-ChallengHE

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Online learning model pilot for teaching in HE

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1. Introduction

1.1 Objectives of the evaluation

The objectives of the evaluation for the **D-challangHE** project's pilot testingt are as follows:

1. **Assess the effectiveness of educational content and methodologies:** To analyze how participants in each partner country received and applied the course content, including online teaching methodologies, the use of artificial intelligence in education, and soft and communication skills for digital teaching.
2. **Identify key challenges and adaptations:** To identify the challenges faced by partners during the implementation of the pilot courses and to analyze how adaptations were made in response to cultural, organizational, or other differences among the countries.
3. **Evaluate the impact on participants and academic institutions:** To determine how the courses impacted the digital literacy and teaching practices of participants, and to assess how academic institutions have utilized the project results to enhance teacher professionalization.
4. **Conduct a comparative analysis among partners:** To perform a comparative analysis among the different partners to assess differences in the success and acceptance of the courses and to understand how various didactical and organizational approaches influenced the outcomes.
5. **Develop guidelines for future projects:** Based on the findings, formulate recommendations and guidelines for improving future projects that focus on digital education and teacher professionalization.

1.2 Scope and methodology of the evaluation

The scope of the Evaluation includes the following key aspects of the D-challangHE project:

- **Geographical Scope:** The evaluation covers all partner countries involved in the project, namely Greece. Italy, Lithuania, Romania and Slovenia.
- **Content Scope:** The evaluation includes a review of all three courses (Online Teaching Methodologies, Use of AI in Education, Soft and Communication Skills for Digital Teaching), as well as additional teaching tools and resources used during the pilot testing.
- **Time Frame:** The evaluation spans the period from the beginning of the pilot testing to the final reporting of results in all partner countries.

The methodology of the Evaluation is based on a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods:

- **Data Collection:** Data was gathered through partner reports, evaluation questionnaires for course participants, in-depth interviews with trainers, and analysis of documentation and feedback.
- **Qualitative Analysis:** This includes an analysis of interviews and feedback to gain deeper insights into the experiences of participants and partners with innovative teaching methods.

- **Quantitative Analysis:** This focuses on the statistical processing of data from evaluation questionnaires to quantify the success of the courses about the set objectives.
- **Comparative Analysis:** Used to compare results among different partners to identify which methods and approaches were most effective in various contexts.
- **Concluding Analysis:** Integrates findings from all methodological approaches to provide a comprehensive assessment of the success and impact of the D-challangHE project.

2. General Project and Partners Overview

- How would you describe the overall goal and purpose of the D-challangHE WP3?
- What were the main roles and responsibilities of each partner within the WP3?
- How did the partners collaborate and communicate throughout the project's duration on WP3?

The D-ChallengHE project aims to advance digital teaching in higher education by developing innovative online teaching methods that promote collaboration among institutions, improve educator skills and evaluate digital teaching practices, therefore WP3 developed a platform and courses aimed to do just that.
Academia coordinated the project, managed course development, guidebooks creation and preparation of evaluation tools and materials, such as certificates for pilot testing. The institution coordinators handled participant applications for pilot testing and administrative tasks. The trainers delivered course content, provided feedback and conducted evaluations. The participants or trainees engaged in courses, completed assignments and filled out evaluations.
Partners held regular meetings for progress updates, used email video conferencing and forums for communication, utilized online platforms for sharing resources and tracking progress maintained detailed records and provided progress reports.
Time zone differences were managed by scheduling meetings at convenient times and using asynchronous methods. Cultural differences were addressed through open dialogue and flexibility. Technical issues were handled with technical support and contingency plans and language barriers were mitigated with translations and clear communication.

Specific Data:

- **Total Number of Trainees Enrolled to Courses:** 1,025 across all partners.
- **Total Number of Trainers Delivering Courses:** 27 across all partners.

3. Presentation of Pilot Testing and Didactical/Organizational Approach

- What were the main methods and strategies used during the pilot testing of the courses?
- How was the pilot testing organized in each partner country?
- What innovative didactical approaches were employed, and how were they received by participants?

- What were the key adaptations required due to cultural or organizational differences among countries?

