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# THE CONTRIBUTION OF CASE STUDIES TO CONCEPTUALISING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF WORK-INTEGRATING HIGHER EDUCATION

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## FUNDING STATEMENT

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## ABSTRACT

The implementation of work-integrating higher education programmes poses a challenge for universities worldwide. Given the lack of all-encompassing theoretical frameworks that consider pedagogic, institutional, structural and cultural dimensions, the onus lies on individual universities, if not faculties and departments, to develop their very own, uniquely tailored approaches to implementing work-integrating HE programmes. This paper reports on an international good practice case study research project that examined the successful implementation of work-integrating educational offers in the US, England and Denmark. Based on the empirical evidence of the case studies, the paper proposes four key factors that drive transformation and generate positive results. Following the assessment of our cases study design against Ridder's (2017) framework on the contribution of case studies to formulating theory, the article argues that our research design was rigorous and aptly fitted the aimed contribution to theory, and that our findings contribute to building tentative conceptual building blocks for the implementation of work-integrating HE.

## THE CHALLENGE OF IMPLEMENTATION

At the level of implementation, converting the conceptual building blocks of work-integrating Higher Education (HE) into real-life pedagogic, institutional, structural and cultural changes poses a plethora of challenges for educational providers worldwide (see e.g. Dadze-Arthur et al., 2020; Mulkeen et al., 2019; Tomei & Talbot, 2019; Zegwaard & Ford, 2017; Billett, 2014; Bridger et al., 2013). In realising the integration of academic studies with learning on the job, individual faculties and departments must not only grapple with disciplinary idiosyncrasies, but also work within the constraints of their respective universities' internal institutions, structures and culture, such as rigid infrastructures, inflexible resource allocation, the stigma conjured up by vocational programme components and so on (ibid). Additionally, they must operate within the limits set by external conditions, such as regional and national educational policies, economic conditions, labour market demands, employer requirements, legal and financial frameworks, and so forth (ibid). Helpfully, the literature proffers conceptual building blocks for operationalising the pedagogy of work-integrating HE (see e.g. Billett, 2001; Boud et al., 2001; Cooper et al., 2010; Lester & Costley, 2010), as well as practical guides for resourcing and managing such programmes (see e.g. Cooper et al., 2010). However, all-encompassing frameworks that comprehensively conceptualise implementation along pedagogic, institutional, structural and cultural dimensions are not yet available (see e.g. Glass et al., 2020). In other words, there is no conceptual framework for implementing work-

integrating HE that takes account of the complexities of real-life, thus leaving faculties and departments to develop their own, bespoke approaches.

## PURPOSE OF OUR CASE STUDY RESEARCH PROJECT

Given the lack of conceptual building blocks for implementing work-integrating HE, we undertook an international good practice case study research project to inform the implementation efforts of German actors in HE (see Dadze-Arthur et al., 2020 for the full-length case study research report). Within the context of the study, a good practice case was defined as “any successful approach to work-based HE at university level, programme level, course level or module level, leading to either a graduate or postgraduate degree, diploma, or certificate from an accredited university” (Dadze-Arthur et al., 2020, pp. 9). The study adopted a research strategy that was capable of capturing the complexity of diverse real-life approaches to implementing work-integrating HE. By examining in depth a small assortment of cases, the research project sought to extract and aggregate themes and dynamics that emerge as shared across the different approaches. Thereby, we were hoping to shed light on key factors pertinent to the implementation of work-integrating HE, and in so doing, systematically inform not just the practice of German HE actors but also those of other HE actors operating in different institutional, structural and cultural contexts.

## STRUCTURE OF THIS ARTICLE

This article presents the knowledge and insights gained from our international case study research project on work-integrating HE programmes across the US, England and Denmark, and critically reflects on the value of the more widely shared lessons for developing conceptual building blocks for implementing work-integrating HE. In preparing the ground for such reflection, the following section briefly presents Ridder’s (2017) propositions regarding the contributions of different case study designs to informing conceptual or theoretical frameworks. Subsequently, the paper outlines the research design and methodology of our case study research project, before presenting three case studies and four shared factors that emerged from our analysis as conceptually pertinent to the implementation of work-integrating HE. The paper concludes by assessing our research process and its findings against Ridder’s (2017) propositions on the contribution of case study research to theory.

## THE CONTRIBUTION OF CASE STUDY RESEARCH TO INFORMING THEORY

The literature concurs that case study research as a methodology is generally exploratory and well suited to surface insights that contribute to theory (see e.g. Corley & Gioia, 2011; Colquitt & Zapata-Phelan, 2007; Edmondson & McManus, 2007). Although principally agreeing with this claim, Ridder (2017) contends that the common generalisation of case study research obscures the heterogeneity of the underpinning methodologies, and their specific contributions to informing theory. Therefore, Ridder (2017) argues for an increasingly nuanced and fine-grained approach to analysing case study research designs, and proposes to map them along a continuum that gradually differentiates between contributions to building, developing, testing and reconstructing theory. In justifying the use of such a continuum, Ridder (2017) explicates that an acute awareness and clarification of a case study research project’s contribution to theory enables increased rigour of the research (ibid).

Correspondingly, Ridder’s (2017) proceeds to argue for four distinct case study research designs that inform theory in unique ways. The first category, labelled *Social construction of*

*reality*, is unique because it is not driven by a specific research question but a wider curiosity in a case or particular research issue. Grounding his argument in Stake's (1995) propositions, Ridder (2017) posits that this category distinguishes between intrinsic case studies that emphasise learning from a case per se vis-à-vis instrumental case studies, that focus on understanding issues in one or across several cases – a process called categorical aggregation (Stake, 1995). Research designs of this category adopt purposive, also called expert, sampling and methods of thick description with a view to enable an interpretative and holistic understanding of the case(s). As a result, the research design *Social construction of reality* is best suited to construct concrete, contextual knowledge relating to new phenomena, and thus contributes to building theory (Ridder, 2017).

The second category, which Ridder (2017) coined *No theory first*, also sets out to investigate novel constructs, which are deduced from new research issues or phenomena, but is premised on a tentative, broad and unassuming research question. Such design employs theoretical sampling that allows for gathering construct- and variable-oriented data in order to reveal new insights about new or preliminary constructs. Consequently, so Ridder (2017) demonstrates, the *No theory first* research design is most productive in contributing to building and developing theory.

The third category, termed *Gaps and holes* (Ridder 2017), is distinguished by a research question that is theory-driven and addresses gaps in an existing theoretical or conceptual framework by focussing on the 'why and how'. Sampling is contingent on the purpose of the case study project, which might range from examining a phenomenon in depth to investigating its generalisability. Data analysis aims at identifying regularities and discrepancies between empirical data and existing theoretical propositions. Hence, *Gaps and holes* is suited to validate, refine and expand a theory, and thus best contributes to developing or testing theory (ibid).

Ridder's (2017) fourth category is labelled *Anomalies*, and is motivated by a research question that seeks to shed light on contradictions or anomalies that an existing theoretical or conceptual framework is unable to explain. The design's theoretical sampling strategy seeks to enable the comparing and contrasting of differences. Following data collection from participant observation or a dialogue between participant and observer, the analysis focuses on recurring structural factors, which explain the failures of the existing theory. *Anomalies* is particularly productive for testing or reconstructing theory (ibid).

## METHODOLOGY OF OUR CASE STUDY RESEARCH PROJECT

Being clear about a case study research project's aims is imperative in choosing a research design that offers an appropriate methodological fit for generating findings that make a conceptual or theoretical contribution (Trochim, 2005; Ridder, 2017). Accordingly, our research inquiry adopted a case study design as both the methodology and method, "whereby the knowledge thus attained could be relayed in form of a 'thick description' for each approach to work-based HE that is situated, integrative of various accounts and perspectives, and meaningful to outsiders also" (Dadze-Arthur et al., 2020, pp.13). With the help of international experts, the study identified and recruited a non-probability sample that included five good practice cases of work-integrating HE from the US, England and Denmark – three of which are presented in this article (ibid).

The semi-formal interviews with stakeholders responsible for programme set-up, directing, delivery and assessment, as well as representatives of advocacy and regulatory bodies averaged 60 minutes and inquired about the organisational set-up of the programme, its pedagogic model, institutional embeddedness, lessons learned, governance structures and broader policy contexts, and aspects around equality and equity of access. The transcribed

interviews were interpreted employing thematic analysis, before being triangulated with information extracted from the case-specific documents and the literature review. This approach permitted to surface not only shared, explicit views, but also tacit, nuanced and informal knowledge. We presented the findings back to the interviewees in order to minimise any distortions, and confirm that the interpretative accounts were indeed authentic and reflective. On this basis, notwithstanding the widely differing cases and their diverse institutional, structural and cultural contexts, the study identified shared factors that emerged as conceptually relevant to successfully implementing work-integrating HE.

## FIELDWORK RESULTS FROM OUR CASE STUDY RESEARCH PROJECT

### **Case 1: University of Pennsylvania's LPS Coding Boot Camp (US)**

The first case study features an example of HE workforce development, i.e. shorter work-based educational provisions that focus on occupation-specific skills and lead to non-degree certificates awarded by the HE institution. These programmes address skills gap in the labour market, and are delivered in cooperation with non-university learning providers that are specialised in occupation-specific training. The programmes challenge traditional universities to broaden their educational mandate and expand conceptions of academic learning. Despite being a workforce development programme, our good practice case is located at the University of Pennsylvania (UPENN), a private, research-intensive elite university in the US.

In 2017, UPenn's *Professional and Organizational Development* (POD) team, a discrete unit in the Liberal and Professional Studies Division (LPS) in the School of Arts and Sciences, initiated a partnership with the private sector learning provider *Trilogy Education Service* (Trilogy) to be able to offer workforce development programmes in front- and back-end coding. The *Coding Boot Camp* is offered and accredited by the university, yet delivered by Trilogy in either a fulltime (12 weeks) or a part-time (24 weeks) format.

POD's partnership with Trilogy leverages UPENN's quality seal as an Ivy League university and Trilogy's expertise in training adults to fill the nation's digital skill gaps. The partnership is hallmarked by a particularly close collaboration that not only involves faculty members but also strategic decision-makers at leadership level. For instance, Trilogy's Vice President attends fortnightly meetings with POD's directors to review real-time data on student satisfaction, course performance, career services and labour market trends and, on that basis, refine curricula and teaching approaches, and address support needs or any other issues that might occur.

The *Coding Boot Camp*'s pedagogic model simulates real-world corporate environments by teaching students to apply what they have learned to real portfolio projects under the guidance of local employers. Delivered in a blended format that includes both on-campus lectures and online classes, individual and team exercises are designed based on the latest research into effective learning processes. The learner-centred teaching model involves lectures from industry professionals, and provides student support through teaching assistants, online tutors, peers, career advisers, and a dedicated student success manager.

The many stakeholders who form part of the programme are organised along a clearly delineated and purposeful division of roles. While those in student-facing roles, including Trilogy's instructors, teaching assistants, and online tutors provide academic guidance, the student success manager monitors the performance of individual students and offers tailored welfare services. UPENN's faculty members oversee the design and continual improvement of the curricula, while the POD team manages strategic and legal aspects. Trilogy's career



services collaborate with employers and assist students with job search upon successful completion of the programme.

In order to establish the *Coding Boot Camp*, POD had to persuade UPENN's academic and administrative stakeholders in six-month-long negotiations to live up to the university's reputation as an innovator and its commitment to the local community, which required rethinking its remit as an educational provider. Key arguments included the possibility of generating revenues for the School, extending UPenn's reach to new student segments, and boosting economic development in the region.

### **Case 2: University of Birmingham's MSc Public Management & Leadership Executive Degree Apprenticeship Level 7 (UK)**

In the UK, recent legislative changes introduced the so-called Degree Apprenticeships at Bachelor's and Master's Level, intended to create three million work-integrating study places by 2020. Typically, every degree apprenticeship is original as an employing organisation commissions a HE institute of its choice to design and deliver the programme in close cooperation with the employer and sector-specific industry body. Consequently, degree apprenticeships formally combine vocational and academic learning, and lead to both a HE qualification as well as a professional one.

Our case study is located at the Institute of Local Government Studies (INLOGOV), an academic department at the University of Birmingham, which is a traditional, research-intensive member of the world-class Russell Group. Deviating from the typical model, INLOGOV self-financed the university's first master-level Public Management & Leadership Executive Degree Apprenticeship, and designed, marketed and delivered it in partnership with the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (Solace), an accredited training provider and assessor of vocational leadership and management courses. INLOGOV's model is particularly attractive because it allows individual employers to fund degree apprenticeships for as few or as many staff members as they can afford to.

INLOGOV's partnership with Solace was key in realising the programme, considering the training provider's experience in executive leadership coaching, and its practical insight following the delivery of a level 5 degree apprenticeship, which sits just below the bachelor level. Moreover, INLOGOV was able to capitalise on its existing links with sector bodies and local government organisations in recruiting employers and students. However, given the lack of a conducive infrastructure and culture at wider university level, INLOGOV could not have set up the programme without its dedicated staff members, who had to capitalise on their personal contacts in registration, admission, finance and other administrative and professional services in order to launch the degree apprenticeship.

