Pedagogical values in transition when teaching in digital environments: discoveries from participants' analysis of an online course

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Abstract

This article presents the findings of an evaluation of a mixed-method study carried out amongst higher education institution (HEI) educators' participating in an Erasmus+ funded project entitled Digital Education and Timely Solutions (DIG-IT). The 25 educators from universities in five European countries (Finland, Malta, Slovenia, Cyprus and Italy) had all graduated from a pre-requisite 9-module Designing, Delivering and Evaluating Online Study-Units Course and for this study completed a 3-module Train-the-Trainer-course. Data triangulated from a summative online survey, focus group discussions and written assignments demonstrated that academic staff benefit from (1) convenient, training designed to help identify their teaching values and pedagogical approach(es), (2) opportunities to discover different technical solutions available to support students' learning processes and (3) the use of a digital education quality standard framework to critically examine online courses and make continual improvements. The article is relevant across the entire professional development arena because digital education lessons learned and identified best practices are all shared in the hope of contributing to discussions related to changing roles of educators in contemporary information-rich societies.

Keywords: digital education, online education, higher education, digital educator identity, pedagogical values

Introduction

Higher Education Institution (HEI) educators' digital skills and their development have received significant attention at all educational levels due to changes in digitalization of societies and rapid evolution of educational technologies. The development of digital technological skills must be supported by helping educators rethink their pedagogical values and renegotiate their professional digital identity. In this article we used the term Higher Education Institution (HEI) educators to refer to academic professors, academic teaching staff members, and academic educators who are working in the universities or universities of applied sciences. The backdrop of this study considered HEIs' changing roles in the context of digital education in contemporary, information-rich societies, explored pedagogical values educators' hold, shared digital education lessons learned, and identified best practices.

During pandemic times, HEI educators were forced to rapidly transform from face-to-face to online educators and figure out how to facilitate learning using different digital solutions. Teaching in an online environment requires skills that are not always straight-forward and therefore changing from face-to-face teaching practices to online teaching can be complex (Wang & Torrisi-Steele, 2015). Even though most universities offered online learning opportunities before the pandemic, more pedagogical investigation of effective online teaching was required. As part of the Erasmus+ Digital Education Initiatives and Timely Solutions (DIG-IT) project 2019 – 2022, five European universities recognized that HEI educators needed to

further develop their skills in online teaching. The universities participating in the project pooled their knowledge, expertise, and experience to support HEI educators in adapting and transforming their traditional in-person teaching style into professional performance suitable for digital learning environments. One of the outcomes of the DIG-IT project was a 3-module Train-the-Trainer course facilitating that transition. An evaluation strategy in the form of a mixed methods study was built into the inception of this course and the following article describes the course, learning journey of academics and their evaluation of the course efficacy.

The researchers' aim was to discover how HEI educators evaluated their online learning experiences and conveyed their pedagogical values in the Train-the-Trainer online course. This course was designed to ease the transformation from classroom teaching settings into digital learning environments as educators have described having difficulties in achieving comfort with online teaching. The course supports HEI educators to recognize their teaching values and describe their pedagogical approach(es) selected for an online course. They explored different technical solutions available to support students' learning processes to achieve the learning objectives and reflected on how they could maintain their important values in digital learning environments. Finally, the HEI educators used a digital education quality standard framework to critically examine their online course to further improve it.

Train-the-trainer course

The three module Train-the-Trainer course was the second course offered to HEI educators. First, these educators completed a pre-requisite 9-module course entitled Designing, Delivering and Evaluating Online Learning. This course supported HEI educators in developing: a student-based learning community, measurable learning outcomes, online content with supportive resources, online teaching strategies, structured learner support strategies and effective online learning evaluations. After successful completion, HEIs were invited to participate in the Train-the-Trainer course which complemented the 9-module course and offered them the credentials needed to teach future iterations of the course.

