

More on this

The website of the Skills Lab is:

https://www.fmv-skill-lab.uliege.be/

Illustration Page

Usually, students will train their massage technique with relatives at home. But also practicing on ones own body can be an option. – Foto taken at Vestifex adult education centre, Narva.

REMOKING

Blended Health

Remote massage training for caregivers

Valga County Vocational Training Centre

Summary

The public VET centre in Valga, Estonia, *Valgamaa Kutseõppekeskus*, discovered a way to allow trainee caregivers to learn and practice basic massage techniques remotely: First, the trainees watch video instructions recorded by the VET centre's massagist. Then, they practice the techniques at home with relatives or friends. To earn credits for the module, they have to record videos of their activities and submit them.

Area

- ☒ Pedagogics / Didactics
- ☒ Work-based training
- ☐ Curriculum
- ☐ Management

Description

We offer a comprehensive year-long course for caregivers (first level vocational training) consisting of various modules. One specific module focuses on the fundamentals of massage therapy.

In presence classes, the module features live demonstrations by a professional certified massage therapist, followed by hands-on application of massage techniques.

Understanding the needs of all our learners, including those who may not be able to be physically present, we have integrated a hybrid learning model: During the live demonstrations, we recorded each session capturing the therapist's explanations and demonstrations of techniques.

REMOKING

To ensure competency and mastery of the skills taught, remote learners are tasked with applying these techniques practically. The task consisted of practicing the techniques on a friend or a relative, and submitting a video recording of this practice. This video serves as proof of their understanding and ability to accurately execute the massage techniques learned. It is essential for online participants to earn credit for the module.

The time spent on massage training is, by curriculum, 5 hours.

Why is it interesting?

This example shows that even manual activity training and practice can be carried out remotely. The requirement for participants to practice the techniques on their own, recording their sessions, not only ensures skill acquisition but also aligns with the project's focus on remote skills validation.

This case illustrates the project's potential to explore and implement effective methodologies for practical skill development in a blended learning setting, catering to diverse learner needs.

Can it be applied elsewhere?

The hybrid learning approach employed in this case – blending live demonstrations with recorded sessions and practical skill validation through participant-generated videos – can serve as a model for other institutions. Institutions seeking innovative ways to deliver practical training, especially in fields requiring physical skills like massage therapy, can find inspiration in this practice.

Who does it?

Institution

Valga County Vocational Training Centre (VKOK, *Valgamaa Kutseõppekeskus*) is the only vocational education institution in Valga county (Estonia). Its main activities are: 1) organization of vocational training in

all forms and types of learning; 2) organization of in-service training and retraining of adults; 3) vocational orientation and counselling for students and adults in the county.

Languages of instruction are Estonian and English.

The school has the following curriculum groups:

- transport services
- accommodation and catering
- home services
- construction and civil facilities
- materials processing (glass, paper, plastic, wood),
- motor vehicles
- shipping and aeronautics
- childcare and services for young people, social work and counselling.

Forms of study include:

- School-based study (full-time study with theoretical and practical lessons take place at the school according to the lesson plan. Anyone can start school-based learning).
- Non-stationary form of study (volume of independent work more than 50 % of the total volume of studies).
- Work-based learning or apprenticeship (at least two-thirds of the training takes place in a company).

Size

VKOK has a staff of 54. It registers about 500 learners per year.

Is it a VET provider?

VKOK is a fully developed VET education centre offering training for a broad range of vocations, see above.

Location

Valga county is one of 15 counties in Estonia. It has a population of 27 000 with 12 000 living in the name-giving city. Valga county is in the southern part of Estonia, bordering Latvia.

More on this:

Website of VKOK:

https://www.vkok.ee/en

5
Reorganisation of Space

Illustration page

REMOKING

Room to Learn

Online-learning made accessible to everybody in a special venue

Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed

A charity in Dublin has equipped a room to provide access to technology available to individuals who otherwise lack access or do at home not have the necessary privacy and quiet at home. The room is used for online learning and studying.

Summary

☐ Pedagogics / Didactics
☐ Work-based training
☒ Curriculum
☐ Management

Area

The INOU has implemented a range of effective measures in remote teaching and learning, with a notable example being the transformation of their third training room into a dedicated space for online learning and studying.

Description

Recognising the challenges faced by individuals in accessing remote education, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, the organisation pro-actively addressed barriers such as limited access to technology, lack of private space, and unsupportive home environments.

By re-purposing the training room, the INOU provided a solution to these challenges. The room was equipped with brand-new PCs, complete with headphones and web cameras, enabling students to engage in online learning effectively. Additionally, the room provided

REMOKING

screens and an air filtering system to ensure a safe and facilitative environment considering COVID-19 concerns.

This innovative approach exemplifies the organisation's commitment to fostering inclusive and accessible learning opportunities. By providing a designated space equipped with necessary technology and safety measures, the INOU not only facilitated remote learning but also addressed the specific needs and challenges faced by their students.

This initiative serves as an inspiring example for other institutions to consider similar measures to ensure equitable access to education in remote learning settings.

Why is this interesting?