Geared at senior-level public sector employees, the programme is delivered in a part-time, blended format, and leads to a master degree in Public Management and Leadership as well as a Chartered Management Institute Level 7 Diploma in Strategic Management and Leadership. It consists of six taught 20-credit modules and a work-based 60-credit dissertation, with academics convening the taught component and a management mentor appointed by the employing organisation overseeing the dissertation project. The academic modules are assessed by written assignments, while the work component involves students dedicating 20% of their time at work to experiential learning tasks that are gathered in an e-portfolio for assessment by the Chartered Management Institute. Knowledge exchange with peers is also an important tenet of the pedagogical approach.

A variety of roles underpins the delivery of the programme: Two *academic directors* oversee the programme, while the *module convener* is responsible for learning content and

assignments, and *industry experts* for lectures and workshops. An *academic tutor* and an *INLOGOV practice tutor* are assigned to each apprentice, with the former offering guidance on academic progress and pastoral questions, and the latter assisting with translating academic learning into practice at work. A *welfare tutor* supports apprentices in case of personal difficulties, and the *programme administrator* offers guidance on administrative matters. Nominated by the employer, the *management mentor* provides on-the-job support, and the *line manager* ensures that apprentices are able to meet both their work and learning related commitments. The *apprenticeship coordinator* manages the contracts with employers, while the *degree apprenticeship facilitator* oversees the operational activities around the university's degree apprenticeships, functioning as the lynchpin between employers, the university, apprentices, and the central admissions team.

Importantly, at departmental level, INLOGOV already had the experience, pedagogy, culture and institutions necessary for realising work-integrating education, and thus was well equipped to take on the uphill struggle in lobbying stakeholders at wider university level to adapt existing infrastructures, central processes, and professional services. The process of setting up INLOGOV's pioneering degree apprenticeship prompted the wider university leadership to initiate some institutional changes effectively to deliver work-integrating education. However, a deeper cultural shift, which truly facilitates further, much needed institutional, structural and operational improvements, is still outstanding.

### **Case 3: Aarhus University's Module Experimental Management Practice (DK)**

The third case study hails from the Danish School of Education (DPU) at Aarhus University in Denmark, one of the world's best 100 universities. Following a string of New Public Management reforms between 2003 and 2000, Denmark was able to establish a coherent system of higher and higher vocational adult education and continuing training. Importantly, the new system of academic and professional education incentivised traditional HE institutes, such as Aarhus University, to provide executive master and diploma courses that are offered in part-time formats or as single modules. Typically, these programmes are aimed at mid-career practitioners in full time employment, who have managed to secure funding from their employers in order to prepare for leadership or change agent roles.

Our good practice case is the module *Experimental Management Practice*, which forms part of the two-year part-time *Master of Educational Management* (MEM). The programme was originally developed in collaboration with Copenhagen Business School and targets professional managers in educational institutes. Following two semesters on theory and research methods, learners take the module *Experimental Management Practice* in their third semester. It engages students through a problem based learning (PBL) approach that invites learners to apply theoretical knowledge to solving real-life problems.

DPU's traditionally close links with schools and other service providers in the education sector, as well as its fruitful partnership with Copenhagen Business School, were pivotal factors in designing a programme that is relevant to the world of practice. These partnerships enabled DPU to identify the specific needs of employers and student practitioners, and on that basis design innovative modules, such as *Experimental Management Practice*, which offer value to employers and practitioner students by providing a creative space in which learners are able to experiment and generate theoretically informed solutions for problems at the work site.

Driven by the pedagogy of a PBL approach, the module *Experimental Management Practice* invites students to identify a management challenge at their own work site, and design and execute an intervention. Following the intervention at their respective workplaces, the students gather empirical data that they analyse, guided by relevant theoretical literature of their choice. They are able to test their ideas against academic and professional views by

engaging in discussions with teachers and peers. Thereby, students turn a practical issue at work into a theoretical issue, but also learn to switch perspectives and reframe a problem based on different epistemological assumptions. Similar to a PhD defence, students are assessed on the basis of presenting and defending their projects. The learning outcomes include the ability to self-direct learning in addition to critically experience and productively transform professional practice through the use of theoretical concepts. During the process, students acquire an ability for critical thinking and rigorous analysis, in addition to enhancing generic skills around collaboration, communication, and project management.

The module's PBL approach involves three distinct key roles: First, the teacher's role is to facilitate the linking of empirical knowledge to new theoretical concepts, and help students analyse their professional practice. Second, classmates, who are also experts of their own managerial practice, play a key role in debating and scrutinising their colleagues' emerging hypotheses and findings relating to the theorising, reframing and solving of professional challenges. Third, colleagues at work, who are directly affected by the professional dilemma, offer input outside the classroom and inform the learner's investigation and reflections within the particular, applied context.

Considering that the PBL approach has an established track record in Denmark's traditional HEIs, DPU and Aarhus University already had the cultural and institutional prerequisites for realising the module *Experimental Management Practice*. Additionally, DPU's willingness to allow its faculty members creative freedom and organisational discretion to tailor the application of the PBL model in the context of work-integrating education proved another noteworthy factor in designing and delivering the module.

## SHARED FACTORS DRIVING SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION

Even though the international good-practice cases differ widely and are situated in the distinct educational landscapes of different localities, however, the analysis surfaces four factors that are shared across in assisting with the successful implementation of work-integrating HE:

### ***Productive and innovative partnerships***

Notwithstanding different cultures, languages, systems and priorities, the ability to negotiate productive partnerships with non-traditional external partners in the public, private and voluntary sphere, such as employers, professional organisations, learning providers, or community organisations, emerges as pertinent to effectively implementing work-integrating educational provisions in HE. The challenge is, of course, to make sure that calibrating such educational offers to the demands of partnering organisations happens with a long-term view that puts learners at the centre and is capable of managing, if not avoiding, the short-term priorities of stakeholders, industries and economic sectors.

### ***Systematic integration of theoretical, experiential and peer-based learning***

The systematic integration of academic learning with professional training, but also with peer-based learning, which involves knowledge exchange between practitioner students from within a community of practice, appears to be another pivotal factor in successfully implementing work-integrating HE programmes. The methodical linking of theory and practice results into educational stakeholders and employing organisations having to coordinate curricular and experiential activities, and possibly assessment, so that they complement each other. Thereby, it drives a pedagogy that overcomes the divisive binaries of 'classroom' and 'workplace', and 'theory' and 'practice', and results into a broadened

conception of 'knowledge'. Furthermore, combining theoretical learning with both experiential and peer-based learning tends to ensure that learning outcomes are continually updated, and thus remain relevant, valid and appropriate. The caveat is, of course, that such systematic integration requires high-level negotiation skills, alongside the ability to design appropriate work-integrating programmes, which may lead to a plethora of learning outcomes, given that both academic and professional skills and competencies may need to be considered.

### ***A diverse and purposeful range of staff roles***

The case studies also demonstrate that the job roles involved in setting up, facilitating and assessing work-integrated teaching and learning, both at the worksite and the university, ought to be highly diversified and clearly demarcated to support effective implementation. In addition to the traditional teaching roles, there is a wide range of roles for student-facing personnel, who address the particular support needs of working adults in HE by providing personalised academic, welfare and career development services. Similarly, there is a variety of roles for employer-facing staff, who monitor labour markets, recruit employing organisations, manage relationships, assist with placing student practitioners and graduates into jobs, and support staff at the worksite effectively to participate in the teaching, and possibly assessment, of learners. Moreover, there is a range of roles for those staff members, who are responsible for back office functions and the promotion, alignment and coordination of work-integrating programmes across academic, administrative, legal and professional services departments. The challenge here is that some of these roles are unprecedented and will have to be newly developed.

### ***A willingness and capacity for structural, institutional, operational and cultural changes***

While the impulses for change that drive HEIs to adopt work-integrating HE education vary, all three case studies show that a willingness and capacity for reform are imperative for successful implementation. A university keen on realising work-integrating educational provisions must have the ability to be flexible, innovative and do things differently, which inevitably will require internal lobbying to change the culture, institutions and operational processes of the HEI and its individual faculties and departments. Ultimately, a culture is needed that embraces not just academic subject expertise but also practice-based expertise, while university infrastructures, departmental procedures and institutionalised practices need to respond to the different requirements of work-integrating programmes by becoming more flexible in terms of admission and assessment procedures, contracting and legal affairs, collaborative arrangements, and the way in which resources are allocated. Here, the obvious caveat is that HEIs are traditionally resistant to change and often too rigid to reform time-honoured cultural and institutional traditions.

## **ASSESSING OUR STUDY AGAINST RIDDER'S (2017) PROPOSITIONS**

The design employed in our study features all of the characteristics, which according to Ridder (2017) define case study research designs labelled *Social construction of reality* – a term that evokes Berger's and Luckmann's (1966/1991) seminal work on the sociology of knowledge. The rationale for our case study research project was based on the premise that the phenomenon of interest, the effective implementation of work-integrating HE, has not yet been conceptually understood and theorised. Consequently, we opted to forego a concrete research question in order to avoid theoretical preconceptions and leave room for surfacing unexpected insights about the ways in which HE providers have implemented work-integrating HE (Dadze-Arthur et al., 2020). Underpinned by a constructivist epistemology and

idealist ontology, our research design employed thick description to achieve holistic and situated insights into each case, reflecting meanings embedded in the respective contexts. Confirming Stake's (1995) suggestion that intrinsic and instrumental case studies may merge into one, our research design facilitated learning both from each individual case per se as well as from categorically aggregated themes. Our study's purposive non-probability sampling approach is also characteristic of case study research designs in this category.

By exhibiting all the characteristics of the category *Social construction of reality*, our case study research is most productive, according to Ridder (2017, pp. 298), in developing "tentative theory" and "building concrete, context-dependent knowledge with regard to the identification of new phenomena". As this was indeed the purpose and achievement of our study, there is evidence to suggest that our research design is rigorous and aptly fits the aimed contribution to theory, which is "a prerequisite for the contribution of case study research to better theories" (Ridder, 2017, pp.302-303). Conversely, our study offers empirical evidence that confirms Ridder's (2017) theoretical propositions regarding the category *Social construction of reality*, and thus endorses its usefulness in guiding the development of research designs that aim at building theory.

## CONCLUSION

This article presented three good practice case studies and, on that basis, extracted four key factors that constitute preliminary conceptual building blocks for implementing work-integrating HE: productive and innovative partnerships, systematic integration of theoretical, experiential and peer-based learning, a diverse and purposeful range of staff roles, and a willingness and capacity for structural, institutional, operational and cultural changes. In aiming at informing the practice of HE actors operating in different institutional, structural and cultural contexts, the results could contribute to a more systematic approach to implementing work-integrating HE, and thus enhance the success of these programmes.

The greatest limitations of our study are those inherent to the methodology chosen. Undertaking case studies implies a series of choices and omissions – which cases do we select, which parts of the cases do we observe in depth, which parts do we present in what way – and which not. Grounded in an epistemology of the particular, we rely on the force of a few cases in assuming that what is found in these cases can be found in others. Accordingly, further research is needed, for one, to probe whether the four factors can also be identified in other successful work-integrating HE programmes, and second, to elicit additional factors that eventually contribute to a more comprehensive implementation theory.



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## FROM UNIVERSITY TO LABOUR MARKET IN THE 21ST CENTURY: A STEP FORWARD IN WORK-BASED PLACEMENTS. AN INTRODUCTION TO THE UNILAB PROJECT

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### ABSTRACT

University-business cooperation has in today's world a crucial role, covering multiple areas, such as applied research, joint education and professional development programmes, work-based learning for the students, and other spheres. The competences acquired by students at university are key for their future job satisfaction and payment level, which in turn influence very much the quality of life and the whole societal satisfaction, determining a profound impact on national economies.

The Erasmus+ project UniLab focuses on one of the domains of university-business cooperation: work-based practice for current students and work placement for recent graduates. This is one of the most demanding and challenging aspects of university-business cooperation in the Partner Countries involved in the project: Russia, Belarus, and Azerbaijan.

The challenges that these Partner Countries face in relation to work-based learning are manifold: insufficient career support services, poor practical placement guidance, uncertain employment perspectives, low involvement of Career Centres in the practical placement procedures, curricula that do not provide students with relevant professional competencies and university-business cooperation agreements that need to be improved.

UniLab aims to contribute to the modernisation of the higher education sector in Azerbaijan, Belarus and Russia by converging with four European partners, who will share selected successful practices of work-based learning, and developing tools to enhance collaboration between enterprises and HEIs towards the increase of graduates' employability.

Based on a strong peer learning approach, the project will develop an efficient model of cooperation between universities and enterprises, including a set of resources, among which are a Prototype Education Model, a Prototype Model of extra-curricular activities, a Students' Portal and a Network Model of International University Students Career Centres.

By doing so, UniLab aims to impact on three main types of stakeholders:

- Universities (student, teaching and administrative levels)
- Business (private companies, retail, services, manufacturing, etc.)
- Governmental bodies (chambers of commerce, city organisations, professional labour communities, etc.)

### Key words

University-business cooperation, work-based learning, practical placement, career support, peer-learning.

## WORK-BASED LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Successful cooperation between the academia and business world is essential to ensure the effectiveness and satisfaction of the whole economy and society. In the wide landscape of university-enterprise collaboration, work-based learning (WBL) – intended here both as work-based learning during study programmes and graduate placement at the conclusion of studies - plays an especially important role.

