

Internships in Times of Crisis: Collaborative production of instructional videos at a distance

Summary (174/200 words)

The Bachelor in Educational Sciences (BScE) at the University of Luxembourg offers a thorough and demanding teacher training program that combines academic and practical knowledge. As in many other initial teacher training programs, internships are a key part of each semester in the BScE. In the face of the COVID-19 health crisis, this essential part of our teacher training program could not be maintained. Indeed, the schools were closed, and the pupils were taught at a distance by their teachers. We therefore had to quickly innovate and set up alternative learning activities that best met the objectives of the internships. We thus asked our students to design and produce educational videos, in dyads, for the country's schools. The aim was to enable our students to develop the necessary skills to produce such learning resources and to make them available to schools via the Internet. We will describe, analyse and evaluate the scheme and the videos that were produced. We will also discuss possible lessons learned that might lead to adaptations in our training program.

Keywords: Initial teacher training, internships, higher education, distance education

Main goals and problems

The Bachelor in Educational Sciences (BScE) at the University of Luxembourg offers a thorough and demanding teacher training program that combines academic and practical competences. As in many other initial teacher training programs, internships are a key part of each semester in the BScE.

When faced with the COVID-19 health crisis, these internships could not be maintained. Indeed, in springtime 2020 the schools were closed and the pupils were schooled at a distance by their teacher. We therefore had to quickly innovate and set up alternative learning activities that best matched the objectives of the internships, that could be deployed relatively quickly and that were manageable by the team of university tutors. In addition, we sought to put in place something that would serve the real needs of Luxembourg schools in these times of crisis. After many discussions internally and with officials from the Ministry of Education, it was decided to ask our students to design and produce, in pairs, instructional videos (about German

language, French language and mathematics) for fundamental schools that could be used by teachers throughout the country. The aim was to enable our students to develop the skills needed to produce such digital learning resources and to make them available to schools via the Internet. We therefore developed new guidelines for our students, set up resources for them (about how to design and produce instructional videos), established procedures and set up digital tools to support the process of designing, producing and distributing the videos. The process was supposed to be entirely remote, given the lockdown conditions. The students were provided with an online platform with theoretical foundations for the design and production of instructional videos, a range of useful technical tools for the pre-production, production and post-production of the video clips and tools for communication, collaboration and publication. They had to choose a competence to be addressed, and then to define, in writing, a didactic concept for the video to be produced and to write a script for the video. This design scenario was then sent to the tutor by email, who provided them with constructive feedback via email or via video chat. They could also ask for feedback from experts in specific didactics via an online forum. Then they would start producing the video with the IT tools they had at home, often a smartphone, a tablet or a laptop. Once the video was produced, they submitted it to their tutor for feedback and validation before submitting it for publication in an open access online portal (<https://oer-bsce.uni.lu>) together with a lesson plan describing the content and recommended use of the video. A group of didactic experts looked at each submitted video and decided whether it should be published online. Over the five weeks, a total of about 600 videos were developed, of which 259 were uploaded to the online portal.

Factors that made the process successful

Overall, we found that the solution implemented under emergency conditions worked well. We all learned to deal with the situation on the job, students, and tutors. In the face of the emergency, some things were possible that we would never have dared to consider in normal times. All the involved actors showed a lot of resilience when trying to cope with a difficult and unusual situation. Fortunately, most students and tutors had access to good enough Internet connections and had hardware and software tools at their disposal that allowed them to have functioning communications and to make meaningful contributions to the process. One factor that also contributed to the relative success of this solution was the fact that most of our tutors and students were already used to using digital tools to communicate, collaborate, produce and publish.

Our students learned to create and produce multimedia products for an authentic audience and were thus highly motivated to do well. They knew that schoolteachers would use their products and that they were thus contributing to a national effort to make the best out of the situation.

The exchanges on the didactic foundations of the teaching activities were more intense because they now happened between students and university tutors (rather than schoolteachers), but also because there was less time pressure associated with normal internships and we could thus more easily ask the students to rethink their concept before producing the instructional video.

Factors that made the process challenging

We all clearly struggled with the fact that we had to interact at a distance and via the Internet for every step of the process and this made some things more complicated than they would otherwise have been. Also, having to develop and produce instructional videos for pupils that neither students nor tutors knew, made it rather abstract and complicated. Moreover, the instructional videos produced by the students were mostly about learning and teaching events (Verpoorten et al., 2007) where the initiative is on the teacher's side (reception-transmission and modelling-imitation). This might have been due to the fact that the task we gave them slightly induced this teaching model or it showed that most students conceive teaching in terms of directed instruction (Roblyer & Doering, 2013).

Main conclusions

Overall, we are quite satisfied with the process. We received positive feedback from teachers who still use the instructional videos from our online portal. The students clearly used this opportunity to develop digital and techno-pedagogical skills (Koehler & Mishra, 2009) that they had never had the opportunity to develop otherwise. We discovered that it was feasible to ask our students to design and produce instructional videos and we have since extended our online portal where we publish more and more of our students works for the national (and international) school community to find inspiration for innovative practices.

Interactivity

We will ensure interactivity (1) by asking the audience about their own experiences with teaching during the COVID-19 crisis, and (2) by asking the audience for their opinions about our solution, e.g. what they like about it, what they do not like, what they would change and how they would improve it.

References

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