The INOU is an interesting case for the Remoking project because it provides education and training to a specific group of learners who may have limited access to traditional education and training programmes. The use of remote teaching and learning has allowed the organisation to reach more learners and provide them with the skills and knowledge they need to find employment.

Can this be applied elsewhere?

While the INOU is a unique organisation, the use of remote teaching and learning could be applied in other institutions that serve similar populations, such as community education centres and organisations that provide education and training to marginalised groups.

What else?

The INOU has emphasised the importance of providing personalised support and guidance to learners who are engaging in remote learning. This has included the provision of one-to-one support, as well as the use of digital tools to monitor learners' progress and provide feedback.

Who offers it?

The Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed (INOU) is a non-profit organisation in Dublin, Ireland, that provides support and services to unemployed people, including education and training programmes.

Institution

INOU has approximately 23 staff and an unknown number of learners.

Size

The INOU is not a VET institution, but it does provide education and training programmes to unemployed people.

Is it a VET provider?

More on this

Website of INOU:

https://www.inou.ie

Illustration page

Above: A group of students discussing a topic. With them at the table: the telepresence robot, here used to include two students from a remote location.

The Learning Lab is equipped with mobile furniture, a lot of telecomunication device, and the windows can be used as notepads, too. - Both pictures courtesy of the UCLouvaine.

Overcoming Limitations

A fancyfully equipped room at the University of Louvain enables learners to cooperate with externals, even in person

Université catholique de Louvain

At the Catholic University of Louvain in Belgium, students and teachers can use a futuristic learning environment by the name of Learning Lab Montesquieu. It consists of a room equipped not only with movable desks and office chairs on casters, but notably of all sorts of electronic equipment to enable collaboration both in the room and with people from outside. The most eye-catching feature is likely the „teleparticipation" robot, which can move around the room, allowing a person from anywhere in the world to physically participate in the activities.

Summary

- ☒ Pedagogics / Didactics
- ☒ Work-based training
- ☐ Curriculum
- ☐ Management

Areas

There is a broader movement in francophone countries to experiment with nonstandard learning environments to enable new forms of cooperation between people in the classroom, different from what we still see in school-like environments most often. On the search for examples, especially such that include options for remote teaching and learning, we found the *Learning Lab Montesquieu* of the UCLouvain in Belgium.

Description

The Learning Lab Montesquieu is named simply after the address of the Library building where it is installed, the Place Montesquieu; it has nothing directly to do with the French political philosopher.

With this innovative learning environment, the Université Catholique de Louvain is also part of the *Learning Lab Network*, an initiative to bring together such places internationally.

The *Learning Lab Montesquieu* was inaugurated in 2020. It can host up to 32 people. Furniture-wise it offers collaborative islands with screens for work in small groups, interactive white boards that can bring together the screens of sub-groups, interactive flip charts, videoconferencing systems for sub-groups and for the whole room, etc. In addition, remote collaboration is enhanced by the use of a telepresence robot which can be controlled from anywhere in the world. It can move around the space and interact with work groups, a speaker, a team, etc.

Here is a list of equipment as published on the website where students and teachers can book the room:

- Interactive white board
- 3 videoconference posts on casters (the post are referred to as „totems"), with screen, camera, and a good microphone
- a co-modality station
- 32 mobile office chairs
- 14 mobile and foldable tables
- materials to write on the glass walls
- 4 Lego kits for creativity
- interactive flipcharts
- 1 teleparticipation robot

A crucial advantage of the electric devices (flipchart, screen) as compared to traditional ones (paper flipchart, whiteboard with pens) is that the screen contents can be made accessible to outside participants as well.

We do not have insight into how often, how intensively, and in which concrete setups the UCL does use this room, and what are the lessons learned from it since it's commissioning in 2020.

In summary, the Learning Lab Montesquieu is a concrete step forward into a future where limitations of space are overcome with the help of telecommunication devices. Work in small groups can be done with people present in the room and with people elsewhere in the world. (In pedagogical terminology we would call this synchronous co-modality.) Further steps in this direction (not yet implemented at UCL) would include:

- Use of augmented reality and virtual reality
- Use of telepresence robots which not only move around in the room and let an outside person communicate with people there (videoconference-like), but also has arms to manipulate objects in the room – which the currently used robot is not capable of.

Why is it interesting?

The *Learning Lab Montesquieu* in Louvain-La-Neuve serves as an example for a possible future direction for organising learning spaces. The lab offers an environment for doing group work (as opposed to traditional frontal teaching). It accommodates not only those physically present in the room, but also includes participants from outside via various technical devices, including some forms of physical (mechanical) interaction with the robot moving across the room.

Of course, such hyper-technologised environments come at a price: First, the equipment is expensive to purchase and mainten. Second, the students need to be adept at using it.

It remains to be seen if this type of technologised learning environment represents the future or if a countermovement of technology-free spaces for human interaction will gain significance.

Can it be applied elsewhere?

Any institution can establish a room equipped with such technology. The key factors are available funding and the commitment of educators, technicians, and management to maintain the space and its devices.

Additionally, learners must develop the necessary skills, as each piece of equipment requires specific training for effective use.

However, working with this type of equipment in an educational setting is an excellent way to prepare students for the world of work, where such technology is increasingly prevalent.

Who does it?