The benefits of work-based learning are evident for all the actors involved. To higher education institutions (HEIs), work-based learning offers the opportunity to improve the professional dimension and relevance of the curricula and of the teaching methods; it helps to foster exchanges with the business world; it contributes to improve the employment prospects of higher education graduates. For the business world, work-based learning means having the possibility to give feed back to universities about the real needs and priorities of employers and the labour market; it gives the opportunity to train students in real tasks and eventually identify and recruit future employees, making the whole recruitment process less demanding in terms of time and resources. For higher education students and graduates, work-based learning means having the opportunity to receive academic teaching and practical training at the same time, better harmonizing theoretical and practical knowledge; it also helps them to build up experience in a real work environment and have more chances of employment. Finally, work-based learning can be a powerful tool by which public authorities can address the problem of unemployment – especially youth unemployment - generating more opportunities of employment for young and older students. By promoting a higher job satisfaction, a better quality of life is ensured for all individuals and the society as a whole.

The UniLab project moves from the above premises, with the aim to improve the model of cooperation between HEIs and businesses in relation to work-based learning in Russia (RU), Belarus (BY) and Azerbaijan (AZ).

The project, coordinated by the European University Continuing Education Network (eucen), is funded under the Erasmus+ Programme, KA2 Capacity Building in the field of Higher Education, and runs from January 2020 to January 2023. The consortium is composed of twelve partners, eleven of which are higher education institutions. Four of the partners are based in the European Union (Austria, Belgium, France, and Spain), while the rest are universities based in Russia, Belarus and Azerbaijan.

## CURRENT CHALLENGES

Work-based learning is one of the most demanding and challenging aspect of the university-business area in Russia, Belarus, and Azerbaijan. The problems encountered in this area are manifold and have been identified in the initial project phase by the partners through desk research and consultations with stakeholders (mainly enterprises) conducted both online meeting and via a dedicated survey.

These are some of the key problems identified by the partner universities based in RU, BY and AZ:

- Poor practical placement guidance offered to students
- Career Centres not involved in practical placement procedures
- Career Support services not diversified enough
- Wide gap between university education (qualifications and skills obtained by the students) and the labour market needs



- Dissatisfaction among students with the quality of the preparation they receive in universities and sense of ill-preparedness
- Need to improve the agreements on university-business cooperation
- Uncertain employment perspectives for students
- Lack of follow-up system of student employment success
- Lack of information about good models existing abroad

Part of the above challenges correspond to similar problems faced in countries based in the European Union. However, the specificity of the problems experienced in Russia, Belarus and Azerbaijan is strongly related to the common Soviet past of these countries, in which universities and labour market were closely linked through governmental programs that would secure obligatory work placement of graduates by the employers. When the Soviet Union collapsed, universities as well as enterprises became isolated from each other. This meant that universities stopped getting customized order on specialists either from the government or from the enterprises and were forced to establish education programs on their own.

## THE PEER LEARNING COMPONENT

UniLab has a very strong Peer Learning component, which underlies the whole project, and which was introduced since the very beginning of the project.

According to this principle, the partner universities based in RU, BY and AZ collaborated in the writing of national reports on work-based learning (covering ongoing practices, legal limitations as well as the findings of a survey conducted with enterprises) and shared and compared these reports in the kick-off transnational event – the Barcelona Peer Learning Seminar, organised in March 2020. In the context of the same event, the EU partners – eucen, and the three EU-based universities - shared with the consortium selected models of work-based learning programmes that are currently running successfully. This was the starting point of discussion for the following project developments, which produced a SWOT analysis of current WBL systems in RU, BY, AZ, as well as a diagram (see *Figure 1* overleaf) useful to map out and identify potential moments of interventions for improving the existing WBL system.

Peer learning within UniLab is also facilitated and encouraged at national level through the establishment of dedicated Focus Discussion Groups. These are meant to be spaces where local/regional stakeholders (i.e., enterprises, other HEIs, associations, students, alumni, mentors/supervisors, etc.) meet each of the HEIs periodically, discuss the work carried out by UniLab and provide feedback on how to better adapt this work to the specific local/regional context and needs.

Finally, peer learning will be promoted via three Study Visits, each led by one of the European universities: the Barcelona School of Management of Universitat Pompeu Fabra (ES), IMC Fachhochschule Krems (AT) and Université Lille (FR). Each Study Visit develops around one key aspect of work-based learning, on which the partner universities in RU, BY and AZ need to work and make improvements.

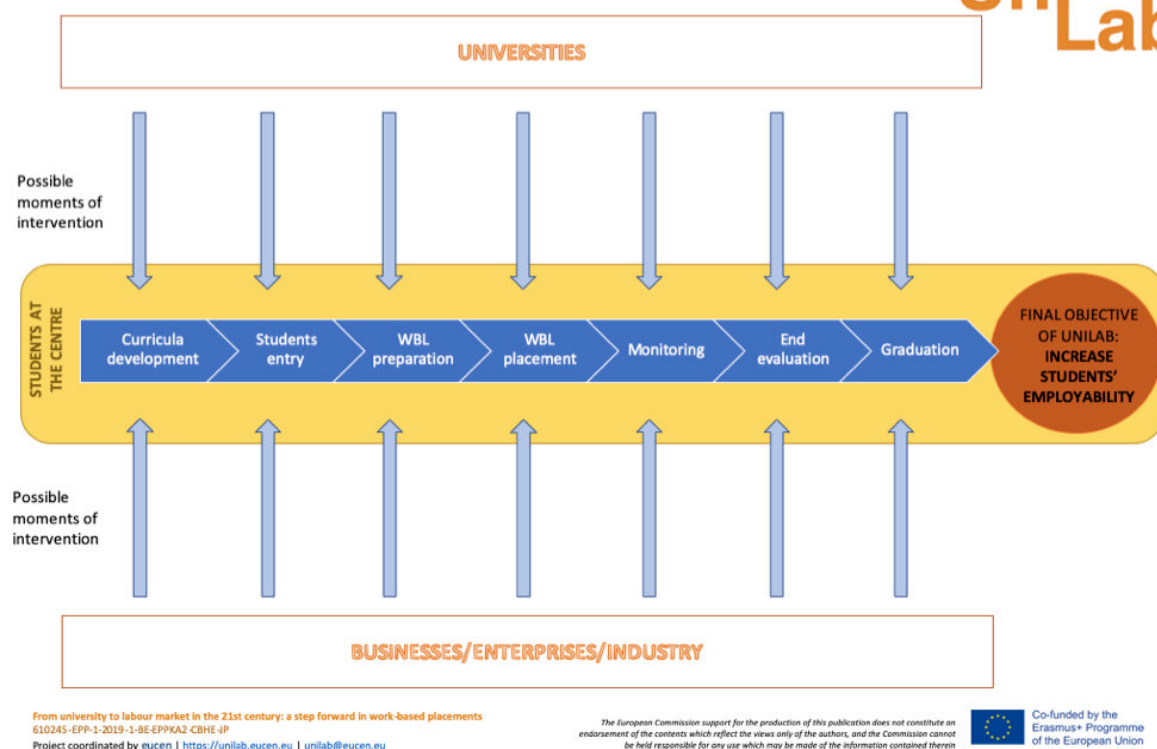


Figure 1: Guiding Diagram to identify potential interventions for improvement of a WBL system

## RESOURCES FOR WORK-BASED LEARNING

UniLab will work on the development of a set of practical resources to support universities in RU, BY and AZ to modernize their current work-based learning practices. The development phases started with the first study visit, and follow as described below:

- I. The first development phase corresponds with the Study Visit organised by the School of Management of the University Pompeu Fabra and focuses on University-Business collaboration strategy development, with participation of different actors. The Study Visit will be followed by the elaboration of a) a strategic plan for developing existing or new collaborations in RU, BY and AZ and of (b) a model of University-Enterprise cooperation to improve existing ones.
- II. The following phase will consist of the development of a prototype of education programme model in accordance with requirements of the labour market, designed to meet the demands of specific employers (e.g., designing professional tailor-made programmes jointly with employer). This stage of the project will also see the development of a prototype set of extra curriculum activities that will be offered by Career Centres to support the development of skills students need to have a smooth transition from education to employment (self-branding, entrepreneurship, self-understanding, etc.).
- III. The subsequent phase, built around the Study Visit organised by the University of Applied Science of Krems, will focus on online tools for students/alumni. An internet-portal dedicated to Student Practical Placement will be launched, including documents, assessment tools, database of businesses, organisations, companies, university enterprise; agreements, forums, info for graduates' employability, videos (cases, interviews, etc.), advertisements, success stories, etc.

- IV. The final development phase will be inspired by the Study Visit organised by the University of Lille and will focus on practical arrangements of work-based learning, such as tools and methods to design WBL collaboration between business and academic practical arrangements for university-business collaboration. The UniLab consortium will work on the development of philosophy/principles/concept of modern/practical placement; on the development of standards, including quality criteria; and on the development of a tool set for practical WBL placements (digital portfolios, peer reviews, written reports, etc.).

One of the final and most ambitious objectives of UniLab is the development of a model Network of University Career Centres, which will enable better graduates' employment on local, regional, national, and international level. The model will include channels by which students can meet with potential employers, open lectures and workshops from the industry leaders and other experts enhancing the students career chances and meeting the academic and labour stakeholders. A 10-year Plan for full development and implementation will also be included.

UniLab will accompany its development work with a full set of activities and events designed to disseminate and valorise its results. Regular internal institutional information seminars will be organised, to present the project and ensure institutional support, multiplying the knowledge/expertise within the wider university community. In parallel, local and regional workshops will be organised at different stages to present the project to external stakeholders, in order to engage them in the project activities.

Towards the end of the project, in 2022, national exploitation conferences will be organised in Moscow, Minsk and Baku, to ensure awareness raising of external stakeholders, present the project results and resources and further multiply their adoption and implementation. Furthermore, a final, research-based International Conference will take place in Baku, in the same year.

## CONCLUSION

UniLab aims to generate a strong impact both on the single partner institutions and on the partner countries involved. It will do this by building an efficient model of cooperation between higher education institutions and business and developing better schemes to answer the needs of both parties and of the learners. The latter must be considered the ones at the very centre of the whole work-based learning process. By improving work-based learning practices, the employability of students and graduates will improve, generating a broader social impact.

The UniLab consortium is aware that there is not a *one size fits all* plan: each country, and each institution within it, has its peculiarities in terms of needs, assets, and priorities. The opportunities of intervention and improvement of each single university may differ, based on the legislation in place in the country, on the institutional regulations governing the university, the local and regional context, the characteristics of the labour market, etc.

The diagram adopted by the consortium during the Peer Learning Seminar held in March 2020 (see *Figure 1*), illustrates the complete work-based learning path, from the beginning to the end (which is represented by student's employability). As the diagram shows, there are several moments in time, during the process, in which universities may be able or need to intervene to bring about changes and improvements. Based on the learning acquired through UniLab, each university in RU, BY and AZ will devise and direct its plan of action according to its specific situation, priorities and needs.

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# HIGH TOUCH, HIGH FEEL IN THE VIRTUAL CLASSROOM: LESSONS LEARNED FROM A REFLECTIVE PRACTITIONER IN THE AFTERMATH OF COVID-19

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## INTRODUCTION

In March 2020 as Covid-19 continued to impact the world, universities quickly moved many courses from face to face to online. Faculty became online instructors overnight. One semester turned into two semesters and into three semesters. Educators needed to learn new technology quickly and to find ways to continue that high touch, high feel approach with students that they fostered in their face to face classes. How could they maintain that warm connection they established with students during the physical class-room? Chatting with students before the class began, exchanging social conversation during the break and providing instant feedback during the class, accompanied with visual cues, such as body language and facial expressions and tone of voice. This instructor did not want to lose the connections she made with students and sought ways to ensure the connections continued in her virtual classrooms. This action research study outlines the ways the educator fostered that high touch, high feel in her virtual world. From Saturday evening informal online gatherings, to the use of personalized videos on discussion boards, as well as detailed feedback on student assignments confirm that there are ways to keep that warm environment of connectivity even in a world of Covid-19 and uncertainty.

In this study, the researcher sought to answer the following question:

What factors contribute to a high touch, high feel online learning environment?

The researcher used information from eleven online courses between March and September 2020 in a South East Florida public university in the United States.

In online courses and with face to face courses, instructors often use discussion boards to engage students in interactive conversation. Instructors and students generally communicate their thoughts via a written piece within the text box of the discussion board. An alternative to a written post or response is a personalized video. The use of a personalized video can add student and instructor presence within the course. Even a personalized welcome video at the start of the course module may help a student feel connected to the instructor. Today and tomorrow, online classrooms will grow, and technology will continue to enhance online learning. Educators will continue to learn and incorporate technology into their classrooms to enhance student satisfaction and engagement. This educator will share her personal reflections and study findings during 2020.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Personalised videos*

Draus et al., (2014) emphasize that the teacher student relationships that are strong can be connected to student satisfaction in a classroom. The use of personalized videos, as well as informal ways to get together virtually create a warm environment and invite interaction and perhaps ease the sense of loneliness. The virtual classroom goes from being 'dead' to 'alive'

and the student experience is enhanced. Dennen (2011) found that instructors created places that invited increased interaction between students when they placed a personalized video into a discussion board. According to the student feedback and grades, there was an increase in satisfaction between students, as well as a higher level of learning. Students communicated with one another more often than they did without embedded personalized videos. Additionally, the quality of their communication was high. Draus et al., (2014) concur that incorporating personalized videos in the online classroom can help to form teacher-student relationships and when these relationships are developed, they may contribute to student success. Almusharraf and Khahro (2020) reviewed studies that confirmed when instructors used personalized videos, they were helpful to students and assisted in learning. The use of personalized videos in teaching is increasing within higher education (Chan 2010) and there are ways that instructors can enhance the personal connection with the use of personalized videos that allow instructors to connect to students (Underdown & Martin, 2016).