The three modules of the Train-the-Trainer course allowed HEI educators to identify and apply their professional values, teaching philosophies, and theoretical perspectives to the creation and implementation of online pedagogical approaches. They experimented with alternative and advanced technological solutions needed to develop an effective asynchronous online course and improved their online facilitating skills by aligning them with the DIG-IT European Union Framework: A Quality Standard to Guide the Design, Delivery and Evaluation of Effective eLearning (Figure 1. MacDonald, C J. et al., 2021). Finally, the HEI educators examined their own online courses by critically analysing them against the European Union Digital Education Quality Standard Framework and Companion Evaluation Toolkit (EU Digital Education Framework (project-digit.eu). HEI educators participated as learners within a learning community of practice by completing readings, assignments, and other tasks and they learned from each other by sharing experiences.

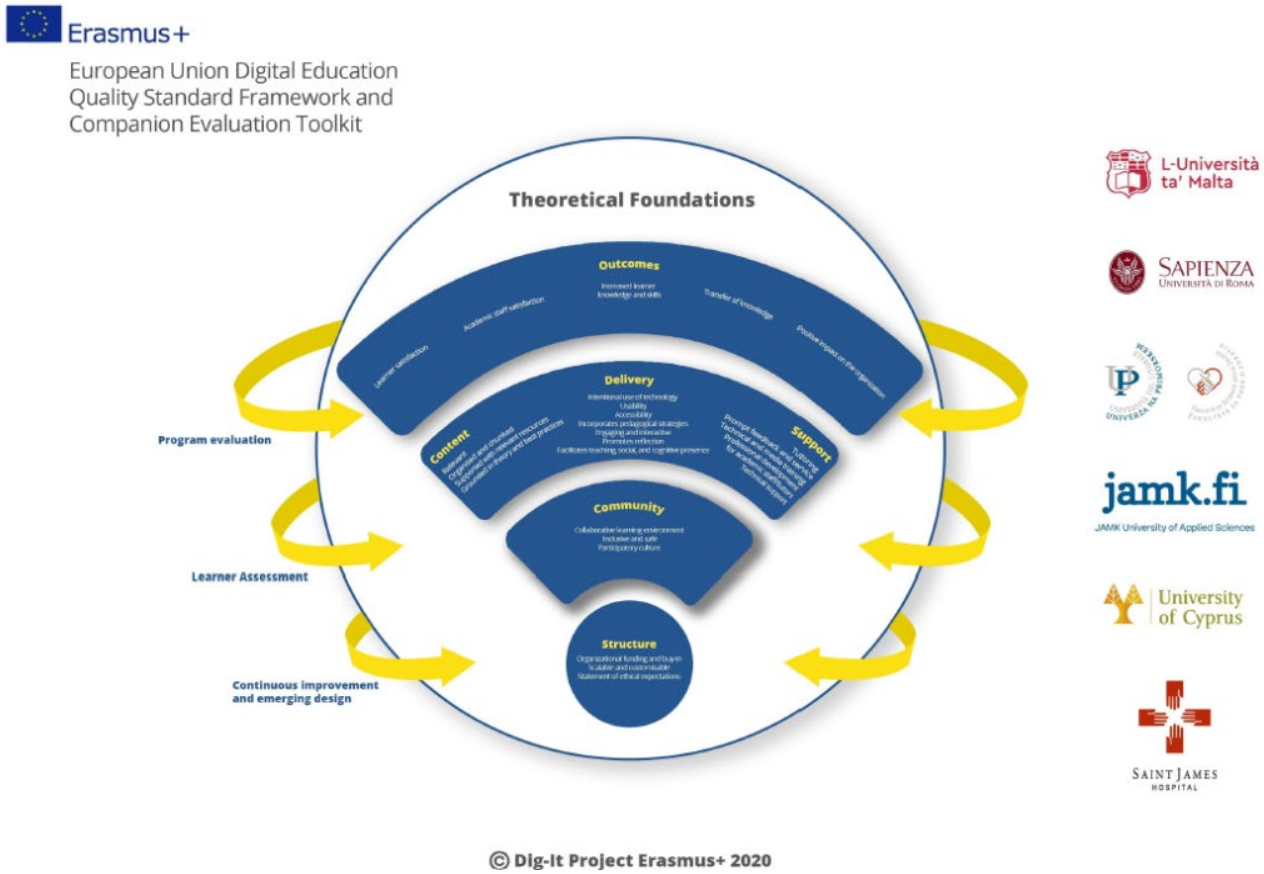

Figure 1. European Union Digital Education Quality Standard Framework and Companion Evaluation Toolkit.