Institution

The Université Catholique de Louvain is Belgium's largest French-speaking university. It's main location is the city of Louvain-la-Neuve 30 kilometres outside of Brussels in the region of Walloon-Brabant. Other places are Brussels, Charleroi, Mons, Tournai and Namur.

Since September 2018, the university uses the branding UCLouvain, replacing the acronym UCL, following a merger with Saint-Louis University, Brussels.

Staff and students

The UCLouvain has about 35 000 students. It has about 7000 employees, of which 3500 are teaching staff.

Is it a VET provider?

In terms of what can be learned there, the UCLouvain is a typical university, although it is pretty unique in terms of institutional setup, history, and multilocality.

More on this

More information on the equipment used in the *Learning Lab Montesquieu* at the Catholic University of Louvain is available via the following video links:[1]

Electronic flip chart:

https://youtu.be/4qx-rFpz1pE

Interactive whiteboard:

https://youtu.be/ZkRMPT8Jk-U

Videoconference posts („totems"):

https://youtu.be/0nlW_wYX4bU

The robot

https://youtu.be/3d60NDDHSuA

Article about the robot, on the university website:

https://uclouvain.be/fr/etudier/lll/actualites/un-robot-de-telepresence-pour-soutenir-la-premiere-rencontre-des-etudiants-circle-u.html

Website of UCLovain:

https://uclouvain.be/

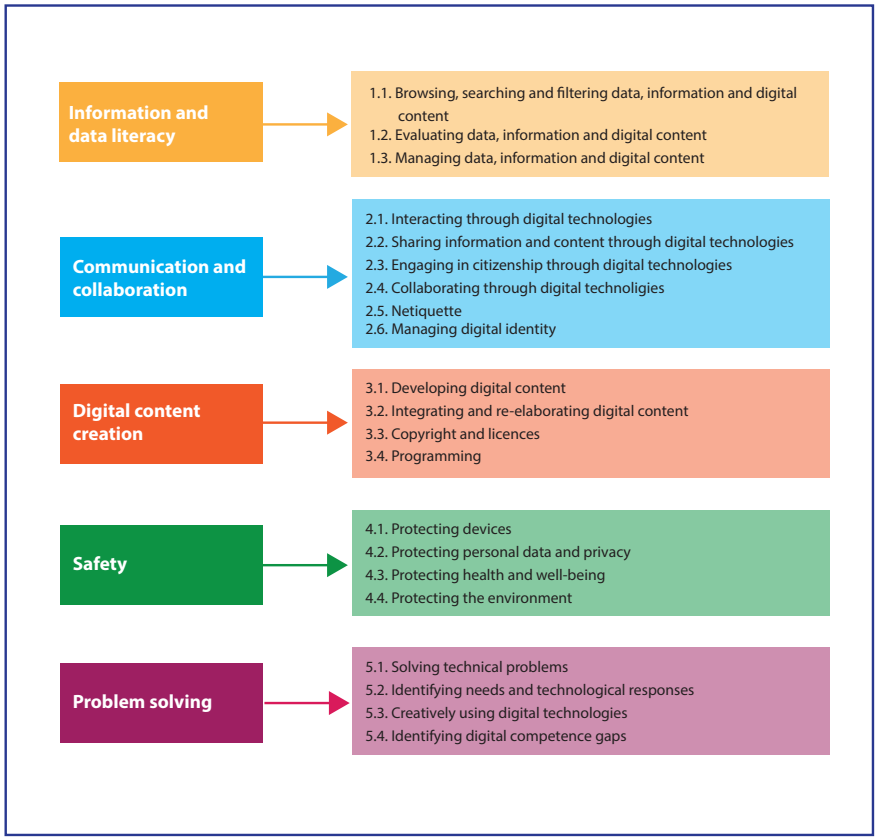
Website of UCLovain, presentation of the the *Learning Lab Montesquieu:*

https://uclouvain.be/fr/bibliotheques/bspo/learning-lab-montesquieu.html

1) All links were checked in September 2024 and were found working.

6
School Management

Illustration page



The DigComp reference framework defines five areas or competences that are useful for citizens when dealing with digital devices. The five areas (left) are detailed through descriptions of specific skills (right). The entire framework is much more complicated, but this is the basic structure. The goal is to make digital skills measurable.

Skills Considered

Integrating DigComp into adult education management

VHS Hannover

In a world where computer technology increasingly influences all aspects of life, citizens must possess the skills to navigate devices, data, and everything digital. This is true also for educational activities delivered remotely. To answer this, the VHS Hannover adult education centre now aims to reshape its entire educational planning and delivery by taking into account the existing (or lacking) digital competencies of its learners. To achieve this, they utilise DigComp, the *European Digital Competence Framework for Citizens*.

Summary

☐ Pedagogics / Didactics
☐ Work-based training
☐ Curriculum
☒ Management

Area

Digital skills are essential in all aspects of life. Citizens must be proficient in using computers not only in the workplace but also in everyday situations. For instance, purchasing a ticket for public transport typically requires familiarity with computerized ticket vending machines. Additionally, retrieving information from the internet has become nearly unavoidable in daily life, and this technological shift significantly impacts how we learn and teach.