The pilot testing involved a mix of synchronous and asynchronous learning methods. Trainees engaged with online course materials through self-paced modules and participated in live sessions for real-time interaction. Feedback was gathered through pre- and post-assessments and course evaluations.

Each partner country organized its own pilot testing by enrolling participants, scheduling synchronous sessions, and managing asynchronous learning. Coordinators and trainers tailored the delivery to local needs and tracked progress using the project's online platform.

- **ACADEMIA:** Soft and Communication Skills for Digital Teaching (25 trainees, 1 trainer), Online Teaching Methodologies (26 trainees, 1 trainer), Use of AI in Education (25 trainees, 1 trainer).
- **Hellenic Open University:** Soft and Communication Skills for Digital Teaching (26 trainees, 1 trainer), Online Teaching Methodologies (23 trainees, 1 trainer), Use of AI in Education (23 trainees, 1 trainer).
- **Klaipeda University:** Soft and Communication Skills for Digital Teaching (34 trainees, 3 trainer), Online Teaching Methodologies (34 trainees, 3 trainer), Use of AI in Education (41 trainees, 5 trainer).
- **Institute for Education:** Soft and Communication Skills for Digital Teaching (284 trainees, 2 trainers), Online Teaching Methodologies (288 trainees, 2 trainers), Use of AI in Education (363 trainees, 3 trainers).
- **Linc Campus University:** Soft and Communication Skills for Digital Teaching (6 trainees, 1 trainer), Online Teaching Methodologies (41 trainees, 1 trainer), Use of AI in Education (46 trainees, 1 trainer).

Innovative approaches included interactive forums, real-world case studies, and multimedia elements. Participants generally responded positively, appreciating the practical applications and interactive nature of the courses. Adaptations included adjusting content to reflect local contexts and educational practices, accommodating different time zones and scheduling needs, and modifying communication methods to fit cultural preferences and organizational structures.

3. Training Testing Results

- How would you assess the success of each module: *Online Teaching Methodologies*, *Use of AI in Education*, and *Soft and Communication Skills for Digital Teaching*?
- What were the main challenges faced during the delivery of the courses, and how were they overcome?

- How did participants evaluate the relevance and applicability of the content in their daily educational practice?
- What were the significant differences in the testing results among the partner countries?

The success of each module can be assessed through participant feedback, completion rates, and the effectiveness of learning outcomes. For Online Teaching Methodologies, success was measured by participants' ability to apply various online teaching strategies. For the Use of AI in Education, success was determined by how well participants understood and could implement AI tools. Soft and Communication Skills for Digital Teaching were evaluated based on improvements in participants' communication and interpersonal skills in online settings.

We experienced some challenges including technical issues, varying levels of participant engagement, and differing local educational standards. These were addressed by providing technical support, engaging participants through interactive content, and adapting course materials to local contexts.

Participants generally found the content relevant and applicable to their daily educational practices. They reported that the modules provided practical tools and strategies that they could integrate into their teaching, enhancing their effectiveness in online and blended learning environments.

Testing results showed variations among partner countries due to differences in educational backgrounds, prior experience with digital tools, and engagement levels. Some countries demonstrated higher proficiency in using AI tools, while others excelled in communication skills, reflecting diverse strengths and challenges in each region.

4. Evaluation Interviews - Qualitative Insights

- What were the key feedback points from participants regarding the content and delivery of the courses?
- How did participants describe their experience with the innovative teaching methods?
- What changes would they suggest for improving future course deliveries?
- How have the courses impacted their knowledge and skills in digital education?

Participants generally found the course content relevant and well-structured, but they highlighted areas where more detail or clearer explanations were needed. They appreciated the inclusion of practical examples and interactive elements, which made the learning process more engaging. However, some participants expressed a desire for more real-life case studies and examples to better connect theory with practice.
The innovative teaching methods were well-received by participants, who found them engaging and beneficial. The use of interactive tools and multimedia enhanced their learning experience. Nevertheless, a few participants struggled with adapting to new technologies or methodologies, indicating that additional support or guidance might be helpful.