The HEI educator's role in creating and supporting effective learning processes whether conducted face-to-face or online, is essential. Working in digital learning environments necessitates HEI educators renegotiating their professional identity and develop skills to promote and maintain their teaching philosophy and values in these settings. Maintaining one's pedagogical values is important as values and beliefs are reflected on online learning experiences. (Coker, 2018).

The Train-the-Trainer course concentrated on helping HEI educators identify their core values, which can be challenging to maintain in digital learning environments. Describing such values as 'promoting critical thinking skills', 'fun' or 'interactivity' and then finding appropriate technical solutions to promote learning that reflected these values was a process that helped them apply strategies to their educational commitment. Therefore, finding the appropriate technical solutions that were aligned with the selected pedagogical approach, helped design courses that created satisfactory learning experiences for both students and educators. In addition, the educators had time within the course for critical reflection and analysis needed for continuous improvement of their overall performance as educators in digital learning environments.

Educator value beliefs and digital identity

Discussions about the adequacy of educators' skills and competences call for attention to how digital learning environments affect educators' pedagogical principles and shape their digital identity. It cannot be assumed that being an effective face-to-face educator will automatically transfer one as an effective online educator. Teaching face-to-face and/or online require both similar and yet different pedagogical skills. At the heart of the teaching profession is the deep ambition to help others learn. Teaching and learning in online

environments places educators and students in different physical and temporal spaces and consequently, many valuable non-verbal cues that help educators' in-action reflections of the learning process are lost. This makes it necessary for educators to rethink their pedagogical approaches, positions, and values as facilitators of learning. The connection between one's pedagogical principles and implementation has been identified, for example, by Coker (2018) and Thanaraj (2016) who discovered educators' pedagogical approaches, beliefs, epistemology, and technological skills influencing on how they facilitate online teaching.

Educator beliefs have been conceptualized encompassing multiple systems from knowledge construction, ways of learning and teaching to pedagogical ideologies, values, and attitudes (Kim et al., 2013; Taimalu & Luik, 2019). Studies have highlighted that educators' own value beliefs influence on their judgements when selecting digital tools (Jääskelä et al., 2017). Thus, the consistency between educator values, beliefs, and their practical teaching actions should be obvious.

Coker (2018) found that educators' chosen pedagogical approach seemed to be influenced by how they positioned themselves as online educators and it further reflected on students' experiences of online learning. Coker (2018) discovered that some educators focused on emotional aspects of learning, valuing holistic and affective experiences of learners, or active dialogues to create social interactions, whereas others positioned themselves as being informed by a scientific epistemology and focused on knowledge delivery.

According to Richardson and Alsup (2015), online teaching requires educators to rethink their beliefs or have an internal dialogue with preconceptions related to face-to-face and online teaching. It appears the transition from face-to-face situations to online teaching requires educators not only understanding the nature and functions of online platforms but also considering the pedagogical approaches that can be employed to support learning (Thanaraj & Williams, 2016). These changes appear to challenge educators' conceptions of who they are as online educators and what they believe is important to their own digital pedagogy (Richardson & Alsup, 2015). Thus, these constantly evolving environments, not only necessitate educators to enhance their professional digital competencies, but also nurture their digital identity (Engeness, 2021).