### **Feedback**

Feedback is an important part of learning. Students may benefit from constructive feedback on their assignments so that they can reflect on the feedback and apply it to future assignments and learn. According to Uribe and Vaughan (2017), providing feedback that is both timely and worthwhile to the student is constantly a challenge. It is even more challenging in an online class where there are no visual cues accompanying the feedback. The student attempts to understand the written communication and may not have the opportunity to ask questions. Leibold and Schwartz (2015) suggest that the feedback conversation can be a way for the instructor and the student to connect and interact. It is relatively simple and quick for instructors to respond to a student discussion board posting, or to provide personal feedback on an assignment. Even a warm video welcoming students to the course can create a feeling of belonging to the learning community. The welcome might include an informal bio of the instructor, together with the basics of attending an online course and what to expect regarding format. A video introduction to each module that incorporates a short story can help students relate the content to practical life. Closed captioning can be utilized when including a personalized video so that students have another option to review the video content.

### **Engagement**

There is very little research on the use of social virtual get togethers in online courses. However, Redmond et al., (2018) posit that social engagement between students and instructors was instrumental in online student engagement, as well as creating relationships and trust. They included this in their higher education online engagement framework. During face to face classes, there are many ways for student-interaction. Students engage with the instructor prior to the class meeting, during the break, during in-class activities and at the end of the class. However, in the virtual classroom, a considerable amount of effort needs to occur in order for engagement and interaction to happen. Dennett and Vasquez (2012) posit "When taking online classes, interaction between students, peers and instructor is virtual; the personal contact may be lost if suitable techniques and tools are not made available" (p. 48).

Cheung et al., (2008) studied the reasons for student participation in the virtual classroom. They found that students who wanted to stay in the class and participate, were the students who thought they connected well to the instructor or students in the class. The student-teacher relationship was instrumental to the student and how they performed in the class. The students described how they missed the physical interaction they had in face to face classes. However, the way the instructor communicated with them and offered ways to collaborate helped to build a sense of community. Tolan et al., (2020) discussed that



students' engagement was inhibited when there was a lack of interaction in the online course. This interaction was important to student learning. There are various ways to offer interaction, these included Zoom, WebEx and various video platforms.

## METHODOLOGY

Action research was used to conduct this study. Creswell (2005) defines action researchers as “exploring a practical problem with an aim toward developing a solution to a problem” (p.549).

As lifelong learners, instructors constantly evaluate what is working and what is not working in the classroom. In early March 2020, a pandemic hit the world: Covid-19. Face to face classrooms were transformed to online classrooms overnight. This researcher did not want to lose that warm connection she had in face to face classes and she chose to evaluate ways that continued to make her learning environment warm and engaging. The warm rapport and connection that was established in the classroom needed to occur in the virtual classroom. This was especially important in a world filled with uncertainty, change and the constant need for adaption. Her goal was to share these best practices with other colleagues across the world.

The researcher concentrated on the following research question: What factors contribute to a high touch, high feel online learning environment? The research was conducted in three phases. Phase I included the design of the study. Phase II concentrated on collecting the data and phase III focused on analysis.

**Phase I.** The researcher was always curious in how to create a warm environment that fostered interaction. She tried to find ways to continue to encourage this in her online classes. However, when Covid-19 turned all face to face classes into immediate online classes, she wanted to ensure the high touch high feel continued in the online world and to explore what seemed to work for students. She created the design of the study and explored ways on how she would gather and analyse the data.

**Phase II.** Data were gathered in this phase. The data were collected from Spring, Summer and Fall semesters of 2020. Links to surveys for the Student perception of teaching (SPOT) are emailed to all university students at the end of each course requesting students to evaluate the instructor in each of their courses. The SPOTs include both quantitative data and qualitative data. For this study, the research examined the qualitative data. There are two questions: What did you like most about this course and how could this course be improved? There was an additional place to add comments and suggestions. Approximately four weeks after the course is finished and the final grades have been submitted, the university emails SPOT results to instructors. The results are anonymous to the instructors. For this study, the SPOT evaluations from the Spring and Summer semesters were analysed. The Fall semester SPOTs had not been distributed due to the timing of the research. As well as using the SPOT evaluations, the researcher emailed each student in each of her courses an email consisting of three open-ended questions mid-way through the semester asking for their feedback about the course. Students responded via email, therefore these comments were not anonymous. The purpose of these questions was to gather feedback from students, mid-way through the semester so that the instructor could continue what was working and make changes for improvement in the courses. The SPOT evaluation results are received after the course is complete and therefore there is no opportunity for the instructor to make current changes to those courses. There is only opportunity to make changes to future courses. Questions in the mid-semester pulse check included: What do you like best in this course so far? What do you like the least? What are your suggestions for improvement?

**Phase III.** Results from the SPOT evaluations were analysed by the researcher reading through the SPOT summaries in order to obtain a “general sense of the data” (Creswell, 2005 p. 231) and transcribing the results into an excel spreadsheet and reviewing for common words and themes. The researcher read through the transcripts several times in order to understand the context of the student comments. She highlighted descriptive words that were expressed more than once. She followed the same analysis for the mid-semester pulse check surveys.

### Sample

Eleven courses between March and December 2020 (spring, summer and fall semesters) were reviewed (see table 1). Ten courses were totally online and one course was face to face that transitioned to online due to the pandemic. Two courses were undergraduate courses and nine courses were graduate level courses. However, due to the timing of the research, only the spring and summer semesters SPOT evaluations were evaluated (seven courses). One hundred and seven students from seven courses in a public university in South East Florida had the opportunity to participate in SPOT evaluations. Sixty-seven students completed the SPOT evaluations. SPOTs for fall 2020 have not been completed at the time of this research study. However, the mid-semester surveys were distributed via email to students in eleven courses (including fall 2020 semester). One hundred and fifty-five students completed the mid-semester surveys out of a possible one hundred and ninety students.

Semester	Course	Total Students	SPOTs Completed	Surveys Completed
Spring 2020	ADE 6381	19	7	18
Spring 2020	EDA 6103	20	14	17
Spring 2020	ADE 6184	20	13	15
Spring 2020	LDR 2020	11	9	6
Summer 2020	EDA 6103	7	6	7
Summer 2020	ADE 5185	19	12	13
Summer 2020	ADE 6930	11	6	10
Fall 2020	ADE 6381	21		18
Fall 2020	EDA 6103	22		18
Fall 2020	ADE 6387	23		21
Fall 2020	LDR 4104	17		12

*Table 1 - Courses Analysed and Total Responses*

## RESULTS

Three themes emerged: Thorough feedback, personalized videos and virtual get togethers.

**Thorough Feedback.** The participants shared that they valued the feedback and the quality of the feedback. They believed that the feedback helped them to learn from past assignments and to improve on future assignments. According to one participant “The video feedback on assignments and engagement was truly appreciated. I felt connected to the instructor.” Another participant agreed “Her feedback! She makes each assignment clear through her rubric, but even after she completes grading our assignments, she provides the most thorough feedback that helps me understand how to better complete later assignments.”



**Personalized Videos.** There was general consensus that participants thought the instructor's personalized videos helped to create a connection between her and the participants. One participant confirmed this "I really enjoyed the personal feedback and videos about our assignments. Even though this was online, I felt that she actually tried to make it feel like it was face to face." Another participant wrote "I liked seeing video announcements by the professor because it felt even more personable than reading posts, although there was nothing wrong with written posts."

**Virtual Collaboration.** The third theme of virtual collaboration and getting together emerged. Participants seemed to want to have ways that they could connect with one another and the instructor. A participant commented "She really tries hard to encourage us students to get to know each other. My favourite virtual party was the afternoon tea she organized. It was a lot of fun seeing each other and learn about the food they made." Another quote from a different participant stated "I like the use of WebEx online sessions to provide a stronger more personalized connection to other members of the class. This is a fantastic class."

## DISCUSSION

Based on early feedback through the mid-semester surveys, the instructor implemented changes in her courses. She continued to provide detailed and thorough feedback on all assignments coupled with personalized videos. She concurred with Draus et al., (2014) in that students' levels of engagement and satisfaction were high when in classes with instructors who incorporate personalized videos. A personalized welcome video is a warm way to introduce the student to the course. The instructor can set the stage of what to expect, as well as create that nurturing climate for learning. An introduction to each module of the course can highlight important areas of the material or re-emphasize important points. This instructor continued to make personalized videos for discussion boards, announcements and assignment feedback. A personalized video can be a nice way to provide feedback to the student. The student can play the video and replay the video as needed. As well as a written response, the video makes the connection more personal and individualized. She added additional ways to connect virtually via Zoom and coordinated an afternoon virtual tea, a virtual celebration for graduates, a virtual welcome get-together, as well as a virtual pot-luck gathering. In 2015 Korkut et al., shared that university administrators were worried about engagement among students being missing, as well as instructors not engaging students fully.

The instructor shared her findings with colleagues in a global conference. There are opportunities for future research to continue to learn what is working and what needs to be improved. This research forms a foundation to support conversations sharing best practices with other educational institutions and communities of practice.

## CONCLUSION

Educational institutions had to transition from face to face classrooms to online classrooms virtually overnight as a result of Covid-19. As universities continue to offer ways for students to learn online, instructors need to find ways to engage students and to find ways to form a connection. This research study reinforced the researcher's beliefs that there are ways to interact with students in online classes using personalized videos, by giving thorough feedback and by offering ways to collaborate. The high-touch high feel can be fostered in the virtual world. The researcher sought to answer the following question: What factors contribute to a high touch, high feel online learning environment? The researcher used her

eleven courses between March and September 2020 as the sample at a South East Florida public university.

Today and tomorrow online classrooms will grow, and technology will continue to enhance online learning. While the virtual world will still bring challenges both to students and instructors, there are methods that the instructor can utilize to enhance the student's engagement and learning experience. Educators will continue to learn and incorporate technology into their classrooms to enhance student satisfaction and engagement. They will continue to find ways to interact with their online students and establish a personal connection.

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## **NEW SCENARIO IN CONTINUING EDUCATION: A CHALLENGE AND MANY OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE FUTURE**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

COVID-19 has transformed our life. In particular, the way in which teachers have evolved the learning methodology. Although it already had been on the rise before the crisis, through fully online or blended programs, digital learning suddenly became the only way to deliver programs through what is sometimes referred to as “emergency remote teaching”. The learning curve was steep for learners, teachers and course organizers. We had to learn several tools and software in order to modify our presence in the classroom to a virtual way of teaching. In essence, we had to change to a new paradigm of learning.

In UC3M, as an institutional norm, we began to use Blackboard Collaborate for the online classes, both for lectures and for workshops, and Google Meet for team work and tutorials. In order to capture the attention of students, we personalized our classrooms, getting constant feed-back from students and producing interaction with quick quizzes, and presentations. This transformation took place in record time, since in just two weeks, all teachers received University training and the TIC service was helping us thoroughly in each step: the learning process and the evaluation process. Given that the pandemic did not end in May, we decided to implement online exams using different tools and applications.

### **THE PAST. CHRONICLE OF EDUCATION TRANSITION**

The transition begins in mid-March when the education system is closed and the university redirects face to face teaching to the online system using two basic tools: Blackboard Collaborate for teaching and Google Meet for tutoring.

All teachers were able to transform their teaching using these tools. In parallel, the University decides to delay by 15 days the end of course date to compensate for this adaptation period.

The assessment process also had to be adapted to the new circumstances. Decisions had to be made. In the UC3M system there are two calls, ordinary and extraordinary. The Vice-rector of Studies decided to evaluate students using remote tools; mainly Quiz in our intranet (moodle) using cameras or opening zoom.

Subsequently, in June UC3M School of Continuing Education, according to the university strategy, started planning the academic year 2020-21. To facilitate this, a form sheet was designed to receive information from Directors of the teaching model that best suited the characteristics of the program (e.g. many of the programs include face-to-face internships in companies).

SCE offered four options and different models as a guidance for planning the teaching in 20/21, to be considered by the management team of each program.

Directors had to select only the model that was understood to be the most appropriate for each program:

1. Suspension of the program. It was considered advisable not to offer the program the next academic year. The management team had to indicate the reason, as difficulties in obtaining external internships, reduction of the number of applications for admission, etc.
2. Synchronous online orientation, with exceptional face to face activities. Management team had to describe the model of tuition and the face to face activities and decide if attendance at face-to-face activities was mandatory in order to be evaluated. They also had to confirm the type of space required for activities and include proposals for tuition aid for students.
3. Bimodal. Part of the program is followed synchronously online and part face to face. Management team had to include a brief description of the model and number of face-to-face and online hours, a description of the type of space required for face to face classes and proposals for tuition aid for students.
4. Face to face orientation. Exceptionally offered if it was not possible to organize any synchronous online programming (Only in programs with less than 30 students). Management team had to include a brief description of the model and the number of face to face hours, a description of the type of space required for face to face classes and proposals for tuition aid for students.

