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ABSTRACTS

THE SYMBOLIC-CULTURAL DIMENSION OF THE DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IN HE. A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

In the last few years and after the pandemic emergency digital transformation has affected the academic system, from all points of view: organisational, didactic, research and development, third mission, etc. The university is increasingly configured as a complex organization where the cultural dimension is central. This is expressed through the didactic offer, the curriculum, the organization of the disciplinary sectors, adopted taking into account the supranational and national constraints and the strategic lines of development pursued at the level of the single university. This work based on the assumptions of the sociological *theory of translation* (Callon 1986; Latour 1986, 1987; Holmes 2000), aims to identify the symbolic-cultural categories and the representations of digital transformation in six universities of five different European countries (Greece, Finland, Ireland, Italy, and Spain) to understand how individual contexts have translated, transformed, and negotiated existing ones. This complex political and cultural process of transfer and transformation is brought to light by means of Emotional Text Mining method (Greco, 2016), which identify the horizon of cultural meaning shared by social actors studying words choice and association.

Keywords: Digital transformation, Higher Education, Emotional Text Mining, comparative analysis, translation theory

UNIVERSITY GOVERNANCE FACING CHALLENGES OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMAATION.
SOME RESULTS OF THE FIELD RESEARCH

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ABSTRACT

Some studies highlight that the majority of European HE institutions have made little progress in adapting the courses offered to a student-centred learning model capable of integrating developments and opportunities in technology-enhanced education.

Challenges posed by digital transformation to universities do not regard only teaching and learning processes. There are different levels of institutional and organizational action which produce effects on these processes; political and financial choices which determine other choices in this field.

The objective of the presentation is to share the main results of a part of the field research of ECOLHE.

This part refers to the six case studies developed. They have aimed to examine how the universities involved in the project develop their strategic approaches to digitalisation. They, using an organisational empowerment approach, have intended to take stock of the current situation and evaluate to what extent there is a deficit in terms of meeting critical challenges in European HE. The objective of the research planned in the first phase of the project - Digital Technologies in HE: from the European vision to the university governance - was to understand the organizational processes in promoting digital innovation in universities to examine: national legislative frameworks; guidelines; best practices; standards and constraints; micro-policies related to how universities have "translated" the digital challenge into practice (through the promotion of digital resources in teaching activities (online and/or blended); professional development on digital transformation; e-learning quality standards; online/blended university policies).

The main targets of the case studies were to illustrate: needs and perspective of improvement of the use of digital technologies in HE; emerging teaching and staff skills for the digital era; the most essential problems detected and possible solutions.

UNIVERSITY TEACHERS' DIGITAL EMPOWERMENT FOR BLENDED TEACHING: AN EXPERIENCE OF TEACHERS' TRAINING IN EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

The global pandemic involved an intense integration of Digital Technologies in all the spheres of human life, and also education needed to adapt to an urgent remote context. Given that situation, online training became a response for educational institutions from all levels because they had to apply hybrid solutions to develop their training activities.

In addition, the need to quickly adapt to these changes made teachers aware of a lack in their own Digital Competence from a methodological perspective; this fact has been identified in the application of models of online teaching based on the strategies they apply in face-to-face setting.

With the impossibility to perform their teaching practices in face-to-face settings, HE teachers adopted remote solutions based on replicating face-to-face dynamics and activities online. But this remote teaching cannot be considered online teaching, because any online education activity needs a proper design to be properly developed and to assure students' meaningful learning

Because of this situation and the solutions adapted, the results of remote teaching were not coherent with online teaching principles, causing a negative vision on online teaching and learning. To promote HE teachers' Digital Competence, an online course was designed, implemented and evaluated in six European universities. In this work, the process of design and implementation will be critically discussed to highlight the limit and opportunities of this training as a model to help teachers to transform their practices from traditional to blended settings causing a negative vision on online teaching and learning.

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ONLINE TEACHING IN HIGHER EDUCATION AFTER THE PANDEMIC EXPERIENCE: GUIDELINES AND RECOMENDATIONS

Conclusions from the pandemic era experience

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ABSTRACT

In the years during the pandemic there was a dramatic conversion in the traditional operation of universities. Until then, distant teaching was used rarely, or not at all. To fulfill their role and continuing their operation in quarantine times, traditional Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) transformed their teaching services from in situ into fully distant, keeping it this way for at least two years. A critical question is still whether they should return to their usual teaching methods or transform their operation based on their experience from distant teaching. The present work uses the collective work of ECOLHE Project to outline the effect of new teaching methods in Higher Education (HE) during and after the pandemic. During a three-year research, ECOLHE project investigates the way that Universities have forwarded the enhancing of ICT resources in HE, through the realization of six case studies in partner countries HEIs. Furthermore, the Project developed a pilot implementation of an online environment as an online teaching tool to increase HE teachers' ability in the usage of digital technologies. Next step was the creation of a Serious Game aiming to study users' development of new skills and new ways of solving problems. Also, a self-assessment tool was implemented aiming to define and evaluate the level of innovation in HE institutes. Summarizing the extensive work of the previous steps conclusions were drawn that lead to the formation of Recommendations and Guidelines regarding the Academic Bodies, with the target of addressing the challenges for modern educational systems.

EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION IN 2050: THE VISION, THE EVOLUTION

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ABSTRACT

The European Higher Education and Research Area is going through a transformation process that will push Europe to a leading position on the way to a green digitalization of societies. The environment of learning including methods and spaces is expected to change drastically. With knowledge of today's technologies we can only imagine the future but the way forward is almost clear. In this presentation we will attempt to describe the learning in the future in both school and higher education as their evolution needs to develop in parallel.

ADOPTING GAMIFICATION AS A STRATEGY TO SUPPORT STUDENTS' MOTIVATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION: THE TEACHERS' ROLE

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ABSTRACT

Students' academic performance and learning outcomes are significantly influenced by their level of engagement in learning activities and their motivation to learn (Schnitzler et al., 2020; Sedova et al., 2019; Christenson et al., 2012; Dixson, 2015; Robinson & Hullinger, 2015). Students who are highly motivated and engaged are more likely to complete their learning experience successfully (Hughes et al., 2008), are more resilient (Finn & Rock, 1997), and are less likely to drop out (Finn, 1989) or engage in negative behaviours like academic cheating (Finn & Frone, 2004). Several studies referred to gamification, which can be defined as the "use of game design elements to motivate user behavior in non-game contexts" (Deterding, 2011), as a possible strategy to foster students' engagement and motivation at the Higher Education (HE) level (Alsawaier, 2018; Campillo-Ferrer, 2020; Kovácsné Pusztai, 2021). However, a crucial factor affecting the adoption and the success of this new pedagogical practice, as any other one, is the fact that teachers possess the needed skills' set to implement it, according with the specific needs of their discipline and their students. To equip teachers with the competences needed to effectively design, implement, and evaluate a gamified learning activity, an online

THE EUROPEAN STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVE OF DIGITAL TEACHING AND LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The ECOLHE Erasmus+ Project

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ABSTRACT

The increase in the use of online training connected to the pandemic emergency has highlighted, as never before, that Higher Education Institutions have to deal with the digital revolution, promoted by the European Community since 1998 from the so-called Bologna Process. This work illustrates the results of the students' survey of the "Empower Competences for Onlife Learning in Higher Education" (ECOLHE) project. ECOLHE project aimed to investigate the transformation processes and of developing practices of higher education's digital teaching and learning in several European countries, and it was coproduced by an international partnership and co-financed by the ERASMUS+ Program of the European Union. The research project was based on the hypothesis that the availability of technological infrastructures does not grant an efficient and effective use of ICTs by professors, students and researchers.

ECOLHE is a three-year project involving six partners from five European countries (Italy, Spain, Finland, Greece, Ireland) characterized by a different digital development process and Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) value. This work illustrates the results of an online survey involving 1148 students from online and traditional universities in the partner countries. The data was collected by means of a self-administered questionnaire aimed at investigating the elements deemed relevant for students' digital learning and training. The results of the multivariate analysis made it possible to identify five components characterizing digital maturity and seven digital learning styles. Finally, the comparison between the universities involved made it possible to understand the effect that teaching practices had on the perception of students in terms of effectiveness and efficiency.

Keywords: Higher education, digital transformation, digital maturity, digital learning styles

A STUDENT-CENTRIC WORKING-LIFE COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT A JOURNEY FROM CLASSROOM TEACHING TOWARDS 'ONLIFE' LEARNING: PEDAGOGICAL BEST PRACTICES

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ABSTRACT

In recent years the digital transformation and pandemic emergency demanding the digitalisation of contemporary higher education (HEIs) in Europe. The situation needs transformational vision, legislative and operational support from the HEI stakeholders, government, and relevant bodies. However, the most critical element is a working-life and industry demands new set of skills and competencies from the HEIs graduates. The ECOLHE European innovation project presented the Onlife Manifesto being human in the hyperconnected world. More broadly, it helps start a reflection on the way in which a hyperconnected world calls for rethinking the many existing practices in HEIs. On the one hand, the hyperconnected world demands a new way of future competencies. And on the other hands, many research studies confirm that a clear gap between HEIs competence development and market demands resulted in a big shortfall of the workforce and working-life ready graduates. The most interesting thing in these studies shows the lack of suitable working-life candidates causing this shortfall rather than the organisation's willingness to hire. In Finland, the education ministry has manifested future proofing of the education system to meet the demand of modern businesses and hyperconnected world under the Vision 2030 development. In Vision 2030, one of the key development areas identified was a modern curriculum design and development that meets the rapidly changing demands of working life and society. Laurea University of Applied Sciences has positioned their education offering to fill the gap of demand and towards Vision 2030. Laurea adopted online education and innovative pedagogical model that strengthens students' futureproof competence development and workforce capacity building. A student-centric working-life competence development a journey from

classroom teaching towards 'Onlife' learning presents the pedagogical best practices. The paper is focusing on the adaptation of continue curricula development, adopting modern online pedagogical and education approaches, and increasing industry cooperation and work-life practices. The paper addresses two-fold challenges including meeting the demands of working-life professionals and future-proofing education offerings.

Keywords: Digital transformation, Working-life ready graduates, Futureproof higher education, Working-life competence development, Digital pedagogy best practices