Research and definitions on educators' digital identity stems on the vast research conducted on educator identity and professional educator identity (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Beijaard et al., 2004; Suarez & McGrath, 2022). Defining an educator's professional identity, and conceptualizing their digital identity is complex. To the extent that an educator identity is understood as continually negotiated and constructed in interactions with others, digital educator identity is seen as a dynamic and ongoing process, involving making sense and reinterpreting the beliefs, values and educational experiences in a context of contemporary digital society (Robson, 2018). Educators can negotiate and develop their digital identities by engaging in online learning and designing digital environments thus allowing participation in and contributions to social practices (Engeness, 2021).

Methodology

A mixed-method approach was utilized to evaluate this project leading to the three sets of data collection. First, an online survey was sent to evaluate HEI educators' viewpoints of the delivered online course. Second, the evaluation of their perspectives of the Train-the-Trainer course was explored by conducting focus group discussions. And third, an online learning assignment was created to investigate what values HEI educators considered important in their teaching. The researchers adopted a convergent parallel design as proposed by Creswell and Plano Clark (2018) where collection of quantitative and qualitative data is simultaneous and where both approaches have equal priority. The findings of both analyses were then compared and merged to form an integrated whole. This kind of research design supports triangulation

whereby the researchers aim to offset the weakness of both qualitative and quantitative approaches by capitalizing on the strengths of both.

Participants and procedure

The participants consisted of a purposive sample of 25 HEI educators from four countries: Malta, Italy, Cyprus, and Slovenia, 40% of whom were females and 60% males. The average age was 46.6 years (ranging from 24 to 62), and mean years of work experience16.8 years. Out of 25 participants, seven HEI educators (five females and two males) agreed to participate in the focus group discussions.

The online survey was based on the European Union Digital Education Quality Standard Framework and Companion Evaluation Toolkit (MacDonald et al., 2021) that was created in the first phase of the DIG-IT project. The framework was a result of an extensive literature review providing an overview of six domains. The online survey was designed to attain participants' perspectives on the Train-the-Trainer course and was available in the Moodle online platform as an embedded link accessible to the participants after the final module was completed.

A second set of data was collected in the focus groups discussions. The participants received a consent form describing the aims of the study, methods of data collection and measures taken for assuring their anonymity and confidentiality. Two group discussions representing participants from three countries were held in February 2021. Discussions were mediated in English and audio-recorded by using Zoom© lasting approximately one hour. The recordings were transcribed verbatim. Focus group discussions were supported by semi-structured questions, consisting of four thematic sections related to content and delivery, support during the course, structure of the course and outcomes to align with the EU Digital Education Quality Standard Framework.

The third dataset was collected from participants' written learning assignments to investigate the ways in which educators conveyed their pedagogical values. The assignment prompted HEI educators to consider their teaching values by defining them on a collaborative online board. The defined values were reviewed by the researchers and analysed qualitatively.

Data analysis processes

The data from the summative online survey, focus group discussions, and written assignments were analysed and used to triangulate the qualitative and quantitative data sources. This consisted of three phases. Phase 1 was conducted by qualitative analysis processes by utilizing processes outlined by (Doyle et al., 2020; Kyngäs et al., 2020). In phase 2 researchers performed a statistical analysis of the quantitative data and in phase 3 a mixed-method data analysis was conducted. Several processes can be implemented to conduct such an analysis so upon reflection and elaboration, it was decided to use "side-by-side comparison" as the researchers discussed and made comparisons based on the findings (J. W. Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The participants' written texts of the educators' values were analysed by the researchers using inductive thematic content analysis. This form of analysis was selected due to its suitability to cover phenomena that had not been found in the previous study processes (Kyngäs et al., 2020). The inductive analysis process consisted of reading the educators' assignments, identifying the listed values, and finally, forming general concepts and themes by carefully comparing the similarities and differences in the data.

During the analysis, researchers remained vigilant about the importance of integrating both perspectives. The qualitative analysis was performed using computer software NVivo ver. 12 QRS International. Two researchers individually analysed the data and compared then assimilated and compared reflective notes,

individual findings, and jointly conceptualized the final concept of the phenomena under study. There was a lot of focused reflection on the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings.