Description

This is particularly evident in remote learning and teaching: effective remote education is impossible if teachers and learners are unable to use their devices,

navigate software, and troubleshoot technical issues when they arise.

Beyond these basic technical skills, both learners and teachers need the ability to assess the information they encounter: Is this information from a reliable source? Am I being misled? This critical skill is what we refer to today as media literacy.

In this context, a recent initiative of VHS Hannover is becoming increasingly relevant: VHS Hannover has decided to restructure its entire internal process of pedagogical planning and pedagogical delivery (planning courses, teaching courses, issuing certificates, etc.) to align with the *European Digital Competence Framework for Citizens* (DigComp).

What is DigComp?

DigComp is a competence framework designed to categorise and assess the skills of individuals.

A well-known and straightforward example of a competence framework is the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR), which many people recognise through its A1-C2 rating system for assessing language proficiency.

Similarly, competence frameworks for digital skills serve to categorise abilities related to using information and communication technology. Various initiatives worldwide have sought to establish standards for classifying these skills. In the European Union, the officially promoted system is *DigComp*. Developed on behalf of the European Commission, it was first published in 2013 and has since undergone several updates, with the most recent version being *DigComp 2.2*, published in 2022.

Updating typically involves refining the framework to incorporate new aspects necessitated by technological advancements, such as the recent surge in artificial intelligence. Authors of competence frameworks must continuously evolve their systems to reflect these changes.

The DigComp framework defines five areas in which a person can demonstrate competence (or lack thereof):

1) Information and data literacy
2) Communication and collaboration
3) Digital content creation
4) Safety
5) Problem solving

These areas are further defined by 3-5 specific competences each, which can be rated on a scale from 1 (total beginner) to 8 (top expert).

This rating can apply to individuals, such as learners or actually any other citizen, as well as to educational content. For example, an adult education provider might state, "This course in English language requires learners to be able to use digital technology at this or that level." This requirement becomes particularly relevant when digital devices are used during lessons or when classes are delivered remotely. This is where the framework becomes particularly interesting for Remoking.

How does VHS Hannover use it?

VHS Hannover, an adult education organisation with a 100-year tradition, offers a wide range of courses, including various computer courses. These range from basic use of everyday devices such as mobile phones (particularly for the elderly) to office software (text processing, spreadsheets, etc.), visual content creation (photo and video editing), and specialised software (e.g., for accounting) as well as computer programming. While the competence level of participants has always

been considered, this has not been done systematically; rather, it was addressed on a course-by-course basis.

As digital competences have become an essential part of everyday life, the plan is now to systematically incorporate learners' digital skills and course requirements into all phases of educational delivery at VHS Hannover– from course planning and teaching to issuing certificates.

To achieve this, VHS Hannover is working on integrating DigComp into all its internal processes. This is being done through an Erasmus+ funded project in collaboration with six other organisations from six different European countries: *DigCompAE - Integrating DigComp into Adult Education Holistically*. The project period spans from 2023 to 2026.

Steps to be done on the management level at VHS Hannover are:

- Acquainting all staff with DigComp (the EU framework) through in-house training.
- Developing tools to enable staff (educators, teachers, administration) to reference digital competences in course descriptions and during teaching.
- Tweaking the organisation's course management software to allow for the marking of digital competency levels for each educational offering, both internally and publicly.
- Providing tools for assessing learners' pre-existing competences, e.g. an online test.
- Developing processes to automatically generate suggestions for appropriate courses for learners, even when they only browse the course catalogue on the website.

Why is it interesing?

When discussing the organisation of remote education, considering the digital competences of learners is crucial. The ongoing project at VHS Hannover exemplifies a systematic approach to achieving this.

Can this be applied elsewhere?

Fully replicating VHS Hannover's approach will be a demanding endeavour for other educational organisations. (Some large institutions, such as VHS Wolfsburg in Germany and VHS Wien in Austria, are pursuing similar paths.[1]) However, there are practical ways to incorporate digital skills using less elaborate methods.

A good starting point is to familiarise oneself with DigComp and identify which elements of this relatively complex framework can be implemented within one's own organisation. Regarding the assessment of learners' competences, many organisations have already developed tests; some are available online for free, while others may require a fee.

Who does it?

Institution

VHS Hannover is the public adult education centre for Hannover, the capital city of the German federal province of Lower Saxony. Although the centre is technically part of the municipal administration, it operates as a distinct institution for the general public. It offers a wide range of general adult education courses, including languages, arts, health, and computer skills, as well as specialised programmes for specific groups, such as adult literacy, German language courses for newcomers, and Second Chance courses aimed at obtaining a lower secondary school certificate. In the past, VHS Hannover also provided full vocational training courses in selected professions.

Size

The adult education centre employs approximately 100 salaried staff, including around 30 teachers for Second Chance classes. However, most of its work is carried

1) This article was written in 2024 and reflects the situation then.

out with the assistance of about 700 freelance teachers. Each year, approximately 30 000 individuals take advantage of the learning opportunities offered by VHS Hannover.

Is it a VET institution?

VHS Hannover is not a VET organisation in the strictest sense, but many of its courses are job-related, such as typewriting, office computer skills, and specialised software for accountants. In the past, full VET courses were offered in areas like sales, office management, and pre-press services. Currently, there are ongoing courses aimed at retraining low-skilled employees within the municipality of Hannover.