For future courses, participants suggested incorporating more hands-on activities and practical exercises to reinforce learning. They recommended providing clearer instructions and additional resources for those who wish to delve deeper into the topics. Flexible scheduling options and improved technical support were also mentioned as areas for enhancement to accommodate diverse participant needs.
The courses significantly impacted participants' knowledge and skills in digital education. Participants reported increased confidence in using digital tools and strategies, improved online teaching practices, and a deeper understanding of how to integrate AI into their educational settings. The training equipped them with practical skills and knowledge that they were able to apply in their teaching practices.

5. Follow-up Reports and Recommendations

- What follow-up actions were taken to implement innovative learning approaches after the pilot testing concluded?
- How have academic institutions in the partner countries utilized the project results to enhance teacher professionalization?
- What recommendations would you make for scaling and improving such educational initiatives in the future?

Following the pilot testing, partners focused on refining and implementing innovative learning approaches. They reviewed feedback from participants to make necessary adjustments to course content and delivery methods. Best practices identified during the pilot were documented and shared among partners. Training materials and resources were updated based on pilot results to ensure they met the needs of a broader audience.

Academic institutions in partner countries leveraged the project results to enhance teacher professionalization by integrating the new methodologies and tools into their training programs. They organized workshops and seminars to disseminate knowledge gained from the project. Institutions also revised their professional development curricula to include the innovative approaches tested during the project, ensuring that teachers received updated and relevant training.

Recommendations for Scaling and Improving Educational Initiatives:

1. Enhance Flexibility: Provide flexible learning options and support to accommodate the varying needs and technological competencies of participants.
2. Focus on Sustainability: Develop strategies to ensure the long-term sustainability of the innovations, including creating self-sustaining training programs and ongoing support systems.
3. Gather and Act on Feedback: Continuously collect and analyze feedback from participants to make iterative improvements and adapt to emerging educational needs.

6. Final Comparative Evaluation

- What are the main findings regarding the differences in the success and acceptance of the courses among the partner countries?
- How would you compare the effectiveness of different didactical and organizational approaches used in various countries?
- What key lessons were learned that should be considered for future projects?
- What guidelines would you propose for academic institutions to improve teacher professionalization based on the experiences of this project?

The success and acceptance of the courses varied among partner countries due to differences in educational contexts, technological readiness, and cultural attitudes towards digital learning. Some countries reported higher engagement and satisfaction due to better alignment of the course content with local needs and more advanced technological infrastructure. Others faced challenges such as limited access to necessary technology or resistance to new teaching methods, impacting overall effectiveness and acceptance.

Different didactical and organizational approaches showed varying levels of effectiveness. For example, interactive and participatory methods were more successful in countries with a strong tradition of collaborative learning. Conversely, countries with a more traditional educational approach benefited from structured and clearly defined course materials. The flexibility and adaptability of the approach were key factors in its success across different contexts, indicating that a one-size-fits-all model is less effective than tailored solutions.

Key Lessons Learned for Future Projects:

1. Adaptability: Tailor approaches to fit the local educational and cultural context to maximize relevance and impact.
2. Technological Infrastructure: Ensure that all participating institutions have the necessary technological resources to support innovative methods.
3. Continuous Feedback: Regularly collect and act on feedback from participants to make iterative improvements.

Guidelines for Improving Teacher Professionalization:

1. Customize Training: Develop training programs that are adaptable to different educational contexts and technological environments.
2. Promote Active Learning: Incorporate interactive and participatory methods to engage teachers more effectively.
3. Ensure Technological Support: Provide adequate support and resources to help teachers integrate new technologies into their practice.
4. Facilitate Ongoing Development: Offer continuous professional development opportunities to keep educators updated on new methods and tools.

7. Annex for Training Tools

- What educational tools and resources were used during the pilot testing?
- How did these tools contribute to the effectiveness of the training?
- What are the potential shortcomings of these tools, and what improvements would you suggest?