The principles established in the Declaration of Helsinki were followed (World Medical Association, 2018). The study was approved by the research and ethics committee of the University of Malta (December 11th, 2020, no.7284_01122020). All data were treated confidentially. Informed consent was obtained from all participants and participation to the research was voluntary.

Findings

Findings of the online survey

Participants were asked to evaluate their experiences with the Train-the-Trainer-course based on the six domains of the DIG-IT Train-the-Trainer summative survey: content, delivery, support, structure, community, and outcomes (Authors, 2021). The 25 participating HEI educators indicated that all domains were rated highly, and no major differences could be identified (mean = 4.27, SD = .376 [95% CI 4.11, 4.42], p = .000). The Cronbach's alpha for the entire questionnaire was .963. Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of the respondents based on the questionnaire domains.

Table 1: 'Dig-it Train-the-Trainer' questionnaire (n = 25)

Domains	N of items	Mean value	95% CI		*p*	Cronbach α
			Lower	Upper		
Content	8	4.34	4.18	4.50	.000	.871
Delivery	5	4.24	4.08	4.41	.000	.742
Support	5	4.04	3.84	4.24	.000	.859
Structure	6	4.28	4.12	4.44	.000	.801
Community	6	4.21	4.01	4.42	.000	.879
Outcomes	6	4.43	4.24	4.63	.000	.914

Note: Participants rated the Dig-it Train-the-Train questionnaire on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 5 – strongly agree to 1 – strongly disagree

The results show that participants rated the Outcomes and Content domain the highest (mean = 4.43 and 4.34, respectively) and the Support domain the lowest (mean = 4.04), but still very high. The findings suggested that HEI educators valued the fact that they would be able to apply what they learned in the course to design their own online learning and working situations (mean = 4.54; SD = .588). Furthermore, HEI educators reported that the knowledge and skills attained from this course will help them improve student support (mean = 4.50; SD = .511).

Findings of the focus group discussions

Using a descriptive approach to qualitative analysis (Doyle et al., 2020) the codes were reviewed and grouped into three overarching themes explaining participants' experiences in attending the internet-based Train-the-Trainer course: (1) perception of content organization and delivery; (2) perceived support and feedback; (3) reaching the course objectives and knowledge translation.

Organization and delivery

All participants described their overall experience of the online course as very positive, particularly the content and delivery. One participant pointed out´ […] my experience was very positive, and I think it was actually a bit surprising. I thought it would be harder than it was, and I thought it would have a heavier workload. ´ The delivery of the Train-the-Trainer course spanned the COVID-19 pandemic and participants were therefore experiencing extensive workloads and additional stress within their work settings. Another participant expressed: ´ […] At the beginning I was afraid that we would be overwhelmed because of COVID, but it was very well-balanced and manageable. It was very innovative. I learnt a lot of things. ´

The online course structure gave HEI educators autonomy to pursue their own learning needs and further develop their teaching style. For an example one participant said:

I have done other courses and sometimes I found them a little bit prescriptive, like 'you do this in this way'. I like the fact that this course was not like that because, in my own experience, sometimes something works, sometimes it does not, and it is very hard to have very general rules about doing something one way or another.

The structure of the online course was assessed as having the right balance between theory and practice and several digital solutions, as one participant expressed:

We were given our own courses to evaluate, to analyse, as well as those little case studies and at the same time, including some theory related to the learning and teaching. That is why I think the course had the right balance between theory and practice, learning for ourselves, learning how we would advise others and help others.

Even though teaching online was familiar to some participants, they confirmed the content offered them an opportunity to explore new aspects of their teaching and use of certain new tools.

Even now I am learning new things with these tools that we were using. I would say that maybe I was using basic things to get things done and not really exploiting them to their full extent of interactivity.