As a result of considering these options:

- 33% of the programs have been offered using the synchronous online model, and are mainly programs with a high percentage of international students.
- 37% of the programs are taught in the bimodal model. About 50% of the teaching will be given from a university classroom, and the other 50% in synchronous online format without classroom use. These programs have small groups, so there are classrooms available with capacity enough for the delivery of the face-to-face teaching part.
- 40% of the programs continue with the completely face-to-face modality and will be used in the programs that have the facilities offered by different companies and institutions that have spaces suitable for the organization of classes with the required security measures.

In July the decision was to use a hybrid / mix system, with 50% of face to face so, in case the pandemic goes worse, we should move again to completely remote classes. Surveys were conducted among the students both in undergraduate and graduate. The levels of satisfaction were good, underlying the great effort performed by all academic personnel.

Finally, in October, after observing the evolution of covid-19 in Europe, some programs had to change to an online system. We also have programs addressed with institutions, firms that decided to move to their specific centres to offer face to face teaching, following the sanitary rules of Government. As a responsible institution, The School of Continuing Education (SCE) is aware that requirements are compliance. Because of this concern, the SCE proposed an action plan, with the collaboration of the Directorate of continuous education programs, offering teaching alternatives for the next edition.

## THE PRESENT. NEW PARADIGM

### ***A safe return*** [1]

UC3M aimed for everyone to return under safe conditions. To guarantee the safety of the University Community, a series of measures and protocols have been put into place. The commitment of each one and strict compliance with hygiene and safety measures are of essence to combat the spread of COVID-19.

A framework of general measures has been established in the work and academic environment and a series of specific measures in classes, offices, laboratories, cafeterias, Schools and Centres. Measures have been also taken for individuals at risk. Practical guides for both students [2] and teachers [3] are available.

### ***Organisation structure to manage the incidence in UC3M***

To facilitate the return to face-to-face academic activity at UC3M, following the recommendations prepared by the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Universities to adapt the 2020/2021 academic year to the new scenario, UC3M adopted a series of preventive measures to facilitate a safe return to face to face classes.

A procedure was required to ensure rapid containment of the infection, agile management of students who initiate symptoms, and early identification of cases, quarantine and follow-up of close contacts and identification of possible sources of transmission.

The organizational structure for decision-making and the management of the actions derived from COVID-19 in UC3M was established as follows:

A **Commission** constituted to monitor COVID 19 cases at UC3M, made up of different academic authorities.

Its competencies are:

- Monitoring the evolution of COVID 19 cases at UC3M.
- Making the appropriate decisions according to the circumstances of the cases detected among the students, teachers, and staff of UC3M services.

An **advisory committee of experts** is set up in order to advise the Commission on decision making.

It is designated a **Global Head of Management** of actions derived from COVID 19 in UC3M, whose functions will be:

- Coordinate the management of actions and information for the follow-up of cases within UC3M.
- Provide the support required by the Covid Commission.
- Provide the information required by the health administration and by the rest of the competent bodies and services of the State Administration and of the Government of Madrid.

**Delegated managers** responsible for Covid management in the centres are also appointed to support the Global Head of Management in the necessary steps.

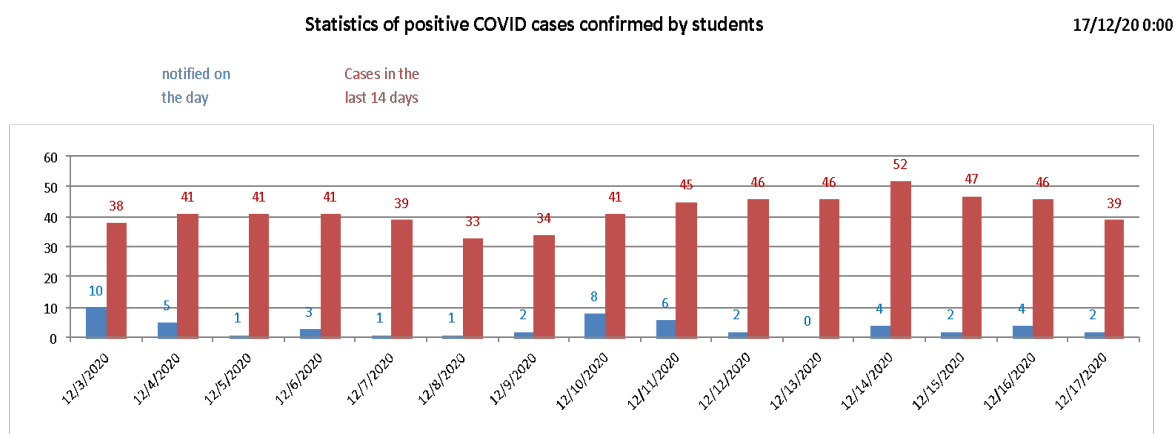
The functions of these team are:

- Support the Head of Management in the steps that are necessary for the location, communication and information to the students.
- Manage the specific measures established by the Deans in relation to laboratories and external student practices.

## CURRENT SCENARIO AND FUTURE PLAN

### *To what extent is the situation controlled?*

The evolution of the data of covid cases confirmed by students since the beginning of the course in September until the Christmas holidays has been:



***We need to reinforce the system and procedure, coordination and organisation is crucial***

Maybe, in the future we will have to maintain a hybrid system.

For the academic year 2021/22, the courses on offer in the School of Continuing Education programs have incorporated novelties, in many cases as a result of the experience acquired in the new scenario, which we hope will reflect improvements in the teaching and monitoring systems of the classes.

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## FUTURE OF LIFELONG LEARNING (LLL) IN A DIGITAL CONTEXT

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### LIFELONG LEARNING (LLL) AND CONTINUING EDUCATION (CE)

A definition of LLL by the European Commission is that LLL is designed to enable people, at any stage of their life, to take part in stimulating learning experiences, as well as to develop their education and training. LLL will become the predominant enabler for all persons, ages and universities [1].

Education transforms lives and is at the heart of UNESCO's mission to build peace, eradicate poverty and drive sustainable development. UNESCO believes that education is a human right for all, throughout life, and that access must be accompanied by quality [2].

EUCEN – European University Continuing Education Network was created in 1991. The definition adopted there was that Continuing Education is education and training acquired beyond that attained by attendance at educational or training institutions in accordance with formal national requirements [3].

Universities have been providing Continuing Education and Professional Development for adults since the XIX century. Most universities have been developing activities beyond the education of young students and have been researching towards providing training and education for adults. Universities have been researching and cooperating to develop structures, procedures, teaching methods, forums and know-how to provide the framework for adult education and training within the perspective of LLL.

In the past decades, several networks and associations such as EUCEN ([www.eucen.eu](http://www.eucen.eu)) and UPCEA (<http://upcea.edu>) have been active in developments. Adult Education and Learning, Andragogy and Gerontology are areas researched by member universities and their centres for education and training. These are research areas that enable the appropriate methods to address adult needs and learning profiles. A large number of universities have created centres, departments and external bodies to handle the provision of LLL training and education. These universities have been working for years in this provision of (LLL) education and training for a large sector of the population. Examples of this panorama are the ALLUME project (<http://allume.eucen.eu/>) and its follow up, COMMIT (<http://commit.eucen.eu>), as well as the initiative of the European University Association Charter of LLL [4].

Universities and other HE (Higher Education) institutions have been addressing the use of Open Educational Resources (OER). The latest advances have been in MOOCs (Massive Online Learning Open Courses), that create free access to courses in most areas of knowledge. These MOOCs represent an effective development open to all in LLL. The enrolment at courses includes learners from all over the world, without prerequisites in terms of previous education and training. Such courses address different levels in the educational system, although a major portion are produced by HE staff.

Initiatives are successfully spreading around the world, where some courses have enrolments of hundreds of thousands of learners. Examples are Coursera ([www.coursera.org](http://www.coursera.org)) and EdX ([www.edx.org](http://www.edx.org)).



Most of these successful OER initiatives are led by prestigious universities, leading to a visible improvement in the quality of the available education and training. This is a motivation for all potential attendants.

Universities and HE institutions have led research in terms of evaluation and quality assurance in LLL. Some examples are projects such as EQUIPE (<http://equipe.up.pt>) and DIALOGUE (<http://dialogue.eucen.eu/>). HE institutions have also enabled the recognition of prior knowledge of learners. This recognition addresses informal learning and non-formal learning (for instance, work based learning and work place learning). The accreditation and validation, associated with the recognition, are relevant for qualifications in either professional or academic realms. Universities have played a large role in research and innovation, in the definition of methods of assessment, as well as the validation of qualifications acquired outside the formal educational system. This also leads to accreditation of the competencies acquired, which can be a further motivation for all to continue their LLL.

Many initiatives have been undertaken by universities or groups of universities to promote the advancement of recognition of prior learning. Some examples are OBSERVAL and OBSERVAL-Net (<http://www.observal-net.eu>) and URPL (<http://www.u-rpl.eu/>). Many countries, such as France, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Belgium, Netherlands, Switzerland, Portugal, Germany and Australia, have published specific legislation to promote the recognition of prior learning carried out at universities. In most cases the accreditation of such prior learning leads to partial qualification towards a degree, but it is a major incentive for all to continue LLL.

Some HE institutions have been leading this process by including in their usual learning paths the learning and training acquired outside the traditional educational system. This innovation is possible also for other levels in educational systems and can be replicated in the primary and secondary sectors.

## ONLINE LEARNING AND LLL CHALLENGE

### *Characterisation*

Technology developments have been influencing daily life at an unexpected rate, with tremendous changes in the areas of learning and teaching. Communication media is playing an important role in changing the format and the quantity of information available for educational purposes. Such changes require a series of reflections and thoughts regarding the future role of learners and teachers. A specific area where transformations are more radical is Online Learning.

Most used media systems adopted for use in Online Learning are based on computers, smartphones, tablets and include communication using email, social networks, cloud storage, data collected from the WWW, dedicated software and connections with other audio visual media. Online Learning takes advantage of these electronic platforms to provide educational resources to those who would otherwise not have access to them.

Learners presently have the possibility of continuous access to specific information and dedicated learning tools. Therefore, in a classical educational system, teachers, researchers and administrators will face a rapid change in education methodologies, affecting course profiles, teaching procedures and other institutional issues that are connected with Online Learning practice. Open Education Resources (OER) have played an important role in providing access to many learners. OER models and platforms have been developed including some business for profit models [5].



The characteristics of Online Learning Courses imply that some initiatives are created as a replacement for face-to-face tutorials and treated as the primary teaching medium. Others are accomplished for purposes relating to student access to learning centres and as complimentary learning tools. Some important questions relate to the availability of computers, smartphones, tablets and to technical support and the allocation of teaching staff to produce these materials. Most attempts at implementing Online Learning courses in educational settings have added on to already existing course materials, rather than revising course structure and content. Generally, Online Learning materials become more integrated when the course is designed specifically for the particular medium [6].

Factors to be considered for Online Learning course design are: the maturity and profile of students, the interface friendliness, the active interaction with other students and tutors, and the flexibility of the learning pace. Another typical characteristic of Online Learning is that it may promote co-operation between learners if a group is set regularly to address joint projects/tasks or problems. This is a fundamental change from the vertical structure of classical educational systems and in some cases, such as adult education, may represent an enormous added value to teaching and learning.

In Online Learning courses there are materials that are permanent and reusable, unlike face to face instruction. This has advantages such as the chance for all learners to have access to the whole set of information and data, for students to study at their own pace, for Online Learning courses/modules to be better prepared than traditional ones and for enabling interaction between learners and tutors in a more open communication environment [7].

For teachers, the overload of students may be unbearable if there is no fixed upper limit to the number of learners interacting with each Online Learning course tutor. As additional tasks to the traditional teaching responsibilities, it may be a heavy burden if the workload is not adequately defined and limited. Since learners can incorporate outside resource materials into their response, it can improve the level of discussion but also increase the complexity of the tutoring process. In some cases, this may be a barrier for the involvement of tutors/teachers/mentors in Online Learning, for instance if learners are active professionals.

Online Learning teaching requires some reorganisation, despite the fact that much of an instructor's expertise in face-to-face interaction or distance teaching will have to be generalised properly to the Online Learning environment. Online Learning tutor training might occur through procedure manuals that explain the differences between Online Learning and face-to-face interaction, a basic list of right ways and wrong ways, examples of Online Learning interactions and analyses of basic communication problems and possible solutions. Some issues are particularly relevant, such as the techniques used to moderate and facilitate discussion and interaction between the learners and tutors, or adequate procedures to train instructors in effective ways to teach using Online Learning. Another concern is the effective pace of work of the learners using Online Learning material, which has to be chosen and controlled so that it will meet the deadlines or learning rate qualifying factors and pedagogical/andragogic requirements [8].

### ***Seven challenges for Teaching and Course Design***

**Challenge 1:** Flexibility - Some materials for the courses are requested by a number of learners with very different educational backgrounds. Therefore, the courses have to be prepared with enough flexibility to support a range of different learning demands. The materials need a degree of user friendliness to meet many different attitudes towards the learning medium used, such as people being afraid of using computers or falling asleep watching an educational video.