More on this

Website of VHS Hannover:

www.vhs-hannover.de

Website of the Erasmus+ project *DigCompAE - Integrating DigComp into Adult Education Holistically*:

www.digcompae-erasmus.eu

DigComp paper published by the EU, presenting the entire DigComp concept, Version 2.2 (2022)[1] (pdf for download):

https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC128415

1) Latest version available when this book was published (2024)

Illustration page

Intro picture from the company's website, 2023.

6 – School management

SmartSchool

Online platform to facilitate cooperation between stakeholders within schools

Primary & Secondary schools in Belgium

An online platform for schools to carry out administrative work, promote communication between teachers, students and parents, and provide remote teaching solutions. This platform is used by schools in Belgium.

Summary

Area

- ☒ Pedagogics / Didactics
- ☐ Work-based training
- ☐ Curriculum
- ☒ Management

Description

SmartSchool is an online school environment used by schools (primary & secondary) to ensure that everyone can work together smoothly within one safe environment (teachers & students but also parents). The strength of *SmartSchool* is its simplicity and accessibility.

Tasks that can be carried out with *SmartSchool* include

- Create a school newsletter / newspaper
- Communicate easily with parents
- Compile a dossier for each student
- Be informed about absenteeism
- School administration
- Use various didactic tools provided by the platform.
- And many others

Why is it interesting?

SmartSchool is an integrated solution designed to facilitate remote teaching and learning. It simplifies the management of administrative tasks, didactics, and communication between educators, learners, school administration, and parents. The platform can be combined with other video conference tools (Zoom, Meet, etc.) for online instruction.

We include it in this collection here not so much for recommending this specific platform, but rather to illustrate the concept of such platform in general. Other similar platforms are likely available in various countries.

Can this be applied elsewhere?

Conceived and developed by the Belgian IT company Smartbit, the practice can easily be applied to other institutions, particularly those transitioning to distance teaching and learning. *SmartSchool* is accessible online. Institutions are required to pay a fee to utilise the platform. The platform is compatible with multiple devices, including PCs, mobile phones, and, tablets.

Who runs it?

Institution

The platform is used by primary & secondary schools in Belgium.

Schooling in Belgium is compulsory between the ages of 5 and 18. Up to the age of 15, a student must complete compulsory education full-time. From the age of 15, students can take part in part-time training and opt for a structured learning path that combines part-time professional training in an educational institution with part-time work.

Size

Belgium has thousands of schools. Many of them use this specific platform.

Is it a VET provider?

Almost all secondary schools in Belgium are also VET institutions.

More on this

The website of the platform in French is:

https://www.smartschool.be/fr/

Or in Dutch:

https://www.smartschool.be

Illustration page

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Training and Support

Enabling the use of digital technology through support for learners and teachers

Cavan and Monaghan Education and Training Board (CMETB)

The Cavan and Monaghan school authority operates several schools in the two Irish counties and is also involved in vocational training, adult education and youth work for a population of approximately 140 000. In order to support their initiatives aimed at increasing the use of remote teaching and learning methods, they have developed a range of supportive measures, including training of trainers, and personal assistance for learners who struggle with using devices.

Summary

☐ Pedagogics / Didactics
☐ Work-based training
☒ Curriculum
☐ Management

Area

Description

The CMETB has successfully implemented effective strategies for remote teaching and learning, demonstrating its commitment to using online platforms and tools to deliver courses and assist learners.

One notable strategy is their comprehensive training programme for educators, which focuses on equipping them with the necessary skills to effectively use digital technologies for remote teaching.

This programme includes an initial assessment of educators' digital proficiency, followed by training plans

REMOKING

tailored to individual needs. It covers a range of topics from basic digital literacy to advanced tools and online pedagogical techniques.

The programme also provides ongoing support through a mentorship system, regular webinars, and workshops, as well as an online resource hub with tutorials and a community forum for collaboration.

By prioritising this comprehensive training programme, CMETB ensures that its educators are well-prepared and confident in delivering high-quality remote education.

Organisations can implement similar strategies as CMETB, by following these steps:

- **Assess Needs:** Conduct surveys to identify educators' digital proficiency and areas for improvement.
- **Customise Training**: Create tailored training programs based on assessment results.
- **Offer Training Modules:** Provide sessions on basic and advanced digital tools, online teaching methods, and assessments.
- **Provide Ongoing Support:** Establish a mentorship programme and hold regular webinars and workshops.
- **Create Resource Hub:** Develop an online library with tutorials and a community forum for collaboration.
- **Gather Feedback:** Collect feedback after each training session to continuously improve the programme.
- **Measure Impact:** Track improvements in digital skills and teaching effectiveness.

Perspectives

Looking ahead, the focus on blended and online learning presents numerous opportunities for CMETB. By adopting blended or fully online approaches to education, the institution can enhance the accessibility and feasibility of the Further Education and Training Strategy (FET) for specific groups of learners. This includes individuals who are engaged in full-time, part-time, or self-employment and those who face transportation constraints.

Why is it interesting?

