SUMMARY

With the 2020 coronavirus pandemic, Higher Education institutions throughout the world suddenly turned to remote teaching as the only way to replace classroom-based teaching. This shift caught everyone by surprise and completely unprepared. Different institutions embedded in different cultural, social and political environments with different teaching staff expertise, beliefs and approaches, with different technologies delivered teaching to very varied students bodies.

The global scale of this shift calls for a platform where individual practices can be compared and discussed.

The aim of this research networking proposal is to gather language practitioners from a range of countries and compare their experiences as language teachers and/or managers during the months of the crisis. The questions we will address in this research network partners project will focus on what has changed in language teaching practices as a result of the COVID-19; on what might be the desirable permanent changes and those more likely to revert to the pre-pandemic context; on redefined language pedagogy and new learning objectives; on materials development for remote teaching. The project also aims at identifying a number of strands to be researched further.

This project will produce a volume of case studies that describe good practices and lessons learned crossing national boundaries.
OBJECTIVES

- Analyse the nature of the educational response to lockdown measures - Different institutions within different staff and student backgrounds as well as within different cultural, social and technological environments reacted differently to the advent of Covid-19. Their responses were varied and driven by the perception of their pedagogical needs.

- Describe and evaluate the deployment of technology in remote language teaching - Lockdown imposed the need to deliver teaching at a distance, remotely. Language teaching is specific for we do not only deliver content (explicit grammatical and cultural knowledge) but also develop synchronous, real-time communicative skills such as listening and speaking. This makes the remote delivery of language teaching particularly challenging and requiring the deployment of a selection of technological tools and platforms. The evaluation of the deployment of such tools is based on teacher and students feedback as well as other hard data such as attendance, retention and completion rates and examination outcomes.

- Discuss methodological issues - The move from classroom based and/or blended-learning to remote teaching represents, for many universities, a paradigmatic shift. Teaching staff lacked experience, expertise and training. Many lacked resources in digital format. These factors as well as the presence of a new teaching environment had enormous implications for the ways in which we present materials, structure lessons, manage the classroom, communicate with students and assign work for class and self-study time.

- Collect and evaluate resources - Moving to online teaching meant that non-digital resources which are not deliverable online had to be abandoned (or scanned, digitised). The online search for adequate resources was and is intense and is followed by the thorough evaluation of such resources and inclusion in the curriculum.
Delegate teacher training - Initial teacher training and ongoing support has been and is of critical importance. It is interesting to see how different institutions went about it and what plans are in place for the future.

Discuss and evaluate management issues - Lockdown came quickly and as a great surprise, nothing could have prepared us for it. This is a clear example of change management. Clear ideas, excellent communication and steady leadership were/are absolutely essential for educational programmes and teams to be taken forward.

Edit a collection of case studies that will represent a global point of reference and to establish cross-cultural criteria of sound, good practice.

Establish a global network of language teaching practitioners - This project aims at bringing together not only the authors of the published studies but a much larger global audience. The common platform will be built around the collection of studies, followed up by a number of networking events (some face to face if possible, if not, all Zoom based).

Enhance open communication, collaboration, exchange of resources and staff among partners.

Promote innovation in language teaching and sustainability with special reference to social-distancing and remote, online teaching.
PROPOSED CHAPTERS

1. Introduction to Covid-19 and HE
2. Remote and online teaching and learning
3. Institutions participating in this case study
4. Case studies will address the following questions
   a. Institutional context
   b. Students
   c. Staff
   d. Technical support
   e. Decision-making process to go fully online
   f. Assumptions underpinning design of remote programme
   g. Pedagogical and logistics considerations
   h. Hardware
   i. Software
   j. Training and support
   k. Delivery
   l. Student feedback
   m. Learning outcomes
   n. Teacher feedback
   o. Lessons learnt
   p. Planning for the future
   r. Conclusion
5. Comparative analysis
6. Conclusion

THE EDITORIAL TEAM:
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