**Challenge 2: Universality** - The Online Learning materials have production costs that can only be met if their use is as large as possible and must therefore be prepared for a mass audience, enabling a potential use that guarantees the elimination of geographical frontiers. This means that they must also consider cultural and educational characteristics inside or outside the country(ies)/region(s) of production that may represent a barrier to the use of Online Learning materials.

**Challenge 3: Innovative Models** - The new technologies available for Online Learning courses are, in some cases, the opposite of traditional courses in terms of structure, organisation and evaluation. The teaching and learning models adopted have to be innovative and adapted to these media and tools so that courses make use of the full potential of Online Learning. There is a great need to rethink the teaching models in the design and delivery stage and to create new pedagogical guidelines to achieve proper learning.

**Challenge 4: Co-operation** - The production of Online Learning courses and their materials should be executed in cooperation with other institutions and groups of users, such as industrial and associations of professionals. In this way, the product will be guaranteed a certain degree of success in terms of destination group. The industry and other educational/training stakeholders in society have a cooperative role that may improve the quality of the courses and their use. Cooperation between teachers from different institutions is also highly desirable since it will contribute to lower costs and increase the potential target group of the courses.

**Challenge 5: Teaching activities** - These are the most difficult challenges since the motivation of academia to change their teaching methods is traditionally low. The new activities have to be considered as new tasks for the instructors and not as additional work on top of the existing tasks. Any additional task should be rewarded in accordance. In cases where activities involve a new type of work for instructors, there should be an adequate training phase, where they are now learners of the new learning and teaching technologies.

**Challenge 6: Organizational infrastructures** - The production of Online Learning materials requires new administrative infrastructures together with equipment facilities for the type of course delivery. The established system will suffer considerable changes that must be addressed adequately by the administration, allowing the Online Learning teaching and tutoring functions to be implemented with the necessary support, including trained technicians to manipulate the new equipment and technologies.

**Challenge 7: Learning evaluation** - Online Learning requires a new and appropriate system of quantifying the learning progress. Considering the different forms of learning achievements such as skills, knowledge acquisition or understanding, the assessment and evaluation has to be designed to measure the full amount of learning achieved by the learner. This evaluation can be open mode, but it must address the characteristics of the Online Learning course and the types of learning outcomes.

## CONCLUSIONS

Online Learning courses and materials are an inevitable development in the future of teaching activities and this challenge must be faced as soon as possible. The consequence of being outdated on this issue may mean that universities fail in the public service they are supposed to fulfil because others have already prepared Online Learning materials that may better fit the needs of the expected clients. Another danger is the demise of traditional teaching, possibly leading to teacher unemployment, since the learners in Continuing

Education/LLL are in most cases capable of using the Online Learning material and the information technologies without direct tutoring and teaching.

Quality assurance must be present in the production of Online Learning courses, since its absence can be a major obstacle to the acceptance of this type of learning by both teachers and learners. Some of the Online Learning courses have been designed based on the innovative capabilities of the supporting medium instead of the course pedagogical value. The challenge of quality evaluation and learning effectiveness of the Online Learning courses must be a priority in the course design and delivery. Without generalized quality control in the Online Learning courses, the learning achievements will not be guaranteed just by the use of sophisticated media.

It is envisaged that teachers will be trained in Online Learning technologies and pedagogy/andragogy together with organizational changes that allow the implementation of Online Learning courses in the classical teaching institutions. These are complex issues that need rethinking and adaptation, but the future of the learning environment is evolving rather rapidly. The future of Online Learning courses is not only in Continuing Education/LLL, where the learners are working and educated are therefore more likely to succeed, but also in the traditional basic education. The approach to Continuing Education/LLL Learning must be adopted by all and, first of all, by teachers, who have the duty and the responsibility of being the leaders in this change of attitude.

Other major interests of study were firstly, the main barriers that can prevent open education policies (or, for countries where there is no policy, open education initiatives) from fully succeeding, and secondly, the potential enablers for open education [9]. The research team believes in fact that understanding the barriers and enablers to open education can help policymakers who are both currently running policies and planning future initiatives in the field to better steer their actions. The main barriers identified by the interviewees are: low digital tools-readiness, low policy priority assigned to open education, fragmentation of initiatives, lack of institutional support, resistance to cultural change, lack of awareness about open education, low open education capacity within the teaching population, and the absence of an open licenses national recognition scheme. The main enablers for open education to thrive are: a clear policy priority assigned to open education; awareness-raising on open education, targeting leaders and educators; capacity-building on open education for educators and other stakeholders; measures to empower educators; and Online Learning platforms and advocacy communities.

EUCEN has addressed these issues in several projects related to the use of digital tools and Online Learning. Recently, at the Bergen Conference in June of 2018, EUCEN announced the creation of a Community of Practice (eCoP) to share good examples and useful tools for the digitalisation of LLL. This eCoP will focus on existing examples of application of digital tools in an ULLL environment from cradle to grave. The goals are to:

- link with other organizations involved in this type of actions, such as EDEN and IACEE;
- be a repository of contributions in events, conferences, chats, fora, blogs, projects, websites and publications;
- select examples and/or case studies relevant for this group;
- attempt to promote virtual discussion through live debate or forums;
- provide a collaborative newflash;
- present and analyse the Swiss Universities initiative on quality of digital learning

This eCoP is for professionals who have interest in digital transformation of education and training and who are willing to cooperate and to collaborate. Especially those with genuine interest in improving quality of LLL using and exploring new approaches to LLL.

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# THE EXPERIENCE OF EMERGENCY REMOTE TEACHING ENGLISH FOR MULTICULTURAL APPLICANTS

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## INTRODUCTION

The aim of this research is to present the experience of teaching a course of English for international applicants of the Russian medical university, in conditions of remote digital learning. This course was first introduced in 2010, when the first applicants from Brazil arrived to study at Kursk State Medical University (KSMU). Before that, international applicants did not study English prior to entering the University. The author also taught the same course of English for Brazilian applicants in 2017 and 2018 and in the multinational academic groups in 2019. The focus of the course expands from the language of medicine to the adaptation of students to their new conditions of living in Russia.

In 2020, there was an urgent need to change the format of learning to that of online. The analysis of the experience of online teaching and learning has facilitated the identification of the problems and challenges a teacher faces during online foreign language training.

## BACKGROUND OF THE COURSE

Being the first University in Russia to teach foreign students in English, Kursk State Medical University admits students from different countries in the world. The first international students of KSMU were from Syria and India and came to study in 1992. The International Medical Institute, a new division of KSMU, officially began its work on February 13, 2020. It is based on many years of experience at the University in international activities and traditions established in the 1990s. Now applicants that enter KSMU take a pre-university course at the International Medical Institute. It is a compulsory pre-university training in different subjects, including English. To some extent, it is the first stage of the students' lifelong learning (pre-university training – undergraduate education – postgraduate training).

## DESIGN OF THE COURSE

Before emergency online learning, this course of English was taught face-to-face. The course duration is 8 weeks, with one 3 hour weekly class. The applicants aim to acquire the following competences:

- Professional language competence;
- Professional communicative competence;
- Cross-cultural competence.

Professional language competence is of great necessity for student applicants. They are introduced to the professional language of medicine, as they will be trained in Medical Sciences in English, in the process of undergraduate education. Studying English for Medical Purposes includes the formation of not only language competence, but also the basics of professional communicative competence.

A doctor's communicative competence is of special importance nowadays as understanding and communication come to the foreground in Medical Care. The increased interest in this respect over the last decades is related to the concept of the patient being seen as a partner in Health and Medical Care, and therefore to a change in the previous approach of simply treating an ill person (Tomova, 2018). In order to form this competence, many pedagogical technologies have been adapted to the conditions of use for medical students or designed by the author on the basis on Reflective and Creative Approach. These include imitation and business games, problem cases, didactic dramas, etc. They are presented in the author's textbook, published at KSMU (Razdorskaya, 2018) and used in the classes of English.

The last, but not least, element is the cross-cultural competence. Each language is closely connected with its culture, it indicates the culture, is an obligatory precondition for the development of the culture in general. Traditionally, Russian specialists in didactics view English as a tool for getting to know the culture of the English-speaking countries. In our environment, it has become a tool for integrating the international students within a local community and for getting to know Russian culture and the history of Kursk and Kursk region, the part of Russia where the students will be studying for 6 years. It is necessary to adapt the applicants to the new living conditions and learning environment. The applicants get information concerning Russia and its culture, about local history and culture of Kursk Region, about KSMU and its history. Thus, a tolerant attitude is formed to both Russian culture and the native cultures the students represent. Moreover, the applicants adapt to the multicultural community of the students of KSMU. Although Russian students study in the Russian-speaking academic groups, the international and Russian students can meet each other during extracurricular activities (sport, scientific conferences for the students, cultural events, etc.). Consequently, communication with the international students motivates the Russian students to study English (also a compulsory subject) at the University.

In fact, the course of English for the foreign applicants has become blended, because it started in February 2020 in face-to-face format and from March until July 2020 it was offered in online format (Moodle and Zoom). It has become necessary to adapt the technologies used for the formation of the competences mentioned above.

## **PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE OF TEACHING THE APPLICANTS**

Only three classes in February, 2020 were in face-to-face format, but it was a nice opportunity to see the students personally. There were 8 groups with 10 applicants in each. Teachers of the Department of Foreign Languages of KSMU were teaching students using the course designed by the author. In some groups there were applicants from only one country (for example, Malaysia), while the applicants from the other groups were from various countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. The author taught two academic groups, with applicants from Brazil, India, Nigeria, Thailand and the Republic of South Africa. This multicultural contingent required the use of these cross-cultural education methods.

There is no doubt that cross-cultural interactions can give students a rich learning opportunity. In the classroom, they can exchange ideas about different issues (Bai, Larimer, & Riner, 2016). In our case, it was the exchange the ideas about doctor - patient communication in different countries.

During the first two classes in English the applicants were told about the importance of the communicative competence for a healthcare provider. The author initiated a discussion about the characteristic features of doctor - patient communication in the applicants' home countries. As these applicants will have practice in Russian hospitals during their 5<sup>th</sup> year of study (requiring that they also study Russian during pre-university and university training), they were informed of the patterns of doctor and patient communication in Russia.



During remote learning, because of the confinement and closure of face-to-face activities, the applicants received the task of writing an essay about the importance of communicative competence for a future doctor.

An applicant from Malaysia wrote:

*"A good communication will provide respect. Patients will have more respect to you as a doctor that wants to treat them. With that, they will naturally follow the decisions you put for a better health care in different aspects for them. They will avoid from making arguments as they respect you. Patients reporting good communication with their doctor are more likely to be satisfied with their care. Finally, a good communication of a doctor will give an example for them on how they should talk or behave with you as a doctor."*

An applicant from Brazil wrote:

*"In Brazil, we don't have a lot of problems with doctor – patient communication. Brazilians are very charismatic people, so it is easy to form a good relation between them. But we have exceptions, because this is a concept for the majority of people, not every person who lives there. I think I need to learn how to communicate with the patients effectively. The informal language is not the best to be used. Some people can't start a good conversation with a doctor. So, it is very useful practical experience before I get practice with a real patient."*

An applicant from Thailand wrote:

*"Doctor-patient communication in Thailand has many different problems. One problem is when a patient thinks he knows more than the doctors and comes with his own diagnosis and ideas of his problems. This greatly hinders the process of the communication since the patient will be reluctant to listen to the doctor and be stubborn. Another problem is that there are some doctors who will look down at the patients and will not listen to them properly. There are also cases when the doctor will raise his voice against the patient or the patient will raise his voice against the doctor. These are the problems that are prevalent in Thailand, although it is improving day-by-day."*

Having three-years' experience of teaching Bioethics for the international students, the author informed the applicants of the different models of doctor and patient communication, such as paternalism, technical model, informative model, etc. We discussed if all models are applicable to modern patients. Then the students received the problem cases with a brief description of a doctor's improper behaviour, while talking to patients. The students had to dramatize them and think of a patient's reaction to breaking the rules of professional ethics by the doctor. In some dramatization the patients were refusing the treatment, and there was an opportunity for instilling in applicants the principle of a patient's autonomy and his/her right to refuse the treatment. It was difficult to adapt these activities for online learning. Only the applicants who were living in the same hostel were making videos of their imitated doctor – patient communication in English.

During the third class the applicants visited the museum of the history of KSMU. The author acted as a guide and showed the students different exhibits, dating from 1935, the year of the foundation of the University. At the museum, there are also gifts from the various countries of student origin. Before remote learning, the applicants usually visited the museums and landmarks of Kursk, but in the spring term of the academic year 2020 – 2021 there became a necessity to find videos about Kursk, for showing to the applicants with comments by the author in English. The information about the history of Kursk and Kursk region from the local sites requires the translation into English, as these sites don't have an English version. The author will also be using a virtual tour of the museum of KSMU with the comments in English as it is also only available at the site in Russian.

## DIVERSITY OF LANGUAGES AND ITS IMPACT ON THE TEACHER'S ACTIVITY

This academic year the course has required certain adaptation to the multinational contingent of the academic groups of applicants. There was a need to modify the course because of the diversity of the applicants. Usually, in the process of teaching foreign applicants from only one country (Brazil), the author initiates the comparative analysis of lexical and grammar phenomena of English and the students' first language (Portuguese) to prevent its interference. In this situation, the applicants become the active subjects of the educational process as they introduce the teacher to the peculiarities of their native language. The usage of comparative analysis contributes to the development of the applicants' cognitive skills and promotes their motivation for studying English.