The CMETB's good practices related to remote teaching and learning are interesting for the Remoking project because they involve the effective use of digital technologies to deliver courses and support learners.

The institution's focus on providing training and support to teachers and staff to use digital tools is also noteworthy, as it highlights the importance of ensuring that educators have the skills and knowledge needed to effectively deliver remote education.

Can this be applied elsewhere?

These practices could be applied in other institutions, especially those that offer VET, adult education, and community education programmes.

However, it is crucial to note that the cost of implementing these practices can be significant, and institutions would need to invest in digital tools, training, and support for staff and learners to effectively use them.

What else?

Another important aspect of the CMETB's approach is its emphasis on supporting learners who may have limited access to digital technologies or who may require additional support to engage in remote learning. This highlights the importance of ensuring that education and training programmes are accessible to all learners, regardless of their circumstances.

For examples, CMETB offers to learners devices on loan while on the course.

Also, CMETB offers sessions to demonstrate several assistive technology tools and free apps for people who have troubles typing on a PC. This includes speech-to-writing tools.

But CMETB's assistance is not restricted to coping with technology. They also offer an easily accessible service for learners who have not been feeling well lately and need somebody to chat with about their wellbeing.

Who does it?

Institution

Cavan and Monaghan Education and Training Board (CMETB).

The CMETB is a local, statutory education and training authority established under the Education and Training Boards Act of Ireland 2013. The board's headquarters are in Monaghan town, with a sub-office in Cavan town in the Cavan and Monaghan constituency in the northern part of Ireland, next to the border with Northern Ireland. CMETB provides education and training services to a population of about 140 000 across the two counties while also working with employers to anticipate and address workforce needs. CMETB offers education and training services to over 12 000 learners across eleven post-primary schools and fourteen Further Education and Training (FET) centres. Activities include youth programmes, adult education, and community education.

Staff and learners

CMETB is a significant employer within the region, with a total staff of approximately 1400. Some 870 members of staff are employed full-time with the remainder part-time. About 380 staff members work in the area of further education and training.

Is it a VET provider?

CMETB provides a range of VET courses and programmes, but also other types of education.

More about this

Website of the *Cavan and Monaghan Education and Training Board*:

https://www.cmetb.ie/

The CMETB regularly publishes strategy documents that document its current work and plans for the future. The latest strategy document (56 pages in English) is available at the following address:

https://www.cmetb.ie/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/ONLINE-Bilingual-CMETB-Strategy-Statement-2022-2026-WEB.pdf

Illustra page

It is not the most crucial element of the Hyflex appraoch, but at least it allows for some visuals: In the most recent project description of TU Dublin to equip 21 more rooms for Hyflex teaching, they also show this type of cabin to be used as a learning separé. Nine of this were to be purchased in 2024. – Foto courtesy of TU Dublin.

6 – School management

HyFlex Teaching

Students freely choose their mode of participation between presence, remote, synchronous and asynchronous

Technological University Dublin

Summary

Blended Learning has been a significant focus at the Technological University Dublin for many years. However, they are now elevating this concept to a new level with the implementation of the new *HyFlex* approach. This allows students to decide on short notice whether they want to attend classes in person, remotely, or engage in synchronous or asynchronous interactions. This flexibility is made possible through investments in technology, but even more so through teachers preparing materials and activities for all modes simultaneously.

Area

- ☐ Pedagogics / Didactics
- ☐ Work-based training
- ☐ Curriculum
- ☒ Management

Description

TU Dublin has implemented a range of good practices related to remote teaching and learning, including the development of online courses and the use of digital technologies to support teaching and learning. The institution has also invested in training and support for staff to ensure that they have the skills and knowledge required to effectively use digital tools in their teaching practice.

One specific example is the implementation of *HyFlex* delivery, a flexible teaching model that allows students

to choose their mode of attendance – whether in-person, synchronously online, or asynchronously online – on a week-to-week or topic-to-topic basis. This model ensures that all teaching, learning, and assessment experiences are designed and delivered equitably across these modes.

Definition

On its Website, the TU Dublin provides the following definition what a Hyflex delivery is:

> "A HyFlex module is offered in-person on-campus; synchronously online; and asynchronously online, at the same time. The students are usually free to choose their modality from week to week or topic to topic, therefore a student can choose to be an in-person on-campus learner only, a synchronous remote learner only, an asynchronous remote learner only, or a flexible learner who exercises a degree of choice of modality each week or topic. All teaching, learning and assessment experiences are designed and delivered in an equitable manner."

Community of Practice

To support this, TU Dublin has established a Community of Practice (CoP) for HyFlex delivery, providing regular workshops, targeted professional development, and a dedicated video conference channel for staff collaboration.

This initiative not only enhances flexibility and accessibility for students but also fosters a supportive community for educators to share best practices and innovative approaches in remote teaching.

Costs

Of course, establishing up a learning environment that allows students to decide on short notice whether to attend classes on campus or participate online, to participate online – either in real-time with live interaction (synchronously) or at their own pace with written interaction (asynchronously) – requires significantresources. Teachers must be well-prepared, teaching materials must be developed, and the necessary facilities and devices must be available and operational.