Support and feedback

Perception of support and timely, constructive feedback were recognized as important motivational factors that influenced HEI educators' engagement in the Train-the-Trainer course. The role of facilitators in this online course was certainly a key issue for the participants. HEI educators reported that the facilitators' role was perfectly placed within the course since it offered a different, atypical model of facilitators. As one participant stated: '[…] they (*facilitators*) always gave us promptly feedback after our assignments. The feedback was correct, and they did it in the right way to give you a little push. So, I think that in general, everything was done quite well.' Similarly, a second learner reported '[…] the feedback was very balanced. They gave us realistic feedback, some remarks on how to improve in a very nice way. It was not only "you did a good job", but "there are some things that can be improved" and they offered their suggestions.' Another learner shared:

I think the facilitators were perfect in giving us a lot of space for self-discovery and self-learning. It was a very autonomous way of learning, very student-centred learning. So, it was the perfect balance between guiding us and giving us space to follow paths on our own.

Finally, one HEI educator explained how important the facilitators were to their learning in the Train-the-Trainer course. *There was a moment when I got lost in the interface […] but then I got an email from the instructors who were being supportive…and their understanding prompted me to continue.*

Due to some technical problems in the middle of the course, communication between facilitators and participants were interrupted for a brief time. In certain cases, especially among those not skilled in online learning, caused a 'time of uncertainty' for some participants.

[…] due to the technical issues, we had […], sometimes it took a lot of time until I actually got feedback of the task I had submitted. But that was not a big issue. It was just that I did not know whether I had done everything or not.

The way in which the course was designed and the fact that it offered a more personal touch in its delivery, was noted in the feedback. This was identified as an important element to some participants who reported they missed face-to-face interactions:

[…] At one point the facilitator sent us an audio message, and this made a big difference in a more interactive way. Even if it was just the voice for a minute, I think it made a big difference in my way of feeling the course.

Course objectives and knowledge transfer

Participants reported that the course fulfilled their needs and expectations. The majority of them referred to the multiple use of digital tools which initially inspired them to join the course. For example, one of the participants pointed out:

I felt that I needed to know more and get more ideas of how I can integrate more technology into my teaching. I think the objectives were met; they were clear.

Besides the learning objectives being directly related to the course content, the course initiated two major processes among participants: reflective practice which led to finding ways of knowledge transfer and continued self-exploration of teaching/learning methods and approaches. The course stimulated reflectivity over the current teaching approach among many participants. For example, one HEI educator shared; 'Now I have a broader perspective of tools that I can use in my lectures that make things more interactive with students.' Another participant agreed:

It was an opportunity for me to reflect on what I was doing with my online teaching, and it pushed me to think about something that should be changed or that I am not so happy with, or I can improve.

In a similar vein, learners found the framework and reflection activities beneficial to their online teaching transition:

I also found the framework very useful, but I identified myself better with the modules than the framework from a personal approach. I found some of the earlier work more useful for me to identify the weaknesses and improve my teaching. I like the approach of reflecting on our own teaching, and I know it is something we do, but often I do not have time to just stop and think about how I teach or why I teach or reflect on my teaching philosophy. I enjoyed being pushed to do that. It was positive.

HEI educators reported the Train-the-Trainer course motivated them to explore new approaches to teaching and learning, seen as an added value. For example, one participant said, 'The course pushes the teacher to do research for themselves and look for other possibilities.' Another educator shared:

Experiments with this technology triggered an interest in exploring new things that I have never heard about. It works well for this level of training. For me, this was an excellent approach to get people to think and to make you want to go and explore on your own.

Another unexpected perspective that was revealed in the focus groups discussions was associated with social interaction. The course demonstrated that online environments impose limitations compared to a face-to-face learning environment. The feedback emphasized that communication and social interaction should not be neglected or put aside. The following quotations from the focus group interviews emphasized this point:

It had a big effect on me and made me realize that I need to adapt the way I teach online to better reflect my philosophy. I feel I am shaping the way I teach online into a way to get students to reflect and discuss more. It is very important, but I was struggling to get that online. It is very important to establish a sense of community and some sense of belonging, to be part of the group which is very difficult in asynchronous. So, it is even more important in these situations that you establish some kind of connection between the participants.