In conditions of a multinational group, more time is spent on preparation for online classes and on initiation of the cooperation with the students whose first languages are Thai and Afrikaans. Traditionally, during offline learning Brazilian students received the assignments worked out by the author and based on the comparative analysis of the language of medicine in English and Portuguese. Now Internet was needed to find the examples of medical vocabulary in Thai and Afrikaans. These examples were shown in the presentation during the class in Zoom, and the applicants had to say out their English equivalents.

## PEDAGOGICAL CHALLENGES

In the process of teaching this course online the author faced the problems of multitasking, limited technical support and, of course, lack of face-to-face interaction. Before that, there were no distance teaching and learning English at KSMU. In fact, the author was using Zoom for the first time, so it was necessary to modify the entire course of English from face-to-face to online mode, to derive tests for students in each class and to take into account the peculiarities of the multinational contingent of the applicants. Moreover, both the students and the teacher were facing problems of psychological character, as it was rather difficult to get used to online mode of teaching and learning. Besides, during emergency online education it was necessary to get used to online relationships and to humanize them. On the basis of this difficult, but challenging experience the author would like to point out the teachers' needs in their lifelong learning: they should be trained in the usage of modern technologies of digital teaching of English and on online interaction with students.

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# ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSIVITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE IMPACT OF COVID-19: IMPLICATIONS FOR ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP AND UNIVERSITY LIFELONG LEARNING

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## INTRODUCTION

Never before has the higher education sector being challenged the way it has been in the last few months, triggered by the disruption caused by the pervasiveness of the Covid-19 pandemic, which forced higher education institutions to change the way that they have been teaching. Almost overnight, higher education institutions had to move to distance teaching to ensure that learning occurs even in the midst of a lockdown (Marinoni, van't Land & Jensen, 2020, p. 23). However, this move depended by and large on availability of information, communication infrastructure, technological devices, internet connectivity as well as capacities to teach online (ibid., pp. 24–26). Many students were also not well prepared or competent to study online as they were struggling with motivation, finding support or an adequate learning environment for remote learning (Means, Neisler, with Langer Research Associates, 2020; QS, 2020).

The Covid-19 pandemic did not only force higher education institutions to move online, but it also highlighted some challenges in relation to inclusivity and accessibility. The Covid-19 pandemic has brought to the fore the need to train, retrain and reskill people for the demands of the knowledge economy that is highly digitalised, systematically excluding people due to lack of digital skills, connection or digital device. In time of crisis, the tendency is to focus on the short-term solutions, but as a result from the Covid-19 pandemic there is the risk of higher education institutions losing their mission. Therefore, it appears necessary to think about long-term solutions for the present as well as for the future to lead to the broadening of access and to ensure inclusiveness designed to achieve an equitable learning that promotes sustainable development, according to the *Sustainable Development Goal 4* (United Nations, 2015).

The key to active citizenship is embedded in lifelong learning because it aims at giving people a chance, irrespective of their background, to participate in higher education. The concept of lifelong learning is rooted on the individuals' need to pursue learning activities with the purpose of personal fulfilment, therefore, lifelong learning as a visionary concept includes all forms of learning, including formal, non-formal and informal learning (Zepke, 2017). The need for lifelong learning has never been so acute as it is during the Covid-19 pandemic: Many higher education institutions have had to adapt their mode of delivery to digital spaces, which requires new knowledge, skills and competencies. In this sense, the Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated the need for education beyond formal qualifications. Given this, it is imperative that higher education institutions begin to rethink their provision of teaching and learning to address the future they aspire for.

## APPROACHES

Policies and concerns on lifelong learning affect the missions and conceptions of a higher education that aims at accessibility and inclusivity. Political agencies, such as OECD, UNESCO as well as the EU, offered different approaches to lifelong learning and integrating

the concept of citizenship (Jarvis, 2008). In this manner, lifelong learning has a political purpose, which is based on the fact that “active citizens should be informed, knowledgeable, and able to participate in public debate” (ibid., p. 47) in order to foster social justice, participation and sustainable development. An education geared to citizenship addresses the ‘responsible agent’ based on the idea that individual action has global impact (Nikolitsa-Winter, Mauch & Maalouf, 2019). What this means for education in general and higher education in particular is to provide the skills that are needed to respond to the global challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century by fostering democratic, plural, diverse and collective civic engagement (International Commission on the Futures of Education, 2020, p. 4). In this regard, lifelong learning in higher education provides academic knowledge transfer, but in a broader understanding it can serve as “fora in which a society can critically reflect on itself” (Field, Schmidt-Hertha & Waxenegger, 2016, p. 230).

According to Brennan and Naidoo (2008, pp. 287–288) higher education has both, an *import* and an *export role*: It imports political discussions and agendas to shape social justice within higher education, and exports their internal processes to impact in the shaping of societies and the quality of the life of individuals (ibid.). Therefore, lifelong learning education is associated with the notion of flexible pathways for working and educating in order to acquire and adapt capabilities over the lifespan (UIL, 2020). In this sense, realising accessible and inclusive higher education is both a question of widening participation in higher education as well as the contribution of higher education to society. The results that are presented in this paper focus on the individuals’ learning opportunities in higher education as brought forth by Brennan and Naidoo (2008) who consider this perspective as strongly related with shaping society in terms of opening up opportunities for citizenship and participation.

## COVID-19 AND THE NEED TO RESPOND

With regard to the aforementioned, the Covid-19 pandemic challenges higher education institutions to rethink their missions and to redefine their roles connected to public responsibility to ensure accessible and inclusive learning opportunities. This finally challenges the perception that many have of higher education institutions as “ivory towers, detached from the society in which they are situated” (Hammer, 2018, p. 141), and in which lifelong learning and citizenship are neglected.

Although the Covid-19 pandemic has disrupted the whole education system, there is limited data on long-term consequences. It could therefore be assumed that most *Sustainable Development Goals* (United Nations, 2015) will be affected negatively by the Covid-19 pandemic (Sachs, Schmidt-Traub, Kroll, Lafortune, Fuller & Woelm, 2020) in view of emerging issues surrounding the fragility of societies, deepened inequalities, social and digital divides or lack of technological skills (UNESCO, 2020). It is on the basis of this that more than 80 percent of higher education institutions in Europe are keen to explore new ways of teaching in response to the changes of the last months (EUA, 2020, pp. 3–4). This move is understandable, considering that Covid-19 almost invariably has influenced how teaching and learning is provided in higher education worldwide (Marinoni, van’t Land & Jensen, 2020, p. 23).

It therefore becomes important that planning for these new solutions should be designed in a way that ensures equitable university lifelong learning opportunities. Higher education institutions are now required to make use of the new opportunities and to face up to the new challenges, which questions the future relationship between remote and physical learning and the flexibility and quality of teaching. Imagining that lifelong learning is key to support diverse and inclusive learning (Finn, Fitzsimons, Crummell & Noone, 2018), it seems obvious that higher education institutions need to embrace lifelong learning as a tool to encourage active participation and citizenship.

## METHODOLOGY

To address the need to respond to new ways of structuring teaching and learning during and post-Covid-19, data was collected from three focus groups of eleven experts who are working as researchers, lecturers and managers in higher education institutions around the globe. These experts who were interviewed in May and June 2020 are members of the *University of the Future Network (UFN)*, whose aim is to shape transformations that current universities need to have in order to respond to the new learners' needs and expectations (UFN, n. d.).

The aim of the focus groups was to contribute to re-visioning the future of teaching and learning in higher education while responding to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Attention was given to transversal issues that are common to the education agenda specifically on the use of technologies to ensure equitable access to traditionally excluded communities. Discussions focused on visionary paths regarding teaching and learning in higher education, challenges and opportunities and significant conditions that need to be in place to ensure accessibility and inclusivity in higher education. Participants in the focus groups also gave an outlook on how visioning of teaching and learning in higher education might look like post-Covid-19.

The focus group discussions were guided by the *UNESCO Futures of Education* initiative (UNESCO, n. d.) and the results were compiled into a report to inform the initiative (Schulte, Cendon & Makoe, 2020). Although many themes emanated from the discussions, the findings that this paper focusses on are those that addressed issues of accessibility and inclusivity in higher education. And these were addressed in relation to their implications for active citizenship and university lifelong learning.

## FINDINGS

Initial scientific discussions address potentials and risks, equally, and range from a vision of the pandemic as accelerator for innovation and transformation of teaching and learning in higher education (EUA, 2020; Reimers, 2020), to new chances for more equitable and inclusive higher education (Arnove, 2020; Zhu & Liu, 2020), but also to an increasing inequality among learners in higher education, especially those from poorer countries (Altbach & de Wit, 2020).

The findings of the focus groups are in line with previous findings that support that the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic will lead to teaching and learning innovation in higher education. Visionary paths that the experts identified for the future were related to the strengthening of blended and online approaches in higher education. They also predicted that students will become more demanding on where, how and what they want to study. What this means is that individual students will look for those study programmes that address their needs making education more student-centred and personalised. To provide support for this new personalised way of teaching and learning, higher education institutions will need to pool together their knowledge on pedagogical and technological resources to facilitate openness in higher education. This will also lead to an increased and easier collaboration between higher education institutions with companies and civil society. In this sense, the experts saw the crisis as an accelerator for digital change and the opportunity to rethink and transform a higher education geared to aspired futures.

The experts also raised challenges and barriers in relation to the capability of students to transition to online and to the lack of online teaching skills that still remain on the part of lecturers. In view of these findings, the experts identified the following key areas of digital

divide that are emerging, especially affecting most people who come from poorly resourced environment, such as inequalities in terms of:

- Connectivity – access to internet, availability of information and communication infrastructure
- Devices – ownership of digital equipment such as smart phones, laptops and/or desktop computers that provide different types of learning experiences
- Digital Literacy Skills – competencies needed to use technologies to teach and learn in an online space

Some of these challenges are linked to social conditions such as a lack of healthy learning environment at home or living in an urban centre with good digital infrastructure as opposed to living in a remote rural area that has connectivity problems. All these reinforces the digital divide by excluding those with limited access to technological tools that make learning possible.

Another barrier identified was the one that relates to the resistance to change as key to undermining progress. The experts describe it as tension between turning towards a new normal and reverting back to traditional ways of doing things. This is because many lecturers might have felt that they were forced to pivot to online and were not necessarily motivated to change. For change to occur, strong leadership is seen as crucial to drive innovation and to support structural changes that are needed. At the same time, some students are happy with going online and others may not want to change. This requires the need to actively engage students and to provide learning experience according to the expectations of students.

In order to realise an accessible and inclusive higher education the experts suggest that teaching and learning in higher education should:

- Bridge the digital divide that manifests in different types of inequalities and foster social justice by including students' different ways of learning;
- Support online and autonomous learning to achieve skills for self-directed learning as well as data literacy;
- Diversify higher education by embracing open education principles of access and inclusivity to address the social justice mandate of education;
- Adopt blended learning approaches to ensure that education is accessible to students with a diversity of needs;
- Address the gross inequalities in higher education by providing flexible personalisation of learning and supporting students' individual learning pathways.

The results provide a basis for discussions on how to actively rethink teaching and learning in higher education that ensures accessible and inclusive learning conditions that are needed to foster sustainable development and citizens that are engaged.

## **IMPLICATIONS FOR ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP AND UNIVERSITY LIFELONG LEARNING**

Bridging the social and digital divide that has accelerated through Covid-19 and higher education moving online is key to ensuring participation and active citizenship. Closely connected to that is customising teaching and supporting students' individual learning pathways as an opportunity to foster social justice and civil engagement. This is linked with the individuals and their needs to be self-motivated and self-adaptive in order to be resilient even in the face of disruptive changes and uncertainty. To achieve this, higher education

institutions need to integrate the students' voices in the planning, designing and developing of teaching and learning approaches to support students' individual learning pathways.

Moreover, it is important that higher education institutions and governments address the issue of the digital divide by ensuring that all students irrespective of their circumstances and where they live should have access to connectivity and technological tools and enablers. It is also critical that people are retrained on digital literacy skills in order to adapt to new ways of teaching and learning. This calls for a higher education environment that allows for personalised and flexible learning opportunities and gives students the opportunity to autonomously choose the most suitable approach for learning.

According to Osborne, Rimmer & Houston (2015, pp. 34-36) fostering lifelong learning opportunities in higher education is not only a question of access, but also of the flexibility of the delivery of learning that promotes retention and progression (ibid.). In this sense, university lifelong learning can be seen as key to serve as an enabling space to provide lifelong learners the competencies that are needed to perform in a new environment. It is therefore the task of higher education institutions to create learning opportunities that meet possible future requirements from teaching and learning as well as the development systems and structures that enable learning.

## CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that the Covid-19 pandemic has changed the way we think about the future. Although the nature of education is about preparing people for the future, this discussion has never been the focus of higher education until recently. The Covid-19 pandemic has brought to the forefront the lack of agility and flexibility in the higher education sector, of which, all of us suddenly have to seriously think on how to guarantee a sustained business continuity for teaching and learning. To address some of the challenges that are brought about by the crisis, decision makers tend to look at short-term solutions. However, we need to be cautious not to remain in an 'emergency' mode for long.