On its Communit of Practice website, TU Dublin provides insight to external observers into the efforts involved in managing such a system. As of September 2024, there is a project presentation available that outlines the various investments required for the next phase of delivering HyFlex teaching. This includes the refurbishment of 21 classrooms, the purchase of 50 tablet computers along with separate cameras and speakerphones for university staff, and nine mini separés, known as "pods," which are small, fully enclosed indoor cabins designed to serve as workspaces for students, offering acoustic separation from the surroundings.

Why is it interesting?

This initiative by the TU Dublin is relevant to this collection of good practice of the *Remoking* project, as it demonstrates the extent to which an organisation can integrate in-person and remote teaching and learning, given adequate funding.

Perhaps most noteworthy is the philosophy underpinning this approach: it empowers students to decide in which mode they want to attend classes, even at short notice.

Can it be applied elsewhere?

The approach can be applied across various educational organisations, provided that the learning does not rely on craft tools, workbenches, or similar resources. Therefore, it is fully applicable to secondary and tertiary

education. In VET organisations, it can be implemented in contexts involving desk-based learning.

However, a key prerequisite is the commitment of management to secure the necessary funding, along with the willingness of teachers to accept the additional workload.

Who does it?

Institution

The Technological University Dublin (TU Dublin) is a state-funded university in Ireland that provides a broad range of undergraduate and postgraduate programs across various disciplines.

TU Dublin is renowned for its innovative use of technology in teaching.

It has an annual budget of about 250 million euros.

TU Dublin exists under this name since 2019. Predecessor organisations include the *Dublin Institute of Technology* (DIT) and others.

Size

TU Dublin has about 29 000 students and and about 3500 employees, of which 1500 are academic staff (teaching and research).

Is it a VET provider?

TU Dublin is a university, not a VET institution in the narrower sense. Many of its courses are however tech-oriented and hence close to industry and the labour market.

More about this

TU Dublin Website:

https://www.tudublin.ie

Website of the Community of Practice for Hyflex:

https://www.tudublin.ie/explore/about-the-university/academic-affairs/digital-education/building-organisational-digital-capability/hyflex-community-of-practice/

(Links tested in September 2024 and found working.)

Illu Page

Appendix

SpeakUp Tutorial

The SpeakUp app is free to use, and it is run by a consortium of public universities. That all makes it favourable, but there is one drawback: there is no comprehensive instruction how to use it, and its use is not completely intuitive, especially if one is used to other products (Kamoot, Mentimeter, etc.).

Therefore we publish here a SpeakUp tutorial for beginners. It is based on the Remoking team's own experience when exploring SpeakUp the first time.

Types of polls

There are various types of polls that can be created: simple question, multiple choice, quiz and chat.

Simple question

A simple question appears on the screen e.g. like this one:

To create it:

Type your question into this field

Hit the „arrow up" button (right hand side) to create the question.

That's it. Your question has been created. It will be displayed on top (!) of your other questions.

Users who opened your poll on their devices (using the SpeakUp app) can press the Vote up / Vote down icons (thumb up, thumb down), and the summary result will be displayed immediately on all devices.

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Multiple choice question

Click the „+" button (left hand side) to create a new question.

A larger field appears:

Set *Number of choices* to e.g. 4.

Enter a question text (e.g. "How many moons does Earth have"), and – important! – add right here inside the question field all your answers, marked with A, B, C, D.

You can use paragraph end marks to start a new line. Multiple paragraph end marks will be preserved.

Click the "Arrow up" button, to create the question.

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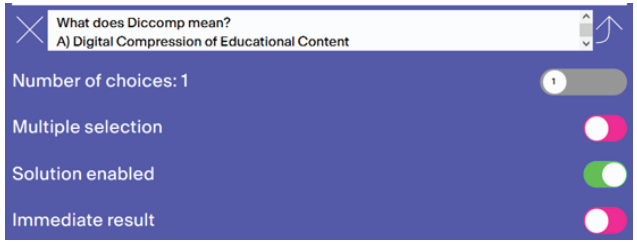
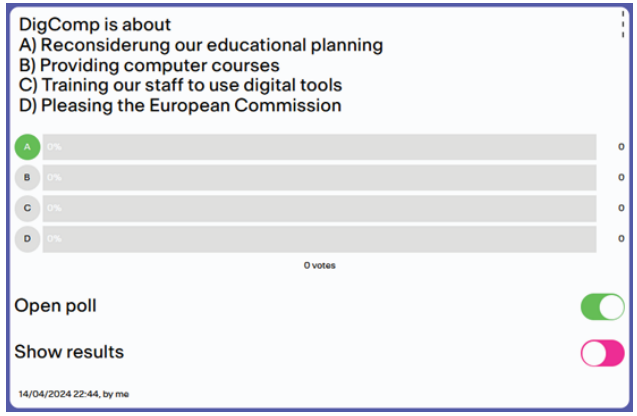
Quiz

To create a quiz:

Same as multiple choice, but use the “Solution enabled” option.



“Solution enabled” is short for “Give the admin the possibility to mark one solution as the correct one.” This is done by clicking on the letters in front of the answers. The letter will get green then (on the admin’s screen):



The correct result will be indicated on the participants‘ screens as soon as the admin enables „Show results“.