Findings of the participants' teaching values as an educator

One learning assignment in the course prompted the HEI educators to consider their teaching values. Participants created their own page on an online board and described their views on the two following questions: What kind of educator are you? What are your values as an educator? The assignment resulted in a total of 131 descriptions of educator values. These were analysed by inductive thematic content analysis (Kyngäs et al., 2020) identifying five main value themes. Themes differed based on the kind of pedagogical views and educator positioning perceived as facilitating learning in online contexts. The value themes were: 1. emphasizing collaboration and interactive learning, 2. espousing affective values, 3. putting emphasis on students' learning, 4. supporting students' self-awareness and 5. promoting subject-based and/or personal principles as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Participants' teaching values as an educator

Value themes	Collaboration and interactive learning (n=42)	Affective values (n=27)	Emphasis on students' learning (n=24)	Students' self-awareness (n= 19)	Subject-based or personal principles (n=19)
Examples of value descriptions	participatory collaborative dialogical interactive supporting teamwork differentiated learning	being fun caring compassionate inspiring love for learning honesty safety	approachable considering students' needs and prior experiences formative feedback	emphasizing students' responsibilities determination resilience equality	firm but fair being a role model having excellent knowledge and skills

The majority (n=42) of the descriptions fell in the theme 'emphasizing collaboration and interactive learning'. For example, HEI educators expressed their values as participatory, collaborative, dialogical,

interactive, supporting teamwork, active knowledge creation and differentiated learning. The 'emphasis on students' learning' (n=24) and 'espousing affective values' (n= 27) theme groups collected almost an equal number of descriptions. The notions in the former theme highlighted values such as being approachable and adaptable to learner's needs, considering student's prior experiences and offering formative feedback. Whereas the values in the latter theme consisted of emotional aspects, for instance, being fun, caring and compassionate, inspiring love for learning, nurturing honesty, safety and fairness. The last two themes, 'supporting students' self-awareness' (n=19) and 'promoting subject-based and/or personal principles' (n=19) were equal in belief values. The values noted in these two themes included expressions such as, emphasizing students' responsibilities, determination, resourcefulness, and resilience, as well as being skilful and firm but fair.

None of the HEI educators were identified as belonging to a single value theme, rather overlap between the theme groups was evident. However, the list manifested that learning and teaching in digital environments urges educators to rethink their values and pedagogical approaches, and to acknowledge that there is not only one truth or principle that fits for all.

Discussion and Conclusions

Acknowledging that teaching and learning in digital learning environments has grown exponentially, educators' digital pedagogical retraining and digital identity creation at all educational levels are of the utmost importance. Among digital educational experts a common understanding exists that becoming a successful facilitator of learning in digital environments requires more than just adding courses online. Rethinking one's pedagogies and values is required. In this study researchers explored how a group of HEI educators evaluated their online learning experiences and conveyed aspects of their pedagogical values. By sharing experiences and lessons learnt, discussions related to changing roles in the teaching profession from classrooms to digital environments were presented.

Creating a successful and supportive learning community for an asynchronous course where participants progress at their own speed is very challenging. Facilitators play an important role in fostering online learning communities and overcoming the lack of social, face-to-face presence (Daigle & Stuvland, 2021; Kravariti et al., 2018). In the learning design process of the Train-the-Trainer course, principles of social constructivism were applied to create a feeling of belonging.

One useful tool for educators to demonstrate their unique presence and sense of immediacy that helps students achieve a sense of community, is using video messages (Griffiths & Graham, 2020). In the Train-the-Trainer course participants sporadically received video messages from course facilitators to boost motivation, particularly when they faced technical challenges. As data revealed, the use of 'in-time-just-for-you' directed video messages was appreciated by participants.