Hence, it becomes necessary to establish visions for a higher education that questions how current changes will affect the future, how they can be addressed and how to adapt these changes in a beneficial way in order to ensure lifelong learning opportunities for all. This can be seen as a continuous proactive rethinking process in terms of doing things differently. These processes are fundamental for establishing viable strategies on how to deal with change for the future we aspire for within our higher education institutions and within our teaching and learning. In this sense, higher education institutions need to rethink their teaching and learning approaches in order to address the deepened inequalities and to create sustained learning conditions that are needed. By so doing, they will be re-visioning the future of higher education in order to achieve its objective of making purposeful contributions to the learning environment while tackling social, political and economic needs in the world and thus, promoting active citizenship.



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## ACTIVE AND GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP – INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENTS AND PRACTICAL EXAMPLES

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### INTRODUCTION AND BIOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

The author was invited to contribute to the *euцен University Lifelong Learning Open Fora 2020* during the final week dealing with *Bridging active citizenship and ULLL*. The invitation came through *euцен* President Balázs Nemeth. We are well known to each other since the mid-1990s when he was in his final years of studies at the University of Pécs, and I had joined as Honorary Professor in the Institute of Adult Education and Human Resources Development. The issue of education for active citizenship has been following us ever since, and I shall return to a joint effort with him at the Adult Education Academy of the University of Würzburg later (Universität Würzburg 2020). During those years in Hungary I was Director of the DVV International Country Office in Budapest. DVV stands for Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband (German Adult Education Association) which represents the joint interests of the Volkshochschulen (vhs, Community Adult Education Centres) on national and international level.

Looking through a biographical and institutional lens will be the approach in this article. There is this narrative to remember the past and learn for the future, which is important for the field of adult learning and education (ALE) and beyond in all walks of life. DVV International and the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) provided an excellent example when they reminded us of the beginning of World War I and how this should be remembered in ALE today. Outcomes from the respective conference on *1914 – 2014 – Remembering the past to live the present and shape the future* were shared and disseminated widely (Kelbert & Avdagic 2015).

Having moved far in one's own life is good for two perspectives. One is what Rolf ARNOLD calls the "Rest-Biography", or what the Hollywood movie "The Bucket List" identifies as the rest and maybe the best which is coming at the end. It may also be helpful here to look back, and this is what we did in *Adult learning and education: Active global citizens for sustainable development – a political, professional and personal account* (Duke & Hinzen 2018). There was much to tell from the 1960s in distributing pamphlets against the war in Vietnam during school days, the time of the students' rebellion at university, the research on colonial policies in education for the PhD dissertation, environmental campaigning against extracting industries and waste disposal plants on natural heritage land, and leaving for a final professional engagement 2009 - 2015 for DVV International, as Director of the Regional Office in Southeast Asia, based in Laos, as the most heavily bombed country on earth (Hinzen 2015).

### ORIENTATION AND GUIDANCE – AGENCIES AND PARTNERS

The information by *euцен* that the keynote on the opening of the Master Class would be presented by Professor Sir Alan Tuckett from the University of Wolverhampton was another welcome call to join. We share a common battle ground with governments while he was the CEO of the National Institute of Adult and Continuing Education (NIACE) in UK, and I was Director of DVV International in Germany. We could do many things together on European and global level, including joining a period on the Executive of the International Council for

Adult Education (ICAE) while CONFINTEA VI as the series of UNESCO World Conferences met in Belem, Brasilia in 2009. That was an important preparation for the World Education Forum in Incheon, Korea in 2015 as the outcome document from there would be advanced as the Education 2030 Agenda of the Sustainable Development Goals - SDGs (UNESCO 2015).

Alan TUCKETT threw the net wide in his keynote - from the 1919 Report on Adult Education of the British Ministry of Reconstruction and the 100 years anniversary campaign, the early University engagement through their Departments for Extra-Mural Studies, to the deepening of climate change and the dangers of populist regimes of today. However, from his ten ideas two were so close that I thought to take them further in my own presentation. They were: "Work with agencies already engaged" and "Work with partners having common concerns".

The choice of agencies and partners for me then was to take DVV International where I joined the leadership in 1978 as well as the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) for which I coordinated a first study already in 1977 and later was invited as Honorary Fellow. When Moldova State University conferred a Doctor Honoris Causa title on me for serving and supporting the global ALE development and movement, these two organisations and related major achievements and milestones were prominently mentioned (Hinzen 2019).

Those decades of involvement in planning, management and monitoring and also advocacy, research, and teaching have taken me to the position that today I join all those who argue that in this age of globalization and digitalization, demographic and technological changes, the human right to education has turned to a human right of lifelong learning - LLL (Elfert 2019). Currently the Futures of Education initiative by UNESCO, actually a follow-up to *Learning to be: The world of education today and tomorrow* (Faure et al. 1972) and *Learning: the treasure within. Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the 21st Century* (Delors et al. 1996) invited for contributions. Two important ones for our discussion here were *Embracing a culture of lifelong learning* (UIL 2020) and *Adult learning and education (ALE) – because the future cannot wait* (ICAE 2020). ILO and UNESCO have taken it even a little further as they now looked into LLL as an entitlement (Dunbar 2020).

## INTERNATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS AS COMMITMENTS

Every 12 years UNESCO Members States meet for CONFINTEA (Conférence Internationale sur l'Éducation des Adultes) to inform and exchange on developments in ALE. The first was 1949 in Helsingör, the latest 2009 in Belem, and 2022 in Marrakesh will be the next. I enjoyed being on the German delegation, and on the drafting group as each of the conferences end up with a report and recommendations. *The Belem Framework for Action* (BFA) covered five areas: policy, governance, financing, participation, quality, and participants adopted: "We recognize that adult education represents a significant component of the lifelong learning process, which embraces a learning continuum ranging from formal to non-formal to informal learning." And in respect to participation, inclusion and equity called for "creating multi-purpose community learning spaces and centres..." (UIL 2010, 5) . This was an important recognition for those working in and for ALE institutions.

The BFA tasked UIL with a role in regular monitoring of the ALE sub-sector of the education system. On implementation, the Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE) was started. Meanwhile, GRALE 5, on *Active and global citizenship education*, is under preparation. Before, GRALE 3 in 2016 covered *The Impact of Adult Learning and Education on Health and Well-Being; Employment and the Labour Market; and Social, Civic and Community Life* and GRALE 4 in 2019 was on *Participation in Adult Education*.  
[https://uil.unesco.org/fileadmin/keydocuments/AdultEducation/en/GRALE\\_en.pdf](https://uil.unesco.org/fileadmin/keydocuments/AdultEducation/en/GRALE_en.pdf)

The idea of the World Education Forum (WEF) is to look at the education, learning, and training sector as a whole. After a first meeting in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990, the next was 2000 in Senegal, which adopted *The Dakar Framework for Action: Education for All (EFA)* (UNESCO 2000). The time frame of the EFA was in line with the United Nations (UN) Millennium Development Goals (MDG) going up to 2015. Unfortunately, adults neither in ALE nor in ULLL played a role, and in civil society circles it was asked: *Does EFA stand for "Except for Adults"?* (Khan 2000).

In 2012 the UN Secretary General launched the Global Education First initiative. It had three priorities: "Put every child in school; improve the quality of learning; foster global citizenship" (<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/gefi/about/>). That was the starting point of efforts by UNESCO to define what was phrased as Global Citizenship Education (GCED). The Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding (APCEIU) invited us to a technical consultation in Korea (<http://www.un-rok.org/about-un/offices/unesco-apceiu/>) and a year later, together with the UNESCO Bangkok Office, to a global forum to further define GCED. Ever since, active and global citizenship education has gained importance in the international discourse (Milana & Tarozzi 2019).

The post-2015 debate called for a paradigm shift: The MDG should turn to SDG with a global orientation, and the EFA should move towards LLL for all. This period is documented well, and highly interesting for comparative studies. One such collection is *On the Eve of EFA and MDG – Shaping the Post 2015 Education and Development Agendas* (Fernandez, Hinzen & Khan 2014). We all contributed to this important discourse, for example, *Towards a lifelong learning target for 2015* (Tuckett 2015) or *Lifelong Learning for All – A potential global goal for the post 2015 education and development agendas* (Hinzen 2013).

The World Education Forum 2015 in Incheon adopted as the overarching goal for the Education 2030 Agenda: "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all". As target 4.3 to "ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university", and in 4.7 to "ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development ... through education for ... human rights, gender equality ... global citizenship ..." (UNESCO 2015a). Clearly, universities and global citizenship are there. At the same time we argued – for all means for all, also for all adults.

Another important request that came from the BFA was the revision of the UNESCO *Recommendation on Adult Education*. This was done in light of the SDG 2030 Agenda and a major clause reads as: "Adult learning and education also includes education and learning opportunities for active citizenship, variously known as community, popular or liberal education. It empowers people to actively engage with social issues such as poverty, gender, intergenerational solidarity, social mobility, justice, equity, exclusion, violence, unemployment, environmental protection and climate change. It also helps people to lead a decent life, in terms of health and well-being, culture, spirituality and in all other ways that contribute to personal development and dignity." (UNESCO 2015b, 2). This was adopted by Governments of Member States in the UNESCO General Conference 2015.

## SELECTED EXAMPLES AND EXPERIENCES

If LLL is to become a human right, then there can be no doubt that ALE is part of that human right. Adults are the largest group of society, and people are adults for the longest part of their life. Here ULLL and ALE could join hands struggling for and implementing a human right. While the universities conform much closer to a common framework it is different for the diversity or even fragmented ALE sector.

There is a tradition for these joint efforts. Part of the historical roots of ALE lie in the enlightenment period and are close to what today is called citizenship education. Early University Extension, through their Departments of Extra-Mural Studies, was important for today's engagement and community work of Universities. In Germany there existed, since 1970 and for a long time, the Arbeitskreis Universitäre Erwachsenenbildung (AUE, Working Group for University Adult Education), representing the cooperation between vhs and DVV with the Universities. Today it is the Deutsche Gesellschaft für wissenschaftliche Weiterbildung und Fernstudium (DGWF, German Association for University Continuing and Distance Education), and DVV serves as a member in the DGWF Advisory Board (<https://dgwf.net/services.html>).

Another historical root of ALE was the agricultural and industrial revolutions, with their demands and needs for vocational skills or better employability, in the language of today. Here again is an important area of cooperation between DVV and the German Federation of Trade Unions. They together established a national association with the name of Arbeit und Leben (Work and Life), fostering the aim of a "democratic culture of citizen participation" through workshops, projects and publications, including the international level <https://www.arbeitundleben.de/bundesorganisation/item/working-toward-a-democratic-culture-of-citizen-participation>

The examples of institutionalised ALE, in many parts of the world, include Adult Education Centres such as vhs in Germany, or the Cultural Houses and Community Learning Centres (CLC). Turning to the vhs, it should be acknowledged that, 100 years ago, adult education, including the vhs, became part of the constitution of the Weimar Republic. Today, ALE in its different dimensions is part of public financing, resting in policy and legislation. Governance of the vhs is guided by regular monitoring and the collection of statistical data is published yearly. Figures from 2018 for all the 900 vhs with their 9 Million participations in lectures and courses show that around 20% are related to politics, society, and environment (Reichart, Huntemann & Lux 2019).

The specialized body in Germany for active citizenship education is the Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung (bpb, Federal Agency for Civic Education). Its main function is related to "Strengthening Democracy - Fostering a Civil Society". Here again, agency cooperation is ensured: The President of bpb is a member of DVV Advisory Board, and many vhs work together with bpb <https://www.bpb.de/die-bpb/138852/federal-agency-for-civic-education>

DVV International was founded in 1969 and therefore celebrated *50 Years DVV International. Half a Century of Adult Education* (Hirsch, Jost & Waschek 2019). Numerous activities could be explored on projects and cooperation with partners around the world that dealt with ALE via active and global citizenship. A most recent one was the engagement in the European research project EDUMAP, results published in *The contribution of adult education to active participatory citizenship* (Brand & Schmidt-Behlau 2019).

In 2019 the Minsk Office of DVV International in Belarus invited to the conference *Adult Education for Achieving Sustainable Development Goals* on the occasion of its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary. In my keynote I mentioned that the city of Vitebsk, the birth place of Chagall, is a member the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC). Citizen participation on community level is a key feature of learning cities, often between civil society, universities and ALE providers (UNESCO 2015c, 12). Active citizenship education and participation in policy and practice was at the heart of project work in the EU funded *Learn to Act* (Veramejchik 2019).

A final experience: The University of Würzburg has established during the past years an Adult Education Academy on comparative studies in ALE and LLL for doctoral and master



students and practitioners in cooperation with some ten universities, and EAEA and DVV International as partners (Egetenmeyer, Buffo & Kröner 2020). One of the comparative groups deals with *building active citizenship through adult education - a mission, role and responsibility*, where Balázs Nemeth and I act as co-moderators. Here again, the cooperation of agencies and partners, of students, teaching staff and practitioners is an example where active and global citizenship can be nurtured ([www.hw.uni-wuerzburg.de/intall](http://www.hw.uni-wuerzburg.de/intall)).

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