Chatting

The teacher creates a new room and shares the room key (e.g. 76449) so that everybody can enter the room.

Everybody (both teacher and students) see on their screens this little text field:

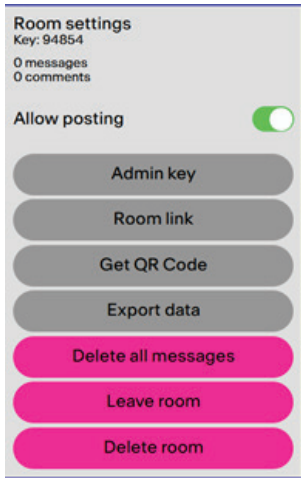
Everybody can enter a comment. On hitting the button, the message will appear on all screens. Newer messages appear on top of the column.

Participants can vote the message up or down.

How to use it in the classroom

Click the square top right in your screen (as the poll creator).

This will make the „room settings“ appear.



There you see the „Key“ (here: 94854). Pass this on to your students.

Students have to open the SpeakUp app on their mobile device. They will punch in the „Room Key“, and then they get displayed the questions.

Or you the „Room link“ which will look like:

https://web.speakup.info/room/join/94854

Tips for first-time users

- In multiple choice questions, students can tip A, B, C, D, E (or more, depending on number of answers), and the result of the voting will appear on the teacher's screen. They have not to confirm their selection separately, it appears right away when they click an answer. Students can reconsider and change their selection afterwards by clicking another answer.
- The „Open poll“ switch on the teachers screen makes the poll appear / disappear on students‘ screens. It means actually “show/hide”.
- The “Show results” switch closes the poll; a note “Poll closed” will appear on students‘ screens; the final result is displayed on everybody's screen.
- Attention: once created, you cannot edit your question. – You can however delete it and create a new one.
- The number of choices in multiple choice questions is restricted to 15. Answers are not numbered but marked with with letters A, B, C ..., so if you want the students to pick a number, you would need to write A: 1, B: 2, C: 3, D: 4... and so on.
- The app (and web app) is built in a way to allow the teacher to create questions very quickly, even on the fly during the lecture; that's possible not least because the number of settings is very limited (as compared to other tools such also Mentimeter), and the graphic design is very simple.
- New questions are always put on top of the existing ones (a bit irritatingly, but the authors of the tool will have had their reason for it)
- In simple questions, the teacher can participate in the polling (giving answers); his actions will be counted, too. This is not the case in multiple choice questions.
- Simple questions can be answered with yes (thumb up) or no (thumb down). The result will be shown on screen as positive (+5) or negative (-5) number, plus a tiny note how many votes have been given in total.

Good Practices Mapping

	Pedagogics/Didactics	*Work-based Training*	*Curriculum*	*Management*
1) Tiny Tools for Everybody				
Liberating Structures – Group activities to foster creativity and communication	+			
SpeakUp – A non-commercial app for classroom quizzes	+			
30 000 Times Free - A network of universities in France offers self-learning materials on a wide range of subjects	+		+	
2) How to Work with People				
Getting Involved – Using group work in online classroom	+			
Responsible Learners – Vocational training re-organised		+		
Different Classroom, Different Structure – Some easy-to-remember tips for online classes as compared to presence classes	+			
Off-time & Reflection – Digital wellness in everyday online education	+		+	+
3) Specific Activities				
Students as Directors – Producing video tutorials remotely as part of vocational training of nurses		+		
The Labour Market Role Play – Job seeking trained in online chats	+			

REMOKING

	Pedagogics/Didactics	*Work-based Training*	*Curriculum*	*Management*
4) Virtual Objects and Simulations				
Torch and Screen – Training welding with augmented reality		+		
The Patient Beast – Veterinary training on plastic animals		+		
Blended Health – Remote massage training for caregivers	+	+		
5) Reorganisation of Space				
Room to Learn – Online-learning made accessible to everybody in a special venue			+	
Overcoming Limitations – A fancyfully equipped room at the University of Louvain enables learners to cooperate with externals, even physically	+	+		
6) School Management				
Skills Considered – Integrating DigComp into adult education management				+
SmartSchool – Online platform to instigate co-operation between stakeholders at school	+			+
Training and Support – Enabling the use of digital technology through support for learners and teachers			+	
HyFlex Teaching – Students freely choose their mode of participation between presence, remote, synchronous and asynchronous				+

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Abbreviations

AE	Adult education
CFL	Centre for Flexible Learning – a type of AE and VET institution in Sweden
EU	European Union; the association of currently 27 European countries to promote well-being, citizen rights, and democracy
HE	Higher education – as opposed to Primary and Secondary Education as well as VET
HUFB	*Hälsinglands utbildningsförbund* – one of the partner organisations in the *Remoking* project
MOOC	Massive open online courses, a type of online courses popular e.g. in academia
URL	Uniform Resource Locator, the technical term for internet links in their ubiquituous form, e.g. https://www.something-interesting.org
VET	Vocational Education and Training, a branch of the formal education system, as apposed to e.g. Primar Education, Secondary Education, Higher Education, etc.
VHS	Volkshochschule – a traditional form of adult education organisation in Germany

www.remoking.eu