Although participants in the Train-the-Trainer course enjoyed the flexibility and convenience asynchronicity afforded them, being self-paced and less instructor-dependent required a lot from the learners. The course was created to support highly educated university educators' self-awareness and self-regulation with carefully selected learning assignments and prompts to think and reflect on their online education practices. This type of self-regulated learning requires a high level of autonomy and independence, aspects that are emphasized in varying degrees in different learning cultures. Native learning culture and integrated theories influence students' abilities to manage in digital learning environments (Suominen & Hakanurmi, 2013). Students who have high skills in metacognition, information communications technology, learning-to-learn, and collaboration are more likely to be satisfied in digital learning environments that are based on constructivist learning theory.

The European Union Digital Education Quality Standard Framework was a tool for participants to use to enhance their own online courses by identifying and developing content, examining what to keep or omit, and explore new ideas to add, extend and enhance. Graduates of the Train-the-Trainer course were pleased to discover new solutions to common difficulties in online teaching and learning.

Pedagogical approaches in digital learning environments

Despite the increased familiarity of digital teaching environments, creating spontaneous collaboration, interaction, and feelings of presence for learners in an asynchronized online course is challenging. Anticipating learner motivation and engagement is much more difficult online than it is in personal contact settings where educators can observe and analyse learners' reactions and immediately modify and adjust learning situations. Online, strategies must be varied based on forecasted learner needs, and solutions and should be built-in to courses at their inception.

Educators' online pedagogical and social presence is integral to supporting online collaboration (Richardson & Alsup, 2015). The contention that educator beliefs and values are the main determinants of educator presence and identity offers a possible explanation as to why some educators may experience angst in re-creating their courses in digital environments. For instance, educators who follow constructivist, collaborative paradigms in teaching must recreate these in online contexts. The pedagogical tools and activities they choose to embed in their course design reflects their values and facilitation style, and the extent and intensity of their presence and learner collaboration.

Educators whose professional identity leans towards innovation and creative learning in the classroom might have difficulties in adjusting practices in online settings. Especially in asynchronous courses, they must be mindfully proactive and find creative pedagogies that suit their style yet meet learning objectives. Similarly, educators who espouse affective values such as 'inspiring', 'encouraging', 'caring' or 'fun' have to create these experiences using online tools, activities and learning assignments. One of the great aims and successes of the Train-the-Trainer course was to provide reflective time that helped participants rethink and contemplate their professional philosophy and values. Once determined, they could identify digital solutions to the design, implementation and evaluation of their online courses in a manner that was true to their cherished values.

Researchers in this study were startled at the numerous (n=131) values that HEI educator identified as important to their teaching. Many values that HEI educators listed are not simple to implement in a digital learning environment. This indicates support is needed to aid educators to create online learning courses that connect their subject matter expertise to their selected pedagogical solutions and professional values and beliefs. It challenges digital designers and developers to consider educator preferences and create flexible, interactive environments that facilitate educators' ability to be innovative and unique.

Discussions around online learning and teaching are focused on the multiple factors that need to be considered while teaching in the digital environment. As we are considering the affordances of creating digital education to fit the demands of our digital world, we need to pay close attention to educators who experience hurdles in the transformation from classroom educator to a digital facilitator. The cornerstone to an engaging online learning experience is the recognition of which values educators consider essential to teaching and learning. In a busy academic world, a discussion of values can start the organizational conversation that must also consider the goals of time and balanced resource allocation to ensure HEI educators feel fully supported and connected to digital online teaching.

Limitations

The study limitations include a relatively small sample in both the quantitative and qualitative data collection, so the generalization of results should be interpreted with caution. Another limitation that must be considered is that the Train-the-Trainer course was conducted by different facilitators in each country involved in the project, although all facilitators followed the same instructions for conducting the asynchronous course. Third limitation is the cultural context that should be considered in interpreting the results. Future research on how different cultural backgrounds and learning cultures effect on creation of online education could be investigated. Also, the questionnaire should include a more comprehensive analysis and further psychometric testing.

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