During the courses, several educational tools and resources were employed to support the courses. The primary tool was the **D-Challange online learning platform**, which facilitated the delivery of course content, assignments, and discussions. This platform provided a centralized location for accessing educational materials and participating in course-related activities. **Video conferencing tools** like Zoom or Microsoft Teams were used for synchronous sessions, allowing for real-time interaction between participants and trainers. **Collaborative forums** on the platform enabled participants to engage in discussions, share insights, and provide peer feedback. Additionally, various **educational resources** such as worksheets, quizzes, and supplementary reading materials were provided to enrich the learning experience. These tools and resources significantly contributed to the effectiveness of the training. The video conferencing tools facilitated real-time communication and engagement, making synchronous sessions interactive and dynamic. The online learning platform offered flexibility, allowing participants to access course materials and resources at their convenience, which supported diverse learning paces and schedules. The use of collaborative forums encouraged peer-to-peer learning and feedback, fostering a supportive learning community. Overall, these tools created a comprehensive and accessible learning environment that supported various aspects of the educational process. Despite their benefits, some shortcomings were identified in the tools used during courses. Technical issues occasionally disrupted video sessions, with participants experiencing connectivity problems or technical glitches. The **user interface** of the online platform was found to be challenging for some participants to navigate, which impacted their ability to efficiently access and utilize course resources. Additionally, some supplementary materials were not fully aligned with the course content or were outdated, which affected their relevance and utility. To address these issues, several improvements could still be made but some were already made during the pilot testing. Enhanced **technical support** should be provided to resolve connectivity and technical problems more effectively. Improving the **user interface** of the online platform could make it more intuitive and easier to navigate for all users. Regular updates and reviews of **educational resources** are necessary to ensure that they are current and relevant, aligning with the latest course content and educational standards. These changes would help to enhance the overall effectiveness and user experience of the educational tools and resources used in future pilot testing phases.

8. Additional Information and Useful Materials for Academic Institutions

- What additional information and resources would be useful to include to support academic institutions?
- How can the results of this project contribute to long-term improvements in the educational process?

The project has underscored a strong interest in the knowledge and skills offered through the pilot courses, reflecting a significant demand for free pilot training opportunities. The three courses addressed crucial areas: **Online Teaching Methodologies**, focusing on effective digital teaching techniques; **Use of AI in Education**, exploring artificial intelligence integration in educational settings; and **Soft and Communication Skills for Digital Teaching**, aimed at improving communication skills essential for online education.
To further benefit from these insights, institutions and educators in all pilot countries involved were encouraged to visit the D-Challenge platform for course enrollment and access to valuable resources. Detailed instructions on how to sign up and participate are available on the platform. For additional information or alternative training options, the platform offers various opportunities to enhance digital teaching skills.

9. Inclusion of Additional Qualification Questions for Course Participants

- How did participants previously assess their digital literacy and ability to use digital tools in an educational context?
- What additional digital skills or competencies did participants wish to acquire after completing the courses?
- To what extent did participants feel that the courses adequately addressed their needs and previous experiences?

Before the courses, participants generally rated their digital literacy and proficiency with digital tools based on their prior experience and familiarity with online teaching platforms. Many participants expressed varying levels of confidence, with some feeling comfortable using basic tools but less confident in integrating advanced digital methods into their teaching practices. Post-course, participants indicated a desire to acquire skills such as advanced data analytics, interactive content creation, and mastery of emerging educational technologies. Many expressed interest in learning more about integrating artificial intelligence into education, creating engaging online content, and leveraging advanced digital communication tools.

Participants generally felt that the courses addressed their needs to a reasonable extent, though there were some variations based on their previous experience and expectations. Feedback indicated that while the courses were useful, there were areas for improvement, such as offering more advanced modules for experienced users or additional resources for those new to digital tools.

10. Exploring Long-Term Impact on Participants and Institutions

- How frequently and in what contexts do participants continue to use the knowledge and tools acquired from the courses in their daily pedagogical practice?
- Have participants noticed any improvements in their pedagogical methods or student engagement due to the use of digital methods acquired in the courses?
- What changes in support or infrastructure have been made at the institutional level to enable better use of digital tools and methods in education?

Participants reported varying degrees of ongoing use of the knowledge and tools acquired. Many regularly incorporate digital tools and methods into their teaching practices, using them for online course management, interactive learning activities, and student engagement. The frequency of use often depends on the participant's role and the specific demands of their teaching environment. Participants have observed improvements in their pedagogical methods and student engagement. Enhanced digital skills have enabled them to create more interactive and engaging learning experiences, resulting in better student participation and feedback. The integration of digital tools has also facilitated more flexible and personalized learning experiences.