

Teachers online or facilitators? Does it really make a difference? Which competences are needed?

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Summary of presentation

First question about the recent practice changes for a professor of XXI century, due to the pandemia, in mode of teaching, presential or online, is who is capable of teaching online? In most countries and higher education institutions anyone can teach online. There are no requirements to teach online in most situations and any professor can perform this type of activity. Taking into account that to be a teacher in the educational system one needs to be trained and assessed it seems evident that a competence verification should exist for anyone teaching online. It is a major injustice for a learner to have a teacher not qualified to teach online.

EDEN Europe, as well as other organizations, has suggested that a qualification framework should be implemented and assessment of the competences of teachers online should be verified. This framework is called TOP - Teaching Online Permit. Also the online teaching and learning transformations motivated by the pandemia and by the changes of the educational and training scenario may also lead to the surge of new professions. For instance, in project FACILE coordinated by the Technical University of Wien has proposed the role of facilitators. These facilitators have the purpose of helping learners use the online context in terms of attendance, motivation, information and personalized follow-up. These are not teachers or technicians but companions of learners.

The role of professors may in the future be a mixture of tutor and examiner. Tutor due to the personalized needs of each learner that are different and changing with evolution of educational and training contexts. An example is the Continuing Professional Development of University of Stanford that started in 2008 to make their online materials freely available saving for the staff the role of providing certificates of accomplishments after proper competence evaluation.

Another important trend is the one proposed by the European University Association report of 2016 that the “e” in elearning should be eliminated since all is learning. The report presents evidence that both modes are effective as long as the quality is present. And learners perform better in each mode or in blended mode according to their own learning styles. Assessment in both modes can be done effectively as long as evaluation methods are aligned with the different type learning outcomes. Also the teaching techniques in online teaching, as well as in face to face, should be chosen using pedagogy, andragogy or gerontagogy theories.

Future will bring an increased use of digital tools that will facilitate and replace functions of professors. Some of these are the assessment supported by machine learning, the use of simulation learning scenarios (virtual, augmented and immersive reality) or application of memory information brain implants. Attention should be paid to the use of digital tools to control behaviour of learners like the projects underway since 2017 with the identification of student emotions, up to nine, leading to post actions by professors in a clear violation of

privacy rights. The use of Artificial Intelligence must be critically analysed and a clear separation should be made between the folklore performances of the tools of AI and the benefits for teaching and learning. Serious research should be made in terms of the capacities of the AI tools algorithms for education and training. A strong effort should be made to avoid the spectacles that happened during the MOOCs phase since the context is similar. Astonishment must yield to rational analysis for professors to avoid superficial conclusions and guidelines. Every professor should understand machine learning ("The master algorithm" by Pedro Domingos) before embarking on dangerous educational experiments.